

“Truth without Love is too hard; Love without Truth is too soft”

Through *the* Maze

Living Faith Church

Copyright 2008, James R. Spencer Box 8656, Boise, ID 83707 www.beyondmormonism.com 02/08
order line (answering machine) 1-800-871-7120

—www.BeyondMormonism.com—

Uncertainty and Fear: The The Biggest Obsticals to Evangelism

“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (I Cor. 14:8)

Evangelism in America has fallen on hard times. An alliance of bad philosophical ideas, including the twin philosophies of **Relativism** and **Postmodernism**, has backed vast numbers of Christians into a corner of silence. More and more Evangelicals are silent in the face of unbiblical doctrines and movements, afraid to enter into conversations because they may be labeled narrow-minded, bigoted, or politically incorrect.

American culture is well into the Brave New World where confusion and doublespeak are rampant. Dr. Alan Bloom eloquently opened his seminal book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, with this sentence: “There is one thing a professor can be absolutely sure of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, *that truth is relative.*” (Bloom, Allan, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1987) Of course, to most (but not all) Evangelical Christians, the statement “Truth is Relative” is ludicrous.

Relativism in morals and religion is everywhere. However, few people are Relativists when they are selecting a heart surgeon or boarding an airplane. They want the surgeon and the aeronautical engineer to believe in absolutes because they want the surgeon to cut the right artery and they want the engineer to design wings that won't come off when the

It is never necessary to make a donation to Through the Maze to receive this newsletter, however, we do have to hear from you at least once a year. Please return the purple card.



plane is airborne.

Relativism breeds uncertainty. Today, even conservative Christians who believe they have a responsibility to share

(Cont. on page 2)

their faith often seem genuinely uncertain about whether or not it is OK to do so. Is it *civil* they often wonder, to challenge ideas that seem to them to be dangerously wrong? What gives them the right, they are asked, to question what others believe? “It isn’t loving,” they are told. “It isn’t *supportive*.” So, many of them—many of *us*—are confused because we know the Bible commands us to try to bring people to Christ, but everything in our culture screams that doing so is impolite at best and vulgar or rude at worst. So, as the psychologists say, we are “conflicted.” Being conflicted we often let opportunities pass us by—opportunities to share Christ.

Is there a way to learn to share Christ in this modern world?

THREE PRELIMINARY STEPS TO BECOMING

MORE ADEPT AT WITNESSING
First, we must be sure that God has clearly called us to be his witnesses. That command has not been rescinded because we are living in tough times.

Second, we need to understand that becoming adept at *effectively* presenting the Gospel is—and has always been—difficult. It may not be hard to leave tracts in public places, but engaging someone in meaningful conversation takes a bit more forethought.

Third, we must come to believe that our task is not Mission Impossible. We need to remind ourselves that hearts, underneath all the camouflage, really are hungry for the *only* message in the universe that can bring complete peace. It might help to reflect on our own conversion experience. Most of us were not really seeking God when He found us. Most of us were surprised by His grace when He violently invaded our hearts, broke down our doors of resistance, and drug us out of our refuge of sin.

Likewise, we need to conclude that God has indeed called us to a difficult work, but that He would not call us to a work that we cannot do. We need to agree that we *can* actually acquire the skills to make our case in effective ways.

GOD HAS CALLED US TO WITNESS

The simple truth is that God really has a plan for redeeming

mankind that includes us! In fact there is no *other* method for spreading the Good News than through the witness of believers. Without that witness the Kingdom of God comes to a standstill. As the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans:

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? (Romans 10:14)

Paul was *not* thinking of a special class of Christians who were called to preach the Good News. All of us who have

been redeemed are to be partners in the redemption of our neighbors. We literally are to become “fishers of men.” (Matt: 4:19; Mark 1:17)

Paul explained it this way:

[God] has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. (2 Cor. 5:19-20)

WITNESSING NEVER WAS EASY

We should not think that Christians in an earlier age had it easier. We remember that the Church has always been persecuted for its faith. Jesus warned the early Church:

But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake,

for a testimony against them. (Mark 13:9)

Witnessing is dangerous. No matter how careful and civil we are, we will often be misunderstood; we will often give up something in the eyes of our coworkers, fellow students, and neighbors when we decide to become open advocates of evangelism. We will be rejected, sometimes, by people we love and respect. That can’t be changed. But what price are we willing to pay for our respect in the world? Jesus asks us,

Born Again Ignorance?

The Barna Research Group has found that Born Again Christians have little better—and sometimes worse—understanding than those who claim no religious position. According to Barna:

- **Half of born again Christians (46%) think that Satan is “not a living being but is merely a symbol of evil.” (2007)**
- **37% of born agains believe that if a person is good enough they can earn a place in Heaven. (2007)**
- **26% of born agains agree that “while he lived on earth, Jesus committed sins, like other people,” (In this case born agains were not as confident as the general population. A survey of adults without regard to religious affiliation showed that 41% of them thought Jesus was sinless! (2007)**
- **Only 36% of born agains said they believe in moral absolutes (2006)**

Barna’s careful definition of the term Born Again Christian “Born again Christians are not defined on the basis of characterizing themselves as ‘born again’ but based upon their answers to two questions. The first is ‘have you ever made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in your life today?’

If the respondent says ‘yes,’ then they are asked a follow-up question about life after death. One of the seven perspectives a respondent may choose is ‘When I die, I will go to Heaven because I have confessed my sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as my savior.’ Individuals who answer ‘yes’ to the first question and select *this* statement as their belief about their own salvation are then categorized as ‘born again.’”

—Barna Research Group studies: www.barna.org

“What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?” (Matt: 16:26)

WITNESSING IS POSSIBLE IF WE TEMPER OUR ZEAL WITH WISDOM

Without wisdom, our message will not be heard, but when our witness is well-rounded, sincere, and presented in the natural flow of conversation, it will produce results. Throughout the New Testament, the Kingdom of God is likened to a seed. A seed we plant and water, but that God causes to grow. We must be content with what appear to be small victories. We may not see someone come to Christ immediately, but we are part of the program. Our goal is to make an entrance for Christ, to reduce prejudice against Him and his message, and to move our contact person along the road towards a new life.

AN EXAMPLE OF EVANGELISM IN ACTION

Pastor Bob Caldwell of Calvary Chapel in Boise, recently hosted an all-day seminar on Mormonism. Knowing that many people in his congregation were uncomfortable with the idea of publicly addressing Mormonism, Bob patiently explained to the congregation why he had authorized the seminar. I thought his explanation was excellent. And, I thought one of his examples serves a model for the right way to do evangelism.

To help us understand how to proceed with humility and boldness, he described a situation he frequently finds himself in when he travels to India as part of his church’s missionary outreach to that country. Pastor Bob said that as he flies to his duties in Bangalore, he often finds himself in the company of nonchristian Americans and Europeans who are going there to visit the famous ashram of guru Sai Baba.

Frequently those he meets on the airplane ask him why he is going to India. He responds that he is going to preach the Gospel in the poor sectors of the city. Almost without exception, he says, this announcement is met with shock and bitterness:

“That’s horrible!” his fellow passenger often says, “How dare you come to this culture and bring your religion to them. *That is so wrong!* Why don’t you leave these people alone?”

At that moment Bob is presented with an opportunity, but it is a risky one. He asks himself, “What should I do, what should I say? I want to say something that makes sense, something that gives them a reason for my activity. But I have to speak to the person in the context of their present mind set. They have been incorrectly taught that Christianity has ruined the world. They have a belief system, a mind set that has taught them that Christian missionaries are usually bigots and that our missionary efforts do horrible things that hurt people and ruin their culture.”

Bob continues, “Knowing that is what they believe, I try to say something that will help them understand where Christians *really* are coming from. But I realize to be effective I have to be meek and I have to respect the person I am talking to. So in that situation I try to say things that I think are reasonable. I ask questions.”

Bob asks questions that point to the destructive nature of some aspects of Hinduism. Bob says he asks questions like:

Do you think it is reasonable that many people in India live in slums—many are untouchables and that they have been relegated so low in the religious caste system that they don’t

even have a caste?

Do you think it is reasonable that others should not even touch them? Is it reasonable that they are told they have to submit to their persecutions and sufferings in society because of their karma? Is it reasonable to tell them that they have committed sins in some past life that causes them to be born in this wretched condition, and that there is no escape for them, and that they need to accept this and live out their karma?

Don’t you think that it is reasonable—if I have a message of liberation from that bondage—that I should tell them? If I believe that sin can be forgiven in a moment of time through faith in a loving God, and that a person can have his weight of sin lifted, shouldn’t I have the right to tell them that? Don’t I have the right to tell them that even though they have been taught that they deserve to live their entire life in a slum, God says he can remove them from that karma because Jesus Christ is an equal opportunity Savior? Don’t you think I have a right to say that to them? Don’t those people—the untouchables—deserve to hear such a message?

See, you can go to the Ashram and experience a nice, mellow time. But there is another part of what Hinduism has done to these people, and I feel a moral responsibility to say something. If they do not want to become Christians, am I going to force them? No. If they don’t think it is logical and reasonable am I going to hassle people? No. But don’t people have a right to information? What do you think?

I think Pastor Bob has taught something all of us can learn from, even if we never go to India. You can find a link to this sermon online at: www.beyondmormonism.com/pastorbob [Note: type “pastorbob” lower case]

IT IS NO DIFFERENT IN AMERICA

We don’t have to go to India to encounter people who are very upset if we attempt to share our faith in Christ. Postmodern culture has decided that addressing another person’s religion is terrible. When I go about my business of evangelizing Mormons, I am often met with the same reaction Bob experienced on the airplane. I remember talking to a Mormon Stake President. I told him I was in his town to preach at a local church. He was very friendly. He said, “What are you going to talk about?” I said, “I am going to tell people how to get Mormons to become Christians.” He was shocked. He thought it was awful. When I said to him that if it were OK for his church to send out 60,000 missionaries to make Christians into Mormons, then it should be OK for me to try to make Mormons into—say—Baptists. He couldn’t understand that at all. And worldly people are no better. If you tell somebody on an airplane that you want to evangelize Mormons, you are likely to hear:

“That’s horrible! How dare you attempt to push your religion on them? *That is so wrong!* Why don’t you leave these people alone?” Such reactions can be rather intimidating and discouraging.

So, what do we do? What do we say? How can we prepare ourselves for these encounters. I have spent the last thirty years

of my life preparing answers for anyone who wants to take the time to learn what are the most important points to cover when speaking to Mormons about their faith. (See mazeministry.com) The trouble is, all too many Christians are so intimidated by the surrounding culture that they think it is a waste of time to prepare for an encounter they are sure they will never have the stomach for! That is what has to change.

EVERYTHING DEPENDS UPON OUR LEVEL OF CERTAINTY OR UNCERTAINTY:

Are we confident we can learn to argue our case effectively? Please do not be put off by the word argument. I am not talking about nasty and uncivil encounters. I am using the term in its best sense:

A reason or set of reasons given with the aim of persuading others that an action or idea is right or wrong

The word is used appropriately to our discussion by the Apostle Paul in Second Corinthians chapter ten, verses four and five:

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Reason is obviously linked to Faith. How can we believe what we have not heard and do not understand. As Paul wrote:

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (Rom. 10:14)

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (1Cor. 1:18)

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1Cor. 1:21)

So, as intimidating as it may sound, a big part of our job is to help people hear. Not only that, but to help them *understand*. To clear up their erroneous thinking. To separate the good ideas from the bad. For that reason, we will have to swim upstream against

the voices that say, “How dare you invade our culture and spread your religious ideas!”

Personally, I hear things like that all the time. When I try to address the doctrinal errors of Mormonism, for example, people will say, “Why do you have to tear down another person’s religion? Why can’t you just say what is good about your religion?”

That is simply unreasonable. You cannot always convey ideas only in positive terms. For example it is not enough that you teach your children to play in the yard; you have to also tell them *not* to play in the street!

Still again, some people say: “If you want to know about Mormonism (for example) you should ask a Mormon. That is high foolishness! Is it reasonable to think that if you wanted to know about the health and value of Communism, you should ask Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Fidel Castro, or Joseph Stalin? Wouldn’t it be more reasonable to ask Alexander Solzhenitsyn?



Feeling Overwhelmed and Outgunned?

When the Bible tells us that we must use reason and arguments to make our case, we should remember that Western Civilization was built on the idea of debate and reason: Socrates said in his trial for heresy in ancient Greece, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Greek philosophy (and hence Western Civilization) was built upon the premise that people could, by reason, find the “good life.” Of course, Christianity teaches that salvation cannot be found through reason *alone*, but throughout all Christian thought is the idea that reason supplements faith.

The guiding principle of Western Civilization is the thought that “some ideas are

better than others.” How does one distinguish the good from the bad? By examining, questioning, discussing, and debating. Civilization has employed those methods in order to eradicate slavery, to liberate nations of people from tyrants (remember Auschwitz and the *gulags*), and to create better working conditions for laborers. Every idea needs to be tested. Religion is no different:

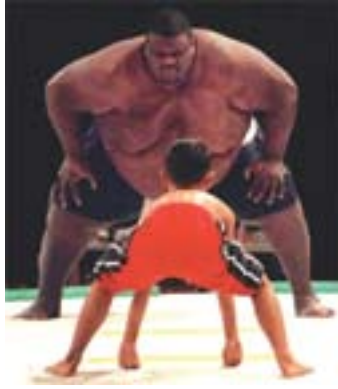
ARE WE SURE MORMONISM IS DESTRUCTIVE?

If we are uncertain about whether or not Mormonism is destructive to the person who receives it and believes it, we will probably not have the courage to speak out. As I said at the beginning of this discussion, we have been greatly influenced by the rise of Relativism and Postmodernism. The Body of Christ has been backed into a corner of intimidation. Fearing we will be regarded as “judgmental,” we have allowed wolves into the

flock.

Nearly gone is the Christian's confidence that those who "bring another gospel" are under a curse. (Gal. 1:6; 2Cor. 11:4) The broader church seems to be ignoring the repeated warnings against false teachers who will come into the church. In one (of many places) the New Testament teaches:

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron (1 Timothy 4:1-2)



But is Mormonism truly dangerous? In my recent DVD "Mormonism: Has Anything Changed?" I demonstrated that Mormonism continues to teach the same heresies that its founder, Joseph Smith, taught. These heresies claim that Jesus and God the Father are not One God, but two, and that all men have the opportunity to become gods in the exact same way that Jesus and countless other "gods" have done. Nothing has changed. If Mormonism were evil when it began in the backwoods of upstate New York, it is evil today.

For two thousand years the Body of Christ has said that corrupting the definition of God's nature was a "damnable heresy." It is wrong and destructive because what we worship is as important as the fact *that* we worship! Furthermore, two thousand years of history (not to mention the clear teaching of scripture) make it clear that *bad doctrine produces bad fruit!*

Today, vast numbers of so-called Evangelical Christians are not sure about the foundational Christian Doctrines: The Holy Trinity, The Virgin Birth, Original Sin, Salvation by Grace Alone, the Inerrancy of Scripture. The Barna Group, a Christian research institute, polled more than a thousand people who described themselves as "Born Again." (See sidebar *Born Again Christians and foggy thinking*) for the remarkable examples of foggy thinking Barna found within the within the Body of Christ)

So, what we believe is important to our spiritual health, even to our salvation. We can only truly worship God when we hear *truth* about Him, about His nature, about His Holiness, about His provision for sinners. We are not—as Mormonism teaches—"gods in embryo," on our way to becoming Gods ourselves. No, people are born into the world *separated* from God. (The doctrine of Original Sin) Only truth can set us free, truth about Christ and his Incarnation and Atonement.

False prophets and the false religious systems they produce, substitute the knowledge of saving doctrines with errors that can never lead us to seeing, recognizing, and accepting the Truth as manifested in Jesus Christ. The evil they do is in failing to provide a real answer to the Sin Problem. That is the destructive nature of the cults. Erroneous doctrinal systems, such as Mormonism, promote the continued separation of men and women from the saving knowledge of God. That is soul-damning.

However, Mormonism not only has eternal consequences, it creates a hell on earth for those who believe it. When I say that, many people recoil and think I have lost my mind. Somehow we have come to believe the Mormon propaganda that suggests that Mormonism produces well-adjusted, happy, people. The social statistics argue against that rosy picture.

Don't get me wrong, many Latter-day Saints are wonderful people, but I could say that about most Muslims. Nevertheless, Islam produces spoiled fruit. Think of women's rights, suicide bombers, rampant legalism, and fatalism.

For Mormonism, social health statistics have been described by at least one Utah caseworker with the Child Welfare Unit in Salt Lake County as "blackly pessimistic." Mormon statistics for child abuse, rape, fraud, spousal abuse, prescription drug abuse, and youth suicide are frighteningly out of control. Recently Utah was ranked the worst state in the nation in terms of mental health and suicide rates. Utah also leads the nation in antidepressant drug abuse. (See: BeyondMormonism.com/statistics) [Note: the word "statistics" must be typed lower case.]

The uninformed outside world only looks at the outside or cosmetic appearance of Mormon culture. Yes, Utah towns have wide, straight streets, and Mormons are educated, patriotic, and want the best for their children. But it is the *system* that is corrupted. As the Psalmist wrote:

Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh [but] in vain. (Psm. 127:1)

In other words, not only can you not find God without the Holy Spirit, you cannot create a truly godly society without the Holy Spirit.

Like Hinduism, Islam, or any other religious or philosophical system, it is impossible to create a truly healthy culture without the special revelation of the Word of God. And that is why God has set the saved into the world as lights, commanding them to go forth and make disciples of all nations. Christians are in the business of reclaiming God's world from the devil. And we do that by declaring the Gospel message with every bit of passion and skill we can muster.

If we are to fulfill our godly obligations that accompany our salvation, we must become interested in the lost and dying around us. That starts, I think, with prayer. I challenge you to ask God to show you the pathway towards your inheritance which is a heart of compassion and an empowered Christian witness in the midst of "this present darkness."



Always start your web searches for Mormon topics at:

BeyondMormonism.com

Then click this link:

[Goto Main Web Site](#)

“Be not Afraid but be of Good Courage!”

More than one-hundred-fifty times in the Bible God says something like “Fear not, I am with you.” Likewise, God’s servants repeatedly have called us to courage. There is an enemy of our souls, a raging lion who seeks to destroy us. (I Peter 5:8) We must stand fast, be strong, and resist the wicked. If we do, we shall overcome evil:

And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do [exploits]. (Dan 11:32)

I believe that those who would fulfill their true Christian destinies must be prepared to fight the good fight of faith. They must be those who “...believe that God is, and [that] he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb. 11:6) They must run the race of life with courage and *certainty*, as Paul taught us in I Corinthians chapter nine.

There is a “great cloud” of witnesses who have gone before us and who have become examples to us. (Heb. 12:1) Remember Gideon who fought the Midianites and Amalakites after reducing his army to 300 men? How about The Three Hebrew Children who king Nebuchadnezzar ordered to bow down to a golden image? The Bible states that:

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we [are] not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be [that you will burn us in the fiery furnace], our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver [us] out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. (Dan 3:16-18)

Then there was the example of the prophetess Deborah who stepped up and delivered Israel from the Canaanite King Jabin and his general Sisera who commanded nine hundred chariots of iron. It was unheard of for a woman to lead an army.

Stories of past heroes motivate me. Like the stories of the courage of David and his Mighty Men. David who crept into the tent of King Saul (who wanted to kill David) and stole his spear. David who approached Saul in the cave and cut off a piece of his cloak. And David who faced Goliath saying:

Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. (I Samuel 17: 45-46)



Nehemiah the Prophet displayed great courage when he refused to hide from his prospective murderers in the temple saying. He said:

Should such a man as I flee? and who [is there], that, [being] as I [am], would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. (Nehemiah 6:11)

What of Esther who risked her life to save her people? That because her uncle said to her, “Perhaps God raised you up for such a time as this.” (Esther 4:14)

And, of course, the greatest list of “Heroes of Faith” occurs in chapter eleven of Hebrews:

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

And others had trial of [cruel] mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and [in] mountains, and [in] dens and caves of the earth.

They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented.

Let us join these heroes in displaying our own faith in the face of great opposition.