



Mormonism

The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints



Some things you will learn in this session....

- The real story behind Joseph Smith's divine visions.
- What's inside the Book of Mormon.
- Why Mormon families often have many children.
- Who God was before he became "God" according to Mormon doctrine.
- Why you will not find any crosses on Mormon temples.
- What to say to Mormon missionaries in your neighborhood.

Outline

Mormonism

1. Early Mormonism
 - a. Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805–1844)
 - First Vision (Sacred Grove)
 - Visitations by Moroni
 - Moving to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois
 - Assassination
 - b. Brigham Young (1801–1877)
2. On what do Mormons base their beliefs?
 - a. Four “standard works”
 - The Bible—King James Version
 - Book of Mormon
 - Doctrine and Covenants
 - Pearl of Great Price (Includes the Book of Abraham)
 - b. Living prophets
3. Mormon teachings
 - a. God is not a Trinity
 - b. “Holy Ghost” (a personage); “holy spirit” (a fluid-like substance)

- c. Jesus, “elder brother” and firstborn spirit child
- d. Adam fell “up”; no sin nature
- e. Afterlife
 - Three “degrees of glory” (Telestial, Terrestrial, Celestial)
 - Outer darkness
4. Mormon practices
 - a. “Word of Wisdom”: no caffeine drinks, alcohol, tobacco
 - b. Temple rituals: endowments
 - c. Individual blood atonement
5. What is the appeal of Mormonism?
 - a. Family emphasis
 - b. Social activities
 - c. Baptism on behalf of deceased relatives
6. What does the Bible say?
 - a. “even if an angel...”
 - Galatians 1:6–8
 - b. No gods before or after God
 - Isaiah 43:10; 40–45
 - c. God is not a man
 - Numbers 23:19; Hosea 11:9; Romans 1:22–23
 - d. Jesus Christ has always been God

- John 1:1
- Matthew 1; Luke 1
- e. The gospel of salvation
 - Romans 3:20–23; 6:23
 - Ephesians 2:8–10
- f. Jesus preserves his church
 - Matthew 16:18
- g. Testing prophets
 - 1 John 4:1
 - Deuteronomy 13:1–5; 18:21–22
- 7. Mormon missionaries at your door
 - a. Don't question their motives
 - b. Don't ridicule their beliefs
 - c. Don't let them pray for you
 - d. Don't agree to pray about the Book of Mormon; instead, test by Scripture
 - Acts 17:11
 - e. Take them through the Scriptures
 - f. Tell them what Jesus has done for you
 - 1 John 5:10–13
 - g. End on a positive note

Key Terms

Book of Abraham Mormon scripture, now published as part of the Pearl of Great Price. In 1835 Joseph Smith purchased Egyptian artifacts from a traveling showman, announcing that they contained the writings of the biblical patriarch Abraham. The “translation” he produced, called the Book of Abraham, was debunked when papyri from the collection were rediscovered in 1967.

Book of Mormon Mormon scripture said to have been translated by Joseph Smith from gold plates he received from the angel Moroni in 1827. It purports to tell the story of three people groups (the Lehites, Jaredites, and Mulekites) that migrated from the Middle East to the Americas, roughly between 2000 BC and AD 400. After being translated, the plates were taken back to heaven.

Celestial Kingdom The highest of three heavenly “degrees of glory” awaiting faithful Latter-day Saints. Entrance into this kingdom is gained by complete obedience to the Mormon gospel, and those who reach its highest level become gods.

Doctrine and Covenants Mormon scripture containing modern revelations, most given by Joseph Smith.

Endowment Ceremony Secret temple ritual performed by living persons, sometimes on behalf of the dead. Required for exaltation.

Eternal Progression Human progression starting from a pre-existent spirit, then into a human body, and then finally on to godhood.

Exaltation Synonymous with eternal life. Only Mormons who gain exaltation have the ability to become gods and procreate throughout eternity.

Freemasonry (Masonic Lodge) A secret society founded in London in the early 18th century. Known for its use of symbolism and secret rituals. Elements of Freemasonry are found in the Mormon temple endowment ceremony.

Inspired Version Also known as the Joseph Smith Translation, this adaptation of the Bible was completed by Joseph Smith in 1833.

Lamanites and Nephites According to the Book of Mormon, followers of Nephi and Laman, the sons of the Prophet Lehi who led his family to the New World prior to the capture of Jerusalem (c. 600 BC). Those who followed the wicked Laman were shown God’s displeasure by being cursed with a dark skin (2 Nephi 5:21–25); they are considered the ancestors of the American Indians and Polynesians.

Moroni Ancient Nephite leader who buried the gold plates containing the Book of Mormon and later appeared as an angel to Joseph Smith to tell him of their location. His image is found on many LDS temples throughout the world.

Pearl of Great Price Mormon scripture containing the Book of Abraham, Book of Moses, and other short works.

Polygamy Between 1852 and 1890 the practice of plural marriage became essential for any Mormon man hoping to achieve exaltation. The Mormon Church's sixth president had five wives and fathered 43 children. The Mormon Church renounced polygamy in 1890, and Utah was then granted statehood when anti-polygamy laws were written into the state constitution.

Priesthood The basis on which Mormon males have power and authority to act on behalf of God. It consists of two orders: the Aaronic (or lesser) priesthood, and the Melchizedek priesthood. Males of African descent were denied the Mormon priesthood until 1978.

Telestial Kingdom The lowest of three heavenly "degrees of glory" to which the worst sinners are sent to after death. The Holy Ghost will visit people in this kingdom, but the Father and Son will not.

Temples Special buildings reserved for ordinances for the dead (including baptism for the dead), marriages for "time and eternity," and "sealings" of families for eternity.

Terrestrial Kingdom The middle of three heavenly "degrees of glory," to which good people who are not Mormons are sent to after death. Jesus will visit people in this heaven, but God the Father will not.

Urim and Thummim A translation device described by Joseph Smith as "two stones in silver bows." Allegedly received from Moroni together with the gold plates containing the text of the Book of Mormon. (Said to be the same as the Urim and Thummim mentioned in such biblical passages as Exodus 28:30.)

Word of Wisdom Section 89 in Doctrine and Covenants which prohibits the consumption of caffeine drinks, alcohol, and tobacco.

Talk About It

Discussion Questions

1. Share about a conversation you had with a Mormon. What things were discussed? Was it easy or difficult to discuss different beliefs?
2. What are some reasons why people join the Mormon Church?
3. What was the purpose of Jesus' death and resurrection according to Mormonism? What was the purpose according to the Bible?
4. What difficulties and challenges do you think someone might face if he or she left the Mormon Church and became a Christian?
5. Do you feel ready to discuss your beliefs with Mormons? Why or why not? What would help you feel ready?

Get Into God's Word

Key Bible Verses

Read Galatians 1:6–8

Q Why is belief in a “different gospel” so dangerous?

Read Matthew 16:16–18

Q What does Jesus promise about his church?

Read Romans 3:20–22

Q How are believers made righteous?

Test Your Knowledge

Quick Quiz

1. Which of the following is *not* true about Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon Church?
 - a. He claimed God commissioned him to restore the church on earth.
 - b. He ran for president of the United States.
 - c. He claimed that John the Baptist appeared to him.
 - d. He was thrown in jail because he refused to stop preaching forgiveness.
 - e. He “married” some of the wives of his colleagues.
2. True or False? The Mormon Church claims that the Book of Mormon is an historical record of ancient Hebraic peoples who came from the Middle East to the Americas.
3. According to Mormon teaching, Jesus was the eldest of God’s spirit children and _____ was his younger, jealous brother.
4. According to the Bible, which of the following is true about salvation?
 - a. Salvation cannot be earned by personal worthiness.
 - b. Good works are the result of salvation, not its basis.
 - c. Salvation is maintained by full obedience to the law.
 - d. (a) and (b)
 - e. All of the above
5. In Acts 17:11, the Berean Christians searched the _____ to test whether the Apostle Paul’s message was from God.

(Answers in Leader Guide)

Think About It

Personal Reflection

1. What attitude do I usually have toward Mormons? How have I treated Mormons whom I've known? How does God want me to treat them?

2. What can I do to be better prepared for when Mormon missionaries come knocking?

3. Do I have a friend, coworker, or family member who is a Mormon? If so, how can I be intentional about praying for them and looking for opportunities to tell them my testimony of what God has done in my life?

Reach Out

Witnessing Tips (DO'S AND DON'TS)

- *Don't assume* that a Mormon defines a word in the same way you do.
- *Do define your terms*—and have them define theirs. (For example, “What do you believe about salvation? About eternal life? Are they the same, or different?”)
- *Don't assume what an individual Mormon believes.* Not all Mormons agree with their leaders. This could be because they are not aware of what their leaders have taught. For example, if a Mormon appears to answer a question biblically, you may respond by saying something like, “That is exactly what the Bible teaches; however, are you aware that prophet so-and-so said just the opposite? Shouldn't they be in harmony with the Bible if they are getting their information from the same God who gave us the Bible?”
- *Do ask Mormons what they believe.* Rather than accusing, ask a question.
- *Don't dwell on topics that are especially sensitive to Mormons* and should only be addressed after they feel more comfortable discussing religious issues with you. Talking about the temple ceremony, the sacred garments, polygamy, or racism will almost certainly bring the discussion to a close. Use your time wisely.
- *Do concentrate on core issues.* What the Mormon believes about God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, as well as the issue of salvation, should be primary. Do your Mormon acquaintances have the assurance that when they die all of their sins are forgiven? Do they feel confident they will receive the best their religion has to offer (godhood, eternal increase)? If so, how so? If not, why not?
- *Don't be surprised if Mormons are suspicious of Christian literature.* Mormons often feel that information written about their church, but not by their church, is almost always inaccurate. If you do use Christian material, make sure it is well-documented. Rather than insisting that the material is correct, have

Mormons show you where the information could be wrong. To do this they will need to read the material and check the references.

- *Do memorize certain points and quotes.* This often works better than using printed material because it shows the Mormon that you have taken the time to read LDS resources. Quote directly from LDS sources if possible. Statements from LDS leaders work best.
- *Don't think you need to cover every topic in one sitting.* Sometimes dealing with one or two subjects makes it easier to remember what you talked about.
- *Do be patient.* Mormons are led to believe that leaving the LDS church will lead to damnation. This is not a decision most Mormons make in an instant.

(Excerpt from *10 Q&A on Mormonism* Rose Publishing, www.rose-publishing.com)

Learn More

Joseph Smith: Prophet or Fraud?

“Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.” —*Doctrine and Covenants* 135:3

Joseph Smith denounced the Trinity:

“Many men say there is one God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are only one God! I say that is a strange God anyhow—three in one, and one in three! It is a curious organization. All are to be crammed into one God, according to sectarianism. It would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a wonderfully big God—he would be a giant or a monster.”—*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 372

Joseph Smith boasted that he accomplished more than the apostles or Jesus:

“I have more to boast of than ever any man had. 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.”—*History of the Church*, Vol. 6, pp. 408–412

Mormonism stands or falls on Joseph Smith:

“Mormonism, as it is called, *must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith*. He was either a prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned, or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. *There is no middle ground.*”—Mormon prophet Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, p. 188 (italics in original)

No salvation without Joseph Smith:

“If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration, there would be no salvation.”—Mormon apostle Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (1978), p. 670

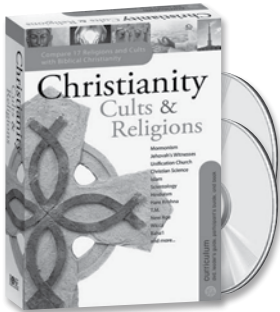
“I know that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of God, that this is the Gospel of salvation, and if you do not believe it you will be damned, every one of you.”—Mormon prophet Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 4, p. 298

“... no man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith.”—Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 7, p. 289

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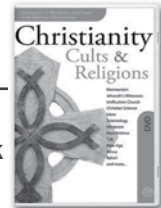
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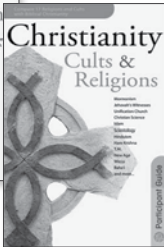
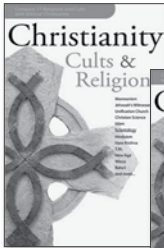
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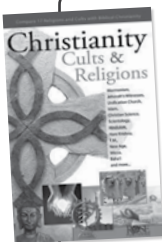


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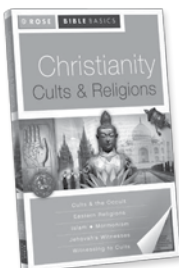
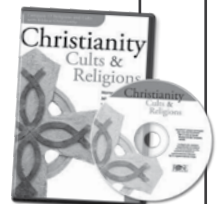
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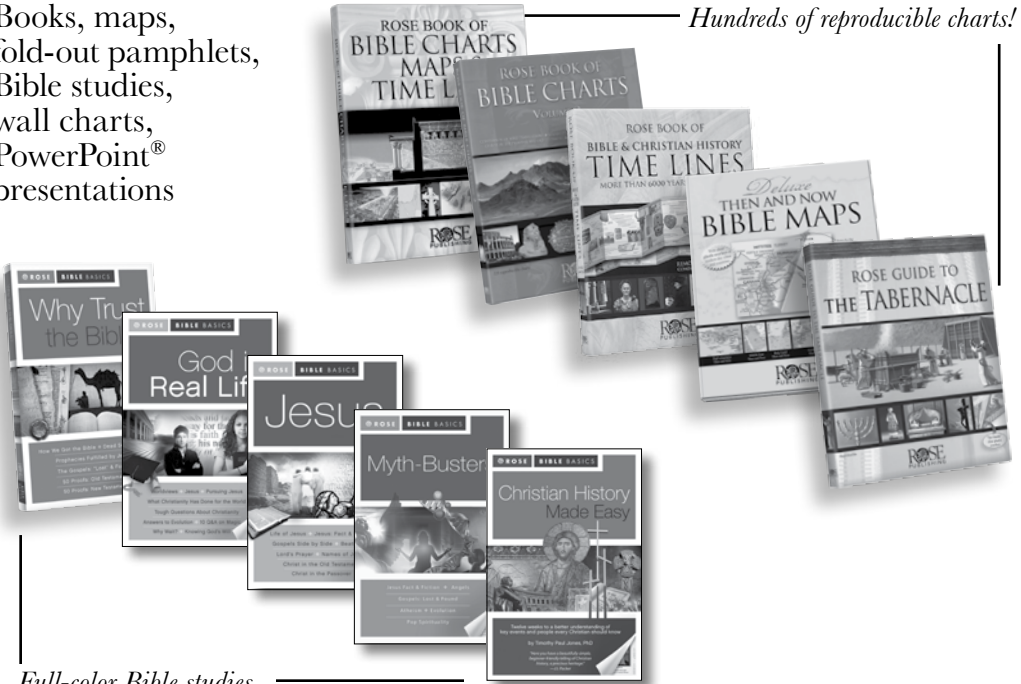
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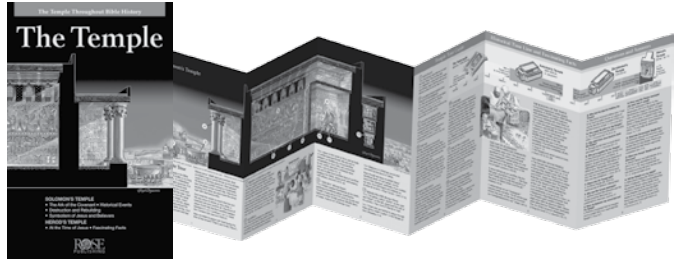
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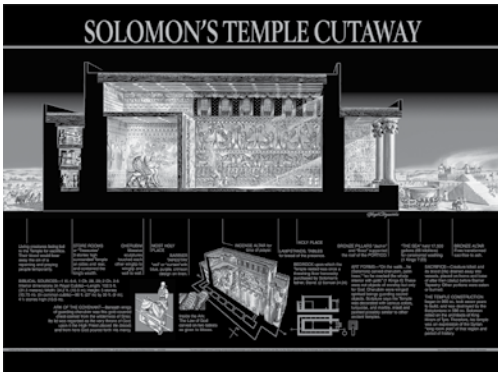


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