



IRR Key Steps Guide:

Helping Family and Friends See the Truth about the Mormon Religion

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Introduction: You and God Can Do This

You can help a friend or family member not get drawn into the confusing and deceptive maze of the Mormon Church and its manipulative methods of proselytizing. But it's harder than it looks. Believe me, I know – I've tried and messed up more than a few times.

Part of what makes it complicated is that the Mormon religion is very attractive. Latter-day Saint (LDS) people are genuinely kind, sincere, and very dedicated to their religion. On the surface their church's offer of families being together forever, modern-day revelation, and living prophets and apostles can be quite appealing.

Because of this, it's not wise to simply point out the historical scandals or outrageous doctrines to someone who has taken an interest in Mormonism. Instead, you need a step-by-step plan that takes into account the Mormon appeal, their culture, and their methods.

Here are some clear guidelines to follow that will improve your effectiveness, safeguard your relationship, and allow you to share truth compassionately — minus the anger, argument and debate that so easily ensues and builds barriers rather than bridges.

3 *Key Components*

You need three key components essential to helping your friend or family member see for themselves the spiritual dangers and unbiblical nature of Mormonism.

1. *Right Heart*
2. *Right Information*
3. *Right Strategy*

1. Right Heart: Have the Heart of Jesus

*Everything starts with your heart- yes, **your** heart.* Jesus said, “Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45) So whenever we want to move towards others to warn them, educate them, and help them understand the spiritual dangers associated with a false religion like Mormonism, we must first check our own hearts. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with the following qualities: compassion, kindness, gentleness, respect and boldness.

Here’s what’s important about each of these and some places where they show up in Scripture.

- **Compassion:** Feeling a deep sense of care and concern for someone else’s need will allow compassion to flow into your heart, and then out towards the person. Jesus exemplified this throughout his ministry.
 - Seeing the people, He felt **compassion** for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 9:6)
 - “Come to Me, **all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.** Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am **gentle** and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)
 - And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, “I feel **compassion** for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way.” (Matthew 15:32)
 - “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I **wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings,** and you were unwilling.” (Matthew 23:37)
- **Kindness, Gentleness, and Respect:** So often these three accompany one another, like close traveling companions all on a common quest. Each serves as a catalyst and a compliment for the others and together they are always an appropriate response to our fellow image-bearers of God. Even when we face opposition and those who challenge our beliefs, when our response is a godly blend of kindness, gentleness, and respect, we earn the privilege of being heard, and so often it helps the other person take our message seriously. Scripture addresses this clearly and repeatedly.
 - *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and **gentleness,** with patience, bearing with one another in love* (Ephesians 4:1-2)

- *And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be **kind to everyone**, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be **gently instructed**, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. (2 Timothy 2:24-26)*
- *But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with **gentleness and respect** (1 Peter. 3:15)*
- *I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and **gentleness** of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but **bold** toward you when I am away! (2 Corinthians 10:1)*
- **Boldness:** Once all the above attributes are firmly established in our hearts we are ready to implement the final component. Boldness entails a straightforwardness, clarity and simplicity when presenting our message. We avoid being ambiguous, clever, or deceitful, not to mention being manipulative, or underhanded, or disingenuous, or sneaky or tricky.

Our message should bring people to a point of decision, not because we force the issue, or demand a response, but because the truth we present is so clear it must either be accepted or rejected.

HOWEVER, we, as the messengers, must strive to be as winsome, attractive, and agreeable as possible in our presentation of the message. Why? Because we never want it to be us, or our approach that is being rejected, because we are being sarcastic, or mean-spirited or harsh. It's hard to shoot a beautiful messenger. They may reject the clear truth we are seeking to share with them, but who we are and how we are treating them should make it harder not easier for them to reject our message.

Note these scriptures that underscore the importance of boldness.

- *Now when they saw the **boldness** of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. **And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.** (Acts 4:13)*
- *And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all **boldness.** (Acts 4:29)*
- *But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had **boldness** in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. (1 Thessalonians 2:2)*

Moving to Step 2

Once the Holy Spirit has control of our hearts, and we are stirred to compassionately and clearly present truth to those we love and care about, we are ready for the second necessary component for helping our friends or family recognize the errors of Mormonism. This component is: **Right Information**

2. *Right Information: Honest, Unexaggerated, Representative, Documented*

This is perhaps the most daunting component. Once upon a time, 20 years ago, there was little access to important historical sources. It was difficult to document key information that exposed the falseness and unbiblical nature of the Mormon religion. Now our problem is just the opposite – we have information overwhelm.

The situation may be further complicated by your friend or family member's skepticism and suspicion regarding the trustworthiness of the information itself. It's possible they may question why they should trust the information you are providing. It is also possible the Mormon people who are influencing them may have warned them about "anti-Mormon" literature. Here's where an important part of Mormon culture comes into play. Within the LDS religious system there is a **strong culture of deception**.

Understanding and Countering Mormon Deception

Mormon people are committed to protecting the image of their religion and its leaders. Therefore, it is likely the LDS members who have been in contact with your friend or family member will deny, downplay, or dismiss the facts you present, claiming they are untrue, inaccurate, or misrepresenting their history and beliefs. They may do this out of ignorance or intentionally, but either way, a Mormon's primary loyalty is to his or her Church, the religious organization. Because of this it is morally and culturally acceptable to misrepresent or distort the facts in order to protect the Mormon Church's image, leaders, and teachings, and portray it as traditionally Christian as possible.

For these reasons, any information you use to educate a person on Mormonism (or any controversial subject for that matter) should meet at least these minimum criteria. It should be:

honest, unexaggerated, representative, and documented.

Honest. The material should be a true representation of the situation or teaching and faithful to the original context. For example, people have accused the Mormon Church of being hypocritical and obviously a false religion because they don't let their members drink Coke (or Pepsi) when they (the Mormon Church) own Coca Cola (or Pepsi Cola). While this allegation makes the Mormon Church look bad, it is not honest or true. The LDS Church to my knowledge has never owned either cola company, and, except in some parts of some countries where overzealous local leaders have made this restriction, members of the Mormon Church are not forbidden from drinking caffeinated soft drinks.

What is true is this. Any Mormon who wants to be worthy of participating in the temple rituals that are necessary for their exaltation to godhood must abstain from drinking tea, coffee, and alcoholic beverages.

It is essential that all material honestly and fairly present official LDS teaching on the subject.

Unexaggerated. There are certain official LDS teachings and historical facts that can make a big, negative impact as they are - there is no need to exaggerate them. For example, the Mormon church has acknowledged that Joseph Smith took over 30 women as his plural wives (<https://mit.irr.org/lds-church-addresses-joseph-smiths-polygamy>). To exaggerate this number is pointless and will only detract from your credibility once a person does some research for themselves.

It is better to under-exaggerate and downplay key facts. Whenever possible, point them to reliable sources and let the person discover for themselves the weight and significance of the topic.

Representative. The examples we provide should accurately reflect the religious system in general or as a whole. Like every religious system, Mormonism has leaders who've held and taught extreme, even ridiculous ideas. Sometimes these ideas were countered or opposed by their fellow Mormon leaders.

For example, it is true that Mormons are taught the Bible is untrustworthy.

The Book of Mormon states that *"they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious."* Joseph Smith himself taught that *"many important points touching the salvation of men, had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled"* (<https://mit.irr.org/mormon-view-of-biblical-text>).

However, it is not representative of contemporary Mormonism to use the view of Orson Pratt, an early Mormon apostle who taught that *"No one can tell whether even one verse of either the Old or New Testament conveys the ideas of the original author."*

So, while it may be tempting to use such extreme statements like that of Orson Pratt for both their shock value and their ability to make Mormon leaders look bad, it is wrong and unwise to state or imply such statements are representative of Mormon views or teaching today.

Documented. We need to be able to support the accuracy of our information from original sources, or primary sources accepted by the Mormon Church. One of the greatest gifts of the Internet is the ability to provide documentation for Mormon history and teaching. For over 30 years this has been a primary focus of [IRR.org](https://mit.irr.org) - the Institute for Religious Research. We are committed to equip you for effective, high impact ministry.

Every article treating historical events or controversial and unbiblical Mormon teaching is carefully researched and documented from the best historical and Mormon sources available. In many cases we even have digitized scans of early Mormon documents not readily available to the public.

See for example:

- This article on the evolving story of the First Vision told by Joseph Smith. (<https://mit.irr.org/changing-first-vision-accounts-1832-first-vision-account-joseph-smith-jr>)
- This article documenting changes in Mormon Scriptures. (<https://mit.irr.org/changes-latter-day-scripture>)

Once you have a right heart toward the person and the right information in hand, you are ready to take action, and for that you need a strategy.

3. *Right Strategy: Be the Guide, Not the Hero*

Your effectiveness in sharing information will depend on three things:

1. The work of the Holy Spirit in the other person opening their heart and mind to truth.
2. The work of the Holy Spirit in your life so you move forward with humility, gentleness, and love.
3. A strategy that is more about them and less about you.

Avoid making yourself the hero of this story. This is not about you as main man or leading lady. The other person is the hero, you are their guide. As a guide your goal is to lead the person on a journey of discovery. We want to arouse their curiosity, not antagonize or attack them. We've found it effective to pose questions rather than make assertions.

Pray often that the Holy Spirit will guide you as you guide them. This is a supernatural, spiritual battle. Remember 2 Corinthians 10:4-5,

"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."

To guide them you will need to know a few things about them. These questions can help you discover what they feel about Mormonism and how they perceive the Mormon religion. The purpose of these questions is making an emotional and social connection with them as a person. Like you, they are made in the image of God. Listen carefully to their answers and try to hear their heart.

- ***What is it you like about the Mormon faith?***

The answer to this question will help you understand what attracted them, and what value the LDS religion has for them.

- ***How did you first find out about it?***

This will tell you about their social connections to the religion.

Did they first learn about Mormonism from Mormon missionaries that came to their door? If so, then find out what part of the missionary presentation got their interest and what part of the Mormon message resonated with them.

Did they first learn about Mormonism from a friend or family member? If so, there are significant and potentially strong social connections that are even more important to them than Mormon teachings. When this is the case, if you attack the Mormon religion you also attack their friends or family members, and this will likely greatly diminish your opportunity for input and influence.

- ***How do you think the Mormon faith compares to biblical Christianity?***

This question will give you some idea how much they know about Mormon teaching and how it compares to the Bible.

- ***What do you think it has in common with Christian belief and practice?***

This question will let you know the sort of doctrinal misinformation they've been given, and how much they truly understand about the LDS religious system.

- ***What teachings of the Mormon church make it distinct or different from traditional Christianity?***

Again, this question will help you discover what, if anything, they've been taught about the radically different doctrines of Mormonism and how these compare to historic, biblical Christian faith and teaching.

Be prayerful and careful. How you respond to their answers will set the tone for the rest of the journey.

Some Important “Do’s” and “Don’ts”

- DON'T - Immediately correct any misinformation they share in answer to these questions.
- DON'T – Instantly jump on their misconceptions about Mormonism or Christianity and explain how they're wrong.
- DO - Make mental notes or take physical notes on areas of misinformation for later exploration

- DO - Look for and affirm areas you agree with that are positives about Mormonism
- DO - Affirm (gently) areas they acknowledge that are different or wrong about Mormonism

One of the main goals for this first level of interaction is to lay a foundation of common ground, goodwill, and trust. No one is going to let themselves be guided by someone they don't trust.

The answers they provide to the first set of questions should provide openings for exploring some Mormon basics and lead into the next set of questions. These are designed to find out how much they know about LDS history and teachings. They are suggestive - feel free to adapt or modify these and invent your own. The key is to reflect a tone of open exploration.

- *What do you know about how the Mormon religion got started?*
- *How much do you know about the Book of Mormon?*
- *Have you read any of the Book of Mormon?*
- *What do you know about Joseph Smith?*
- *Is there any area of Mormon doctrines or teachings you've wanted to know more about?*
- *Is there any part of Mormon origins or history you wish you knew more about?*
- *Are there things you've seen or heard about Mormon history or teaching that seem questionable or create concerns about the religion?*

Like with the previous set of questions, the primary goal is getting to know the person and find out what they know. Take notes on their answers – either at the time if it's comfortable and appropriate, or make notes as soon as you can after the conversation. Feel to spread these out over several conversations.

A good, effective Guide will seek to understand the person they are helping in order to better address their main areas of need, weakness, and vulnerability.

Once you know a person's areas of need and interest you are ready to ask questions that address the right information. Again, these are suggestive and representative, not prescriptive or exhaustive. They are designed to get to core areas of concern that can be documented. For each question we've provided a link to a page or article with well-researched, documented information. It is strongly recommended that you only share articles with the person that you yourself have read, understand the significance of, and are able to discuss.

Questions that Guide a Person to the Core Issues of Mormonism

- ***Are you aware of the evidence that raises questions about Joseph Smith's character and his claims to be a prophet of God?***

If they say “no” feel free to ask if character matters when it comes to evaluating someone who has claimed to speak for God. Then use the article below to explain why the evidence makes it problematic to accept Joseph as a true prophet of God.

- <https://mit.irr.org/why-we-cannot-believe-in-joseph-smith>

- ***How does Joseph Smith and other LDS prophets compare to the characteristics of a true or false prophet found in the Bible?***

Jesus and the writers of the New Testament assumed we would encounter false prophets and gave us clear ways to identify them and the spiritual dangers they present.

- <http://mit.irr.org/prophets-today-prophets-in-bible-and-in-lds-church>

- ***Are you aware of the evidence that points to the Book of Mormon being a work of 19th century fiction rather than an ancient Scripture? If you were to conclude the Book of Mormon was not what the Mormon church claims it to be, would that matter to you?***

- <https://mit.irr.org/category/book-of-mormon/modern-origin-of-book-of-mormon>
- <https://mit.irr.org/category/book-of-mormon/science-ancient-history-and-book-of-mormon>
- <https://mit.irr.org/category/book-of-mormon/bible-and-book-of-mormon>

- ***Have you had a chance to compare the core doctrines of Mormonism with the main teachings of the Bible and the historic Christian faith?***

If they answer “yes” ask what they found that was the same and what was different.

If they answer “no” ask what they would think if they were to discover official LDS teaching actually denies core teachings of the Bible and Christian faith.

- <https://mit.irr.org/mormonism-christian>
- <https://mit.irr.org/category/mormon-view-of-god-and-christ>
- <https://mit.irr.org/category/mormon-doctrine-of-exaltation>
- <https://mit.irr.org/category/temples-and-ordinances>

- ***This page has over two dozen stories of Mormons who left the religion to find faith in Jesus. You are probably the best judge as to which one will have a positive impact on the person you are guiding.***

- <http://mit.irr.org/category/stories-of-former-mormons>

- **There are also great written and video testimonies of the former Mormons that make up the Adam's Road ministry band here:**

- <https://www.adamsroadministry.com/bios>

Conclusion

You can be used by God to guide someone out of or away from the deceptive and dangerous influence of Mormonism with the help of God's Holy Spirit, and three key components:

- **the right heart**
- **the right information**
- **the right strategy.**

Please remember, IRR is here to help and guide you so don't hesitate to reach out for more assistance or information. Vaya con Dios! (Go with God!)

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If you've had opportunity to use this information effectively, we'd love to hear about your experience and how God used you. Or, if after using it you have questions about this material or suggestions for how it could be improved, please let us know. We're excited to hear back from you!