

The Mormon Challenge

A presentation of the other side of Mormonism using LDS-approved sources

The Short Version

See the longer versions at www.themormonchallenge.com for a deeper explanation of each topic, including the apologetics.

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Introduction

In recent years, I've been researching questions I've had regarding Mormonism. I began this research when I decided that I could not be an honest seeker of truth when I was deliberately avoiding such research. This document provides my findings, as well as the sources, that you may check the context of each source. This is a very sensitive topic for many people. As you read some of this material for the first time, you may feel a painful sinking feeling. I've experienced it for myself. It reminds me of how I feel when I find out that something terrible has happened. I will recount some of my experiences to help you out in that regard.

Sources Used

The church has recently published a series of First Presidency-approved essays on lds.org. The list is provided at [this lds.org link](#).

"The purpose of these essays, which have been approved by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has been to gather accurate information from many different sources and publications and place it in the Gospel Topics section of LDS.org, where the material can more easily be accessed and studied by Church members and other interested parties."

[lds.org - Gospel Topics Essays](#) ([Deseret News](#) also confirms First Presidency approval)

Elder M. Russell Ballard has advised that teachers "know the content of these essays like you know the back of your hand." His talk regarding these essays is provided by [Deseret News](#).

Another source that will be referenced is an organization called FAIR Mormon ([FAIR](#)). Their goal is to provide faithful answers to difficult gospel topics. [This Deseret News article](#) discusses FAIR and explains that they "engage even the most challenging issues in a faithful manner."

Another, [josephsmithpapers.org](#), is run by the Church History Department, as indicated at the bottom of their main page. The site is introduced on [lds.org](#).

The trustworthiness of other sources will be discussed as needed. I can't say for sure that any of these websites haven't changed since I accessed them. If any given quote does not match the content on the provided link, insert the full link into the search field at <https://archive.is/>.

The Book of Mormon

Joseph Smith Sr. and the Tree of Life

In 1811, Joseph's father had the following dream (josephsmithpapers.org). Years later, the Book of Mormon begins with the same dream. Did Joseph Jr. borrow it?

Joseph Smith Sr.'s Dream	Book of Mormon (1830)
'I was travelling in an open desolate field...'	1 Nephi 8:9 – "I beheld a large and spacious field."
"I came to a narrow path. This path I entered, and, when I had traveled a little way in it, I beheld a beautiful stream of water ..."	1 Nephi 8:13,20 – "13 I beheld a river of water ..." 20 I also beheld a strait and narrow path ..."
"[I] beheld a beautiful stream of water.... I could see a rope running along the bank, ..."	1 Nephi 8:19 – "I beheld a rod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river, ..."
"and beyond me ... stood a tree, such as I had never seen before: ... and it bore a kind of fruit, ... as white, or whiter than snow: ...[I] began to eat of it, and I found it delicious beyond description; ... I said in my heart, I cannot eat this alone, I must bring my wife and children, that they may partake with me. ..."	1 Nephi 8:10-12 – "10 And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy." 11 And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen. 12 And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; ..."
I beheld a spacious building ... which building appeared to reach to the very heavens. It was full of ... people that were very finely dressed: ... they pointed the finger of scorn at us; and treated us with all manner of disrespect and contempt. But their contumely we utterly disregarded.... "	1 Nephi 8:26-27,33 – "26 ... a great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth. 27 And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit. 33 ...but we heeded them not."
I soon turned to my guide, and inquired of him, the meaning of the fruit. He told me it was the pure love of God	1 Nephi 11:21-22 – "21 ... Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? 22 And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, ..." (this is a part of Nephi's vision)

Jonathan Edwards Jr. vs Alma 42

The Book of Mormon was mentioned [as early as 1827](#), which means that Joseph had years to visit congregations to compile material before the dictation. Could Joseph have heard these teachings echoed in the congregations of his area?

[Jonathan Edwards, Jr.](#) vs. Alma 42:13-22, and other examples:

Edwards Jr. (1745-1801)	Book of Mormon (1830)
"this life is the only state of probation ..."	Alma 42:13 – “on conditions of repentance of men in this probationary state, ...”
"God must be just as well as merciful."	Alma 42:15 – “a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also.”
"[S]in is not imputed when there is no law."	Alma 42:17 – “How could he sin if there was no law?”
“It is generally agreed that murder deserves death. But suppose a law should be made, by which no murderer should be punished by death.... Would not such a law as this ... tend to encourage murder?”	Alma 42:19 – “Now, if there was no law given – if a man murdered he should die – would he be afraid he would die if he should murder?”
“if there were no punishment threatened to the wicked, it would naturally and directly encourage them to persist in vice.”	Alma 42:20 – “if there was no law given against sin men would not be afraid to sin.”
"the general good requires, that sin be punished according to its demerit,... otherwise God would not appear to be what he really is ..."	Alma 42:22 – “the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God.”
“If there be moral good in any of these tempers or actions, there must be moral evil in the directly opposite; and if there be no moral evil in the latter, there is no moral good in the former; ...”	2 Nephi 2:11 – “For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad.”
“the devil, who, because he is miserable himself, is unwilling that others should be happy.” (Edwards Sr.)	2 Nephi 2:27 – “the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.”
“They are enemies to God in their affections. There is in every natural man a seed of malice against God.” (Edwards Sr.)	Mosiah 3:19 – “For the natural man is an enemy to God, ...”

Conviction and Moroni's Promise

[Moroni 10:3-5](#) promises us that we can know truth through the power of the Holy Ghost ([peace](#), [promptings/impressions](#), [joy](#), [a whispering/still small voice](#), or [a burning in the bosom](#)). What if it turns out these feelings are something else? With these same feelings, many people in other faiths were led specifically to their churches, and testify for things which contradict Mormonism. Would Satan be the author of the peace and joy these people feel? Would it be fair of God to allow for such deception in his plan when eternity is at stake?

Within Catholicism:

"I tried to clear my mind of all preconceptions and I honestly prayed (on many occasions over those months) something like this: 'God, if any Christian sect holds truest to your truth, or if somehow they all do, or certain ones do, please show me so I know how to best worship you. I want your Truth—no matter the cost.' And I tried to make sure that I meant it. **Each time that I can remember praying that, I got an answer which was along the lines of a "statistical miracle,"** though not quite as grand as the first, and it always pointed towards Catholicism. I would always feel at peace after this was revealed to me, ..." [forums.catholic.com - post #6](#)

"Before I really learned any of the doctrines of the church, I knew that I had an attraction to something about the Eucharist. I knew that it was [transubstantiated](#), but I never 'knew' until that moment during the consecration at the wedding." [forums.catholic.com - post #30](#)

"As I read these books in a Roman bookstore, and I felt **a burning in my heart** that I should come and investigate." [medjugorje.we](#)

"The Holy Spirit turned my head slowly towards Rome with **whispers** first, and then shouts." [whyimcatholic.com - Lutheran Convert](#)

"When I was around 9 I saw the pope on TV. All of a sudden I had an epiphany that he was our (protestants) pope too! It was so powerful I went outside and just gazed up at the sky... Three months later after leaving the cell church I was in RCIA... That night, while I was lying in bed, **I heard a Voice** and It said "Welcome Home". **I know with every fiber of my being that It was the Holy Spirit.** I know this sounds like fiction or pretentious fluff, but it isn't. ... I actually experienced this just as it is written. And I can tell you, to be a Catholic is **the greatest blessing** in the world. God bless." [forums.catholic.com - post #26](#)

"In the end, there was not a large neon sign saying, "Be Catholic!" on it. Instead, there was a **gentle whisper in my soul**. It's those soft whispers that can have the most dramatic impact on our lives." [whyimcatholic.com](#)

"Both of us, at one point, were **spoken to by the Holy Spirit**, Who told us, 'This is the truth. If you reject it, you are in danger of hellfire. Do you accept My teaching and will you say 'Yes' to the Catholic Church? Or will you reject My teaching?.... We believe that Protestant churches have a portion of the Gospel'" [forums.catholic.com - post #9](#)

"the Holy Spirit gave me an absolute, **no-doubt knowledge** that I HAD to be at Church the next morning. In the back of my mind, it seemed like it should be a Catholic Church that I attend, but the overwhelming message was that I attend church. At this parish, they offered both the host and the cup. As I received each one, it was almost **like being struck by lightning**. When I say this, I mean that it was an actual physical sensation of electricity as I received each species. It was something that I had never experienced before and I was totally unprepared for it." [whyimcatholic.com - Methodist Convert](#)

Within Protestantism:

“I asked the Lord Jesus Christ for a sign to show that the True Jesus Church has the whole truth.... One day, I was sitting under a tree, thinking deeply. I was trying to recall some Bible verses on baptism ... Suddenly, a miracle happened to me. **It was like a light** that I could not exactly figure out. **It shone on me** and took away the doubt in my mind. It seemed that the darkness in my mind was lifted. The doctrine on infant baptism, which I could not at first accept, suddenly became very clear me. I could then accept it with my mind and heart. ... Today I believe that infants must be baptized in order to be saved.... Now I **know** and am confident that this is the end of my search for the whole truth.” members.tjc.org (archive.org link)

“As I slept that night, the Holy Spirit woke me up and the words “rivers of living water” were **impressed** upon me. I **felt prompted** to speak in tongues, which I had previously prayed for but did not know if I had ever received the gift. As I started to speak, the tongues flowed out of me like rivers ...” josephprince.org

Within Islam:

“It was the ‘adan,’ or the call to prayer, ... that changed his life. ‘It inspired me to search for the truth. **It gave me an inexplicable feeling** that spread throughout my body and I stood astounded for a long time. I am very happy to have embraced the world’s great religion,’ he said.” arabnews.com

“I would sit and listen to scholars talk, I would listen to the Quran in my car on my way to work, and then something happened. I felt this **overwhelming emotion, goosebumps, and tears**. I knew that these feelings were so right, I took my shahada, then alhumdulillah I became a Muslim and put on hijab.” muslimsstories

“Islam changed me totally. I now have **no doubt** about our purpose in this world and that I am following the right path, I have a certainty I never knew before, and a **peace** that goes with it. ... **I didn't even really know I was lost before**, but when I found Islam and looked back it was so clear to me that I had been searching for years.” islamtomorrow.com

“It was like the words glowed and completely filled me with **an inner peace I never felt before**... the feeling of each ayyat came upon me with **an indescribable warmth** and sense of understanding. I could not stop. I do not know how long I read ... the feeling was so powerful and filling me with **a strong sense of love and joy** ... I finally set the Qur'an down and knew I was Muslim.” islamicboard.com

“Making supplication, Allah help me, guide me, guide me to the truth, if you guide me to the truth I'll never leave it, and I knew in my heart, **Allah was telling me in my heart** that Islam, that this is true, ya know. And I knew right there it was the correct religion.” [0:00-0:15](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0:00-0:15) (at YouTube)

“I could not stop reading it. It was like feeding me, you know. That’s when I knew that I wanted to become Muslim.” [0:39-0:52](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0:39-0:52) (same video as above)

“I said ‘Please, God, ... who do I have to follow to come to you direct...’ I was 100% sure that God has answered my question. What is the right way, the only right way to come to God? Islam.” [0:52-1:18](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0:52-1:18)

Within the polygamous FLDS church:

“Ya know, I’ve been searching for a witness of this work and of this church and just tonight **I got my witness**, and it’s **burning** within my soul of how important this work is and how true it is. I know it is, I was a typical teenager, and now I’m in a plural marriage and struggling. I’m not going to lie to you. But **I know without a shadow of a doubt** that this is the Lord’s work, that I have finally found it, and I love you guys and I’m thankful for your prayers and all that you have to offer me. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.” thisamericanlife.org (from 5:28 until 6:51 in the recording)

The Seer Stone and a Precise Text

The following is from one of the First Presidency-approved essays ([p. 3](#)). In [this essay](#), the church reveals that Joseph used a seer stone to translate the Book of Mormon. The church [has finally revealed](#) that they still have the stone.

“The other [translation] instrument, [aside from the Urim and Thummim,] which Joseph Smith discovered in the ground years before he retrieved the gold plates, was a small oval stone, or “seer stone.” As a young man during the 1820s, Joseph Smith, like others in his day, used a seer stone to look for lost objects and buried treasure. As Joseph grew to understand his prophetic calling, he learned that he could use this stone for the higher purpose of translating scripture.” [lds.org - Book of Mormon Translation](#)

Joseph Smith found this stone in the ground “years before he retrieved the gold plates” and used it to try and find buried treasure. He then used that stone, instead of the Urim and Thummim, to translate the Book of Mormon. The essay explains that words would appear on the stone. Elder Nelson also discusses that process.

“A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear.”

~Elder Russel M. Nelson quotes David Whitmer, 1992, [lds.org - A Treasured Testament](#)

Joseph’s method of seeing words appear on a stone confirms that the Book of Mormon was supposed to be a word-for-word revelation, as opposed to Joseph coming up with his own wording. [FAIR](#) admits that there have been thousands of changes to the [1830 edition](#) of the Book of Mormon. Most involved punctuation. Other errors include major grammar mistakes in almost every chapter. How do the following errors fit with Joseph receiving a word-for-word text?

- Non-existent words and incomplete sentences ([Alma 56:10](#) – “numerority” & [Alma 55:7](#) – “Moroni caused that Laman and a small number of men which was appointed to go with him.”).
- Switching “was” with “were” and “done with “did” ([Alma 9:32](#) – “they was angry with me,” [3 Nephi 26:11](#) – “I were about to write them all,” [Mosiah 29:41](#) – “and this they done throughout all the land.”).
- Our current edition still mixes up the plural “ye” with the singular “thou” ([Mosiah 4:22](#) – “**ye** put up no petition, nor repent of the thing which **thou** hast done.”).

Testing the Book of Mormon with the Bible

Quoting Moses:

[Acts 3:22-23](#) is a much paraphrased quotation of Moses' words, drawing from two separated verses: [Deuteronomy 18:15 & 19](#). In [1 Nephi 22:20](#), Nephi himself (this is Nephi speaking) says he's quoting Moses. He doesn't give Moses' quote, but instead gives the paraphrased version from Acts. Why does Nephi essentially quote Acts, saying it's Moses, when Acts wasn't written yet?

Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-19)	Acts 3:22-23 – ≈ 80-90 A.D.
<p>“15 The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;</p> <p>18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.</p> <p>19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”</p>	<p>“22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. [skips v. 18]</p> <p>23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.”</p>
	<p>1 Nephi 22:20 – ≈ 570 B.C.</p> <p>“... unto the fulfilling of the words of Moses, which he spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. [skips v. 18] And it shall come to pass that all those who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people.” ~Nephi's words (see v. 22)</p>

The Red Sea:

[2 Nephi 19:1](#) changes [Isaiah 9:1](#)'s “the way of the sea” to “the way of the Red Sea.” As Isaiah specified, *the way of the sea* “in Galilee” is a road that passes through Galilee. [Lds.org](#) shows this road passing through Capernaum, a Galilean city. The Way of the Red Sea is a [different biblical road](#). [Matthew 4:12-15](#) confirms the road in Isaiah 9:1 to be “the way of the sea.” The JST also makes the same error in [its Isaiah 9:1](#), showing that the change was intentional. The full text of the JST (held by the RLDS church) has been [verified as correct](#) (lds.org link).

Trinitarian Doctrine

By 1831, Joseph turned the Father and the Son into the same person in his JST (compare the original [Luke 10:22](#) with the JST's [Luke 10:23](#)). The 1830 Book of Mormon also had Trinitarian language, where it says that the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father ([1 Nephi 11:21](#) and [1 Nephi 13:40](#)). Our edition of the Book of Mormon has “the Son of” added to those scriptures ([here](#) and [here](#)). The original reading is especially problematic when taken with Joseph’s initial recording of the First Vision. In this “1832 account,” unlike his 1838 account, he only sees “the Lord” (see [p. 21](#)). The early D&C revelations have Jesus Christ referring to himself as “mine Only Begotten Son” ([D&C 29:1,5,42,46](#) and [D&C 49:5,28](#)).

KJV vs JST vs BoM:

There are cases where the JST contradicts the Book of Mormon. Again, the full text of the JST (held by the RLDS church) has been [verified as correct](#). We don’t have the JST version of the following passage, among others, due to “lack of space” in our index. Here is the original verse before Joseph changed it:

[Matthew 5:41](#) – “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”

In the [Joseph Smith Translation](#), Joseph didn’t just clarify Christ’s message. He changed the meaning (this content is in [v. 43 of the JST](#)). In every other translation, Christ says that if you’re asked to go a mile, go two (twain). In the JST, Christ is saying to walk only as far as you are asked.

“And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him a mile; and whosoever shall compel thee to go with him twain, thou shalt go with him twain.”

The Sermon on the Mount passage in the Book of Mormon remains unchanged. Which is correct, the Book of Mormon or the Joseph Smith Translation?

[3 Nephi 12:41](#) – “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”

There are other passages in the Book of Mormon which follow the same pattern. If God simply wants the Book of Mormon to match the King James Bible, then why doesn’t the Book of Mormon match the Bible in many other passages, such as in the Red Sea example on the previous page? The Book of Mormon was supposed to clarify Biblical doctrine, not propagate its errors. Or maybe the JST is in error?

The Visitation of Christ:

There is a pattern in 3 Nephi of one-upping different aspects of Christ's ministry in Israel. Having the Book of Mormon one-up the Bible would be consistent with Joseph's character (see also the 2nd picture of Joseph from byu.edu):

"I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him; but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet."

~Joseph Smith, 1844, after referencing [Paul's boastings](#) and claiming to have suffered more than Paul. Joseph goes on to give some of the credit to the Saints.

byu.edu - History of the Church, Vol. 6, Ch. 19, p. 408-409



Figure 1 – Joseph Smith, Jr., by Danquart Anthon Weggeland, [link](#)

A comparison:

New Testament	Book of Mormon
A star in the east	A night without darkness
The sun darkened for three hours	Darkness for three days
A minor earthquake	The destruction of whole cities
Jesus appearing to 500 people after his resurrection with one person touching his wounds	Jesus appearing to 2500 people with all of them touching the wounds
The loaves and fishes	Wine and bread from nothing
Blessing little children	Blessing them with angels encircling them
Strong wind and cloven tongues at Pentecost	Encircled by fire and angels at Pentecost
Jesus being transfigured	A multitude witnessing nine apostles being transfigured
Promised that John would not taste death	Three Nephites receiving that promise

The Reality of the Law of Moses

The Book of Mormon says that [all things in the Law of Moses typify of Christ](#), that [Christ gave the law](#), and that [every whit points to the Atonement](#). What about:

Beating maids is ok, as long as they survive a day or two, for they are money:

[Exodus 21:20-21](#) – “20 And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished.

21 Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money.”

People can be “possessions” and “bondmen for ever:”

[Leviticus 25:45-46](#) – “45 Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession.

46 And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever: ...”

[Deut 22:13-21](#) – If a man suspects that his bride is not a virgin, her parents must prove to the elders that the bedsheets on the wedding night were bloody, or the bride is stoned to death. Women often don’t bleed when they lose their virginity.

A severe penalty for grabbing an attacker’s privates to help defend your husband:

[Deuteronomy 25:11-12](#) – “11 When men strive together one with another, and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets:

12 Then thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall not pity her.”

Discrimination against eunuchs, bastards, and the descendants of bastards:

[Deuteronomy 23:1-2](#) – “1 He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord.

2 A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord.”

Did God really command all of the above to point to the Atonement? Also, would God really command genocide (including the slaying of infants, little boys and girls, etc.), as in the first three links here? See [1 Samuel 15:3](#), [Joshua 6:21](#), [Joshua 10:40-41](#), [Numbers 31:17-18](#) and [1 Samuel 27:8-9](#). Which is worse? Idolatry or grown men killing little girls? Would God test his people’s obedience in this way? Would God find another way to give his people land?

Contradictions

Here are some additional cases of scriptural contradiction in the Book of Mormon.

Knowledge of the Time of Christ's Birth

Did they know when Christ would come? Nephi says yes, Alma says no.

[1 Nephi 10:4](#) – “Yea, even **six hundred years** from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world.” See also [1 Nephi 19:8](#) and [2 Nephi 25:19](#)

[Alma 13:25](#) – “And now we only wait to hear the joyful news declared unto us by the mouth of angels, of his coming; **for the time cometh, we know not how soon.** Would to God that it might be in my day; but let it be sooner or later, in it I will rejoice.”

Knowledge of Jesus' Name

In 2 Nephi 10, an angel reveals the name Jesus Christ to Jacob. Yet, Jacob was enscribing in plates which already contained Jesus' name, as the 1830 Edition has Nephi writing Jesus' name down in 1 Nephi 12:18. Nephi's message was [for his people](#), so why didn't he tell Jacob the name of Christ? Joseph later changed “Jesus Christ” to “the Messiah.” It seems like he was aware of this issue.

[1 Nephi 12:18](#) – “And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God, and **Jesus Christ**, which is the Lamb of God, ...”

[2 Nephi 10:3](#) – “Wherefore, as I said unto you, it must needs be expedient that **Christ—for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name—**should come among the Jews...”

Age of Enos

Jacob was born in the wilderness by 591 B.C. 170+ years later, his son Enos “began to be old.” Additionally, the 7 generations from Jacob to Amaleki span 470 years. [An expected 7 generation span before modern times would be 140 years.](#)

[1 Nephi 17:4](#) – “And we did sojourn for the space of many years, yea, even eight years in the wilderness.”

[1 Nephi 18:7](#) – “And now, my father had begat two sons in the wilderness; the elder was called Jacob and the younger Joseph.”

[Enos 1:25](#) – “And it came to pass that I began to be old, and an hundred and seventy and nine years had passed away from the time that our father Lehi left Jerusalem.”

David's Sin and the Words of Christ

Were David's wives and concubines "abominable," or given to him by God?

[Jacob 2:24](#) – "Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord."

[D&C 132:39](#) – "David's wives and concubines were given unto him of me, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife;"

Shedding of Blood

Moroni says that God has never allowed bloodshed. At the very beginning of Moroni's plate compilation is a story in which God commands Nephi to shed blood. What about God ordering the Israelites to commit genocide?

[Ether 8:19](#) – "For the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man."

Infant Baptism:

Mormon lamented the terrible wickedness of his people. Around this time, it grieved him exceedingly that they would dispute baptizing infants. Given the wars, witchcraft, etc., would infant baptism be that high on Mormon's worry list?

[Moroni 1:1,4,5](#) – "1 An epistle of my father Mormon, written to me, Moroni; and it was written unto me soon after my calling to the ministry. And on this wise did he write unto me, saying:....

5 And now, my son, I speak unto you concerning that which grieveth me exceedingly; for it grieveth me that there should disputations rise among you.

6 For, if I have learned the truth, there have been disputations among you concerning the baptism of your little children."

[Mormon 1:13-15,19](#) – "13 But wickedness did prevail upon the face of the whole land, insomuch that the Lord did take away his beloved disciples, and the work of miracles and of healing did cease because of the iniquity of the people.

14 And there were no gifts from the Lord, and the Holy Ghost did not come upon any, because of their wickedness and unbelief.

15 And I, being fifteen years of age ...

19 there were sorceries, and witchcrafts, and magics; and the power of the evil one was wrought upon all the face of the land, ..."

View of the Hebrews: Israelites in America

Have you ever noticed that none of the civilizations in ancient America match the Nephites in the Book of Mormon? The lack of a good match to any civilization is evidenced by the inability of Mormon scholars to agree on a setting for the Book of Mormon. FAIR provides [this page](#) with links to 73 propositions for a setting.

During Joseph's time, such a mismatch between the Book of Mormon and archaeology wasn't thought to be the case. At the time, many believed that Native Americans were descended from Israelites. Ethan Smith's 1823 work, *View of the Hebrews*, was a book which helped establish these theories.

Ethan Smith theorized that the American Israelites divided into two tribes. After many wars, the barbaric portion wiped out the civilized portion. Sound familiar?

"It is highly probable that the more civilized part of the tribes of Israel, after they settled in America, became wholly separated from the hunting and savage tribes of their brethren; that the latter lost the knowledge of their having descended from the same family with themselves; that the more civilized part continued for many centuries; that tremendous wars were frequent between them and their savage brethren, till the former became extinct These partially civilized people became extinct. What account can be given of this, but that the savages extirpated them, after long and dismal wars!"

[byu.edu - View of the Hebrews - Civilized vs. Savages](#)

[B. H. Roberts](#), a member of the First Council of the Seventy, [studied the *View of the Hebrews* in connection with the Book of Mormon](#). He sent his findings to Heber J. Grant, now published as *Studies of the Book of Mormon*. His findings:

"It will appear in what is to follow that such 'common knowledge' did exist in New England; that Joseph Smith was in contact with it; that one book, at least, with which he was most likely acquainted, could well have furnished structural outlines for the Book of Mormon; and that Joseph Smith was possessed of such creative imaginative powers as would make it quite within the lines of possibility that the Book of Mormon could have been produced in that way."

[imgur.com - Studies of the Book of Mormon - Capabilities of Joseph Smith](#)

Here are some examples from Robert's list of 26 similarities between the two:

"It not only suggests, but pleads on every page for Israelitish origin of the American Indians.... It emphasizes and uses much of the material from the prophecies of Isaiah, including whole chapters, The savage division utterly exterminates the civilized in Ethan Smith's book; Ethan Smith's book assumes unity of race for the inhabitants of America – the Hebrew race, and no other. The Book of Mormon does the same. Ethan Smith's book assumes that this race (save perhaps, the Eskimo of the extreme north) occupied the whole extent of the American continents. The Book of Mormon does the same for its peoples Can such numerous and startling points of resemblance and suggestive contact be merely coincidence?"

[imgur.com - Studies of the Book of Mormon - Similarities](#)

The Witnesses

On the three witnesses: There are many accounts which attempt to credit/discredit them. If we believe them, should we believe in the holy scriptures of the Shakers? Around forty people testified they saw angels verifying its truth. Eight women signed the testimony below. More testimonies are found in the link below.

“We, the undersigned, hereby testify, that we saw the holy Angel standing upon the house-top, as mentioned in the foregoing declaration, holding the Roll and Book.

Betsey Boothe. Sarah Maria Lewis. Louisa Chamberlain. Sarah Ann Spencer. Caty De Witt. Lucinda McDaniels. Laura Ann Jacobs. Maria Hedrick.”

archive.org - A Holy, Sacred, and Divine Roll and Book

The eight witnesses: The following is a letter from a doubting member, high priest Stephen Burnett, to apostle [Lyman E. Johnson](#), both of whom later left the church. [FAIR](#) doesn't believe Burnett, due to the eight (usually?) sticking with their story.

“I have reflected long and deliberately upon the history of this church and weighed the evidence for and against it — loth to give it up — but when I came to hear Martin Harris state in public that he never saw the plates with his natural eyes only in vision or imagination, neither Oliver [Cowdery] nor David [Whitmer] and also that the eight witnesses never saw them and hesitated to sign that instrument for that reason, but were persuaded to do it, the last pedestal gave way, in my view our foundations was sapped and the entire superstructure fell a heap of ruins, ... I was followed by W. [Warren] Parish, Luke Johnson and John Boynton, all of who concurred with me. After we were done speaking, M[artin] Harris arose and said he was sorry for any man who rejected the Book of Mormon for he knew it was true, he said he had hefted the plates repeatedly in a box with only a tablecloth or handkerchief over them, but he never saw them only as he saw a city through a mountain. And said that he never should have told that the testimony of the eight was false, if it had not been picked out of air but should have let it passed as it was—Now br Johnson if you have anything to say in favour of the Book of Mormon I should be glad to hear it.”

josephsmithpapers.org - Letterbook 2

In Perspective

Would someone really be [damned](#) for not believing in the Book of Mormon? What would I conclude if I saw evidence like this against the Quran? I have felt inspired while reading the Book of Mormon. Can that only mean that it is true? Was I inspired because I was in the mode of looking for inspiration?

The Doctrine & Covenants

A few things which stood out to me:

Obscuring Oliver's Divining Rod:

Lds.org shows us that Oliver Cowdery used a [divining rod](#) to receive revelation. As shown below, this has been censored out of our current D&C.

“Oliver Cowdery lived in a culture steeped in biblical ideas, language and practices. The revelation’s reference to Moses likely resonated with him. The Old Testament account of Moses and his brother Aaron recounted several instances of using rods to manifest God’s will (see Ex. 7:9-12; Num. 17:8). Many Christians in Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery’s day similarly believed in divining rods as instruments for revelation. Cowdery was among those who believed in and used a divining rod.”

[lds.org - Oliver Cowdery's Gift](#)

In 1831, the Book of Commandments and Revelations (containing the original revelations now found in D&C) referred to Oliver’s use of a divining rod.

“O remember, these words & keep my commandments[. R]emember this is thy gift[. N]ow this is not all[,] for thou hast another gift[,] which is the gift of working with the sprout Behold it has told you things Behold there is no other power save God that can cause this thing of Nature to work in your hands for it is the work of God & therefore whatsoever ye shall ask to tell you by that means that will he grant unto you, that you shall know.”

[josephsmithpapers.org - Book of Commandments 7:3](#)

Two years later (1833), the [Book of Commandments](#) changed the above highlighted sections to “the gift of working with the rod” and “this rod of nature.” Does God work through divining rods? Why were the Lord’s words further censored in the [1835 edition](#) (and our edition) to obscure the use of a divining rod?

[D&C 8:5-9](#) – “5 Oh, remember these words, and keep my commandments. Remember, this is your gift.

6 Now this is not all thy gift; for you have another gift, which is the gift of Aaron; behold, it has told you many things;

7 Behold, there is no other power, save the power of God, that can cause this gift of Aaron to be with you.

8 Therefore, doubt not, for it is the gift of God; and you shall hold it in your hands, and do marvelous works; and no power shall be able to take it away out of your hands, for it is the work of God.

9 And, therefore, whatsoever you shall ask me to tell you by that means, that will I grant unto you, and you shall have knowledge concerning it.”

Isaiah and Esaias – One or Two People?

Esaias is the Greek/New Testament name for Isaiah of the Old Testament.

Scripture search on lds.org reveals 21 New Testament and no Old Testament matches for [Esaias](#), along with 32 Old Testament and no New Testament matches for [Isaiah](#). The contexts show that they refer to the same individual. An example:

[Isaiah 53:1](#) – “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

[Romans 10:16](#) – “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?”

Here, Joseph refers to Isaiah and Esaias as two separate individuals:

[D&C 76:100](#) – “These are they who say they are some of one and some of another—some of Christ and some of John, and some of Moses, and some of Elias, and some of Esaias, and some of Isaiah, and some of Enoch;”

Most Biblical scholars should have known that Esaias was Isaiah. Did someone ask Joseph why he referred to them as separate people? From a later revelation:

[D&C 84:13](#) – “Esaias also lived in the days of Abraham, and was blessed of him—“

[Abraham](#) lived about [800 years](#) before Greece existed. The name Esaias didn’t come about until the Greeks modified the Hebrew prophet Isaiah’s name. Why does someone from Abraham’s time have the same name as this Greek modification of a Hebrew name?

Removing Pure Language:

In the original [Book of Commandments and Revelations](#) (removed from our D&C), Joseph gives us examples of “pure language.” Some examples:

English	Pure Language
God	Awmen
Angels	Awmen-Angls-men
Sun (from Abraham 3:13)	Shinehah

The Book of Abraham

1) Joseph obtained sections of papyrus and translated them into the Book of Abraham. Problems with his translations call his trustworthiness and reliability into question. When Joseph obtained the papyrus, portions of the facsimiles were missing (see the green box below). [FAIR](#) shows which missing portions of Facsimile 2 were drawn in by Joseph himself. His version is still in our scriptures.

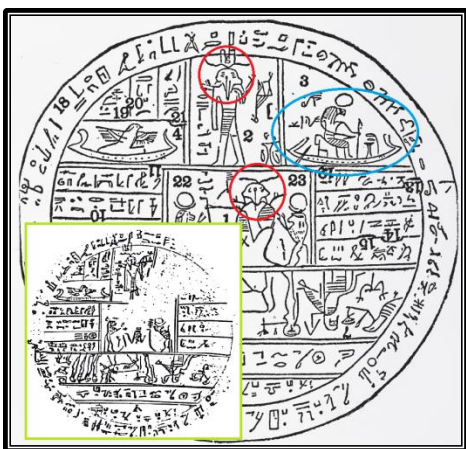


Figure 2 – See page for author [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#), merged with By Descartes1979 at en.wikipedia (Transferred from en.wikipedia) [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, color added, [link](#)

As shown by the red circles, Joseph copied the head in the 12:00 position to fill in the middle of the facsimile. Notice that the upper half that Joseph drew in is disconnected (and offset to the right) from the lower half of the central personage's torso. A close-up:



This facsimile is referred to as a hypocephalus by [FAIR](#). If you do a [google search](#) for “hypocephalus –Abraham” (the “-Abraham” part removes the results showing Joseph’s filled-in version), you’ll see that every other hypocephalus has a four-headed figure in its center (Figure 3), making Joseph’s two-headed figure in the center inaccurate. Notice that the lower half of the torso in Figure 3 matches the lower half in Joseph’s papyrus.



Figure 3 – By Unknown. [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>), CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>) or CC BY-SA 2.5-2.0-1.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5-2.0-1.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, cropped, [link](#)



Figure 4 – "Joseph Smith Papyrus IV" by Original uploader was Descartes1979 at en.wikipedia - Transferred from en.wikipedia. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons, [link](#)

In the 2:00 position (blue oval), Joseph has drawn in a figure in a boat. [FAIR](#) reveals that [this figure](#) comes from another portion of Joseph’s papyrus. The source of both fill-ins can thus easily be identified, and one of them doesn’t match every other hypocephalus. Joseph saw two blank spots and filled them with drawings from the same papyrus.

2) A summary of Facsimile 3 can be found [here](#). Wikipedia lists Joseph's translations of this facsimile, which you can confirm in [your scriptures](#). It also lists Egyptologists' interpretations. I will show you how you can verify those.

In Facsimile 3, Joseph saw one figure that looked like a black man at the end of the line (in the picture on the right). He explains the man to be "Olimlah, a slave belonging to the prince." This matches what someone with an early 19th century American worldview would assume. According to Egyptologists, that figure is [Anubis](#) and is even designated so by the characters above its head. You can even see a remnant of the jackal's ear.

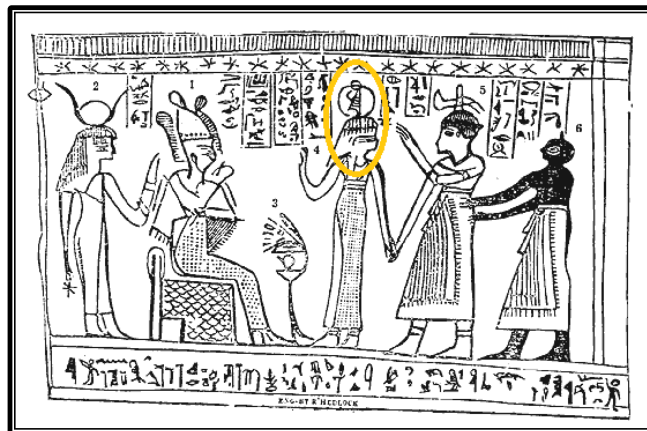


Figure 5 – By Abraham, Joseph Smith, Reuben Hedlock
(http://scriptures.lds.org/en/abr/fac_3) [Public domain or Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, color added, [link](#)

Joseph interpreted the woman in the middle to be the "Prince of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, *as written above the hand*." According to Egyptologists, the figure is [Maat](#), an Egyptian goddess. Notice the hat designating Maat ([google image search](#)). This is the same hat worn by the central figure. Is that figure a man or a woman? Is it Maat or the Prince of Pharaoh? Egyptologists claim that *the characters above its hand* indicate it to be Maat.



Figure 6 – By Unknown author [CC BY-SA 2.5
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5>)], via Wikimedia Commons, color added, [link](#)

Is the figure behind the throne King Pharaoh, with his headdress (as Joseph says "is given by the characters above his head") or [Isis](#), an Egyptian goddess? Egyptologists claim that the characters mark her as Isis. This at the very least shows that Joseph thought he was literally translating the Egyptian characters.

3) As further evidence of that, we have the Egyptian character translations in the GAEL, as shown by [josephsmithpapers.org](#). [FAIR](#) concedes that the translations "do not match the true Egyptian meanings of those characters." [FAIR](#) also explains how Joseph may have used the GAEL to begin a translation of a "forged [fake] set of metal plates" called the Kinderhook Plates. If Joseph started translating a forged artifact, would we be damned for believing that he probably fabricated the Book of Mormon?

The First Vision

A First Presidency-approved essay ([p. 3](#)) discusses [the First Vision accounts](#).

The essay admits that Joseph doesn't mention seeing God the Father in his first written account. However, it ignores a problem in the first paragraph below, where Joseph says that he realized *via scripture study* that there was no true church.

“by searching the scriptures I found that mankind did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostacised from the true and liveing faith and **there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament ...**

the Lord heard my cry in the wilderness and while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord in the 16th year of my age a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of god and **the Lord** opened the heavens upon me and I saw **the Lord** and he spake unto me saying Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee. Go thy way walk in my statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life behold the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commandments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to thir ungodliness and to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Apostles behold and lo I come quickly as it [is] written of me in the cloud clothed in the glory of my Father ...”

~Joseph Smith

josephsmithpaper.org - [Letterbook 1](#)

This contradicts the 1838 account (our current version):

[JS-H 1:18](#) – “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.”

The essay points out that Joseph says “the Lord” twice. They suggest that he was referring to God the Father one of the times and referring to Christ the other time. Is that really plausible? “I was filled with the spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord.”

Again, this matches the Trinitarian doctrine present in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon ([p. 10](#)).

Why are we just now hearing about Joseph's first written account?

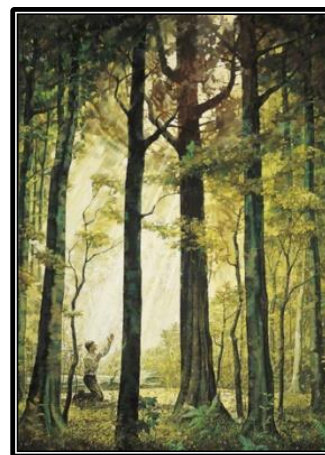


Figure 7 – The First Vision, by Kenneth Riley, [link](#)

Polygamy and Polyandry

A First Presidency-approved essay ([p. 3](#)) discusses [the subject of polygamy](#). Eight of the Kirtland/Nauvoo essay's footnotes reference [Brian Hales](#), one of the church's leading researchers of polygamy. I will reference [Hales' site](#) frequently.

Does God require us to believe in that which feels morally wrong?

1) What we learn from the essay:

- The essay confirms that Joseph had between 30 and 40 wives (footnote 24). The essay adds that these marriages included “the possibility of sexual relations.”
- An angel threatened Joseph with destruction if he didn't practice polygamy.

“When God commands a difficult task, He sometimes sends additional messengers to encourage His people to obey. Consistent with this pattern, Joseph told associates that an angel appeared to him three times between 1834 and 1842 and commanded him to proceed with plural marriage when he hesitated to move forward. During the third and final appearance, the angel came with a drawn sword, threatening Joseph with destruction unless he went forward and obeyed the commandment fully.”

- Joseph was sealed to already-married women. This is known as polyandry.

“Following his marriage to Louisa Beaman and before he married other single women, Joseph Smith was sealed to a number of women who were already married. Neither these women nor Joseph explained much about these sealings, though several women said they were for eternity alone.”

- The essay states that Joseph's sealing to a 14 year-old (Helen Kimball Mar, Figure 18) wasn't so abnormal during his time period.
- Apparently a man needed his wife's consent to take another wife, but if she gave no consent, he could proceed without her consent after all.

“The revelation on marriage required that a wife give her consent before her husband could enter into plural marriage. Nevertheless, toward the end of the revelation, the Lord said that if the first wife “receive not this law”—the command to practice plural marriage—the husband would be “exempt from the law of Sarah,” presumably the requirement that the husband gain the consent of the first wife before marrying additional women.”

- Joseph and other members denied practicing polygamy.

“Participants in these early plural marriages pledged to keep their involvement confidential, though they anticipated a time when the practice would be publicly acknowledged. Nevertheless, rumors spread... The rumors prompted members and leaders to issue **carefully worded denials** that **denounced spiritual wifery and polygamy but were silent about what Joseph Smith and others saw as divinely mandated “celestial” plural marriage**. The statements emphasized that the Church practiced no marital law other than monogamy while implicitly leaving open the possibility that individuals, under direction of God's living prophet, might do so.”

2) What the essay leaves out:

- The essay omits evidence of sexuality in the polyandrous sealings. According to Hales, Joseph was likely intimate with [Mary Heron](#) and [Sylvia Sessions](#). Brian's article goes on to explain that Sylvia's husband was excommunicated at the time of the intimacy, possibly justifying it.
- The essay does not mention the requirement that the women be virgins:

[D&C 132:61-62](#) – “61 And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, **and they are virgins**, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else.

62 And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified.”

- According to [Hales](#), Sylvia already had three children before her marriage to Joseph. How does this fit with D&C 132:61?
- The essay does not address Brigham Young's wives. According to [Hales](#), Zina Huntington gave birth to three children with her husband, Henry Jacobs. She was sealed to Joseph after the first child was born (Zina's profile on [lds.org](#) omits this) According to [FAIR](#): After Joseph's death, after her three children with Henry, and while still legally married to Henry Jacobs (divorce was sometimes off the books), Zina was taken as wife by Brigham Young. She gave birth to a daughter with Brigham: Zina Prescinda Young. How does this fit with the virgin requirement? Otherwise, it is adultery.
- The essay claims that these polyandrous sealings were for “eternity alone,” and not this life. If so, is it ok that Joseph took other men's wives for eternity? From [FAIR](#): In temple ceremonies after Joseph's death, Zina was called Zina Diantha *Smith*, while in Henry's presence.
- The essay claims that these sealings weren't exactly marriages, and may have existed to connect families together. Can we really say that a man getting sealed to a woman isn't a marriage? As evidence that Joseph wasn't just trying to connect families, Joseph was sealed to [Patty Bartlett](#). Though already connected to the family (through Patty), he was sealed to Patty's daughter, [Sylvia Sessions](#). Both women already had husbands. It was the same situation with the Huntington's. He was sealed to Zina, and then [her sister](#). If these sealings were to connect families, why didn't Joseph say so?

- The essay omits the part where Joseph promised exaltation for Helen Mar (the 14-year old), and for her family if she was sealed to him.

“my father introduced to me this principle & asked me if I would be sealed to Joseph, who came next morning & with my parents I heard him teach & explain the principle of Celestial marriage-after which he said to me, ‘If you will take this step, it will ensure your eternal salvation and exaltation & that of your father’s household & all of your kindred.’”

byu.edu - [Womans View](#)

- Other leaders also married much younger women. At age 57, [Lorenzo Snow](#) (Figure 19) married a 15 year-old ([Sarah Ephramina](#)).
- [In one case](#), Joseph married two sisters, neither sister knowing about the other’s marriage until afterwards, as “everything was so secret.”
- The essay claims that God “did not give exact instructions on how to obey the commandment.” [D&C 132:8](#) says that God’s house is a house of order. The section does give detailed instructions, which Joseph and Brigham ignored.
- The passage in [Jacob 2:30](#) indicates that the purpose of polygamy is to raise up seed, but the apostle [John Widtsoe](#) points out in the quote below that there were more men than women in Utah and in the church at the time.

The theory that plural marriage was a consequence of a surplus of female Church members fails from lack of evidence.... Another conjecture is that the people were few in number and that the Church, desiring greater numbers, permitted the practice so that a phenomenal increase in population could be attained. This is not defensible, since there was no surplus of women.”

~John Widtsoe

[Quote can be found here on fairmormon.org](#)

- [FAIR](#) concedes that Joseph “did not always tell Emma immediately about some of his plural relationships.”
- The essay doesn’t mention one of Joseph’s denials of plural marriage.

“What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.”

~Joseph Smith

[1850 byu.edu](#) - [History of the Church, Vol. 6, Ch. 19, p. 411](#)

- The essay omits the grief that women experienced in polygamy:

“I wish my husband’s wives would leave him, every soul of them except myself.” That is the way they all feel, more or less, at times, both old and young.”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 9, p. 195, quote also found on [fairmormon.org](#)

The Temple

1) [FAIR](#) reveals that there used to be penalty tokens in the endowment ceremony, these being removed in 1990. Would Joseph have permitted their removal?

“Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles.”

~Joseph Smith

[lds.org - Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith](#)

2) Are tokens and keywords needed to return to heaven, as learned in the temple?
Christ warns against preaching more than repentance and baptism to enter heaven:

[3 Nephi 11:38-40](#) – “38 And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

39 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

40 And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them.”

3) A theory exists that the LDS temple ceremony is similar to a ceremony in Freemasonry because the Masons obtained the ceremony from Solomon’s temple. [FAIR](#) concedes that Joseph did borrow the ceremony from Freemasonry, and that there is no connection between Freemasonry and Solomon’s temple. If not, why did Joseph borrow the ceremony from a secret society and call it God’s ordinance?

4) [FAIR](#) admits that the Second Anointing exists, though it was “performed more widely” in early church history.

5) If God spoke through Isaiah with [dual meanings](#), are there meanings in these scriptures that apply to us? Matthew 24:24 is discussed on p. 69 of the full version.

[Matthew 24:23,26](#) – “23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.”

[Acts 7:48](#) – “Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,”

[1 Timothy 1:4](#) – “Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.”

“The most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands;” might be significant.

Prophets and Revelators

Special Witnesses

Apostles are supposed to be “[special witnesses of Christ's resurrection](#).” Leaders haven’t been clear on whether this means that Christ has appeared to them or not. Here is what Brigham Young had to say ([p. 58](#) for the JoD as a source):

“We have not seen the person of the Father, neither have we seen that of the Son; but we have seen the children of the Father, and the brethren of the Savior who are in every way like them in physical appearance and organization.”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 11, p. 42 (also found on fairmormon.org)

Revelators: The Word of Wisdom

A quick search reveals that teaching against [smoking](#) and [drinking](#) was nothing new during Joseph’s time. [Simplicity of Health](#), by Hortator, was a product of the temperance movement of the early 1800s and speaks out against hot drinks (pp. 114-115), especially tea (pp. 60-68 and throughout) and coffee (pp. 119-120). Why does the Lord’s health code mirror the science of the 1830s? A common defense of the church is that it promotes successful living. While this is good, [other religions also do this](#), and people in countries like Japan [enjoy success](#) without the influence of religion.

Revelators: The Plan of Salvation

- Would a loving God really separate families in the afterlife? Even those who have lived good lives?
- Where does God draw the line between [valiant in the testimony of Jesus and non-valiant](#)? Is it fair to enact a plan where exaltation is at stake, and participants aren’t even sure whether or not they are passing the test?
- If a third of the hosts of heaven was cast out, aren’t there literally billions of people being sent to Outer Darkness? How is that part of a Plan of Happiness?
- If God sent an angel to Paul or Alma, why not send an angel to many others who would otherwise repent? Why does God let people live through the most righteous periods in their lives, knowing they [will fall at a later point](#)?

Revelators: The Mouthpiece of God

1) It appears that LDS presidents interpret impressions to be God's will (see the "rivers of living water" testimony on [p. 7](#)). From an interview with Gordon B. Hinckley on Larry King Live:

KING: You are the prophet, right?

HINCKLEY: Right.

KING: Does that mean that, according to the church canon, the Lord speaks through you?

HINCKLEY: I think he makes his will manifest, yes.

KING: So if you change things, that's done by an edict given to you.

HINCKLEY: Yes, sir.

KING: How do you receive it?

HINCKLEY: Well, various ways. It isn't necessarily a voice heard. Impressions come. The building of this very building I think is an evidence of that.

There came an impression, a feeling, that we need to enlarge our facilities where we could hold our conferences. And it was a very bold measure. We had to tear down a big building here and put this building up at great cost.

But goodness sakes, what a wonderful thing it's proven to be. It is an answer to many, many needs. And I think it's the result of inspiration.

KING: And that came from something higher than you.

HINCKLEY: I think so.

transcripts.cnn.com - Larry King Live

2) Elder Oaks (below) describes the inspiration behind people getting callings. Basically, the leaders' actions are God's actions.

"I think of the subject of assigning missionaries, and the same principles that apply to your calling of a counselor or a secretary in the Relief Society apply to that. When I was called to the Quorum of the Twelve[,] I was assigned to the missionary counsel, ... and Elder McConkie took me as a younger brother to teach me how to assign missionaries, and so I asked him [after] three or four weeks, 'Elder McConkie, how do you know where to send them?' Then he said, 'You're the servant of the Lord, and your action is the Lord's action. You study it out in your mind and you assign 'em, and they're assigned by the Lord.' You see the application of that principle to the bishop?"

lds.org - [Strength Faith in Christ](#), runs from 2:15 until 3:18

What about when the leader makes mistakes? The Catholic Church hasn't been alone in molestation cases. Here are three cases involving [local Mormon leaders](#).

How have the leaders fared on difficult, divisive issues?

Race and the Priesthood/Temple Ban

This topic is about more than just the Priesthood. Those of African descent were denied the privilege of being sealed to their families in the temple for well over a hundred years of church history.

1) [A First Presidency-approved essay](#) (p. 4) disavows past “theories” that **A**, black skin is a curse, **B**, other races were less valiant in the premortal life, and **C**, that mixed-race marriages are a sin, and the essay calls the past stance a policy.

“Today, the Church disavows the **theories** advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects actions in a premortal life; that mixed-race marriages are a sin; or that blacks or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else.”

A) What about scriptures which say that black skin is a curse, which in the case of the Lamanites [would be removed](#) on conditions of righteousness?

[2 Nephi 5:21](#) – “And he had caused the **cursing** to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause **a skin of blackness** to come upon them.”

[Moses 7:8](#) – “For behold, the Lord shall curse the land with much heat, and the barrenness thereof shall go forth forever; and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people.”

According to the essay, Brigham Young announced that Africans would have the curse removed “at some future day.” As the essay puts it:

“In two speeches delivered before the Utah territorial legislature in January and February 1852, Brigham Young announced a **policy** restricting men of black African descent from priesthood ordination. At the same time, President Young said that **at some future day**, black Church members would “have [all] the privilege and more” enjoyed by other members.”

If you go to footnote 9 and read the February 5, 1852 speech at eadview.lds.org (text is also available at archive.org), you’ll see that Brigham specifies when “some future day” is, that it’s not until the last of Abel’s posterity receive the Priesthood. The essay omits this.

“What is that mark? you will see it on the countenance of every African you ever did see upon the face of the earth, or ever will see. Now I tell you what I know; when the mark was put upon Cain, Abels children was in all probability young; the Lord told Cain that he should not receive the blessings of the priesthood nor his seed, until the last of the posterity of Able had received the priesthood, until the redemption of the earth. If there never was a prophet, or apostle of Jesus Christ spoke it before, I tell you, this people that are commonly called negroes are the children of old Cain.”

In a First Presidency Statement, George Albert Smith quotes Brigham, affirming that the curse will end “when *all the rest* of the children” have their blessings in the Priesthood. Notice his statement that the stance was not a policy, but doctrine.

“The attitude of the Church with reference to Negroes remains as it has always stood. **It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of direct commandment** from the Lord, on which is founded the **doctrine** of the Church from the days of its organization, to the effect that Negroes may become members of the Church but that they are not entitled to the priesthood at the present time. ... ‘And when **all the rest** of the children have received their blessings in the holy priesthood, then that curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will then come up and possess the priesthood...’”

~George Albert Smith, First Presidency Statement, 1949, quote also found on fairmormon.org

B) Regarding the “past theory” on pre-mortal behavior determining one’s race:

“The position of the Church regarding the Negro may be understood when another doctrine of the Church is kept in mind, namely, that the conduct of spirits in the premortal existence has some determining effect upon the conditions and circumstances under which these spirits take on mortality ... spirits are willing to come to earth and take on bodies no matter what the handicap may be ... and that among the handicaps, failure of the right to enjoy in mortality the blessings of the priesthood is a handicap which spirits are willing to assume in order that they might come to earth ...”

~George Albert Smith, **First Presidency Statement**, 1949, quote also found on fairmormon.org

“The privilege of obtaining a mortal body on this earth is seemingly so priceless that those in the spirit world, **even though unfaithful or not valiant**, were undoubtedly permitted to take mortal bodies although **under penalty of racial or physical or nationalistic limitations**.... Any man having one drop of the seed of Cain in him cannot receive the priesthood....’ (Wilford Woodruff, page 351.)

~[Harold B Lee, 1973](#). Note: Racial *or* physical limitations. Is he referring to disabled people?

C) Regarding the “past theory” that mixed-race marriages are a sin:

“Where the children of God to mingle there seed with the seed of Cain it would not only bring the curse of being deprived of the power of the preisthood upon themselves but the entail it upon their children after them, and they cannot get rid of it. If a man in an ungaurded moment should commit such a transgression, if he would walk up and say cut off my head, and kill man woman and child it would do a great deal towards atoneing for the sin.”

Brigham’s [1852 speech](#) (the same speech referred to in the essay)

2) Brigham Young on slavery:

“I should never fight one moment about [the issue of slavery], for the cause of human improvement is not in the least advanced by the dreadful [Civil War] which now convulses our unhappy country. Ham will continue to be the servant of servants, as the Lord has decreed, until the curse is removed. Will the present struggle free the slave? No; ...”

~Journal of Discourses, Volume 10, p. 250; Quote also found on fairmormon.org

Homosexuality

1) Leaders once taught that monogamy would destroy the nation:

“It is a fact worthy of note that the shortest-lived nations of which we have record have been monogamic. Rome, with her arts, sciences and warlike instincts, was once the mistress of the world; but her glory faded. She was a monogamic nation, and the numerous evils attending that system early laid the foundation for that ruin which eventually overtook her.”

~George Q Cannon, Journal of Discourses, Volume 13, p. 202, Quote also found at [FAIR](#)

“this monogamic system which now prevails throughout all Christendom, and which has been so fruitful a source of prostitution and whoredom throughout all the Christian monogamic cities of the Old and New World, until rottenness and decay are at the root of their institutions both national and religious.”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 11, p. 128, Quote also found at [FAIR](#)

We now hear the church saying the same thing regarding homosexuality. Compare the following quote with the above statements:

“This heinous homosexual sin is of the ages. Many cities and civilizations have gone out of existence because of it. It was present in Israel’s wandering days, tolerated by the Greeks, and found in the baths of corrupt Rome.”

~Spencer W. Kimball, [lds.org - President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality](#)

2) Regarding the individuals, a church-published pamphlet in 2007 indicates that “same-sex attraction” comprises love, not just lust, and that at least some people can’t change in this life:

“Same-gender attractions include deep emotional, social, and physical feelings.”

“While many Latter-day Saints, through individual effort, the exercise of faith, and reliance upon the enabling power of the Atonement, overcome same-gender attraction in mortality, others may not be free of this challenge in this life.”

[lds.org - God Loveth His Children](#)

The church now concedes that same-sex attraction is not a choice. From a church-run website in 2012:

“The experience of same-sex attraction is a complex reality for many people. The attraction itself is not a sin, but acting on it is. Even though individuals do not choose to have such attractions, they do choose how to respond to them.”

www.mormonsandgays.org

Is it right to condemn gay people to a lifetime void of love? Maybe they *will* fall in love, many times, but according to the church they can never act on it. They do experience feelings of love, which they are taught to reject. Maybe Paul was speaking as a man in [these scriptures](#)? Paul also condoned [bondage](#) and [sexism](#).

Between November 5, 2015 and January 28, 2016, there were reports of [LGBT Mormon youth suicides](#). Three weeks after reporting to mourn over it, [the LDS church spoke out against a bill](#) ([bill text](#)) which would classify violence against LGBT people as hate crimes. Religion is already protected under hate crimes legislation in Utah, which apply to violence against persons, not property.

3) I gathered a small collection of accounts of those who lived as gay Mormons:

"I kept falling in love with close guy friends. There was one best guy friend in particular who I fell in love with. I felt whole around him. I wanted to be with him always. The church taught me I was evil for it. I knew my feelings of love for him were beyond hopeless, and such feelings never came for women. I'd be alone, always. I remember calling my mom. I was away from my apartment and looking around a dumpster for a sharp object as I made the call. I essentially begged her to let me kill myself, me saying something along the lines of "I can't do this to you. Would you be ok if I check out? I can't take this anymore."

theloveacceptanceproject.wordpress.com

"I practiced my faith for 38 years and I attended Evergreen (a church-sponsored sexual orientation reassignment program) for 12 years. During this time, **five of the fifteen men in my group committed suicide**. My time in Evergreen and my LDS faith brought clarity to me. I was told I would be cured of homosexuality and I was told that my core self was a sinful choice. But all those years taught me that **all I** wanted was what they had: A full loving life and family with the right person. And that person had to be male, because I had already been married to a woman for 16 years and I knew clearly that it wasn't working and it never would. I wasn't even opposite-sex attracted at all. Ultimately, I was staring suicide in the face. Either it was all going to end, or I was going to embrace the fact that this was not something about myself that anyone could remove; nor should they. And so I went about finding my bliss ... And all of the fear that I felt melted away, because those scary stories I was told turned out to be false, and it turned out that following my heart was the right thing to do. And I am now in my tenth year together with my husband and we have found our bliss, and so have our six kids that we raise together."

rationalfaiths.com - [archive.is link](#)

"I really don't understand the people that know it isn't a choice but then call for us to live a life alone. That is the epitome of cruelty. My boyfriend is the most important thing in my life! He is my strength and my passion and he makes the world a brighter place. I also think our love, and the love between all couples, makes the world a better place. There is only good that comes from love and only evil that comes from hate."

From comments on www.huffingtonpost.com

"I have had 4 friends of mine and many acquaintances commit suicide... And we are treated this way why? Because we are gay? We feel the same emotions and attractions as you, we just feel it for someone of the same sex. The feelings and desires are the EXACT SAME! We don't want to hurt anyone or make anyone else gay. We don't want to ban heterosexual marriages and relationships. We want to get married and raise a family. We want to love and be loved back. We want to be honest about who we are and not fear for our jobs and housing should someone find out we have a husband or a wife. We want what you want!"

thoughtsofscotthalles.blogspot.com

On Intimacy and Guilt

LDS leaders teach that guilt is a divine indicator of wrong-doing:

“Consider sin as a spiritual wound that causes guilt or, as described by Alma to his son Corianton, ‘remorse of conscience’ (Alma 42:18). Guilt is to our spirit what pain is to our body—a warning of danger and a protection from additional damage.”

~Elder Bednar

[lds.org - We Believe in Being Chaste](#)

“That feeling of guilt is to the spirit what pain is to the physical body... Guilt is not erased without pain. There are laws to obey and ordinances to receive, and there are penalties to pay.”

~Elder Packer

[lds.org - The Touch of the Master's Hand](#)

Is guilt a divine indicator or is it a result of indoctrination?

Seventh Day Adventists can't go to theaters:

“I do remember going to the movies for the first time. I felt so guilty. I didn’t even sit down, but stood in the back and watched about fifteen minutes of ‘Ma and Pa Kettle Go To Hawaii.’”

[revivalsermons.org](#)

JWs can't celebrate holidays:

“Since my dad nor anyone from his side of the family were Witnesses, we were still allowed to celebrate holidays and birthdays. But as much as I really loved doing that, I knew in my heart of hearts that they were wrong, and I felt guilty for having truly enjoyed opening my Christmas presents with the other members of my family, eating Thanksgiving dinner and watching Fourth of July fireworks.”

[caic.org](#)

The Amish aren’t allowed to drive cars:

“I felt guilty [having a car] until I had one for a couple of years, and then the guilt wore off,’ John said.”

[abcnews.go.com](#)

Muslim women must wear a hijab:

“I took off the hijab. Interestingly, every time I took it off, I felt guilty, and I would just want to put it back on.”

[dispatch.com](#)

In the next four examples, members of the various religions indicated feeling guilty for eating [non-kosher beef](#) (Jewish), [non-halal beef](#) (Muslim), [beef](#) (Hindu), and [chicken](#) (vegetarian Hindu). Is it sinful to eat chicken?

There’s a very strong focus in the church on sexual sin, [the sin next to murder](#). Why do people still feel guilty after *marital sex*, as in [these cases](#), among many others? Are people focusing on sexual sin due to [post-coital tristesse](#)?

Blood Atonement and Adam-God Doctrine

The respective [LDS essay](#) ignores the following sermon, in which Brigham Young states that Christ never commanded us to love wicked enemies (see [Luke 6:35](#) and [Matthew 5:44](#)), that adulterers can only be saved through their own bloodshed (blood atonement), and that such practice is “near at hand.”

“What has been must be again, for the Lord is coming to **restore all things. The time has been in Israel** under the law of God, the celestial law, or that which pertains to the celestial law, for it is one of the laws of that kingdom where our Father dwells, that **if a man was found guilty of adultery, he must have his blood shed, and that is near at hand.**”

“Will you love your brothers or sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shed[d]ing of their blood? **Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood?**

That is what Jesus Christ meant. He never told a man or woman to love their enemies in their wickedness, never. He never intended any such thing;

This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it. ...”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 4, pp. 219-220, quote also found on [fairmormon.org](#)

The sermon is also printed in the [Deseret News](#) on February 18, 1857 ([screenshot](#)). It is PDF 15 of 40:

[Christ forgave the adulterous woman](#). In the quote below, Brigham says he could throw a javelin through an adulterous woman’s heart and do it with clean hands. If we throw out Brigham’s statements as crazy, then what about the leaders, such as Joseph F. Smith, [who continually endorsed his messages](#)?

“Suppose you found your brother in bed with your wife, and put a javelin through both of them, you would be justified, and they would atone for their sins, and be received into the kingdom of God. I would at once do so in such a case; and under such circumstances, I have no wife whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart, and I would do it with clean hands.”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 3, p. 247

Quote also found on [fairmormon.org](#)

Brigham Young taught that Adam was God the Father. [FAIR](#) reveals that Brigham added Adam-God doctrine into the temple, and that “the idea was dropped from the endowment ceremony” after his death. Are current leaders teaching doctrines which are just as false? How can we know, given the content on [pages 6 and 7](#)?

“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. Every man upon the earth, professing Christians or non-professing, must hear it, and will know it sooner or later.”

~Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, Volume 1, p. 50, quote also found on [fairmormon.org](#)

Whitewashing and Dishonesty

A current Sunday School manual vs. the original quote:

"I plead with you in the name of the Lord, and I pray that every man, woman and child ... shall pay one-tenth of their income as a tithing."

~the manual, [lds.org](https://www.lds.org)

"I plead with you in the name of the Lord, and I pray that every man, woman and child **who has means** shall pay one-tenth of their income as a tithing."

~Lorenzo Snow, [1899 Conference Report](#)

It seems that this quote has been edited to increase the amount of tithe payers. Meanwhile, [FAIR](#) states that the City Creek Mall, a real-estate venture in Salt Lake City, has cost the church's commercial real estate department \$1.5 billion. Would Christ be behind spending \$1.5 billion for a shopping mall?

Undiscussed examples of whitewashing include:

- Joseph giving a different version of his "money digging" story - see [JS-H 1:56](#)
- Changing the 1835 First Vision story to read "my first vision" See [here](#) and [here](#)
- [Depicting the Book of Mormon translation](#) with no reference to the seer stone
- [A current Sunday School manual](#) portrays Brigham as a monogamist (Ch. 1).
- Lds.org removing the June 1980 [Mark Hofmann](#) piece from their Ensign archives.
- Compare the following quote with the Race and the Priesthood section ([page 28](#)):

"How grateful I am that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has from its beginnings stood strongly against racism in any of its malignant manifestations."

~Elder Alexander Morrison, of the Seventy, [lds.org - No More Strangers](#)

- [Dallin H. Oaks](#), while claiming that the Civil Rights movement was advanced by men of religion, omits the fact that [Pres. Benson](#) fought the movement.
- Wilford Woodruff giving contradictory accounts of the Saints' arrival in Utah:

Wilford Woodruff on July 24, 1847:

"On this important day after traveling from our encampment 6 miles through the deep ravine valley, ending with the canyon through the last creek, we came in full view of the great valley or basin, the Salt Lake... We gazed with wonder and admiration upon the vast rich, fertile valley... clothed with the heaviest garb of green vegetation in the midst of which lay a large lake of Salt water..."

[lds.org - Presidents of the Church](#)

Wilford Woodruff on July 3rd, 1880:

"This kingdom has continued to increase and spread. When we came here thirty-three years ago we found this place a barren desert. There was no mark of the white man here. It was a desert indeed, hardly a green thing to meet the eye. You can see to-day for yourselves. The inhabitants of Zion are a marvel and a wonder to the world."

~Journal of Discourses, Volume 21, p. 192

Quote also found on [fairmormon.org](#)

The Mormon Challenge

One must weigh the evidences. Is this how God restores his church? Would God allow these things to be so verifiable and eternally damn those who get it wrong?

Would God really condemn sinners to a [thousand years of unimaginable torment](#)?

Would God's plan take away the families of [righteous nonmembers](#), take away their gender ([if Joseph Fielding Smith was correct](#)), and make them single forever?

If this life is a test, then does success rest upon doing good, loving others, and improving the world, or does it rest upon the ability to believe in difficult things?

Perhaps life is more of a growing experience than a test – a stepping stone to whatever comes next. Life is an exciting mystery, and the freedom to live it as one feels best is a valuable gift. Whatever conclusion you come to, I'll leave you with some faith-promoting stories and with a challenge.

[Spanish Fork](#) – three police officers and two firefighters heard a voice which led them to rescuing a baby from a submerged car. I went to their police department and received confirmatory reports that the officers there are trustworthy people.

Near Death Experiences have been fascinating to research. It seems like the majority indicate that love, not religion, is what matters in this life, and that we are all individuals and yet part of a whole (like cells in a body or leaves on a tree). Perhaps there is a veil of sorts, not for faith, but for taking this life more seriously.

On a more personal note, I took a long road trip after my change in faith, traveling through the night. Within two hours' time I received six promptings to slow down. Each time, there were deer on or next to the road shortly after the prompting.

A family member and I had close to the same dream around the same time. We were both in it, and both saw it from our own perspective. The theme was my change in religious belief. The overall message was that I wasn't lost in darkness, and this experience helped to ease the pain of those who knew about my research.

The Challenge: Certain things have to change in order for the church to become a complete force for good in the world. I challenge Mormon leaders to use church meetings to foster positive community relations instead of preaching guilt. Use missionaries to focus on humanitarian work instead of conversion. Allow women to serve in leadership positions. [Rethink the alienation of LGBT members](#). One suicide is too many. Become a complete force for good. Whether people leave or join the church for it, do what is right and let the consequence follow. [Just do it](#).