

# Build Bridges, Not Barriers

A Witnessing Workshop  
*from*



Truth in Love  
MINISTRY

## TODAY'S OUTLINE

- **Opening Question:** How does humanity approach God?
- **Introduction:** Truth in Love Ministry and Be Ye Perfect
- **Bonus:** The Mormon Plan of Salvation
- **Part 1:** Identify the Divide
- **Part 2:** Recognize Barriers
- **Part 3:** Build on Bedrock
- **Part 4:** Five Pillars for Bridge Building
- **Taking it Home**



Pastor Mark Parsons

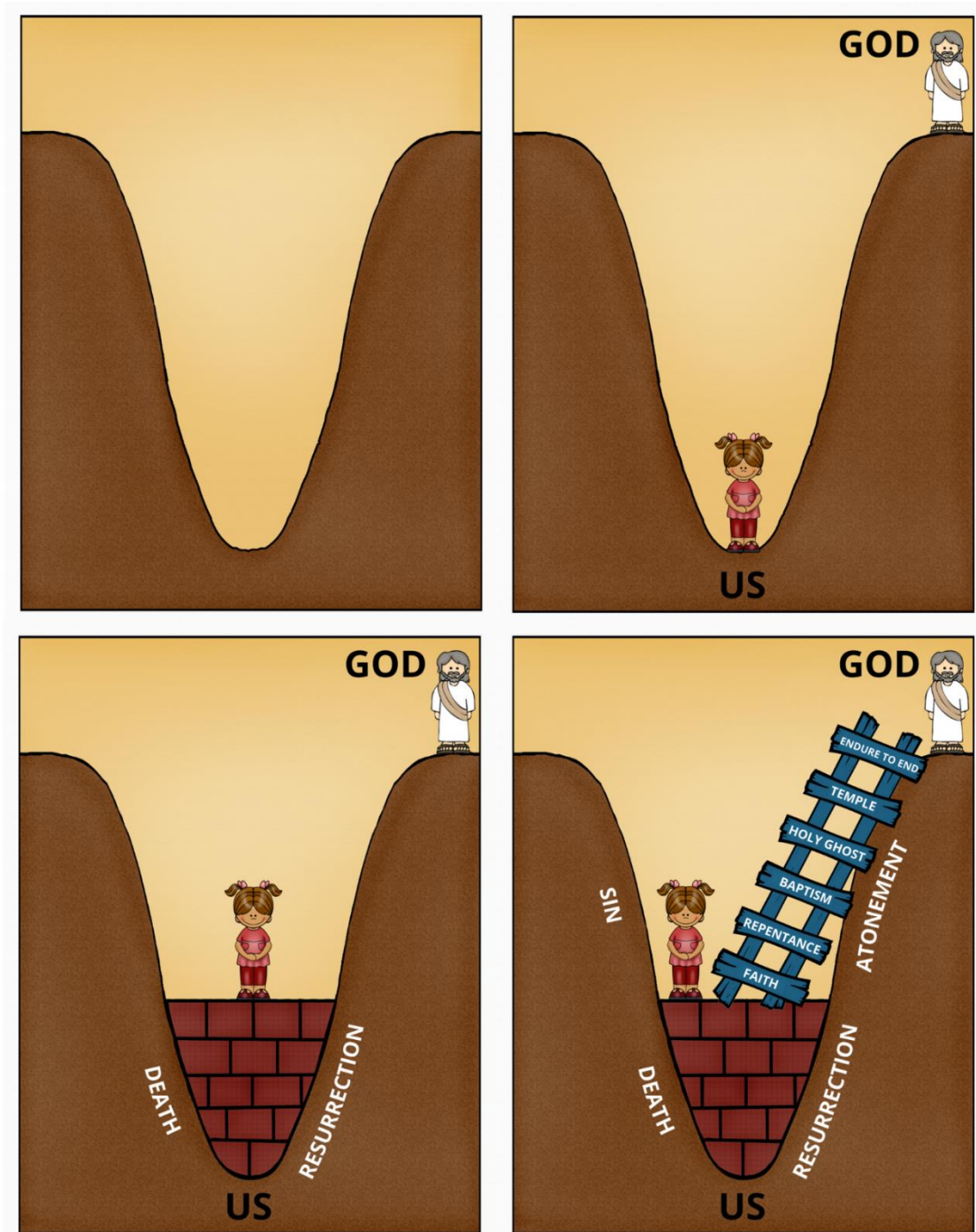
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# How does humanity approach God?

Arrow up or arrow down?



# Intro: Truth in Love's Two-Fold Mission

- PROCLAIMING CHRIST TO MORMONS

- **BeYePerfect.org**
- Proclaim – millions of gospel seeds
- Explain – deep dives into the Word
- Support – supplemental community



- EMPOWERING CHRISTIANS TO WITNESS

- **TILM.org**
- Train – online and in person
- Activate – getting started
- Support – continuing the conversation

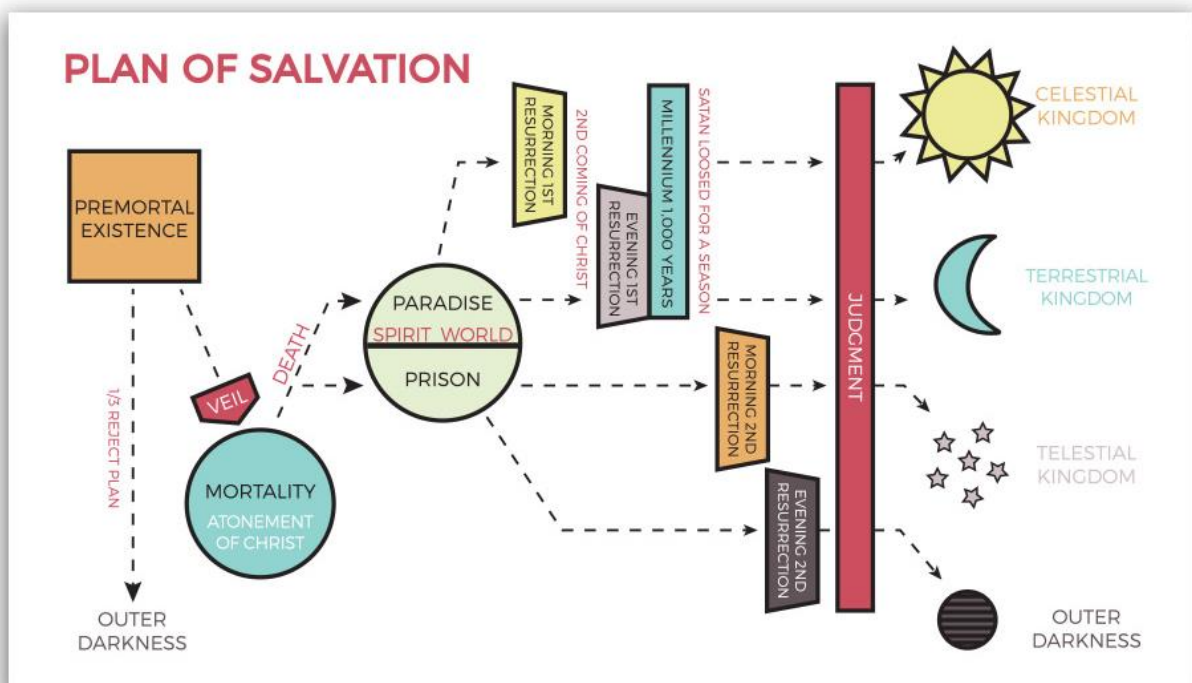


# The Mormon Plan of Salvation

## • SHORT SUMMARY

God the Father presented the following plan to his spirit children:

- Human beings would be born on earth with “agency” to choose the right.
- There they would receive a physical body necessary for “exaltation” and a “fullness of joy.”
- While on earth, they would be tested through trials of their faith and be subject to mortality.
- A “veil” would be set in place to obscure humankind’s memory of its divine origins, thus allowing for “walking by faith” and greater freedom of choice by enabling individuals to make their own decisions.
- Those who live good lives, prove themselves obedient to Heavenly Father’s commandments, receive the ordinances of salvation, and repent of their sins will be able to return to Heavenly Father’s presence (The Celestial Kingdom).
- However, because each person’s experience in mortality is unique, every individual will be judged by their opportunities, knowledge, and blessings while living on Earth.



- **FIRST ESTATE/STAGE: PREMORTAL EXISTENCE**

- Everyone is a literal spirit child of Heavenly Father and Mother
- Agency — “choose the right” and “the freedom to act”
- All need to receive a physical body to progress

For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

**Moses 1:39**

*Birth, passing through the veil*

- **SECOND ESTATE/STAGE: MORTAL WORLD**

***Jesus sent to atone for mistakes***

- “To obey the commandments”
  - Receive sacred ordinances like baptism and make promises
  - Repent and be forgiven of our sins
- “To have joy”
- “To prepare to return to God’s presence”

Joy comes from exercising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, worthily receiving and faithfully honoring sacred ordinances and covenants, and striving to become deeply converted to the Savior and His purposes.

**David A. Bednar, devotional address, “That They Might Have Joy,”  
delivered at BYU on December 4, 2018**

***Death***

- **THIRD ESTATE/STAGE: POST-MORTAL WORLD**

- ***Spirit World***

- *Paradise*
  - Where faithful Mormons will go
  - They will serve as missionaries to those in prison
- *Prison*
  - Can receive proxy baptism and sealings
  - Can accept the restored gospel

***Resurrection***

- **Judgment Day**

- Jesus will act as an advocate
- If you have repented, you will be forgiven
- Judged based on actions on earth and who you have become

- ***Three Kingdoms***

- *Celestial*
  - Symbolized by the sun
  - Righteous—who repented, received ordinances, and were faithful to covenants
  - God and his son Jesus Christ dwell there
  - Those who live here will be with and **be like God** forever
- *Terrestrial*
  - Symbolized by the moon
  - For those who have lived “good” lives but were not as faithful to the gospel
  - Jesus Christ visits there
- *Telestial*
  - Symbolized by the stars
  - Those who have lived earthly evil lives but in the spirit world—recognized Jesus as the Savior
  - The Holy Spirit dwells there

- **Outer Darkness**
  - A place of punishment
  - Reserved for Satan and the most wicked
  - Most Mormons believe very few people have or ever will go there
- **Damnation**
  - Being stopped up in progression
  - It's terrible because of what you are missing out on
  - "You will go where you are comfortable"

Latter-day Saints believe following the plan of salvation entails obedience to the restored gospel and God's commandments. This obedience includes active faith through emulation of Jesus Christ and adherence to his teachings; worship of God the Father and Jesus as the Christ and Son of God; constant repentance and abandonment of sinful practices; teaching the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to others to aid in their eternal progress; enjoyment of and gratitude for the blessings available to human beings throughout their mortal existences; and resistance to the influence of Satan and his servants.

## ● SALVATION VS. EXALTATION

- **Salvation** for most Mormons is equivalent to resurrection, the only free gift in Mormonism. This misunderstanding is why many believe they are saved by Jesus alone. They mean they don't have to do anything to gain resurrection.

You will not be completely saved from sin until you have finished your life on the earth, having faithfully endured to the end. Note that you cannot be saved *in your sins*; you cannot receive unconditional salvation simply by declaring your belief in Christ with the understanding that you will inevitably commit sins through the rest of your life.

Through the grace of God, you can be saved *from your sins*. To receive this blessing, you must exercise faith in Jesus Christ, strive to keep the commandments, forsake sin, and renew your repentance and cleansing through the ordinance of the sacrament.

***True to the Faith, 151-152***



- **Exaltation** is the highest level of the celestial kingdom, godhood. It is one of Mormonism's more famous "theological" terms.

When we lived with our Heavenly Father, He explained a plan for our progression. We could become like Him, an exalted being. The plan required that we be separated from Him and come to earth. This separation was necessary to prove whether we would obey our Father's commandments even though we were no longer in His presence. The plan provided that when earth life ended, we would be judged and rewarded according to the degree of our faith and obedience.

***Gospel Principles: Chapter 47-Exaltation, 275***

They shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things...Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

**Doctrine & Covenants 132:19-20**

## ● CLOSING QUESTIONS

Although the Mormon plan of salvation sounds somewhat biblical, what are some primary differences between this plan and the biblical one? Why do those differences matter?

Which aspects of the LDS plan of salvation might be worth responding to in witnessing conversations? Conversely, which ones will be worth avoiding?

How would you describe the difference between "salvation" and "exaltation" in the LDS theological system? How would you anticipate this difference coming into play in witnessing conversations?

In what various ways does Mormonism DIMINISH God? In what small and large ways does Mormonism GLORIFY humanity?

# Build Bridges, Not Barriers

What comes to mind when you see this picture?



If you are going to build a bridge, you need to ask:

- 1) Where do you want to go?
- 2) How far is it to get there?
- 3) What's on the other side?
- 4) What materials will you use to build?

Today, we will look at **Four Steps for Building Bridges**

- 1) **Identifying the Divide**
- 2) **Recognizing Barriers**
- 3) **Building on Bedrock**
- 4) **Five Pillars to Build Bridges for Proclaiming Christ**

# 1. Identify the Divide

- **ACKNOWLEDGE THERE IS A DIVIDE**

- Many, both LDS and Christian, don't see the divide.
- Some Christians say, "The divide is too great."
- Many Christians see the divide but major on minor points.
- Others see the divide but are hesitant to say anything for fear of upsetting the status quo.

- **SEE THE TRUE WIDTH OF THE DIVIDE**

- **Mormonism denies Jesus' equality with the Father.**

You remember and worship your Heavenly Father and *express gratitude* for His Son, Jesus Christ.

***True to the Faith, p. 188***

- As seen in the idea of the three kingdoms
  - Celestial (with Heavenly Father)
  - Terrestrial (visited by Jesus)
  - Telestial (visited by the Holy Ghost)
- Mormon prayers are never addressed to Jesus

- **Mormonism places human “requirements” on living with God for eternity.**

The time to fulfill the requirements for exaltation is now (see Alma 34:32–34). President Joseph Fielding Smith said, “In order to obtain the exaltation we must accept the gospel and all its covenants; and take upon us the obligations which the Lord has offered, and walk in the light and the understanding of the truth; and ‘live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God’” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:43). To be exalted, we first must place our faith in Jesus Christ and then endure in that faith to the end of our lives. Our faith in Him must be such that we repent of our sins and obey His commandments. He commands us all to receive certain ordinances:

1. We must be baptized.
2. We must receive the laying on of hands to be confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
3. Brethren must receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and magnify their callings in the priesthood.
4. We must receive the temple endowment.
5. We must be married for eternity, either in this life or in the next.

In addition, the Lord commands all of us to:

1. Love God and our neighbors.
2. Keep the commandments.
3. Repent of our wrongdoings.
4. Search out our kindred dead and receive the saving ordinances of the gospel for them.
5. Attend our Church meetings as regularly as possible so we can renew our baptismal covenants by partaking of the sacrament.
6. Love our family members and strengthen them in the ways of the Lord.
7. Have family and individual prayers every day.
8. Teach the gospel to others by word and example.
9. Study the scriptures.
10. Listen to and obey the inspired words of the prophets of the Lord.

Finally, each of us needs to receive the Holy Ghost and learn to follow His direction in our individual lives.

***Gospel Principles: Chapter 47–Exaltation***

- **Mormonism denies Jesus' completed work of salvation.**

For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

**2 Nephi 25:23**

- Human "effort" is required to receive the fullness of the Lord's grace to be made worthy to dwell with him (celestial kingdom).
- A good question is: "How's it going for you? How do you know if you have done enough?"

Christianity	Mormonism
God gives salvation.	God gives a plan of salvation.

- **Mormonism, at its core, is self-centered and not Christ-centered.**
  - Although Jesus gets things started and does the heavy salvation lifting, it is up to each person to do their part to get the best God has to give.
  - The Mormon gospel does not lead to eternal life with God.
  - Man is the engine of Mormonism.

***We have looked at the divide between Christianity and Mormonism, and now we will examine some of the barriers.***

## 2. Recognize Barriers

- UNAVOIDABLE BARRIERS

- The Cross

We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

**1 Corinthians 1:23**

I do not wish to give offense to any of my Christian colleagues who use the cross on the steeples of their cathedrals and at the altars of their chapels, who wear it on their vestments, and imprint it on their books and other literature. But for us, the cross is the symbol of the dying Christ, while our message is a declaration of the Living Christ... The lives of our people must become the most meaningful expression of our faith and, in fact, therefore, the symbol of our worship.

**Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Symbol of Our Faith,"  
*Liahona /Ensign*, April 2005, 3**

- Biblical Law – "Do"
  - Biblical Gospel – "Done"
  - A focus on Jesus' completed work

- WHAT CAN BE CHANGED & WHAT CAN'T

- 1 Corinthians 9:19–27

- What can we learn from Paul's manifesto on mission work?
- What does "serving" look like in your setting?

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I **became** like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I **became** like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those not having the law I **became** like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law.

<sup>22</sup> To the weak I **became** weak, to win the weak. **(1) I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.** <sup>23</sup> **(2)** I do all this for the sake of the gospel, **that I may share in its blessings.** <sup>24</sup> Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. <sup>25</sup> Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

<sup>26</sup> Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. <sup>27</sup> **No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, (3) I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.**

1 Corinthians 9:19–27

- The sacrifice involved

- "Become"
- "Slave"

- Three joys of witnessing

1. Might save some
2. Share in the blessings of the gospel
3. It's good for me too

- **AVOIDABLE BARRIERS**

- **A One and Done Mentality**

- Give up thinking you will *reason* Mormons into the true Christian faith in a single conversation.
    - Don't assume they will jump up and down when they hear the gospel and say, "Thank you. That's the best news ever."

- **Culture vs. Cult**

- It helps to view Mormonism as a unique CULTURE rather than a cult.
    - It has distinct cultural characteristics.
      - Dress
      - Food
      - Holiday(s)
      - Language
      - Community

***So far, we have identified the divide and recognized the barriers. Next, we'll talk about building on the correct bedrock.***



### 3. Build on Bedrock

- BE FIRMLY GROUNDED IN JESUS AS YOUR SUBSTITUTE

- What's the difference between a coach and a substitute?
- Know that you are working "from" salvation rather than "for" salvation.
- Have a basic understanding of the "two kinds of righteousness."
- Emphasize repeatedly Jesus "for us."
- If you use the word "savior," emphasize Jesus as your *substitute* rather than your *example*.

- BE FIRMLY GROUNDED IN YOUR STATUS IN CHRIST

- Who do you see in the mirror? A sinner or a saint?
- How does the Bible describe believers?
- Take great joy in your status and tell your Mormon friends, "I'm already perfect in Christ."



- BE FIRMLY GROUNDED IN GOD'S WAY OF BRINGING PEOPLE TO FAITH

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the **power** of God for the salvation of **everyone** who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

**Romans 1:16**

- **Power**

- **Process**

- **Proclaim**

*So far, we have looked at three steps for preparing to build bridges. Next, we'll look at five pillars for bridge building that proclaims Christ.*

## 4. Five Pillars for Bridge Building

- **SEE MORMONS AS VICTIMS, NOT ENEMIES**

- **Think about the position of your hands.**

- What does a clenched fist say to someone?
- What does an open hand communicate?

- **Know the ways that Mormons are trapped.**

- **No unconditional blessings**

There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundation of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated – And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to the law upon which it is predicated.

**Doctrine & Covenants 130:20–21**

- **A crushing culture of**

- Success
- Wearing masks

- **An extended timeline**

- “You have all the time you need.”
- “You don’t have to be perfect now. There’s the spirit world.”
- “Things will eventually work themselves out.”

- **TREAT MORMONS WITH GENUINE LOVE AND RESPECT**

- **We must love Mormons enough to have hard conversations with them.**

- Don't **fear** sharing the law.

Plenty of people have told me to go to hell before, but no one has ever begged me not to go there. Thank you for caring about me enough to tell me what you believe and why.

**Elder Jacob Hanson**

- Don't **forget** to share the gospel.

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**

- **We must respect their sensibilities.**

- The God of this age has blinded them. (Think about Saul/Paul.)
- Many have never heard the true gospel they are rejecting.

I had never heard the true gospel. I unquestioningly spurned the mainstream Christian gospel as a lie concocted by Satan. I did so without knowing what I was rejecting. When my Christian girlfriend took me to a Mercy Me concert, I heard the lead singer proclaim the gospel for the first time. The words confused and convicted, yet they comforted me. I couldn't un-hear such good news. My father told me, "It's all lies." So, I desperately clung tighter to my Mormon roots. But God had planted a gospel seed, and he continued to nurture it.

**Jacob Miller**



- **We must take the initiative to get to know them.**
  - What's it like growing up in the Mormon culture?
  - What's your story?
  - What holds your family together?
  - How would you describe your relationship with God?
  - Are you confident that you will spend eternity with Heavenly Father?
  - What's your favorite Bible story and why?
- **We must listen!**
  - Ask questions.
  - Take notes.
  - Observe body language.

## ● FOCUS ON MORMON STRESS POINTS

### ○ Perfection & Worthiness

- Be ye perfect *eventually* still causes stress and doubts.
- Lead them through Matthew 5 with specific reference to verse 48.

Striving for “worthiness” teaches us that if we can check enough specific and measurable boxes, like paying tithing and not smoking, then we are good enough to be loved and blessed and ordained by God. This can, admittedly, provide a measure of comfort for many. A decade ago, I confess, I used to proclaim that if an individual was worthy to enter the celestial room of the temple, they were worthy to enter the celestial kingdom of God.

But the flip side of worthiness is dark. The consequences of falling short of the worthiness minimum standard of perfection are terrifying. Temple recommends, marriage sealings, saving ordinances, employment, college degrees, housing, callings, families, friendships, acceptance in the ward community – it’s all at stake if we admit we’ve failed to live up to the church’s standards. If we fail to check specific boxes, the church claims the authority to cast us out from the body of Christ. Even though broken hearts and contrite spirits are exactly what God asks for, so he can heal us with love. Even though the scriptures teach that “if ye should serve God with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants.” (Mosiah 2:17)

And therein lies the problem. By idolizing worthiness, we’ve demonized repentance. “Repentance” is no longer the daily mercy of turning our hearts to God’s love – repentance is the scary thing we have to do because we’re no longer worthy. “Repentance” signifies that we have committed a sin so great, we have to confess it to a Bishop – who will respond as a Judge in Israel by revoking our blessings. Being “in need of repentance” becomes a state to be avoided at all costs, because admitting we sinned threatens our fundamental self-identity as a “worthy” child of God. Pride in our “worthy” status teaches us to rationalize away our sins. It incentivizes us to lie to ourselves, to our clergy, and to our God.

**Carolyn, Common Consent, January 4, 2019**

## Forgiveness & Repentance

- Mormonism gives an impossible ladder to climb.
- The payment timeline is adjusted, and Jesus becomes the new creditor.

After the bishop and his counselors prayed about my sin, they told me bluntly, "God has disfellowshipped you." If I wanted forgiveness, I needed to follow a list of repentance requirements outlined in a letter hastily given.

Their conditions were cold-hearted. My soul steadily sank. Suddenly, I snickered. Twice their sentencing found support from a book called "The Miracle of Forgiveness." The irony made me laugh. The "miracle of forgiveness" was what I had hoped for and so desperately needed. The forgiveness they offered was complicated, conditional, and impossibly out of reach. Their repentance ladder was impossible to climb. Once more, I was afraid.

**Tiana Gray**

It depends upon you whether or not you are forgiven, and when. It could be weeks, it could be years, it could be centuries before that happy day when you have the positive assurance that the Lord has forgiven you. That depends on your humility, your sincerity, your works, your attitudes.

**Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness***

### ○ Living Eternally with Heavenly Father & Eternal Families

- How do you get there?
- Do you have certainty?

- **SPEAK THE MORMON LANGUAGE**

- **Take the time to know and understand key terms.**

- Salvation/Savior
    - Grace
    - Faith
    - Exaltation
    - Eternal life

- **Make your witness personal and emotional.**

- Witness the objective truth but don't stop there.
    - Take the next step and say how the truth has impacted you.
    - When they share their testimony, be ready to share yours.

- **Head these simple cautions and suggestions.**

- Beware of machine-gun evangelism.
    - Quote the Bible sparingly.
    - Begin by using the KJV.



## ● WITNESS CHRIST RATHER THAN DEBATE MORMONISM

- Don't engage in polemics – speaking evil about their beliefs.
- Don't focus on apologetics – defending biblical truth.
- Use popular topics as launching points for spiritual discussions.
- Use the law to show them their sin.
  - The seriousness of sin – “all have sinned and fallen short.”
  - The extent of sin – talk about specific sins.
  - The penalty for sin – outer darkness.
  - The devastating “x-ray results.”
- Proclaim a whole, not a holey, gospel

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, “The righteous will live by faith.” The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, “The man who does these things will live by them.” Christ **redeemed** us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”

**Galatians 3:10-13**

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to **redeem** those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

**Galatians 4:4-5**

# Taking it Home

- REMEMBER

- Jesus is your substitute!
- Your status in Christ is a saint!
- You have a vital role as a witness!
- God can use you as a link in the chain.

- BE A PARTNER IN PROCLAIMING

- **Dig deeper** and start your witnessing journey at [tilm.org/join](http://tilm.org/join)
- **Partner with us** by inviting your church or school to become a mission partner at [tilm.org/partner](http://tilm.org/partner)
- **Encourage others** by becoming a prayer partner at [tilm.org/prayer](http://tilm.org/prayer)
- **Reach more** by giving to share gospel messages around the world at [tilm.org/give](http://tilm.org/give).
- **Join us** and learn how to share your faith as a missionary at [tilm.org/missiontrips](http://tilm.org/missiontrips)

- GET RESOURCED

- *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormon*
- *Crossing the Chasm*
- *Dictionary of Mormonese*
- *Prepared to Share*
- *Sharing God's Word with Mormons*

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