

# Understanding the ABCs of Mormonism: An Introduction



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# BASIC STATISTICS

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- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—  
based in Salt Lake City, UT
- Began in 1830 with 6 members
- Reached their first million in 1947

# BASIC STATISTICS

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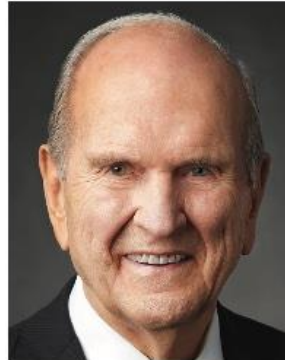
- About 74,000 full-time missionaries (males, 2 years starting 18, females 18 months starting at 19) and 31,000 senior missionaries
- 207 operating temples with more than 170 planned or being built (Farmington will be #2 in New Mexico)
- Currently a membership of over 17 million—more than half live outside the U.S.
- Led by a prophet/president (17<sup>th</sup> President Russell M. Nelson), two counselors (First Presidency), and 12 apostles—“General Authorities”

# CURRENT GENERAL AUTHORITIES

## FIRST PRESIDENCY



Dallin H. Oaks  
First Counselor



Russell M. Nelson  
President



Henry B. Eyring  
Second Counselor

## QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES



Jeffrey R. Holland



Dieter F. Uchtdorf



David A. Bednar



Quentin L. Cook



D. Todd Christofferson



Neil L. Andersen



Ronald A. Rasband



Gary E. Stevenson



Dale G. Renlund



Gerrit W. Gong



Ulisses Soares

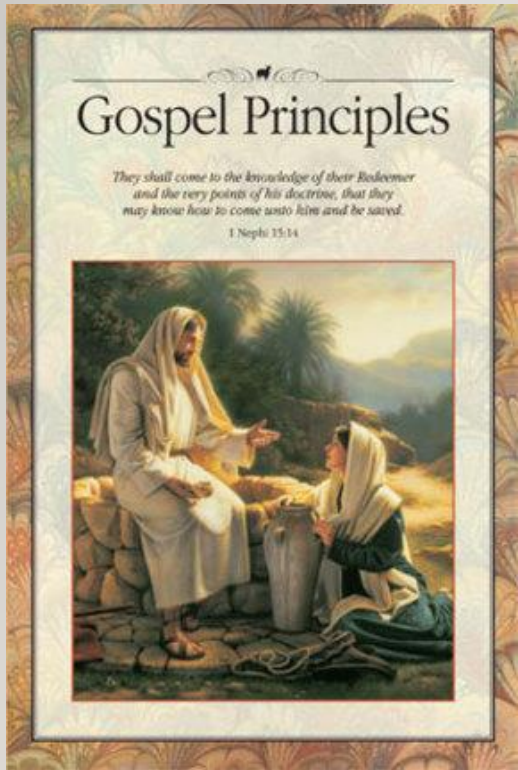


Patrick Kearon



# SCRIPTURES (“STANDARD WORKS”)

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“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accepts four books as scripture: the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. These books are called the standard works of the Church. The inspired words of our living prophets are also accepted as scripture” (*Gospel Principles*, p. 52).

# **“Joseph Smith—History. Overview**

Have students read the five italicized summary statements that are found throughout Joseph Smith—History and list the major events that are described in the text. Write the following five statements on the board:

God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ have appeared to mankind in modern times....

There was an apostasy of the true Church.

Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.

The Book of Mormon is the word of God.

The Church of Jesus Christ has been restored

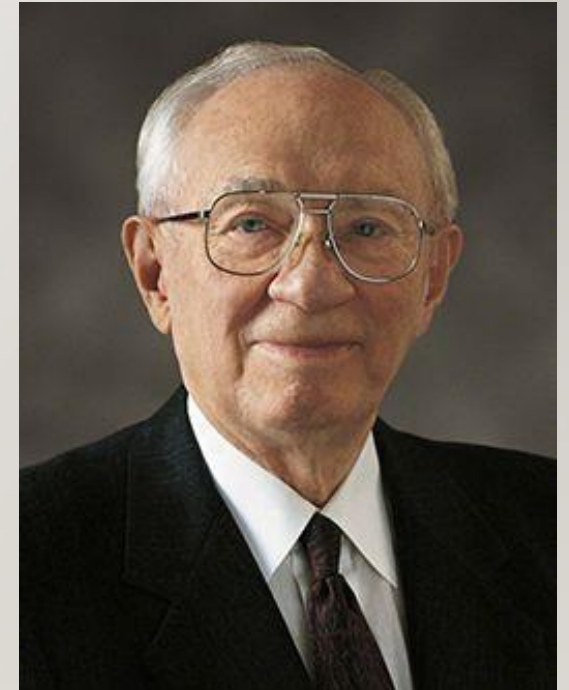
Ask students: If any one of these statements were false, how would that affect the other statements, and why?”

“God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ have appeared to mankind in modern times”

## FIRST VISION

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“Our whole strength rests on the validity of that vision. It either occurred or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud . . . upon that unique and wonderful experience stands the validity of this church” (“The Marvelous Foundation of our Faith,” *Ensign* (Conference Edition), November 2002, p. 80. Ellipsis mine).



Gordon B. Hinckley  
15<sup>th</sup> President

*For more on the First Vision, see chapter 31 in Answering Mormons' Questions*



“There was an apostasy of the true Church”

## GREAT APOSTASY

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“The period of time when the true Church no longer existed on earth is called the Great Apostasy. Soon pagan beliefs dominated the thinking of those called Christians. The Roman emperor adopted this false Christianity as the state religion. The church was very different from the Church Jesus organized. It taught that God was a being without substance... It was the Church of Jesus Christ no longer; it was a church of men” (*Gospel Principles*, p. 92).

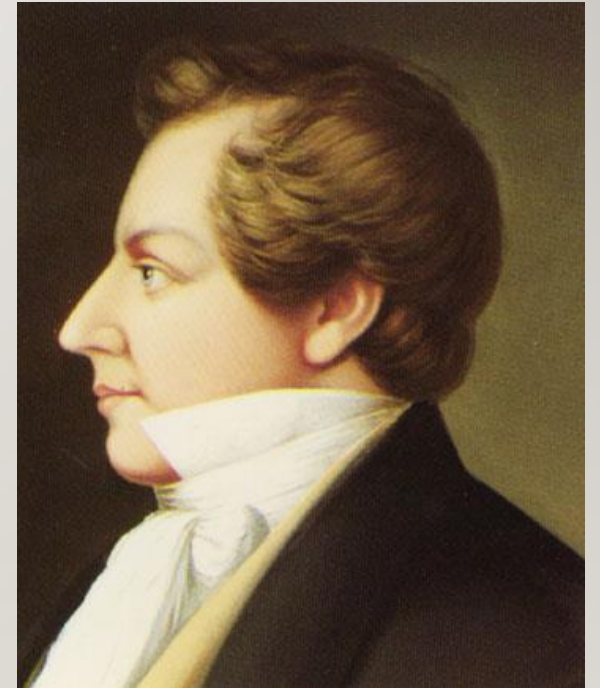
*For more on the Great Apostasy, see chapter 6 in Mormonism 101*

“Joseph Smith was a prophet of God”

## JOSEPH SMITH

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“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” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 1:188).



Church Founder  
Joseph Smith

*For more on Joseph Smith, see chapter 17 of Mormonism 101*

“The Book of Mormon is the word of God”

## BOOK OF MORMON

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Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland

“I am suggesting that one has to take something of a do-or-die stand regarding the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the divine origins of the Book of Mormon. Reason and righteousness require it. Joseph Smith must be accepted either as a prophet of God or else as a charlatan of the first order,

*For more on the Book of Mormon, see chapter 8 of Mormonism 101*

“The Book of Mormon is the word of God”

## BOOK OF MORMON

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Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland

but no one should tolerate any ludicrous, even laughable middle ground about the wonderful contours of a young boy’s imagination or his remarkable facility for turning a literary phrase. That is an unacceptable position to take—morally, literarily, historically, or theologically” (*Christ and the New Covenant*, p. 335).

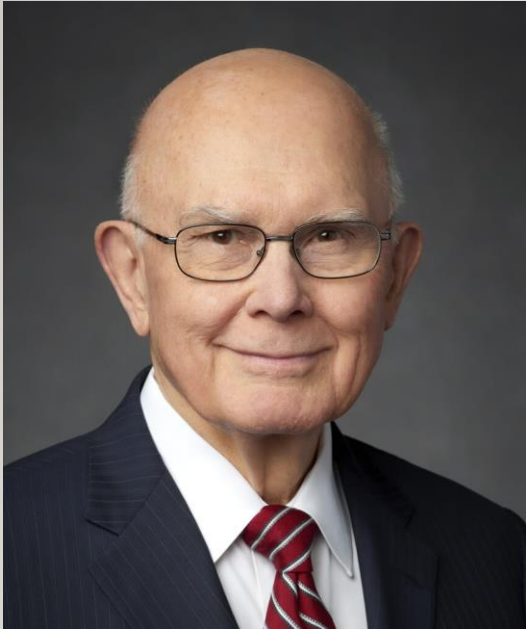
*For more on the Book of Mormon, see chapter 8 of Mormonism 101*



“The Church of Jesus Christ has been restored”

## RESTORATION OF TRUE CHRISTIANITY

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Dallin H. Oaks  
First Counselor,  
First Presidency

“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has many beliefs in common with other Christian churches. But we have differences, and those differences explain why we send missionaries to other Christians” (“Apostasy and Restoration,” *Ensign* (Conference Edition), May 1995, p. 84).

# THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN ADDRESSING MORMON DOCTRINE

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I. Understand the meaning of terms

# “GOD THE FATHER”

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Apostle Bruce R. McConkie

“The Father is a glorified, perfected, resurrected, exalted man who worked out his salvation by obedience to the same laws he has given to us so that we may do the same” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p. 64).

*For more on God the Father, see chapter 1 of Mormonism 101*

## “GOD THE FATHER”

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LDS: “Also known as Elohim or Heavenly Father. He was once a righteous human in another realm who eventually became the God of this world with a tangible body of flesh and bones (D&C 130:22)”

*For more on God the Father, see chapter 1 of Mormonism 101*



# “GOD THE FATHER”

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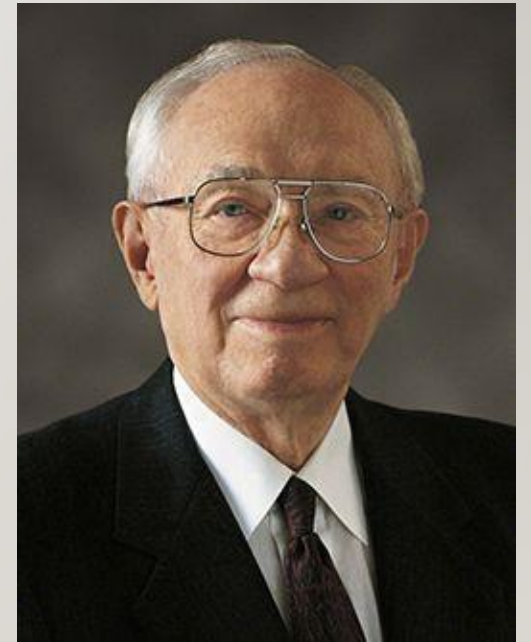
Christian: “The first person of the Trinity who is uncreated and spirit in form (John 4:24)”

*For more on God the Father, see chapter 1 of Mormonism 101*

# “JESUS”

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“As a church we have critics, many of them. They say we do not believe in the traditional Christ of Christianity. There is some substance to what they say”  
 (“We look to Christ,” *Ensign*  
 (Conference Edition), May 2002, p. 90).



Gordon B. Hinckley  
15<sup>th</sup> President

*For more on Jesus, see chapter 2 of Mormonism 101*

# “JESUS”

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LDS: “God the Father’s firstborn son and humanity’s oldest brother. Known as Jehovah, he became a god through obedience. The ‘atonement’ allowed for God’s spirit children who came to earth to progress to one of three kingdoms of glory.”

*For more on Jesus, see chapter 2 of Mormonism 101*

# “JESUS”

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Christian: “The second person of the Trinity who came to earth and lived a human life. His sacrifice on the cross allows allows believers to be forgiven on their sins.”

*For more on Jesus, see chapter 2 of Mormonism 101*



# “SALVATION BY GRACE”

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Apostle James Talmage

“The Sectarian Dogma of Justification by Faith Alone has exercised an influence for evil. The idea upon which this pernicious doctrine was founded was at first associated with that of an absolute predestination, by which man was foredoomed to destruction, or to an undeserved salvation”  
(*Articles of Faith*, p. 432).

*For more on salvation, see chapter 11 of Mormonism 101*

# “SALVATION BY GRACE”

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LDS: “Enabling power provided by God to help a person keep the commandments”

Christian: “Unmerited favor from God provided to those who place their trust in Jesus”

*For more on salvation, see chapter 11 of Mormonism 101*

## “ETERNAL LIFE”

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“These are some of the blessings given to exalted people: 1.They will live eternally in the presence of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ (see D&C 76:62). 2.They will become gods (see D&C 132:20–23). 3.They will be united eternally with their righteous family members and will be able to have eternal increase. 4.They will receive a fulness of joy. 5.They will have everything that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have—all power, glory, dominion, and knowledge (see D&C 132:19–20)” (*Gospel Principles*, p. 277).

*For more on salvation, see chapter 11 of Mormonism 101*

# “ETERNAL LIFE”

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LDS: “Exaltation to godhood in the highest level of the celestial kingdom

Christian: Spending eternity with God in heaven

*For more on salvation, see chapter 11 of Mormonism 101*



# THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN ADDRESSING MORMON DOCTRINE

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1. Understand the meaning of terms
2. Never assume

# ASK QUESTIONS

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- “What do you mean by that?” (i.e., “When you say ‘God,’ what exactly do you mean by that?)
- “What do you believe about (salvation by grace)” (or any other doctrine)
- Do not tell the Latter-day Saint what he or she believes (though you could say “that doesn’t seem to be what your leaders have taught before”)

# ASK QUESTIONS

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- The power of asking questions...
  - It allows the person to explain what they mean
  - No accusation of not letting Latter-day Saints speak for themselves
  - People generally like to talk about themselves and explain what they believe
  - If you listen with care, you can ask even more questions

YET THERE IS NO SILVER BULLET QUESTION

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# THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN ADDRESSING MORMON DOCTRINE

---

1. Understand the meaning of terms
2. Never assume
3. Know your own faith

# SOME EXAMPLES

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As a Christian do you understand

- the difference between grace vs. works?
- how to provide a basic definition of the Trinity (Mormons use the term “Godhead”)?
- the reasons why you believe the Bible is true (while rejecting other LDS scripture)?

# THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN ADDRESSING MORMON DOCTRINE

---

1. Understand the meaning of terms
2. Never assume
3. Know your own faith
4. Realize that Latter-day Saints are not the enemy

# TWO VERSES TO UNDERSTAND

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- Ephesians 4:15 “Speaking the truth in love”
- 1 Peter 3:15-16 “Gentleness and Respect”



## A QUICK NOTE ON TEMPLES (MORE LATER THIS WEEK)

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- Temples are places of work for faithful Latter-day Saints (closed on Sundays)
- No baptisms of living persons are done here
- Living participants must be members for at least a year and have a temple recommend
- Marriages are done for both “time and eternity”



# A QUICK NOTE ON TEMPLES (MORE LATER THIS WEEK)

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- Ordinance rooms are where they are instructed about the creation of the world, learn special tokens (handshakes), and receive new names
- Goal is to provide the necessary work for families to be reunited in the next life (celestial kingdom)
- Vast majority of the work is done on behalf of those already dead
- Includes baptisms for the dead (1 Corinthians 15:29) and “sealings” of ancestors for eternity



# SHOULD I GO ON THE TEMPLE OPEN HOUSE?

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- Your choice—based on your conscience (it's just a building)
- Open through Aug 2—no reservations are required
- It will be the only time you will have to go through without a temple recommend
- Going could be a great lead-in with your LDS friends/neighbors
  - “Just want you to know that I visited the temple. I'd love to ask you some questions about it” (possibly lunch?)



## JUST REMEMBER THOUGH...

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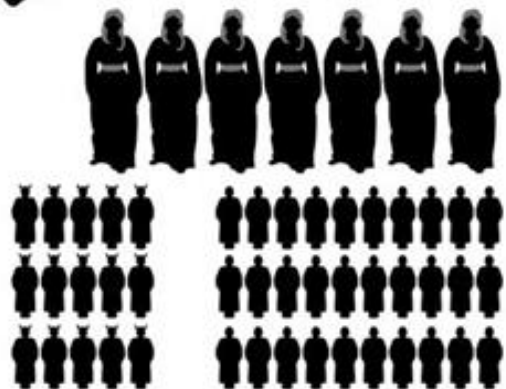
- The things that take place in the temple are *not* supposed to be talked about with others (even within their own family)
- Don't ask specific questions about the rites—you put your LDS friend in awkward spot
- Do not ask about their garments as well, which they wear throughout the day—a little too personal
- Ask questions that deal more with the doctrines/reasons they do these things for both the living and the dead



# MORMON PLAN OF SALVATION

Ruled by Heavenly Father and populated with his wives and billions of spirit children.

## PREMORTALITY: 1ST ESTATE



BIRTH

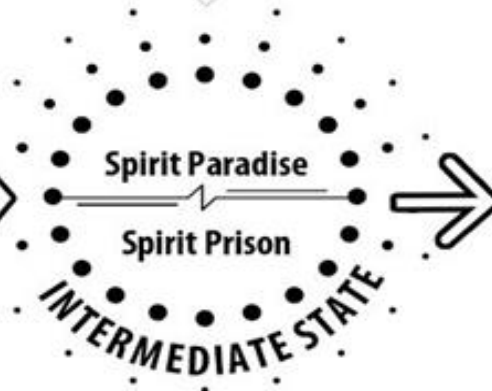
1/3 of spirits kicked out because they chose Lucifer. They have no bodies.



2/3 of spirits get to be born onto earth with bodies needed to progress to godhood. Their circumstance of birth is based upon their merit (worthiness) in premortality.

Those ending up in Spirit Prison can be presented with the LDS gospel when vicarious work of the dead is performed for them on the earth.

DEATH



Celestial Kingdom  
"Godhood"

Terrestrial Kingdom  
Good people

Telestial Kingdom  
Evil people

"HEAVEN": FINAL ESTATE

1,000 year millennium

Judgment

Outer Darkness

# ANOTHER GREAT RESOURCE TO CONSIDER

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(OR TAKE SEVERAL TO PASS OUT TO NEIGHBORS)

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- PDF of the paper is on the site

# Q&A

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