

A Christian Witnesses to His Mormon Friend

Updated with a response from another Mormon – Week of October 17, 2011

Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: I received this email from a friend who has been a guest teacher during our Sunday evening services. He has been led to equip himself in witnessing to Mormons. This letter to his Mormon friend, Stephen, is well done and is a great resource for all those who want to understand what Mormons believe and how their beliefs differ from the Gospel of the Biblical Jesus Christ. On the week of Oct 17, 2011, one of Stephen's Mormon friends (Ron) took issue with Rich Gibson's Biblical rebuttal to Mormon theology. Ron's letter to Rich, and Rich's response, have been added to the end of this original handout.

Hi everyone!

I have been conversing with a Mormon apologist about his beliefs and what the LDS Church teaches. I was looking for Stephen to tell me about everything a person must do to be Saved within the LDS Church.

In their LDS language, what they are trying to do to be “saved” is get to the highest level of Heaven (they call it the Celestial Kingdom) and be with Heavenly Father (God). After many emails back and forth, this is what it came down to. I hope it is informative and it might help you all when a Mormon Missionary knocks on your door someday... If you have questions about any of this, email it back (richgibson@hotmail.com). I hope you find it interesting and helpful.

Also, I want to acknowledge how incredibly nice Stephen was and how much time he spent with answering all my questions honestly and to the best of his ability. I sent out this email to him just before emailing this to you, so I hope to hear back from him...

In His Grace and Mercy, Rich

Stephen!

Sorry for the delay in returning this email, but life popped up and I was busy for a bit!

From all of our emails, this is what I have gathered... If I want to get to the highest level of the Celestial Kingdom and be with Heavenly Father for eternity, this is what your LDS Church requires, more or less-

- Have faith in Jesus Christ
- Be a member of the LDS Church
- Partake of the sacrament weekly or as often as possible
- Acknowledge that there was a great apostasy, and-
- Acknowledge that the true Church of Jesus Christ was lost off the earth and it was restored by Joseph Smith
- Acknowledge that Joseph Smith was a true Prophet of God
- Be baptized into the LDS church by priesthood holder's of the church
- Confirmed to the Priesthood by confirmed Priesthood Holders by the laying on of hands
- Be and remain Temple worthy
- To be Temple worthy, you must have a Temple recommend-
- To have a Temple recommend, you must-
- Be a member of the church for at least a year

Not disclose what goes on in the Temple- “it is sacred, not secret”
Go before the Bishop and answer all his questions honestly
Go before the Stake President and answer all of his questions honestly
The questions are-

1. Do you have faith in and a testimony of God the Eternal Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost?
2. Do you have a testimony of the Atonement of Christ and of His role as Savior and Redeemer?
3. Do you have a testimony of the restoration of the gospel in these the latter days?
4. Do you sustain the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator and as the only person on the earth who possesses and is authorized to exercise all priesthood keys? Do you sustain members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators? Do you sustain the other General Authorities and local authorities of the Church?
5. Do you live the law of chastity?
6. Is there anything in your conduct relating to members of your family that is not in harmony with the teachings of the Church?
7. Do you support, affiliate with, or agree with any group or individual whose teachings or practices are contrary to or oppose those accepted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?
8. Do you strive to keep the covenants you have made, to attend your sacrament and other meetings, and to keep your life in harmony with the laws and commandments of the gospel?
9. Are you honest in your dealings with your fellowmen?
10. Are you a full-tithe payer? Do you keep the Word of Wisdom?
11. Do you have financial or other obligations to a former spouse or children? If yes, are you current in meeting those obligations?
12. If you have previously received your temple endowment: Do you keep the covenants that you made in the temple? Do you wear the garment both night and day as instructed in the endowment and in accordance with the covenant you made in the temple?
13. Have there been any sins or misdeeds in your life that should have been resolved with priesthood authorities but have not been?
14. Do you consider yourself worthy to enter the Lord's house and participate in temple ordinances? Go to the Temple and
be married and sealed in the Temple- To do this, your wife must conform to all things listed here so she is worthy to enter the Temple also

Be sealed to your family- “the blessings of the temple sealing are only realized by those who stay true to their covenants. And that can be decided only by the Savior”. So that means that being sealed to your family does not guarantee you will be “together forever” if a family member falls away and becomes apostate.

Receive your endowment- The endowments mean you will need to take your oaths and covenants.

Do Baptisms for the dead, for your ancestors and others...To do Baptisms for the dead you must do genealogy and trace your ancestors and others.

Be a full tithe payer and be current.

Plural marriage has been done away with, but D&C (Doctrines and Covenants) 132 is still in your teachings, so it will be practiced in the Celestial realm. So eventually you will be a polygamist and have many wives...

Have no affiliation with polygamists here on earth

You must not associate with apostates

You must fulfill all your callings until you are released. The Bishop of the ward assigns callings locally. At the stake level the stake president assigns callings. The president of the Church assigns callings for Apostles, General authorities of the Church, mission presidents

You must repent of all sin, and be obedient to the laws and ordinances of Gospel.

Strive to become like God and Jesus so you can receive a fullness of glory, power, exaltation, and godhood. Not to become greater than God and Jesus, but exactly like them...

Attend church regularly and partake of the sacrament

Sustain and support the President of the LDS church and the general authorities

Practice strict celibacy outside the boundaries of marriage

Adhere to the Word of Wisdom-

Wine or strong drink, and tobacco is forbidden

Use wholesome herbs and every fruit in the season. All [grain](#) is ordained for the use of man and of beasts

Flesh of "beasts and of the fowls of the air may be used sparingly. Flesh of beasts and of the fowls of the air is to be eaten only in times of famine or excess of hunger.

Teach the Gospel to others by word and example

Study the Scriptures

Listen to and obey the inspired words of the prophets of the Lord

Follow and keep all the commandments

Believe that Jesus atoned for all of our sins in the garden of Gethsemane so that all men will have a resurrection

After the resurrection, depending on what you did in this lifetime, you will go to one of the three levels of heaven

Believe that God and Jesus were men just like us and they had to work out there own salvation and earn there Godhood- Lorenzo Snow said- "As man now is, God once was; as God is now man may be."

Believe that Jesus, Satan, you and I, are all spirit brothers

Go before the Bishop at the end of every year and do a tithing settlement to make sure you are current. If you are not current, you will most likely lose your temple recommend...

Serve a mission for the church to which ever country or location you are called to

Believe that you are saved not only by grace alone, but saved by grace “after all you can do”

That God, Jesus and the Holy Ghost are three separate Gods, and not a “Trinity”

That God the Father has a body of flesh and bones.

That the Mormon Church is the Church of the Lamb and all other churches are of the Devil.

Do your fasts tithes once a month

Do your home visiting teaching

OK, that seems to cover it as far as I can tell... This is a huge list and I'm not sure how anyone can accomplish it in a lifetime or the afterlife.

Stephen, you have been one of the very few LDS members that has ever stuck with me on trying to figure out what your Church believes, and what an LDS member must do if they ever hope to make it to the highest level of the Celestial Kingdom and be with Heavenly Father. I really want to thank you for all the time you were willing to take with me on this... your patience is much appreciated.

I have been a Born Again Christian for about 23 years and I have always been interested in what the LDS Church really believes in and although I have researched it as best I can; you have really enlightened me, so thanks again. I would also say our beliefs differ greatly, but I can tell you do this out of love and so I would like to share my beliefs with you if you don't mind...

We all know that we are sinners and deserve hell and damnation because we break the 10 commandments everyday. We don't want to, we try not to, but we still do... the question is, what can we do about it? The Bible states that there is nothing we can do about it. We are guilty, period. Our works (everything we try to do to deserve Heaven) are like “filthy rags” before a righteous and Holy God (Isaiah 64:6). We hope that when we get to Heaven that our good deeds will outweigh our bad deeds. The Bible says that they won't...

So, what do we do? We put our trust in the Christ of the Bible. Yes He did sweat as great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane. He did suffer there, so let's take a look at it. Jesus said. “Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from me, nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done.” (Luke 22:42) At that moment Jesus took all the sins of the world, yours, mine and everyone who ever lived, is living, or will live, upon Himself.

Now, can God be where sin is? No, so He, God, had to turn His back on Jesus which means that Jesus was separated from God for our trespasses. In the Garden He suffered terribly, absolutely, but that is not where He “atoned” for our sins. If He atoned for our sins, in the garden, why then did He then have to go to the Cross? He had to go to the Cross to actually pay (or atone) for our sins, once for all. It was not just so we could gain a resurrection, and then try to earn a higher degree of glory. When Jesus atoned for our sins on the cross, it was so that we could be with Him forever in Heaven, serve Him in glory and never be separated from Him, because the cross is where He paid the price in full to redeem us...

1 Corinthians 1:18 “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those that are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

When He said “It is finished,” that is when the veil in the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The separation between God and man was then bridged once for all through Christ Jesus. Jesus died on the cross, shed His precious blood and died for us...on the third day He rose and overcame death so we might live! He now sits at the right hand of God making intercession for us day and night.

So what do we have to do to get into heaven? The Bible says we must repent, turn from our sins, call on the name of the Lord, believe in what Jesus did on the Cross for us, and we will be saved. We cannot do anything to earn Heaven. Ephesians 2:8-10 makes it clear that we are saved by Grace and Grace alone. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and not of yourselves; it is a gift from God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus FOR good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Please consider the following passages-

Romans 3:23- for all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God

Romans 6:23- For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 3:3- Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

John 14:6- Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Romans 10:9-10- that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.

2 Corinthians 5:15- and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

Revelation 3:20- “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me”

John 3:16-18- “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe in Him is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”

God wants a “personal” relationship with you. He wants you to know that you (and I...) do not deserve eternal life, but it a free gift that you just need to claim through His Son on the Cross. He wants you to be able to know that you can go to Heaven and not just hope for it... In the Bible Jesus said- Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

It seems to me, with all that is required in the LDS Church, the burden is very heavy and not light at all. And no, I'm not looking for "easy grace". Once a person has accepted Jesus as their Savior, because they want to be like the Savior, the outcropping will be good works like James states... but a person is saved by grace alone, apart from works, so no man may boast. It is a free gift. If you receive a gift, from someone, what do you have to do? The answer is just accept it. If you try to pay someone for a gift, by doing something for them to earn it, then it is not a gift...

I know that in Isaiah 43:10 that God said- "You are my witness, says the Lord, And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe in Me, and understand that I am He. Before me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after me."

Isaiah 44:6 states- Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.

Isaiah 44:8 states- "...You are my witness. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one."

Isaiah 45:5 states- "I am the Lord, and there is no other; There is no other God besides Me.

These passages tell me that I can never become a God myself, nor can anyone else. God says He doesn't even know of other Gods. It says in the Bible that He is the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow... if that is true, then how did God become a God? The answer is that He has always been God from the beginning and did not "gain" Godhood" through perfecting Himself.

Stephen, I respect your right to believe in whatever belief's you have. You are an awesome person who I truly like and respect. I just want to make sure you hear what the Bible says about getting to Heaven so you have information to make the right choice. I can't, and won't, try to push you into Heaven, that's not my responsibility, The Holy Ghost will tell you what you need to know, but please don't trust a feeling or a "burning in the bosom". The Bible is clear and says in Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?"

I have trusted my feelings many times and been fooled...be like the Bereans who were counted more righteous because they searched the scriptures daily (Acts 17:11)... The answers are in the Bible, not the heart...

I'm not worried that you believe my words or not, but search the Bible to see what it says. Eternity is too long to make the wrong decision. If the LDS faith is right, I will still get a degree of glory. If the Bible is true, then you are in danger of spending eternity in Hell... I know this sounds harsh, but better harsh now than a wrong decision that has you ending up right where you would not want (you, your family or ANYONE) to be forever!

Jesus Loves you and wants you to be with Him for eternity...

Thank you Stephen for considering the words written here and I would love to hear back from you if you would like...Please pray for me and I am praying for you and yours

In Christ's Mighty Love, Rich

May the Lord Jesus bless you today!

OK everyone; here is the latest email that I received back from Ron. Ron is another Mormon I have emailed back and forth with, and I forwarded my response to Stephens email (the one I originally sent you), to him and he

responded back with a critique... Here is what he wrote and my response... I hope this will give you more insight into the beliefs of Mormonism... To some of you this might be overwhelming, or over the top, if so, I totally understand. But for those of you that are interested in sharing your faith with the LDS people, I pray this helps...

In Him, Rich

HI Rich,

I saw your interactions with Stephen and felt that he was letting himself get far too nit-picky about your question. I don't like to disagree with a fellow FAIR member who is answering a questioner, and you seemed to be getting what you wanted from him, so I kind of bowed out of your discussion. But since you ask my opinion, I will give it to you.

I think the list of requirements you have put together is pointless. They may all be summed in the commandment to love God and to love your neighbor. If you love God, you will strive to keep all his commandments. Who would suggest that you do otherwise? That is the Savior's own requirement. In Matt 19:17, when the rich young ruler asked Jesus what he must do to have eternal life, Jesus kept it simple: "if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Period. Then Jesus started giving him a list of commandments. When he answered that he had obeyed these all his life, Jesus told him to sell all that he had and give to the poor and come follow him. He could not do that and went away sorrowing. BUT no one has ever succeeded in perfectly following all the commandments and fulfilling all the requirements that God has asked of us. That is where the atonement comes in. That is what I told you before.

If you want to understand Mormon soteriology, I refer you back to the three scriptures in my original post. I especially call your attention to 2 Peter 1. If you are not giving diligence, not striving to improve yourself each day, not working out your own salvation, then you will never have your calling and election sure nor will entrance be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not enter the Kingdom of God," said Paul, "be not deceived."

The commandments of God are not given to make our lives difficult; they are given to make them happy. This is why Jesus' burden is light and this is why so many Mormons live their religion. It is not out of fear, it is out of joy. If you would read your Bible honestly, not looking for proof texts to bolster the opinions you already have, but to find all that God wants you to do for your own eternal joy, you will find that there is more. The Church of Jesus Christ asks you to bring what you have, and we will give you more -- more understanding, more fulfillment, peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

Sincerely your brother,

- Ron

Ron

I want to thank you for your time in answering my questions and responding to my email when you could have just as easily counted me as one of the lost sheep and just let it go... I want to respond back and here is the reply... I am really praying that you don't feel like I'm being unreasonable in my response or too aggressive in my answers... My beliefs bring out the most passion in me and I hope I don't offend you in any way...

You say here that the list is pointless, but I have to disagree with you, and tell you that it's the entire point! Stephen was the first LDS member to acknowledge that there are definitive things that you must do to get to the highest level of the Celestial Kingdom and be with Heavenly Father in your faith beliefs. Romans 10:9 say that all you must do to be saved is "believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and you will be saved." 1st Corinthians says that "we are saved by grace alone, aside from any good works we might do..." Mormonism tells me that there are many, many things I MUST DO (see list) to end up where I want to in the eternities... Both you and I agree that Jesus says that we must keep His commandments to enter into eternal life. As you quoted the Bible- "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not enter the Kingdom of God," said Paul, "be not deceived." So, looking at the commandments, it proves one thing to me...that I can't keep the commandments! I desire to, I try to, I hate it when I don't, but I still do... So, If Jesus says that I must keep the commandments to

enter into Heaven, and I know that I can't keep them, then, am I totally screwed at this point? NO! That is why Jesus died on the Cross! He paid the price for all my sins, past, present and future, on the Cross! So, If He paid the price on the Cross for all my future sins, am I free to sin as much as I want? NO!!! Paul said in Acts, CERTAINLY NOT! Because I have been saved through Grace, I've believed in my heart and confessed with my mouth that Jesus is my Lord and Master, I don't desire to sin anymore. Do I still sin? Yes, unfortunately I still do, but I don't run to the sin, and I loathe it after I have done it, but I confess it, repent, and He is faithful to forgive me...

By the way I do "strive to keep all his commandments" as you mentioned, and I can tell by your passion that you strive also... I applaud you for doing this! You said- "The commandments of God are not given to make our lives difficult; they are given to make them **happy...**" I disagree. The commandments don't make me happy, they show me what a sinner I am because I can't live them, or keep them, no matter how hard I try! I've never killed anyone, but Christ said if I hate anyone, I've already killed them in my heart...we have all done this. I don't have sex with other men's wives, but Jesus said that if I just even look at a woman with lust in my heart, I've already committed adultery. This one hit home with you? It does with me unfortunately... and I could go through every commandment with you, and myself, and I have to tell you, as much as I desire to keep his word, I fall short... Thank you Jesus for the Cross!

You say that "The Church of Jesus Christ asks you to bring what you have, and we will give you more -- more understanding, more fulfillment, peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come." So I have just one more question...how is your peace for eternal life going? If you died right this minute, do you have **TOTAL ASSURANCE** that you would end up going exactly where you want to go for eternity? Or, is your answer that, this is your hope? Jesus tells me in the Bible that I have assurance that I will go to Heaven throughout the entire book. But the main point of the Bible is this- I will go to Heaven and serve God there for eternity because of what Jesus did for me on the cross, through HIS FINISHED WORK and because of my faith in Him, and not through any works I can do to try to please Him, or earn my way there through any of my own actions here on earth...

By the way, do I use proof texts? I suppose I do, but don't you also? I have read the entire Bible and study it daily... I have read the entire Book of Mormon and most of the D&C also. I guess the question I have to ask you is this... why do you quote verses out of a book (the Bible) that I have heard your members don't trust as completely accurate, to try to prove accuracy in your statements? Just an afterthought...

Well Ron, the one thing I do know, is that I can't save you, just like you can't save me. I pray God will give both you and I more understanding on being saved and we will accept His truth and go to Heaven through His grace... I will pray for you and I ask you to pray for me... You are not an advisory, you are a seeker of God's will just like me...

I wish you all the best in your seeking and searching for God's truth...

In His Grace and Mercy, Rich

PS- If you are done responding to me, I understand, but as always, I am so very curious about how you might respond... either way thank you so much for your time and energy!