

# How should we welcome Mormons to our church activities?

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When a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly called Mormon, agrees to attend a Bible study, ESL (English as a Second Language) class, church –based play group etc, you may have little time to become acquainted with basic Mormon beliefs. Mormonism is a *religion* with a most complex belief system and a distinctive *culture*. What should you do?

Here are seven points you should remember.

## I The level of your Mormon friend's commitment to the Mormon Church

**Is he or she a temple Mormon (a Mormon who is worthy to enter the temple), or a cultural Mormon?** When it is appropriate you should ask questions: "Please tell how you became a member of the Mormon Church." "How many hours do you spend working for the Mormon Church?" Mormonism is a demanding religion. Mormons are expected to spend three hours at their meetinghouses on Sunday, Family Home Evening on Mondays, do genealogical research, temple works, etc.etc. If the Mormon is a temple Mormon, it will be very hard to present the gospel to him /her. If a temple Mormon wants to have a Bible study with a Christian, we should be cautious about his / her motivation for doing this.

**Invite a temple Mormon to a one-to-one Bible study or English class.** Your first priority should be protecting other members of the Bible study group, English class and the church members from becoming Mormons.

## II The Mormon mindset

### (1) The persecution complex and insularity of Mormon culture

Do not attack the Mormon Church or its leaders. The Mormon Church teaches that early Mormons were persecuted because they were righteous and 'peculiar people' and Joseph Smith was a martyr! If you attack Joseph Smith, raise sensitive issues like polygamy, baptism for the dead for the Holocaust victims or anything negative about the Mormon Church, Mormons are likely to harden their hearts no matter how nominal their commitment to the Mormon Church. People who are in a defensive position cannot think clearly which means they will not listen to the good news.

### (2) Subjective feelings, rather than objective facts, are the most important things for Mormons.

The Mormon Church teaches that God will confirm the truth of the Mormon gospel by a "burning in the bosom." This warm, good feeling is the ultimate method to determine the spiritual truth. Therefore, it is extremely rare to be able to persuade with human argumentation Mormons to admit that their truth-claims were false. Only the Word of God would penetrate the deepest recess of our being, opening us up and judging *the thoughts and intents of the heart* (Hebrew 4:12)<sup>1</sup>. (See our article, "How should we determine spiritual truth?")

## III The Mormon Church has softened the statements of Mormon doctrines<sup>2</sup>

The Mormon Church claims to be the only true church on the surface of the earth and it also claims to have the whole truth which enables people to achieve the highest glory of heaven while other churches have 'some truth'.

However, the public relation-conscious Mormon Church softened:

- the hard line of Joseph Smith who said that all Christian denominations were wrong, all their creeds were abomination in God's sight.<sup>3</sup>
- the teaching on attaining godhood.<sup>4</sup>

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.

## IV Mormon Terminology

The Mormon Church redefined biblical words (like the atonement, the gospel, eternal life, forgiveness, salvation etc). Insist on clear definition of what Mormons mean when using biblical words. A Mormon will say "Jesus is our Saviour," or "We are saved by grace." What do they mean? "Salvation by grace alone" in Mormonism means general salvation. Salvation in Mormonism is twofold: (1) unconditional or general salvation is simply resurrection from the dead, comes 'by grace alone', and is granted to all through Christ's atonement; (2) conditional or individual salvation is what all men must earn for themselves by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Mormon gospel.<sup>5</sup> Grace in Mormonism is the power God gives people to save themselves, which he grants only after they have done everything they can do<sup>6</sup> (Please see our article "Terminological Differences between Mormonism and the Bible" ).

## V Your Testimony

You should demonstrate your living faith and how your encounter with the risen Jesus has transformed your life. You should share your struggles for godliness and weakness with Mormons, with which Mormons are not familiar. The Mormon Church puts on its members' shoulders a tremendous burden, that is, to become perfect in every way, and forgiveness for Mormons is a long, drawn-out process. Sunday after Sunday they hear fellow Mormons say how much they have been blessed with living by the principles of Mormonism. Sincere Mormons may be hurting and guilt-ridden and seem to feel that they are the only ones with failures, as no one seems to share their weakness and failures.

**Make your Mormon friend know what you have and that he/she he does not have: forgiveness of sins (1 John 1:5-10) and eternal life are present realities (John 6:47, 1 John 5:12).** If appropriate, invite Mormons to a Christian worship service where no one will judge him/her with negative comments about the Mormon Church. **Mormons should experience how our church services are Jesus-Christ centred and how the Bible is faithfully taught.**

## VI Focus : who Jesus is, why he came and how we get right with God

Very briefly, Mormon beliefs are:

- The Heavenly Father in Mormonism is an exalted man and has a physical body.
- Jesus in Mormonism is the first spirit child of the Heavenly Father.
- The Work of Christ on the cross was insufficient. Ultimate salvation (exaltation\*) comes by obeying various Mormon laws and ordinances. (\*Exaltation means living eternally as a god in the highest level of the celestial kingdom.)

The following Bible verses are recommended:

- **Read the Bible with Mormons from a context like Luke 18:9-14.** Many Mormons may be self-righteous people like this Pharisee and may be proud people before God. Mormons are also like the rich young ruler who came to Jesus in Luke 18:18-23. They may think that they have done enough, but they have a vague feeling that they have to do more.
- **Read the Bible with Mormons from a context like 1 John 1:5-10 (v7 and v 9 in particular).** Sincere Mormons struggle with forgiveness, as Mormonism teaches that one must earn God's forgiveness.<sup>7</sup> But, 1 John 1:9 says, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"(KJV) Passages like Hebrews 10:17, 18, Psalm 32:1,2, Ephesians 1:7, Micah 7:19, Psalm and 103:11,12 dispute this Mormon claim.
- When reading **Ephesians 2:8-9, please include v10**, as Mormons often think that evangelical Christians do not care about good works (See Titus 3:8).

## VII Witnessing should be guarded by prayers

**Pray that we will proclaim the gospel to Mormons with full boldness and without hindrance. Pray for Mormons.**

**Do not use prayer as an evangelistic tool to non-Christians.** In the past I prayed with Mormon missionaries, but I did not say "Amen" when Mormons prayed. But I stopped praying with Mormons, as I realized that our prayers should be from the heart. **I explained to Mormons why I could not pray with them – a different understanding of God the Father, Jesus and how to get right with God - thus there can be no fellowship between Mormons and Bible believing Christians, stressing that there are vast differences between the Bible and Mormonism.**

**Conclusion:** Many Mormons do not understand why evangelical Christians call Mormons non-Christians. Mormons seem to be struggling with forgiveness of sins and they do not know the message of forgiveness of sins, and they probably do not personally know Jesus who died for our sins and was raised on the third day, as for them (a) a subjective feeling is the most important thing to determine the spiritual truth, (b) they read the Bible in light of Mormon teachings and (c) they were taught that the Bible is the least reliable of the scriptures. Let us read the Bible passages together from the context and expect God's sword, God's Word, to cut their hearts.

1 David Peterson, *Hebrews in "New Bible Commentary"* IVP, Leicester, 1994, p.156

2 The second official Mormon website ([www.mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org)) is specifically for the non-Mormon community, and softens the statements of Mormon doctrines.

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

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

5 Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, Salt Lake City, Bookcraft,1975, pp.133-134 –Joseph Fielding Smith was the tenth president of the Mormon Church.

6 'Grace' in the (LDS) "*Bible Dictionary*", 1927,p.697, See 2 Nephi25:23, in the *Book of Mormon*

7 In Mormonism, forgiveness is granted by proper repentance and not ever repeating those sins permanently, then keeping the commandments of God perfectly (*Doctrine & Covenant 1:32,82:7 Gospel Principles*,2009, pp.111-112).