

WHEN YOU TALK WITH MORMONS

• FOCUS ON JESUS CHRIST • BYPASS JOSEPH SMITH

What can a Christian do — what can *you* do?

Mormons focus on Joseph Smith, the founder of their religion, and the Book of Mormon, which he produced. So, what can you do with Mormons, whose faith was summed up this way by Smith: “Take away the Book of Mormon and the revelations, and where is our religion? We have none.”¹

You can ask Mormons, “What would be your faith if there were no Joseph Smith?” Ask, “What would you believe if there were no Book of Mormon?” Help them focus on Jesus Christ and the Bible, not Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon.

Mormons often express unbounded faith in Joseph Smith, who said he met face-to-face with Christ when another God (the Father) introduced the two in 1820. In 1830 Smith started a church Mormons believe to be the original form of Christianity: with long-lost priesthood powers redelivered to earth by ancient Bible characters visiting Smith; and new scriptures, beliefs, and practices.²

Mormons know about Jesus — what’s true and what’s not — because Joseph Smith found out firsthand. They think also that no other church is a true Christian church and the creeds are false; Smith said that’s what Jesus told him. Church leaders continually urge Mormons to “follow the prophet,” to trust Mormon prophets. Mormons rarely express unconditional trust in Christ alone for their eternal salvation.

Mormons want to be Christians. You can help.

First, see how Christians confronted error in Acts 18: 24-28. In Ephesus Aquila and Priscilla heard Apollos preach. Apollos — well-meaning, no doubt — was eloquent, scripture-oriented, fervent, diligent, and bold as he tried to advance the cause of Christ. He erred, nevertheless, and...

... *when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took [Apollos] unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.*

There is no simple formula for explaining the Good News to Mormons “more perfectly”; it’s not a matter of 1-2-3. But it needs to be done.

You might find the following ideas useful as you talk with Mormons, who may be Bible-literate (or not), earnest, and fervent; who think they are Christians, but devoutly follow the Prophet Joseph Smith and successors.

Help Mormons be comfortable using the Bible

Mormons respect the Bible, and they use the King James Version (KJV). If you use the KJV when talking with Mormons you won’t be

suspected of using a specific translation to alter the message. Mention to them and have them read their Church’s statement that the Bible contains the “fulness of the everlasting gospel” (in the Introduction to the Book of Mormon). Agree with them to find the Bible’s gospel.

Help identify elemental gospel truths.

Sin. • On the one hand, Jesus set impossibly high standards: “Be . . . perfect” (Matthew 5:48), and “sin no more” (John 5:14; 8:11) — instructions Mormons may cite to explain their valiant efforts to obey Jesus (or what they call “the laws and ordinances of the gospel”) and please God. • On the other hand, the Bible describes all people as impossibly sinful: “. . . none righteous . . . none that doeth good . . . all the world . . . guilty before God . . . there is no difference . . . all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (You can read aloud Romans 3:10-23.) Also, James 2:10: “. . . keep the whole law, . . . offend in one point, . . . guilty of all.”

Salvation and eternal life. The Apostle Paul *concluded* that one is to be “justified by faith” alone (Romans 3:28). He noted that God “justifieth the ungodly,” to whom He “imputeth righteousness without works” and does “not impute sin” (Romans 4:5-8). Consider “impute” with Mormons.

Look at Hebrews 1:1-2 — God spoke in the past through prophets; now, through the Son. What is the Son’s message? Importantly, He promised eternal life (or everlasting life) uniquely to those who believe in Him (John 3:15-16). See Hebrews 10:14 — *perfection* granted forever through Christ.

Christians can be confident of eternal life. 1 John 5:13 — *He that hath the Son hath life; . . . These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life . . .*

Suggestions

- Focus on Christ. • Avoid anger, argument. • Don’t solo. (Aquila and Priscilla worked *together* to correct Apollos). • Get pastoral help if needed.
- Don’t be derailed by the earnest testimonies and familiar language you hear from Mormons, or when they challenge the authority of the Bible.
- Be positive. Don’t chase after every quirk in Mormon doctrine and history. • Listen to each Mormon. Many don’t know, believe, or practice the Mormon religion of ten, 50, or 100 years ago. Satisfied church members seeking to “live the gospel” as directed by their prophet and other authorities may have their own private take on current Mormon doctrine.
- Simply assert what Scripture says, and point to the Bible (and thus to Jesus), not, as Mormons do, to their private “testimony” of the Book of Mormon, “the Church,” or “latter-day prophets” (and thus, Joseph Smith).

NOTES: 1. www.josephsmith.net . 2. “The Great Things Which God Has Revealed,” The Ensign, May 2005, page 80. Gordon B. Hinckley, the current “living prophet,” states that the 14-year-old Smith “learned more concerning Deity” during his brief conversation with Christ in 1820 “than all the scholars and clerics of the past.” His promotion of Smith’s meeting with the Gods as the greatest event since the Resurrection can be read at www.lds.org .