

FOREWORD BY FRANK TUREK

Trading Questions

Twenty **Essential Conversations**
to Have with Your **Mormon Friend**



Brady Blevins • Daniel Ray • James K. Walker

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with Your Mormon Friend*

Brady Blevins

Daniel Ray

James K. Walker



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Introduction

We have all heard the all-too-often knock on the door. As you peer through the peephole, you see two young men dressed in dark slacks, white dress shirts, and ties. When you open the door, you see a name tag on their shirt, and to your surprise and confusion the title elder is in front of their names. Now, this is confusing because these two young men do not look like they are far removed from high school! These young men are Mormon Missionaries for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They have knocked on your door to share with you the restored gospel as they have learned from the late prophet Joseph Smith.

What do you do? Over the years we have heard many responses to this question. People have told us that they open up their door and let the dogs chase them down the street. Others say they watch them walk up the driveway only to turn the sprinklers on them. One late senior saint who I pastored told me, after a series on different religious views, said, “Bro. Brady, I’ll tell you what I do when they knock on my door. I tell them if they don’t believe in Jesus they will die, and go to a hell they don’t believe in. Then I slam the door right in their face.” Another way people have responded is by turning out the lights, and pretending they are not home, even though the missionaries can hear them whispering to their children to be quiet. Most people will just not answer the door. If they do, usually they will simply say “I’m not interested,” rather than engage. What might Jesus do, though?

Do you ever wonder why we often respond like this? Do you think that maybe, for many people, it is because they do not have a good response? For most people, they do not want to engage because they simply do not know what to say. Others still are afraid that they will not have an answer to the questions or that they do not know enough to engage. While that could be part of the problem, most people do not engage because they are gripped with fear because they do not have a game plan in place as to what to do when they finally garner the courage to open the door.

Maybe you have picked up this book wondering why there is a need for a book like this. You may have heard that Mormons are Christians too, and that there is really no major difference between Mormons, and evangelical Christians. You may know some Mormons, and, if you do, you have probably been impressed by their kindness, and helpfulness. I personally have a couple of friends who are Mormons, and they are some of the most kind, and respectful people I have ever met. But the problem is that you can be kind, and respectful but that is not what gets you into heaven or into a personal relationship with Christ.

The gospel message is *the* difference between Mormons, and evangelical Christians. In the following pages we will layout essential questions that you should be prepared to ask, and answer as you engage—not the enemy—but a sincere person who is seeking to know Christ. We want to stress that Mormons are not the enemy. They are people who are striving to live a God-pleasing life, enjoy the beauty of creation, and the blessing of a family. They are just like me and you with one difference. The gospel message they have been taught does not match with what the Bible clearly teaches. This is what has motivated us to dedicate our lives to reaching unbelievers.

We wrote this book to give you a game plan to be prepared to engage your Mormon friend or the missionaries who knock on

your door so that you will not find yourself resorting to some of the bad responses we have heard over the years. Instead, we hope that you will open the door, invite them in, and have a civil, respectful conversation that addresses the most important issue for all humanity: the matter of salvation, and the forgiveness of sins.

When Mormons are confronted with difficult questions, they are often told just to put the question on the shelf. We want to address the questions on the shelf, the ones that are often the most important issues that separate evangelical Christian doctrine and Mormon doctrine. Putting questions on the shelf is only a helpful endeavor if you come back, in a timely manner, and deal with those issues.

What's in a name?

Before we begin addressing the most important questions to ask and answer, we must address one thing that might have caught your eye. You may notice that we have chosen to use the word Mormon to describe the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the official name of what is commonly known as the Mormon church, founded by Joseph Smith (1805–1844) on April 6, 1830. The name “Mormon,” as a moniker of the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has fallen in disrepute since the president of the church, Russell M. Nelson (1924–2025), announced on August 16, 2018:

The Lord has impressed upon my mind the importance of the name He has revealed for His Church, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We have work before us to bring ourselves in harmony with His will. In recent weeks, various Church leaders and departments have initiated the necessary steps to do so. Additional information about this important matter will be made available in the coming months.¹

On October 7, 2018, during the 188th Semi-annual General Conference President Nelson stated,

Some weeks ago, I released a statement regarding a course correction for the name of the Church. . . . Instead, it *is* a correction. It *is* the command of the Lord. Joseph Smith did not name the Church restored through him; neither did Mormon. It was the Savior Himself who said, “For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” . . . Thus, the name of the Church is not negotiable. When the Savior clearly states what the name of His Church should be and even precedes His declaration with, “Thus shall my church be called,” He is serious. And if we allow nicknames to be used or adopt or even sponsor those nicknames ourselves, He is offended.²

Consider that Nelson is clearly stating that God is offended when people use nicknames of this church. This statement holds serious implications. First, to consider the name so sacred that to use a nickname, or a shortened version of the name, could very well elevate the official name into a place of idolatry. The official name becomes more important than the principles taught therein. There is, however, another issue at stake here. While we understand that derogatory names are never preferred; sometimes they are embraced because what was meant as a pejorative actually fits the group quite well. Consider that in Acts 11.26, “the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”³ The name was not their choice but rather was given to them by those who were not of them as a way to describe them. Frankly, the name fits because that is what they were, people who wanted to be like Christ. In the same way it fits with people who follow the Book of Mormon. It accurately identifies the individual to what they believe. The question might be, “How was God not offended in Acts? After well over 100 years of using this name, He is just *now* offended?”

Nelson, however, insisted the use of the name Mormon was a “victory for Satan.”

What’s in a name or, in this case, a nickname? When it comes to nicknames of the Church, such as the “LDS Church,” the “Mormon Church,” or the “Church of the Latter-day Saints,” the most important thing in those names is the absence of the Savior’s name. To remove the Lord’s name from the Lord’s Church is a major victory for Satan. When we discard the Savior’s name, we are subtly disregarding all that Jesus Christ did for us—even His Atonement. . . . When we omit His name from His Church, we are inadvertently removing Him as the central focus of our lives.⁴

A major victory for Satan? Consider though that from 2010 to 2018 (the same year as Nelson’s statement), the church ran a \$6.1 million ad campaign entitled “I’m a Mormon.”⁵ The ad campaign featured billboards, buses, television, and internet campaigns (various Mormon celebrities, athletes, and public figures made short video clips proclaiming, “I’m a Mormon”). If using the term Mormon is so bad, such an offense to God, and a major victory of Satan then why would the church spend millions of dollars on the “I’m-a-Mormon” ad campaign? Either the previous president Thomas S. Monson (2008–2018) erred in approving the campaign or Russell M. Nelson’s views concerning the name of the church, and the use of nicknames are wrong. They cannot both be correct.

A flood of inconvenient, and costly changes for the church resulted from Russell’s announcement. The famed “Mormon Tabernacle Choir” quietly changed their name to “The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square.” The church’s website had to change from “LDS.org” to “ChurchofJesusChrist.org.” Another change was “Mormon.org” changed to “ComeUntoChrist.org.” Even the church’s social media accounts had to change, which are now reflected by the name the “Savior’s Church.” It may be noted the

history of the LDS church name is much more complicated than one may imagine, as the brief timeline below shows.

- **April 6, 1830** – The Church of Christ is officially organized with six members. The name “Church of Christ” was inspired by the Scriptures and used until 1834.
- **May 3, 1834** – Sidney Rigdon (1793–1876), and Newel K. Whitney (1795–1850) declare, in a conference of Church leaders, that the name of the Church would be changed to “The Church of the Latter Day Saints.”
- **April 26, 1838** – Joseph Smith received a revelation from the Lord (Doctrine and Covenants 115.4). The revelation states, “For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.”
- **July 9, 1843** – Joseph Smith uses the phrase “Mormon” and “Mormonism” multiple times in a journal entry.⁶
- **1844** – After the death of Joseph Smith, multiple churches began to form. The next president and prophet of the church, Brigham Young (1801–1877), adopted the British-styled spelling of the name, using “Latter-day Saints” instead of “Latter Day Saints.”
- **February 1851** – The church was legally incorporated into the “State of Deseret,” the article “the” was capitalized into the incorporated name.
- **April 1972** – Elder Milton R. Hunter (1902–1975) uses the term “LDS Church” over the pulpit in General Conference for the first time.
- **December 1995** – The official typeface logo of the Church (in use since 1974) is changed to help reemphasize the centrality of Christ in the Church’s teaching.

- **October 2001** – The church announces that Mormon.org will be launched to help visitors interested in the faith learn more and find answers to common questions.
- **January 2011** – The first video clips for the “I’m a Mormon” campaign first aired nationwide but quickly expanded to be worldwide.
- **August 16, 2018** – President Russell M. Nelson releases a statement stating that the church’s official name is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and that all other nicknames or shortened version should be avoided. Shortly after the announcement the Mormon Tabernacle Choir changes their name to The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square.
- **October 7, 2018** – President Nelson gives a General Conference address titled “The Correct Name of the Church”
- **March 5, 2019** – The official website for the church changes from lds.org to ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Mormon.org was changed to ComeUntoChrist.org. Other websites such as Mormonnewsroom.com changed to newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org; FAIR Mormon became FAIR LDS; amongst other groups that had to make name changes and rebranding.

With all of this in consideration, the term Mormon will continue to be used, not as an attempt to offend, but rather for an opportunity for discussion.

Each chapter will address a question that either needs to be asked of your Mormon friend or is a question that you should be prepared to answer. Your Mormon friend may ask you a question that is not considered in this book. Our goal is to try to prepare you for the most common questions, but there will be questions that you were not prepared for, and rather than making up an

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answer on the spot. It is best to acknowledge the question, write it down, and tell them that you want to discuss it later so that you can get them the best possible answer.

As we examine the top ten questions from each category we will address:

- What is the purpose of the question?
- When should I ask this question?
- Why is this question important?
- How should I implement this question?

We hope and pray that this book is a blessing to you as you look to spread the true gospel of Jesus Christ to your Mormon friends and neighbors.

Notes

¹Sarah Jane Weaver, “Mormon’ Is Out: Church Releases Statement on How to Refer to the Organization,” *Church News*, August 16, 2018, accessed July 31, 2023, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/mormon-is-out-church-releases-statement-on-how-to-refer-to-the-organization?lang=eng>.

²Russell M. Nelson, “The Correct Name of the Church,” *Church of Jesus Christ.org*, October 7, 2018, accessed July 31, 2023, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2018/10/the-correct-name-of-the-church?lang=eng>.

³All passages, unless otherwise noted, come from the King James Version.

⁴Russell M. Nelson, “The Correct Name of the Church.”

⁵John Hudson, “The Mormon Church’s \$6 Million Ad Campaign Also Welcomes Trolls,” *The Atlantic*, November 18, 2011, accessed July 31, 2023, <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/11/mormon-churchs-6-million-ad-campaign-also-welcomes-trolls/335197>.

⁶*The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed July 31, 2023, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/36>.