

THE CORNERSTONE COMMUNICATOR

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Help!

by Pastor Martin

I have two questions for you. One, do you ever get overwhelmed? And two, do you take God's Word literally? (You know what I mean: is it real? can you believe it?) Yes? Well, so do I. And most often it turns out that the former (question) has something to do with the latter. When I feel overwhelmed it's usually because I am not taking God's Word seriously enough. I am faltering at some point of trust. So let me be honest with you. I'm tired. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed by all of the pain and all of the sorrow around us. I want to help, I really do. But sometimes I have nothing left to give. (You've probably been there so you know what I mean.) I don't know how you react when you feel overwhelmed, but I begin to resent people bringing their pain and trouble to me. I say to myself, "What do you want me to do about this? Don't I have enough things to worry about? Don't I have enough pain and sorrow to carry for one day??" Then later, in a more sane moment, I begin to see how wrong this attitude is. But I still argue against imaginary, self-imposed burdens. I say to no one in particular, "I am not God. I can't fix your problem. I can't ease your pain. I can't make somebody who doesn't love you love you. I can't make a selfish person generous. I can't make your husband (wife/friend/boss/dog/cat) think right and do right. I can't even make me think right and do right!"

Do you know what the problem is? There is not enough of me to go around. But then again, there isn't supposed to be. I'm not supposed to be everyone's helper. I'm not supposed to be everyone's friend. The whole Church is a ministering agent. Together we are the hands, the feet, the arms, the mouth, the eyes, the ears of God. I don't have enough compassion to go around. But I have you. (Or, more correctly, we have each other!) 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, SO THAT WE CAN COMFORT THOSE IN ANY TROUBLE WITH THE COMFORT WE OURSELVES HAVE RECEIVED FROM GOD." (O.k., the emphasis is mine.)

The question is, do you believe this? Do you take this text literally (seriously)? Do you see yourself as someone who has something to give in the way of compassion and comfort to others? "But," you say, "I don't know how. I don't know how to comfort others, to be there for them in times of trouble. I don't know how to show compassion to those in pain." Come on, let's just say it out loud, "I don't know how to be a friend to a friend in need."

Well, you're in luck! (And so am I.) Because we are about to launch a ministry that will teach you how to be a Christian Caregiver, how to be there for someone in need, how to show compassion and how to offer mercy and grace to those who are hurting. The ministry is called Stephen Ministry. It is a vital, very much needed ministry in this Church at this time. But we need you. We need you to be willing to give of your time, of your energy, of yourself.

Are you willing? That's all we ask, that you be willing to come to the preliminary information meetings. See whether or not this is something you would like to give yourself to. It's a very much needed ministry. I need it; so do the people all around you; and so do you.

Mormon Matters (Part I)

by Robert Sivulka

Introduction

Before I leave for London in September to pursue doctoral studies, I have felt impressed to write a series of articles on the various issues involved in the relation of Mormonism and Christianity. Although the issues of spiritual formation in general that I've been going through

for the last six months are vital for growing in Christ, so are the specific issues of doctrinal formation which this series falls under. Remember that the apostle Paul never stopped warning the church everyday for three years to the point of tears that false prophets would come after he left (Acts 20:29 - 31). The goal here is to be mature enough in your thinking so you won't be tossed around by every wind of teaching (Ephesians 4:13 - 14).

The following is a tract I put together a couple months ago and am planning on distributing outside the Salt Lake temple as soon as it is edited sufficiently. This is primarily for all those individuals who really don't know anything about Mormonism and just assume it's another Christian denomination. But it will also, no doubt, be a great conversation starter for curious Mormons.

I encourage each of you to go and take the various tours at the temple. Become familiar with what is going on there, so that you may be better equipped at steering non-Mormons away from Mormonism and adequately explain to Mormons where our differences really lie. Stop this fundamentalist, avoidance mentality and really get to know your neighbors whom you must love for their sake, as well as Christ's. The apostle Paul hung out on the pagan's own turf and was quite conversant with their own ideas in order that he might be more effective in "persuading" them (Acts 17 & 18). Remember how he urged you to imitate him (1 Corinthians 4:16), and as you share your faith, *then* "you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ" (Philemon 6).

SIX THINGS THEY WONT TELL YOU IN TEMPLE SQUARE

Introduction

The purpose of this is to let you know six things the tour guides of the Salt Lake City Temple Square will not tell you. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or the Mormon Church, is a master when it comes to public relations. They realize that there are particular teachings that are better left undisclosed with those just being introduced to their church. We, on the other hand, do not accept this approach, and think that many would think twice before becoming interested in this faith if they were only given some basic and important facts up front. To use a simple phrase... **BUYER BEWARE!!**

The Six Things

1. Mormon scripture teaches that *all* the various Christian denominations, particularly the

Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists, are all considered by Jesus Christ to be "wrong". When the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, Jr. was questioning, as a 14 year old boy, which of these churches to join, he claimed,

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.'

(Joseph Smith—History 1:19, *Pearl of Great Price*, emphasis added)

2. Mormon scripture, prophets and apostles teach that there is more than one god who created this world, that there are many gods who rule over other worlds, and that worthy Mormons may one day become gods themselves. Even though Mormons claim there is only one God for them, they still believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are separate gods who are only one in their purpose rather than in a being which they share eternally.

Three separate personages—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—comprise the Godhead. As each of these persons is a God, it is evident, from this standpoint alone, that a *plurality of Gods* exists. To us, speaking in the proper finite sense, these three are the only Gods we worship. But in addition there is an infinite number of holy personages, drawn from worlds without number, who have passed on to exaltation and are thus gods. (The late apostle Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 576-577)

Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priest to God, the same as all Gods have done

before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power. (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 346-347)

As man is God once was, as God is man may be. (The late prophet Lorenzo Snow, *The Life of Lorenzo Snow* by Thomas C. Romney, p. 46)

And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth. (Abraham 4:1, *The Pearl of Great Price*)

3. Mormon scripture, prophets and apostles teach that God the Father is an exalted man with flesh and bones.

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! I 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; ...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. (Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 345)

The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's... . (*Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22)

4. Mormon prophets and apostles teach that God the Father has at least one wife by which we were

all literally born from as spirit children prior to coming to this earth. Some of these prophets and apostles have even taught that Jesus had wives and children.

This glorious truth of celestial parentage, including specifically both a Father and a Mother, is heralded forth by song in one of the greatest of Latter-day Saint hymns. *O My Father* by Eliza R. Snow, written in 1843 during the lifetime of the Prophet, includes this teaching:

In the heavens are parents single? No; the thought makes reason stare! Truth is reason, truth eternal, Tells me I've a Mother there.

When I leave this frail existence, When I lay this mortal by, Father, Mother, may I meet you In your royal courts on high? (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 516-517)

We have now clearly shown that God the Father had a plurality of wives, one or more being in eternity, by whom He begat our spirits as well as the spirit of Jesus His First Born, and another being upon the earth by whom He begat the tabernacle of Jesus, as His Only Begotten in this world. We have also proved most clearly that the Son followed the example of his Father, and became the great Bridegroom to whom kings' daughters and many honorable Wives were to be married.
κ (Apostle Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, p. 172)

When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is MICHAEL, the Archangel, the ANCIENT OF DAYS! about whom holy men have written and spoken—He is our FATHER and our God, and the only God with whom WE have to do. (The

prophet Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 1, p. 50)

NOTE: Most Mormons are unaware that Brigham Young taught that in fact Adam was the God of this world. Only members of fundamentalist Mormon groups (not affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) hold to this doctrine today. Regardless of this identification of God as being Adam, no one denies that the Mormon prophet Young believed that God the Father has more than one wife.

5. Even though the presentation at the Christus statue begins by saying, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are", there are many things that Mormons believe Jesus did *not* create. For example, He did not create our spirits, nor Lucifer, nor even the planet that He was born on as a spirit. The reason for this is because Mormons believe that Jesus and Lucifer are literally brothers, and we as humans are all the younger brothers and sisters of them. We were all born of heavenly parents, who did the creating work of their world (not all worlds whatsoever) before we arrived spiritually in heaven.

The appointment of Jesus to be the Savior of the world was contested by one of the other sons of God. He was called Lucifer, son of the morning. Haughty, ambitious, and covetous of power and glory, this spirit-brother of Jesus desperately tried to become the Savior of mankind. (Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel Through the Ages*, p. 15)

6. Even though the video monitor presentation, "Are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Christians?", ends by stating that they worship Jesus Christ, they will not pray directly to Him. Rather, they can only pray directly to the Father *in the name* of Jesus. Former Apostle Bruce McConkie said concerning the Father,

He is the one to whom we have direct access by prayer, and if there were some need— which there is not— to single out one member of the Godhead, for a special relationship, the Father, not the Son, would be the one

to choose. Our relationship with the Son is one of brother or sister in the pre-mortal life.

Referring to "others who have an excessive zeal", McConkie went on to say that

they devote themselves to gaining a special, personal relationship with Christ that is both improper and perilous. ...Another peril is that those so involved often begin to pray directly to Christ because of some special friendship they feel has been developed. ...This is plain sectarian nonsense. Our prayers are addressed to the Father, and to Him only". (BYU DEVOTIONAL, March 2, 1982, pp. 17, 19 & 20)

A Christian Response

Some Mormons may quibble that some of these sources are nonscriptural, and are thus simply the opinions of men with no binding authority. But the Bible says that if so-called prophets and apostles teach other gods than what God has already clearly revealed about Himself, we are to consider them to be false (cf. Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15, & Galatians 1:6-9). What difference does it make if the preceding sources are deemed by the Mormon church to be scriptural or not? If this is truly what they taught, then it seems quite obvious that these individuals are not teaching the God of the Bible, and thus should be considered as **nonChristian** (i.e., they are not following the true Christ).

Other Mormons may quibble that the Bible is full of errors and has been through many a translation such that many "plain and precious truths" have been left out of the translation we have today. Thus, Mormons unquestionably rest their faith in what their church tells them to believe, so long as they receive affirmation from what is called a "burning in their bosoms". Christians, on the other hand, find no reason to think that many truths have been taken from Scripture. Why is it that all the various manuscripts of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Scriptures are remarkably consistent with each other? Where is all the evidence that these manuscripts were cut up in such a way so as to delete the "plain and precious truths" found today in the restored Mormon

Scriptures? Christians find no reason to doubt the words of the Lord Jesus when He said that "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35), and "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away" (Mat. 24:35). It is the word of God, not our "burning in our bosoms", that is a light to our path (Psalms 119:105).

Other Mormons may quibble that "it's all a matter of interpretation" ... as if no reasons could be offered in support of a position. Of course Christians have "their interpretation", but why think that there's no way to support one over the other? Children have certain interpretations of certain matters that grown-ups know is inferior to their own. This shows that even though we all have interpretations, some are better than others and those that are better usually have better reasons for them.

Briefly, the Christian interpretation of the Bible teaches that there was *only one* God who did the creation work of any world that was ever created (not a team of Gods that formed a Godhead) (Isaiah 43:10, 44:24, 45:12, & 46:9). The Bible also teaches that God is not *limited* to a body that He needs to become a God. He is too great for a body (1 Kings 8:27, Hosea 11:9, & John 4:21-24). The Bible also teaches that Jesus created everything that was ever created from the beginning of heaven and earth (John 1:1-3, 14, & Colossians 1:15-18). Hence, wherever we were made, we were made by God the Son. This is why Christians have no problem praying to Jesus (cf. Stephen's prayer in Acts 7:59). He is fully God, and ought to be treated as such (Col. 2:9).

As Christians, we ask you to please weigh very carefully your concept of God. Your eternal salvation depends on whether you really know God or are simply following man-made idols. As Jesus said, "[I]f ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24).

News You Can Use

January marked the 25th anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade court decision on abortion. Perhaps you were moved (once again, or for the first time) to get involved in the Pro-Life movement, but don't know what you can do with a limited amount of time and/or money. This month's News You Can Use column is taken from the book 52 Simple Things You Can Do To Be Pro-Life by Anne Pierson and Carol Risser. The book is available in our own church library.

#1: PRAY FOR A PRO-LIFE MINISTRY

The power of prayer works! Every ministry that exists needs God's grace and your prayers.

There are very few areas in the United States that don't have some active pro-life group ministering through crisis-pregnancy counseling, or a maternity home, or Christian adoption counseling. By calling or writing them, you can ask to be included on their mailing list in order to be kept abreast of their activities and needs. Some ministries have prayer letters or calendars they send out upon request, so be sure they include you on this as well.

When you pray:

- Pray for the clients, that their hearts would be tender and open to receive counsel and the love and forgiveness of God.
- Pray for the director and all those in decision-making positions, such as the ministry's board of directors.
- Pray for the wisdom of God's Holy Spirit; for unity among the staff members; for the marriages and families of all staff and volunteers.
- Pray for their funding efforts and that people would be touched to give generously and regularly.
- Keep individual prayer requests on a calendar in your kitchen and involve your family in praying for these daily needs as well.

Prayer has opened doors of ministry to hurting people, rejuvenated funding, and, in one case we know, been a mighty spiritual weapon that helped shut down a local abortion clinic for lack of business!

#17: VOLUNTEER AT YOUR PREGNANCY COUNSELING CENTER

The newsletter of your local crisis-pregnancy center may contain a list of volunteers and different skills needed. The centers are always looking for willing and dependable hands who can help answer the hotline phone, counsel young women, serve as a receptionist, clean the office, sort maternity and baby clothing, and perform a variety of other general tasks. Don't think for a minute that you must be a skilled counselor in order to be of service to your local center!

Brenda has taken on the task of organizing the baby and maternity clothes closet for her center. Once a week, she comes in, cleans up any