

A Complete Change of Attitude

Jacara Foss

Part of the in-country Internship involves taking a trip to New York to see church history sites and then attending the Mormon pageant in Palmyra. Outside the pageant, which is set up on the Hill Cumorah site, there are protestors of The Book of Mormon and the Mormon church trying to talk to those coming to the pageant. As interns, our job is to have a conversation with those protestors, to try to answer any questions they have about The Book of Mormon, and to let them know there are many similarities between our beliefs and theirs. We prepare for our conversations with them by having classes on witnessing and talking in our group about the things they might bring up to us and how we would answer them.

For me, this part of our trip was the scariest, because I am not an outgoing person. I don't know that much about where certain scriptures can be found and I don't like having to defend what I believe or feeling like I am under attack. I wasn't sure how it would go, especially once we arrived at the pageant and saw all the protestors lined up – some with big signs and bullhorns and some just handing out pamphlets. We walked through the crowd, saved our seats, and then headed back to start talking. The whole time, I was praying silently for God to help me through this, to give me the words to say, and to help me not get frustrated with the protestors.

The first man who started talking to us was very vocal about what he thought we believed, insisting that we must be Mormon if we believe in The Book of Mormon and that we worship a different Jesus than the one in the Bible. Soon, another man with a large sign and a bullhorn came to join us. They asked a lot of questions, such as, "Why do you need The Book of Mormon?" and "What is so great about Joe Smith?" One of the men also accused Joseph Smith of being a wizard, practicing black magic and of having more than 30 wives. Unfortunately, this man could not back up any of his claims with reputable sources, but he also wasn't open to what we were trying to say or to what we really believed. Even though we weren't necessarily able to share our beliefs during this one-sided conversation, I thought it was nice that he was out there doing what he felt was right, no matter how misguided he was.

After ending our conversation with the first two men, the interns split into two groups of three. The group I was in crossed the street to the other, calmer protestors. There, we struck up a conversation with a young woman who asked us if we had been saved and knew where we were going to spend eternity. We assured her that we do believe

in the saving power of Christ and that we each have a relationship with Him. We had an exciting, pleasant conversation with her and a couple of other people. We didn't have all the answers for their criticisms of The Book of Mormon, but we were able to share some of our beliefs with them and talk about our mutual beliefs. We also got some of their contact information so we can continue to communicate with them and hopefully answer more of their questions with research, as well as ask some questions ourselves.

I feel like God answered my prayer, because even though we didn't have all the answers, I didn't feel intimidated by them or their questions. I simply desired to study out the answers and witness of my faith. I wasn't frustrated or angry; I actually enjoyed talking with them and finding out what other people believe about my faith. When Lynn and Sugar, the directors of the Internship, came to tell us that we needed to get to our seats to watch the pageant, I was not ready to leave the protestors. This alone was amazing to me, as I thought I would be more than ready to go watch the pageant when our time was up, but I was more excited to continue talking with the protestors! This experience has made me stronger in my faith and given me the desire to study in order to answer their questions and to continue witnessing to them, albeit long-distance. Now, I feel like I can talk to anyone about the gospel, and I am excited for opportunities to tell people about the Internship and about my faith in God and Jesus Christ.