

# What Lutherans Believe

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church  
Keith Chuvala, [Keith@BackToTheBibleCatechism.com](mailto:Keith@BackToTheBibleCatechism.com)

## **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (a.k.a. The Mormons)**

- History – Joseph Smith, the origin of the Book of Mormon
- A brief summary of fundamental Mormon beliefs
- The Word of God: The Bible, the Book of Mormon, etc.
- The nature of God:
  - Father
  - Son
  - Holy Spirit
- What about Man?
  - Eternal matters: Family, marriage, etc.
  - On becoming a god
- Are Mormons Christian?
- How should I talk to Mormons?

## **About Joseph Smith**

Joseph Smith Jr. was born in 1805 in Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, to Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith. He had 10 brothers and sisters. His parents taught him to pray, read the Bible, and to have faith in God.

At age 14, Joseph saw God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in his First Vision. At age 17, Joseph began to receive heavenly messengers who prepared him for his role in the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ to the earth. He was a prophet, just like those in biblical times.

### **The First Vision**

As a boy, Joseph Smith was surrounded by various churches which each claimed to teach the truth. This caused him much serious reflection. He wanted to know which church was right. One day he read a passage in the Bible which says, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5). Joseph decided to accept the invitation to ask God.

In the spring of 1820, Joseph went to a grove of trees near his home and prayed to learn which church he should join. In answer to his prayer, Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to him. Joseph wrote: “When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other— This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” Joseph was told to join none of the churches that existed at that time.

Joseph Smith’s First Vision marked the beginning of the Restoration of Jesus Christ’s Church to the earth.

Joseph Smith’s written account of this event is a powerful testimony of what he saw and experienced.

*<sup>17</sup> It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*

<sup>18</sup> *My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join.*

<sup>19</sup> *I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.”*

<sup>20</sup> *He again forbade me to join with any of them; and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time. When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven. When the light had departed, I had no strength; but soon recovering in some degree, I went home. And as I leaned up to the fireplace, mother inquired what the matter was. I replied, “Never mind, all is well—I am well enough off.” I then said to my mother, “I have learned for myself that Presbyterianism is not true.” It seems as though the adversary was aware, at a very early period of my life, that I was destined to prove a disturber and an annoyer of his kingdom; else why should the powers of darkness combine against me? Why the opposition and persecution that arose against me, almost in my infancy?*

## **From the Introduction to Doctrine and Covenants**

In the course of time, Joseph Smith was enabled by divine assistance to translate and publish the Book of Mormon. In the **meantime he and Oliver Cowdery were ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist in May 1829** (see [D&C 13](#)), and soon thereafter they were also **ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood by the ancient Apostles Peter, James, and John** (see [D&C 27:12](#)). **Other ordinations followed in which priesthood keys were conferred by Moses, Elijah, Elias, and many ancient prophets** (see [D&C 110](#); [128:18, 21](#)). These ordinations were, in fact, a restoration of divine authority to man on the earth. On April 6, 1830, under heavenly direction, the Prophet Joseph Smith organized the Church, and thus the true Church of Jesus Christ is once again operative as an institution among men, with authority to teach the gospel and administer the ordinances of salvation. (See [D&C 20](#) and the Pearl of Great Price, [Joseph Smith—History 1](#).)

## **A Brief Explanation about the Book of Mormon**

<https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bofm/explanation> (Emphasis mine)

The Book of Mormon is a sacred record of peoples in ancient America and was engraved upon metal plates. Sources from which this record was compiled include the following:

1. *The Plates of Nephi*, which were of two kinds: the small plates and the large plates. The former were more particularly devoted to spiritual matters and the ministry and teachings of the prophets, while the latter were occupied mostly by a secular history of the peoples concerned ([1 Nephi 9:2–4](#)). From the time of Mosiah, however, the large plates also included items of major spiritual importance.
2. *The Plates of Mormon*, which consist of an abridgment by Mormon from the large plates of Nephi, with many commentaries. These plates also contained a continuation of the history by Mormon and additions by his son Moroni.
3. *The Plates of Ether*, which present a history of the Jaredites. This record was abridged by Moroni, who inserted comments of his own and incorporated the record with the general history under the title “Book of Ether.”
4. *The Plates of Brass* brought by the people of Lehi from Jerusalem in 600 B.C. These contained “the five books of Moses, ... and also a record of the Jews from the beginning, ... down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah; and also the prophecies of the holy prophets” ([1 Nephi 5:11–13](#)). Many quotations from these plates, citing Isaiah and other biblical and nonbiblical prophets, appear in the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon comprises fifteen main parts or divisions, known, with one exception, as books, usually designated by the name of their principal author. The first portion (the first six books, ending with Omni) is a translation from the small plates of Nephi. Between the books of Omni and Mosiah is an insert called the Words of Mormon. This insert connects the record engraved on the small plates with Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates.

The longest portion, from Mosiah through Mormon chapter 7, is a translation of Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates of Nephi. The concluding portion, from Mormon chapter 8 to the end of the volume, was engraved by Mormon’s son Moroni, who, after finishing the record of his father’s life, made an abridgment of the Jaredite record (as the book of Ether) and later added the parts known as the book of Moroni.

**In or about the year A.D. 421, Moroni, the last of the Nephite prophet-historians, sealed the sacred record and hid it up unto the Lord, to be brought forth in the latter days, as predicted by the voice of God through His ancient prophets. In A.D. 1823, this same Moroni, then a resurrected personage, visited the Prophet Joseph Smith and subsequently delivered the engraved plates to him.**

*About this edition:* The original title page, immediately preceding the contents page, is taken from the plates and is part of the sacred text. Introductions in a non-italic typeface, such as in 1 Nephi and immediately preceding Mosiah chapter 9, are also part of the sacred text. Introductions in italics, such as in chapter headings, are not original to the text but are study helps included for convenience in reading.

Some minor errors in the text have been perpetuated in past editions of the Book of Mormon. This edition contains corrections that seem appropriate to bring the material into conformity with prepublication manuscripts and early editions edited by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

## **Summary of beliefs**

(<http://www.mormon.org/learn/0,8672,1598-1,00.html>. Emphasis mine.)

Joseph Smith was asked about the basic beliefs of the Church. He summarized the teachings and doctrines in 13 basic points which are known as The Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They are:

1. We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.
2. We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.
3. **We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.**
4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.
5. We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.
6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.
7. We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.
8. **We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.**
9. We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.
10. We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon this the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.
11. We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.
13. We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

## **Basic beliefs**

- God is our Heavenly Father. He loves us and wants us to return to Him.
- Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is our Savior. He redeems us from death by providing the Resurrection. He saves us from sin as we repent.
- Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can return to live with God if we keep His commandments.
- The Holy Ghost helps us to recognize truth.
- The first principles and ordinances of the gospel are faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.
- **The Church of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth.**
- The priesthood authority of God exists in His Church today, just as it did in the original Church.
- The Bible and the Book of Mormon are the word of God.
- **God reveals His will to prophets today, just as He did anciently.**
- Our life has a sacred purpose.
- **Families can be together forever.**
- Through serving others, we can experience joy and draw closer to God.

## **The Plan of Salvation**

**You lived with your Heavenly Father as one of His spirit children before you began your life on Earth.** You were happy there, but God knew that you could not continue to progress unless you left Him for a time.

So He presented His plan—the plan of salvation. It allowed you to come to Earth, where you would gain a physical body and would have experiences that would help you to learn and grow. The purpose of the plan is to help you become more like Him.

Heavenly Father knew that while you were on Earth you would make mistakes—everyone does. So, as part of His plan, He provided a Savior, Jesus Christ, who would make it possible for sins to be forgiven, and for all people who accept His sacrifice to return to live with Heavenly Father.

**The fact that you are living on Earth means that you accepted Heavenly Father’s plan and came here wanting to do all you could to receive all He has to offer.**

The marvelous thing about Heavenly Father’s plan is that by following it, not only can you return to Him after you die—you can also find peace and happiness in this life.



## **The Book of Mormon**

The Book of Mormon is another witness that Jesus Christ really lived, that He was and is God's Son. It contains the writings of ancient prophets. **One of these, Lehi, lived in Jerusalem around 600 B.C. God commanded Lehi to lead a small group of people to the American continent. There they became a great civilization.**

God continued to call prophets among these people. The Book of Mormon is a collection of the writings of their prophets and record keepers. It is named after Mormon, one of the last of these ancient prophets.

These prophets knew about Heavenly Father's plan for His children and the mission of Jesus Christ. They recorded that Christ appeared, after His Resurrection, to the people in America, taught them His gospel, and formed His Church among them. The book contains the teachings of Jesus Christ, testifying of His Atonement and His love. It supports and verifies the Bible.

**The Book of Mormon concludes with a great promise that those who read it and sincerely pray about it can know by the Holy Ghost that it is true (Moroni 10:4).**

## **Other scriptures**

In addition to translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith recorded other revelations he received from God. Many of these revelations are found in two books of modern-day scripture:

- The Doctrine and Covenants
- The Pearl of Great Price

These additional books of scripture show that God continues to give revelation through His chosen prophets to guide His children. He has not left you alone.

## **God, our Heavenly Father**

Jesus taught that God is “Our Father which art in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). We call God Heavenly Father because He is the Father of our spirits.

As your Father, God knows and loves you personally. He wants you to find joy in this life and return to live with Him when this life is over. He has prepared a plan to help you do these things. It is the plan of salvation, a plan of happiness. It offers peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

God is perfect. He is all-wise and all-powerful—the ruler of the universe. He is also merciful, kind, loving, and just—your Heavenly Father. We are created in His own image (Genesis 1:27).

Because you are His child, He knows and loves you as an individual. He has a plan to help His children find joy in this life and return to live with Him when this life is over.

## **Who is Jesus Christ?**

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He was the Creator, He is our Savior, and He will be our Judge. Under the direction of our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ created the earth (John 1:10; Hebrews 1:2).

When Jesus lived on the earth (approximately 2,000 years ago), He led a perfect life. He taught by word and example how people should live in love of God and others.

Through His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane and by giving His life on the cross—that is, by performing the Atonement—Jesus Christ saves us from our sins (1 Peter 2:21) as we follow Him. Because of the Atonement, you can be forgiven of your sins when you sincerely repent (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 26:30).

*<sup>30</sup> Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me.*

Through His Resurrection, Jesus Christ saved us from death. Because He overcame death, we will all be given the gift of resurrection (Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:22). When life on this earth is over, Jesus Christ will be the final Judge (Acts 17:31; John 5:21–22; Acts 10:42). Jesus Christ did what only He could do in atoning for our sins. To make His Atonement fully effective in our individual lives, we must have faith in Christ, repent of our sins, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, obey God's commandments, and strive to become like Him. As we do these things through His Atonement, we can return to live with Him and our Heavenly Father forever.

## **Who is the Holy Ghost?**

The Holy Ghost is a member of the Godhead, along with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost is one in purpose with the Father and the Son, but is a separate being. Through Joseph Smith, the Lord revealed:

*The Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us. [Doctrine and Covenants 130:22]*

The special mission of the Holy Ghost is to testify of the Father and the Son, to reveal the truth, to comfort us, and to sanctify us. He is a divine guide and teacher.

## **How can I be forgiven of my sins?**

You can be forgiven of your sins through the Atonement of Jesus Christ by the process of repentance. Because Heavenly Father knew we would sometimes make wrong choices, He provided a way for us to be forgiven of our sins (John 3:16). He provided a Savior, Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross so that when we sincerely repent, we can be forgiven (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 4:6).

When we sincerely repent, we:

- Confess the sin to both God and anyone who has been harmed by our sin.
- Ask forgiveness from God and from anyone we have harmed.
- When possible, repair the damage we have done.
- Forsake our sins.
- Strive to keep the commandments.

Sincere repentance brings peace and forgiveness. God has promised, “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:42).

*34 And now I give unto you further directions concerning this land.*

*35 It is wisdom in me that my servant Martin Harris should be an example unto the church, in alaying his moneys before the bishop of the church.*

*36 And also, this is a law unto every man that cometh unto this land to receive an inheritance; and he shall do with his moneys according as the law directs.*

*37 And it is wisdom also that there should be lands purchased in Independence, for the place of the storehouse, and also for the house of the printing.*

*38 And other directions concerning my servant Martin Harris shall be given him of the Spirit, that he may receive his inheritance as seemeth him good;*

*39 And let him repent of his sins, for he seeketh the praise of the world.*

*40 And also let my servant William W. Phelps stand in the office to which I have appointed him, and receive his inheritance in the land;*

*41 And also he hath need to repent, for I, the Lord, am not well pleased with him, for he seeketh to excel, and he is not sufficiently meek before me.*

*42 **Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.***

*43 By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them.*

## **Eternal marriage**

The Savior promised that certain sacred acts performed in this life would be effective in the world to come. Consider His words to Peter: “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

When a marriage is performed by the proper authority in the holy temple, it can last through eternity rather than “till death do you part.”

Your marriage and family do not need to end at death. This promise can give you a sense of eternal belonging and eternal commitment.

## **The Eternal Nature of God's Children**

Life does not begin at birth, nor does it end at death.

You are a child of God with a divine nature and a divine destiny. You lived with Him as a spirit before you were born. God sent you to Earth to receive a body and gain the experiences you need to return to Him.

If you are to return to live with Him eternally, you must keep His commandments, accept Jesus Christ's Atonement, and follow His example while you are on Earth.

Sooner or later your life on Earth will end, and you will die. But because Jesus Christ conquered death, your spirit and your body will be reunited, never to be separated again. Then, if you have done what you came to Earth to do, you can return to live with your Heavenly Father.

## **You have Infinite Potential**

As a child of God, you have the divine potential to learn and grow and become like Him. Just as you may have inherited characteristics from your earthly parents, such as your mother's sense of humor or your father's love of music, you have inherited qualities from your Heavenly Father.

He is a God of love, goodness, mercy, charity, truth, power, knowledge, justice, and wisdom. You can nurture these divine attributes. Within you are the seeds of divinity and the power, through Christ, to grow and progress for eternity.

## **What is "heaven" like?**

Heaven is the place where God lives and the future home of those who follow Him. The hope of our Heavenly Father and the goal of each person on this earth is to return to live with Him. This means that the opportunity to return to our Heavenly Father has been provided through the grace of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

After we are resurrected we will be judged and rewarded for the things we have done in this life.

Jesus Christ taught His Apostles that in His Father's house are "many mansions" (John 14:2). Our loving Heavenly Father is anxious to reward all of His children according to their obedience to His commandments and their willingness to follow the Savior.

Those who do these things and are worthy to return to the presence of God and Christ become “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17) of all that the Father has. They will return to live with Heavenly Father and with their families in His eternal glory.

Those who choose not to follow our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will receive a reward according to what they have done in this life, but they will not enjoy the glory of living in the presence of God.

### **God was once a man – “as we are now”**

From Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 345:

*"I will go back to the beginning before the world was, to show what kind of a being God is. What sort of a being was God in the beginning? Open your ears and hear, all ye ends of the earth, for I am going to prove it to you by the Bible, and to tell you the designs of God in relation to the human race, and why He interferes with the affairs of man.*

***God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by His power, was to make himself visible. Say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form, like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with Him, as one man talks and communes with another.***

*In order to understand the subject of the dead, for consolation of those who mourn for the loss of their friends, it is necessary we should understand the character and being of God and how He came to be so; for I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see."*

## **You can be a god, too!**

From Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley, p. 179:

*"The whole design of the gospel is to lead us, onward and upward to greater achievement, even, eventually, to godhood. This great possibility was enunciated by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the King Follet sermon (see Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 342-62) and emphasized by President Lorenzo Snow. It is this grand and incomparable concept: **As God now is, man may become!** (See The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow, comp. Clyde J. Williams, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984, p. 1.)"*



## What About . . .

# Mormonism

### The Rise of Mormonism

If anyone doubts that the Mormonism is a growing concern, just consider these facts. The Mormon church has grown from 2 million members in 1963 to 9.7 million members today with “stakes” (as they call their districts) in 160 different countries. In the United States alone there are approximately 5 million people who claim to be Mormons, Latter Day Saints (LDS)!

As we express our deep concerns about the anti-Christian nature of Mormonism, it is important that we recognize that many Mormons are fine people, with high moral values and deep devotion to their family. The sincerity of the Mormon people is beyond question. But, they are sincerely wrong—very wrong—about the true God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Mormonism is an anti-Christian cult that uses many of the same terms as Christianity, but gives them entirely different meanings. Mormonism bases its religion on the *Book of Mormon* and the “inspired” revelations of its leaders, rather than on the Holy Bible, which *alone* is the Word of God.

### The Beginnings of Mormonism

Joseph Smith Jr., the founder of Mormonism, claimed that an angel had visited him and led him to discover plates of gold upon which was engraved, in what he called “a reformed Egyptian language,” the *Book of Mormon*. Smith gathered all his various documents together in 1833 into what Mormons today refer to as the *Doctrine and Covenants* (abbreviated D.C.). This is the source of their religion.

Unlike the Holy Scripture, there is not a single shred of verifiable, archeological evidence to support the *Book of Mormon’s* fantastical claims of ancient civilizations and epic battles here in the Western Hemisphere. Even the claim of a “reformed Egyptian” language has been proven time and again to be a myth.

After Smith’s death in 1844, the largest group of his followers accepted the leadership of Brigham Young and migrated to Salt Lake City, Utah, the present-day headquarters of the LDS.

### Mormonism’s Key Beliefs

“Restorationism” is the most important principle for the Mormon Church. It is their belief that the true church died with the first generation of apostles and was restored with Joseph Smith. The Mormons are experts at using terms

familiar to Christians, but giving them different meanings. Let’s take a moment now to examine a few key teachings of Mormonism.

### The Holy Trinity

An official statement from the Mormon Church claims: “A paramount doctrine . . . is a belief in God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost. The three make up the Godhead. They are one in purpose but separate in being.” (LDS Internet site). This sounds very similar to Christianity, but a study of what Mormons mean when they use words like “god-head” is very revealing.

Mormonism rejects the Holy Trinity. The key to the Mormon doctrine of the Trinity is found in the words, “one in purpose but separate in being.” Joseph Smith wrote, “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of spirit” (D.C., 130:22).

Mormonism explicitly denies the God revealed in the Holy Scripture and the God confessed by all true Christians through the ages. Matt. 28:19 reveals that the Triune God consists of three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Triune God is three persons, equal in their divinity, yet one God. They are not separate, but of the same divine essence.

### The Person and Work of Jesus Christ

Many Mormons today hold that God the Father had sexual relations with Mary to produce a body of flesh for Jesus to live in. But some say that Brigham Young was “inspired” when he wrote that the Father of Jesus “was the first of the human family, Adam. . . . Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the Garden of Eden, and who is our Father in heaven” (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. I, pp. 51, 51).

Obviously, since Mormons do not believe in the Son of God as He is revealed to us in the Bible, they also reject what He has done for us, namely, paid for all sins with His death on the cross. It is therefore no coincidence that you rarely, if ever, see a Mormon painting of the death of Christ. The crucifix is particularly offensive to Mormons. Why? Because they believe that the blood of Jesus Christ did not atone for all of our sins.

### Salvation



## What about Mormonism?

Holy Scripture teaches clearly that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, apart from works (Rom. 3:28; Eph. 2:8-11). In contrast to Christianity, Mormonism teaches that salvation is not a free gift of God, but something to be earned. A person may earn this salvation by believing in God, by receiving baptism by immersion, and then by fulfilling required works. Mormonism expressly rejects the doctrine of justification by faith alone. One of their “apostles,” James Talmage wrote, “The sectarian dogma of justification by faith alone has exercised an influence for evil since the early days of Christianity” (*Articles of Faith*, 1909, p. 120).

How does a Mormon believe a person is saved? A Mormon theologian puts it this way: “Without the *Book of Mormon* and other latter-day revelation, Christians are left without a full understanding of . . . Jesus Christ. This same Jesus Christ, God of the Old Testament and Redeemer of all, has once again benefited humankind by restoring the same teachings, principles, ordinances, and organization that he first brought to the world two thousand years ago” (Rex Lee, *What Mormons Believe*, p. 24-25).

Mormonism teaches its followers that they must do certain things to gain heaven. Since they reject the true Son of God, Jesus Christ, they can never have the assurance that they are saved by the love of God, revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Mormon church officially states: “The Purpose of Life” is the following: “All have the potential of eternal life, conditional upon individual worthiness and obedience to the Savior’s ordinances and teachings.” How tragic!

### How Can We Reach Out to Mormons?

We need to approach this challenge with the attitude that it is God alone who converts a person to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. We are merely God’s instruments and our calling is to speak the truth *in love* (Eph. 4:14). We know from God’s Word that we are to be prepared to “give an answer” to everyone who asks about the hope we have in Christ (1 Pet. 3:15).

Based on the observations of those who have spent many years living and working among Mormons, here are some practical suggestions for witnessing to Mormons. It is important not to get into arguments with Mormons. As we defend our faith, we must always do so lovingly and with compassion, never merely for the sake of scoring debating points.

When we witness to Mormons, we need to be careful that we base our understandings of Mormonism on reliable sources. An excellent resource is available from Concordia Publishing House. I highly recommend the helpful booklet, *How to Respond to . . . The Latter-day Saints*, by Pastor Edgar P.

Kaiser. You may obtain a copy from CPH by calling 800-325-3040. The best thing we can do is to share with Mormons God’s love and grace in Jesus Christ. We need to emphasize the powerful comfort we have knowing that God loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son to provide, totally and completely, for our salvation. We do not have to look to our own efforts for our salvation. The Mormon Gospel is only a new law. The true Gospel is the good news of God’s work in Jesus Christ, which atones for all sin. The bottom line in witnessing to Mormons is to be aware of the fact that our job is to witness to our faith in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the one who converts a Mormon through God’s Word. Finally, pray that the Lord would bless your words as you present the hope that is within you. Pray too for the Mormon with whom you are speaking, asking that the Lord would break through the fog of error that clouds his mind so that he may come to know who God really is and what His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, is really all about.

— Dr. A. L. Barry  
President

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod