

Are the Mormon teachings you find attractive actually true?

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Missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormon Church) frequently labour among people who already profess some belief in Christianity, believing that they are simply building on a previous belief in God, in Jesus and in the Bible to bring the 'investigators' (potential converts) to a knowledge of the true Church in these latter-days. Before making a decision to join the Mormon Church you should know that miscommunication and misunderstanding probably take place between Mormons and non-Mormons, due to (1) Mormon terminology and (2) what the Mormon Church will not tell you.

Miscommunications and misunderstanding between Mormons and non-Mormons

I The Mormon Church uses the standard vocabulary of the Bible (Heavenly Father, Christ, Saviour, the atonement, the gospel, eternal life, the gospel, the atonement etc.), **but with radically different meanings.** Mormon redefinition of Christian terminology makes you feel that both Mormons and the Bible believing Christians have lots in common, but in fact, they have very little in common. Mormons say, "Jesus is my Saviour". For Mormons this means that Jesus gave him/her 'salvation', which means resurrection. Mormons will agree that they are 'saved by grace alone'. This means that they do not have to do anything to gain resurrection. (See our article [Terminological Differences between Mormonism and the Bible](#))

II The public relation-conscious Mormon Church has softened the statements of Mormon doctrines.¹ They softened the hard line of Joseph Smith who said that all Christian denominations were wrong, all their creeds were abomination in God's sight.² The Mormon Church has also toned down the teaching on attaining godhood.³ But the Mormon Church has not removed or changed what Smith taught about Christian churches and attaining godhood, as the teaching is still in their scripture and official teaching manuals.

Have Mormon missionaries taught you...? "As man now is, God once was; As God now is, man may be." (Lorenzo Snow)⁴

The Mormon Church teaches that the 'Heavenly Father' was once a man like us lived on a planet, died, and progressed to godhood.⁵ An official teaching manual of the Mormon Church, *Gospel Principles* (2009 edition, p.279) quotes Joseph Smith as saying: "It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the character of God. ... He was once a man like us; ... God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith[1976], 345-6)." Even today, one of the first things Mormon Children learn is the following couplet: "As man now is, God once was; As God now is, man may be."

But, the Bible teaches that there is only one God (Isaiah 43:10,11,44:6,8, 45:21-22) **and God has always existed as God throughout eternity** (Psalm 90:2, Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8). Even the *Book of Mormon* (this is the first Mormon scripture Mormon missionaries ask you to read) teaches that there is only one God and is unchangeable (Alma 11:26-29, Moroni 8:18). But another Mormon scripture contradicts this teaching (Doctrine & Covenants 121:32,132:18).

Attractive Teachings of Mormonism

What are teachings do Mormon missionaries present to attract investigators?

I The Mormon Church teaches that families can be together forever ('eternal family'). *Gospel Principles* (p.209) says, "To enjoy this blessing we must be married in the temple.....If we keep our covenants with the Lord, we will be united eternally as husband, wife, and children. Death cannot separate us."

Do you know that to have 'eternal life' and 'eternal family' in Mormonism one has to 'become a god'? Instead of talking about becoming a god, today's Mormons talk about *exaltation, gaining eternal life or having an eternal family*. All these expressions mean the same. They also say '*becoming like Heavenly Father*'. If attaining godhood is openly taught to non-Mormons, many 'investigators' may be alarmed and doubt whether Mormons are Christian.

In Mormonism, one can go to heaven, but not have eternal life. "Eternal life" in Mormonism is synonymous with exaltation: living eternally as a god and having ability to procreate children through eternity.⁶ To have eternal life Mormons must receive the temple endowment and be married in the temple etc. **In the Bible, eternal life is promised to all true Christians and everyone in heaven has eternal life but we are not promised to become gods in heaven.** Apostle John said, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not 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, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:12,13, See John 5:24). Eternal life is a gift, not to be earned (Eph 2:8-10).

Jesus taught that there is no marriage in heaven. Those who are resurrected to a new life in heaven neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven (Matthew 22:30). In heaven Christ's church is married to him, the divine Groom is forever bonded to his bride, the Christian church, which constitutes all people who have trusted in him by faith (Revelation 21:9-27).⁷

(Please see our article "Are Families forever?")

II The Mormon Church teaches that those who died without hearing about the (Mormon) gospel on earth are taught the Mormon gospel in the spirit world and they will have a chance to inherit the highest glory of heaven (the celestial kingdom).⁸ In Mormonism the spirits of the dead can accept the Mormon gospel in the spirit world, but these spirits have no bodies, so they cannot be baptised. But baptism is essential to their progression according to Mormon teaching. What is the solution? The living must be baptised as proxies for them. This teaching can be appealing especially for those who have lost family members prematurely or recently. Mormons must do work for the dead (proxy baptism) in order to attain exaltation (become a god). This is extremely important for a Mormon's long-term progression. So Mormons are urged to trace their ancestry back at least four generations.⁹ This teaching appeals to people's sense of fair play.

But, the Bible teaches that there is no chance to repent after death, but only judgement (Luke 16:19–31, John 8:24, 2 Corinthians 6:2, Hebrews 9:27–28).

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

(Hebrews 9:27–28)

(See [What will happen to those who never had a chance to hear the Gospel of Christ?](#))

Even the *Book of Mormon* texts repeatedly refute any chance to repent after death (Alma 34:32–35, 2 Nephi 9:38, Mosiah 3:25, 16:5, 11, 16:5, 26:25–27). For example, read Alma 34:35 and 2 Nephi 9:38.¹⁰

(See [Did Jesus establish Baptism for the Dead \(offsite\)](#))

III The mixture of the Mormon version of Christianity and ongoing revelation can be appealing. The Mormon Church has the 'living prophet', God's alleged mouthpiece. The prophet is supposedly able to give guidance and reveal God's will to his people. Young people and families can be attracted to the possibilities of 'extra' assistance in determining the best answers to life's choices.¹¹

But the Bible teaches the finality of revelation (Hebrews 1:1). God spoke to Israel decisively through the prophets but the ultimate revelation has come in these last days of human history, through Jesus Christ. (See [Are prophets still needed today?](#))

IV The Mormon Church capitalises on the "disunity" of Christian churches. Mormons often say, "Our church is not perfect, but at least we are united!" Their claims of being the only true church can be attractive because no one wants to join a false church!

But, the Bible teaches that church is not an organization or denomination, but the community of all true believers who have responded to God's call for all time (Deuteronomy 4:10, Hebrews 12:22). Jesus himself promised to build the church, calling his people to himself and the gates of hell should not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). The church God 'hath purchased with Christ's own blood' (Acts 20:28) Therefore, Paul prays, "... unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21).

V The Mormon view of God is simpler and easy to comprehend from a human perspective. Mormons say that they believe in the Trinitarian concept of God, but they mean that God the Father is a God, God the Son is another God and God the Holy Ghost is a third God and they are one God because they are one in purpose.

Not many Christians are really clear about what is meant by the doctrine of the Trinity. *The Trinity means that God eternally exists as three persons-the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit- and each person is fully God and there is one God.*¹² But, the Mormon understanding of the Trinity (essentially Arian) seems to have the backing of scripture (1 Corinthians 15:24–28, John 20:17). So please study passages like **John 5:19–22, 17:21–26, 20:27, 1 Cor. 15:24–28.**

Conclusion: People do not join the Mormon Church because they thoroughly understand Mormon doctrines. They are more likely to be impressed by clean-cut, dedicated Mormon missionaries, and are exposed to a wide range of activities and enjoying a network of friendship etc. The entire package of the belief system comes *after* people join the Mormon Church. They will learn the demanding lifestyle, commitments and deep doctrine gradually.

NOTES

1 The second official Mormon website (www.mormon.org) is specifically for the non-Mormon community, and softens the statements of Mormon doctrines.

2 *Joseph Smith-History* 1:18–19 in *The Pearl of Great Price*- one of official Mormon scriptures.

3 *Gospel Principles*, 2009 edition, p.279- an official Mormon Church teaching manual.

4 *The Life and Teachings of Jesus & His Apostle*, p.59 -an official Mormon teaching manual.

5 *Gospel principles*, 2009, p.279, *Search These Commandments-A Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guide*, pp. 152,153- an official Mormon Church teaching manual, *Achieving a Celestial Marriage*, pp.129–132- an official Mormon Church teaching manual

6 *Ibid.* p.277, Doctrine & Covenants 131:1–4, 132:19–25, 30, 55- D&C is one of four scriptures of the Mormon Church.

7 R. Philip Roberts, *Mormonism Unmasked* (Nashville, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998) p.18

8 *Gospel Principle*, p.236, *Doctrine & Covenants* 137:7–10

9 *Doctrine & Covenants Student Manual*, p448-an official teaching manual of the Mormon Church'

10 *The Doctrine & Covenants*, which teaches the need for Mormons to perform the sacred ordinances for their dead (D&C 128:8, 22,138:54,138:58), contradicts the *Book of Mormon*. D&C teaches more Mormon doctrine than the other three Mormon scriptures combined.

11 R. Philip Roberts, p.19

12 Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Leicester, IVP, 1994) p.1225