

James



CHAPTER 1

JAMES, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations;

3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience.

4 But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraides not; and it shall be given him.

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withers the grass, and the flower thereof falls, and the grace of the fashion of it perishes: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

12 Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him.

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts he any man:

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.

16 Do not err, my beloved brethren.

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift

1:3 Satan tempts us in order to bring out the worst in us; God tests us to bring out the best. (See verse 12.)

1:5 One mark of wisdom is the saving of souls (Proverbs 11:30). With an open-ended promise such as this, we should plead with God for wisdom (see Proverbs 2:1-7). Proverbs 19:8 tells us that he who gets wisdom loves his own soul.

1:15 The ungodly hold firmly onto the lighted stick of dynamite called "sin." They relish its flickering flame. Lust may delight the human heart, but its terrible consequences are sin, death, and hell.

"Human nature rises against restraint: 'I had not known lust except the Law had said, 'Thou shall not covet.' The depravity of man is excited to rebellion by the promulgation of laws. So evil are we, that we conceive at once the desire to commit an act, simply because it is forbidden." *Charles Spurgeon*

THE FUNCTION OF THE LAW

1:25

“God, being a perfect God, had to give a perfect Law, and the Law was given not to save men, but to measure them. I want you to understand this clearly, because I believe hundreds and thousands stumble at this point. They try to save themselves by trying to keep the Law; but it was never meant for men to save themselves by.” *D. L. Moody*

is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

19 **Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:**

20 **For the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God.**

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

26 If any man among you seem to be

religious, and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

CHAPTER 2

MY brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

2 For if there come to your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

3 And you have respect to him that wears the gay clothing, and say to him, Sit here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand there, or sit here under my footstool:

4 Are you not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to them that love him?

6 But you have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which you are called?

8 If you fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, You shall love your neighbour as yourself, you do well:

9 But if you have respect to persons, you commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

1:22 This is particularly applicable to the many commands to evangelize this world.

1:23-25 The only way you and I can see ourselves in truth is to look into a mirror. Yet a mirror can only do its job and reflect truth if there is bright light. In Scripture, the Law of God is called both a mirror (James 1:23-25; 2:11,12) and light (Proverbs 6:23). Many of today's "converts" aren't shown the mirror of the Law. We think that a long look at what they are in truth will be too painful for them, so "All have sinned" is all we tell them. Without the conviction of their own sin, they are stillborn with no life in them.

THE FUNCTION OF THE LAW

2:10

“It is of great importance that the sinner should be made to feel his guilt, and not to the impression that he is unfortunate. Do not be afraid, but show him the breadth of the divine Law, and the exceeding strictness of its precepts. Make him see how it condemns his thoughts and life. By a convicted sinner, I mean one who feels himself condemned by the Law of God, as a guilty sinner.

“I remark that this [the Law] is the rule, and the only just rule by which the guilt of sin can be measured... Every man need only consult his own consciousness faithfully and he will see that it is equally affirmed by the mind’s own intuition to be right.” *Charles Finney*

11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if you commit no adultery, yet if you kill, you are become a transgressor of the law.

12 So speak, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that has showed no mercy; and mercy rejoices against judgment.

14 What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he has faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and

destitute of daily food,

16 And one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding you give them not those things which are needful to the body; what does it profit?

17 Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone.

18 Yes, a man may say, You have faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

19 **You believe that there is one God; you do well: the devils also believe, and tremble.**

20 **But will you know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?**

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22 See how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23 And the scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24 You see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

2:7 Witnessing to blasphemers. If you hear God’s name taken in vain, don’t tell the person it’s offensive; use it as an opening for the gospel. Greet him, talk about something in the natural realm, then give him a gospel tract. Gently say, “I noticed that you used God’s name in vain. Do you know what you’re actually doing when you do that?” Most people will say no. Then say, “Instead of using a filth word to express disgust, you’re putting God’s name in place of that word. That’s called ‘blasphemy,’ and the Bible says, ‘The Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.’”

2:8 Using the Law in evangelism. In verses 8–12 James uses the Law (in conjunction with future punishment) to bring the knowledge of sin. See John 8:4,5 footnote.

2:10 Galatians 3:10 warns that the sinner must continue to do “all things” that are written in the Law. The strict demands of the Law cannot be kept by sinful man and should send the sinner to the Savior. See Matthew 5:48 footnote.

“God’s Law is unified; it all hangs together and is inseparable. It is like hitting a window with a hammer. You may hit it only once, and that rather lightly, but the whole window is shattered.” *John MacArthur*

2:16 “Science may have found a cure for most evils; but it has found no remedy for the worst of them all: the apathy of human beings.” *Helen Keller*

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

CHAPTER 3

MY brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, wherever the governor lists.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasts great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindles!

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds,

and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed of mankind:

8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

10 Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

What can be wiser than in the highest sense to bless our fellow men—to snatch a soul from the gulf that yawns, to lift it up to the heaven that glorifies, to deliver an immortal from the thralldom of Satan, and to bring him into the liberty of Christ?

CHARLES SPURGEON

11 Does a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?

12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

13 Who is a wise man and endued with

2:17 Faith without works. A Christian farmer in western Kansas felt sure that God spoke to him to give his \$40,000 hail insurance to missions. So, in faith he gave the money, trusting that God would protect his crop. Sure enough, the hail came and severely damaged all his neighbor's crops, but not his.

In contrast, there is a well-known story about a brilliant tightrope artist named Blondin, who pushed a wheelbarrow across Niagara Falls. After he had walked to the other side, the crowd roared with applause at his amazing feat.

He asked a small boy in the crowd if he believed that Blondin could walk back. The boy said, "Yes, sir!" He then asked if the boy thought he could do it with him in the wheelbarrow. The boy said he believed he could do it, to which the famous tightrope walker said, "*Good! Jump in then and I will take you!*" The boy would not get in.

Here are two different types of faith. The farmer had faith that he had heard from God; he was so sure that he was prepared to step out. But the boy's faith was (understandably) lacking; he wasn't prepared to step out, and get in. Many sincere folks have a measure of faith in Jesus, but they have never *trusted* in Him. In that sense, their faith, because it doesn't have works with it, is dead.

2:20 "What is it [evolution] based upon? Upon nothing whatever but faith, upon belief in the reality of the unseen—belief in the fossils that cannot be produced, belief in the embryological experiments that refuse to come off. It is faith unjustified by works." *Arthur N. Field*

3:6 The tongue weighs practically nothing, but so few people are able to hold it.

Here we are told that the tongue is set on fire by hell. At Pentecost, God gave man a new tongue—set on fire by heaven. The mouths of men reveal their wicked hearts. See Romans 3:13,14.

knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

14 But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

15 This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

CHAPTER 4

FROM whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

2 You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not, because you ask not.

3 You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.

4 You adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

5 Do you think that the scripture said in vain, The spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy?

6 But he gives more grace. Wherefore he says, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

7 **Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**

8 **Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded.**

9 **Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.**

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaks evil of his brother, and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law, and judges the law: but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge.

12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to

3:17 This is the spirit in which we should share our faith. See Proverbs 15:1.

Beware of “religious” types. They tend to gravitate toward the evangelistic enterprise. They will contend with you about doctrine and steal your time from the work of evangelism. You will recognize them by their lack of gentleness, mercy, and willingness to yield to reason.

4:2-4 Using the Law in evangelism. James here uses the Law once again to bring the knowledge of sin—speaking of lust, adultery, murder, and covetousness.

4:6 Biblical evangelism is always “Law to the proud and grace to the humble.” With the Law we break the hard heart; with the gospel we heal the broken one. See Matthew 19:17-22 footnote.

4:9,10 These are the inner workings of a genuinely repentant heart—affliction, mourning, weeping (contrition), heaviness, and humility. These are the ones the Lord lifts up. See Psalm 147:6.

4:12 The idea for the American government’s divided powers came directly from Scripture. Isaiah 33:22 says, “For the Lord is our Judge [the judicial branch], the Lord is our Lawgiver [the legislative branch], the Lord is our King [the executive branch].” Our Founding Fathers knew that separated powers were needed because of man’s inherent sinfulness and desire for control—and what better model could there be for a government than the Lord who governs the universe!

“The teachings of the Bible are so interwoven and entwined with our whole civic and social life that it would be literally—I do not mean figuratively, I mean literally—impossible for us to figure to ourselves what life would be if these teachings were removed.” *Theodore Roosevelt*

SPRINGBOARDS FOR PREACHING AND WITNESSING



The Will to Live

Millions of people spend dozens of hours each week watching dead people on TV. From Elvis to Lucy to Jimmy Stewart, the faces of folks who no longer exist entertain us. Time not only snatched their looks, it snatched their lives. Today, good-looking Hollywood stars are making movies so that tomorrow's generation can also pass the time by watching dead people on TV.

Time makes today tomorrow's memory. Each weekend seems to pass us by like blurred telephone poles flashing past the window of the speeding train of life.

If I purchased a new car and saw in the owner's manual that it had a certain type of engine, I shouldn't be surprised to lift the hood and find the engine to be exactly as the manual stated. The maker's handbook gives me insight into the unseen workings of the vehicle. This is also true with human beings. The Maker's manual tells us how each of us thinks and why we react the way we do. It lifts the hood and reveals the inner workings of homo sapiens.

In doing so, the Bible discloses an often-overlooked tool that we can use to reach the lost. That tool is the "fear of death." For the Christian who may find such an approach to be negative, it may be looked at in a *positive* light. The tool may also be called "the will to live." Every human being in his right mind has a fear of death (Hebrews 2:15). *He doesn't want to die.* He sits wide-eyed, staring out the window of the speeding train watching life pass him by.

Here is how to use that tool when speaking to an unsaved person: "Let's assume that the average person dies at 70 years old. Then if you are 20 years old, you have just 2,500 weekends left to live. If you have turned 30, you have 2,000 weekends left until the day you die. If you are 40 years old, you have only 1,500 weekends left. If you are 50, then you have just 1,000 weekends, and if you are 60, you have a mere 500 weekends left until the day death comes to you."

Even as a Christian that thought concerns me. I somehow can relate to "weekends," while "years" puts death into the distance. It shakes me enough to ask myself, *What I am doing with my life?* It sickens me that I am doing so little to reach the lost. It also deeply concerns me that I have dry eyes when I pray. My train will take me into the presence of God. For those trusting in Jesus Christ, death has been defeated. But the train of the unregenerate will take them to horrific disaster. Their end will be eternal hell. In light of such terrible thoughts, all my activities outside of warning the world of their destination seem trivial.

It has been wisely stated that every one of us is unique...*just like everyone else.* In truth, each unique individual is uniquely predictable. Every sinner has a fear of death. No one can deny that he naturally has a will to live. Therefore, it makes sense to confront him with reality by reminding him that he has an "appointment" to keep. Bluntly tell him how many weekends he has left. Then appeal to his reason by saying, "If there was one chance in a million that Jesus Christ 'has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,' you owe it to your good sense just to look into it."

save and to destroy: who are you that judge another?

13 Go to now, you that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

14 Whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life?

It is even a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away.

15 For that you ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

16 But now you rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

17 Therefore to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin.

4:17 "To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards out of men." *Abraham Lincoln*

CHAPTER 5

GO to now, you rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have heaped treasure together for the last days.

4 Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, cries: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

5 You have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; you have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

6 You have condemned and killed the just; and he does not resist you.

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, to the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

8 Be also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws nigh.

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest you be condemned: behold, the judge stands before the door.

10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. You have heard of the patience

of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yes be yes; and your no, no; lest you fall into condemnation.

13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

17 Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

20 Let him know, that he which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

5:8 Second coming of Jesus: See Jude 14.

5:16 "Prayer is the honest thoughts of the heart and mind converted into a form of communication, either verbal or mental, directed toward God." *Emeal Zwayne*

5:20 There is no higher calling than to turn a sinner from the error of his ways. A surgeon may extend someone's life, but death eventually takes the person. Our work has eternal consequences.

Mormonism

OFFICIAL NAME: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS, Mormons)

FOUNDER: Joseph Smith Jr., on April 6, 1830

CURRENT LEADER: Gordon B. Hinckley (b. 1910)

HEADQUARTERS: Salt Lake City, Utah

MEMBERSHIP (1998): Worldwide: 10.3 million in 28,670 wards and branches in 162 countries; United States: 5.1 million in all 50 states and D.C.; Canada: 152,000.

MISSIONARIES (1998): 58,700

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded by Joseph F. Smith Jr. (1805–1844). Smith claimed to have had a visitation from God in 1820 in which God directed him to establish the true church. Consequently he organized the Mormon Church on April 6, 1830, with six original members. Beginning with a few hundred followers the church moved to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois before Smith's death at the hands of a mob at the Carthage, Ill., jail. Smith had been arrested for encouraging the destruction of the *Expositor*, a Nauvoo, Ill., newspaper. After Smith's death, Brigham Young was affirmed as president of the church by a majority of the church's leaders and led several thousand followers to Utah where they established Salt Lake City in 1847. Joseph Smith's widow, Emma, resided in Independence, Mo. Those who affirmed her son, Joseph Smith, as the true successor of his father and as prophet of the church helped found the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, now headquartered in Independence, Mo., in 1852.

MAJOR BELIEFS OF MORMONS

ONE TRUE CHURCH: The Mormon church claims to be the only true church. In God's supposed revelation to Joseph Smith, Jesus Christ told him to join no other church for "they were all wrong...their creeds were an abomination...those professors [members] were all corrupt" (*The Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith History —1:19). Mormons teach that after the New Testament all churches became heretical and no true saints existed until the "Church of the Latter-day Saints" was organized, hence their name. Non-Mormons are thus called "Gen-

tiles." The new revelations given to Smith, the institution of the prophet and apostles in the church, the restoration of the divine priesthoods, and the temple ceremonies make the church authentic. True and full salvation or exaltation is found only in the LDS Church.

Biblical Response: The true church of Jesus Christ has had an ongoing presence and witness in the world since Pentecost. Jesus Christ promised that His church, *true* baptized and regenerate believers, would not fail (Matt. 16:17–18). The marks of a true church include faithfulness to the teaching of the first apostles (Acts 2:42)—not the creation of new doctrines.

AUTHORITY OF THE PROPHET: The *president* or *prophet* of the Church is thought to be the sole spokesman and revelator of God. Joseph Smith was the initial prophet, but each successive president holds that position. Through him God's will can be made known to the church. All revelations are made scripture and no Mormon can attain godhood without accepting Joseph Smith as a true prophet. The Mormon scriptures state that Latter-day Saints "shalt give heed unto all his [the prophet's] words and commandments...For his word ye shall receive as if from mine [God's] own mouth" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 21:4–5).

Biblical Response: Old and New Testament prophets were God's spokesmen. Their words were always consistent with the Bible and pointed to God's Son, Jesus Christ. A test of genuineness for prophets was that any prediction they proclaimed would come true (Deut. 18:20–22). For example, Joseph Smith predicted that the temple of the church would be built in Independence, Mo., within his lifetime (*Doctrine and Covenants* 84:2–5). No temple has yet been built there. New Testament prophets spoke, along with teachers, pastors, and evangelists, in evangelizing with and edifying the church (Eph. 4:11–13).

MORMON SCRIPTURE: Mormons accept four books as scripture and the word of God. The King James Version of the Bible is one of them, but only "as far as it is translated correctly"—seemingly allowing for possible questions about its authority. Joseph Smith made over 600 corrections to its text. Other "standard works"

are the *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*. The Bible is missing “plain and precious parts” according to the *Book of Mormon* (1 Nephi 13:26) which the other three volumes complete. The *Book of Mormon* has the “fullness of the gospel” and tells the story of a supposed migration of Israelites in 600 B.C. to the American continent. These Israelites subsequently lapsed into apostasy although their story was preserved on golden plates written in Reformed Egyptian. Joseph Smith, it is said, translated the plates by the “gift and power of God” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 135:3). Reformed Egyptian does not exist as a language. The golden plates were returned to the angel Moroni after they were transcribed and Moroni returned them to heaven. The *Book of Mormon* does not contain explicit Mormon doctrine. *Doctrine and Covenants* contains the revelations of the Mormon prophets—138 in number along with two “declarations.” Here most of Mormon doctrine can be found including the priesthood, baptism for the dead, godhood, and polygamy. *The Pearl of Great Price* contains Smith’s religious history, the Articles of Faith, the Book of Abraham, and the Book of Moses.

Biblical Response: The Bible explicitly warns against adding to or detracting from its teaching (Rev. 22:18; Deut. 4:2). The New Testament contains the inspired and totally accurate witness of contemporary disciples and followers of Jesus. It alone claims to be fully inspired of God and usable for the establishment of doctrine (2 Tim. 3:15–17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21).

ESTABLISHMENT OF TEMPLES: The first Mormon temple was constructed in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1836. Subsequently, a temple was constructed in Nauvoo, Ill., in 1846. Presently there are at least 53 operating temples throughout the world including the one finished in Salt Lake City in 1893. The purpose and function of temples is for the practice of eternal ordinances including primarily baptism for the dead, endowments, and celestial marriages. Baptism in the Mormon church, for both the living and the dead, is essential for the fullness of salvation. The dead often are baptized by proxy which affords them after death the opportunity to become Mormons. Celestial marriage for “time and eternity” is also a temple ordinance. It is necessary for godhood and seals the marriage forever. Temples form an essential part of Mormon salvation. Only Mormons in possession of a

“temple recommend” by their bishop may enter a temple.

Biblical Response: The Temple of the Old Testament was a place of symbolic sacrifice forefiguring the sacrifice of Christ. Worship in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem was a practice of early Jewish believers (Acts 2:46). Otherwise there is no mention of any such practice in the New Testament. Never was the Jewish temple used for baptism for the dead, marriage, or other secret ceremonies. It was the place in the Old Testament where the glory of God occasionally dwelt. Today the individual believer is God’s dwelling place and not a physical building (1 Cor. 3:16).

GOD IS AN EXALTED MAN: Elohim, the god of this universe, was previously a man in a prior existence. As a result of having kept the requirements of Mormonism, he was exalted to godhood and inherited his own universe. God is confined to a “body of flesh and bones” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22) and yet is thought to be omniscient and omnipotent. He obviously cannot be omnipresent. There are an infinite number of gods with their own worlds—these too were previously men. The Holy Ghost, Jesus Christ, and “Heavenly Father” comprise three separate and distinct gods. Heavenly Father sires spiritual children in heaven destined for human life on earth. All humans, as well as Jesus Christ and Lucifer, are god’s heavenly children. (See *Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22; God, Jesus, and the Spirit thus had beginnings.)

Biblical Response: God is Spirit and is not confined to a physical body (John 4:24). Jesus Christ was incarnated through a miraculous and non-physical conception through the Virgin Mary. He was fully God from the beginning (John 1:1). Together with the person of the Holy Spirit they form the triune (three-in-one) eternal God.

JESUS IS GOD’S “SON”: Jesus was Heavenly Father’s firstborn spirit child in heaven. He was begotten by God through Mary as in a “literal, full and complete sense” in the same “sense in which he is the son of Mary” (Bruce McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1993], 67). These two elements of Jesus being literally God’s son form his uniqueness in Mormon theology. In the Garden of Gethsemane as well as on the cross Jesus atoned for Adam’s sin and guaranteed all humankind resurrection and immortality. Jesus visited the Israelites or Indians of North

America after his resurrection and established the true church among them. We are the spiritual, but literal, younger brothers and sisters of Christ. Some Mormon documents claim that Jesus was married at Cana in Galilee (Mark 2) and had children himself.

Biblical Response: Jesus is viewed as God, the Word or Son, eternally existent with the Father and worthy of identity as God (John 1:1–14). He was born of the Virgin Mary who had conceived him supernaturally by the Holy Spirit. He lived a perfect life, died on the cross for the sins of the world, and was raised from the dead. He will come again and reign as Lord of lords.

HUMANS ARE GODS IN EMBRYO: Every human being has the potential of becoming a god by keeping the requirements of Mormonism. A well-known statement within Mormonism is, “As man is god once was, as god is man may become.” From a prior spirit existence in heaven, humans may be born on earth in order to exercise freedom to choose good or evil and to have a body for the resurrection. Basically humans are good, but they will be punished for their sin. But by keeping Mormon teaching and obeying the church and the Prophet, after the resurrection worthy Mormon males may pass the celestial guards, bring their wives with them, and achieve a status similar to Elohim—the god of this world. The consequences of their sin are erased by their allegiance to the tenets of Mormonism. In resurrection faithful Mormons receive exaltation to godhood and will exercise dominion over their world.

Biblical Response: Human beings are God’s special creation. There is no evidence from Scripture of preexistence, rather God acknowledges that it was in the womb of our mothers that He formed us (Isaiah 44:2). A sinful nature is part of humanity’s experience. Liberation from the power and presence of sin is experienced as a result of faith in Christ. At that point God’s image is begun to be remade in every Christian. Although the believer is being transformed to Christlikeness, the Bible does not teach literal godhood as the inheritance of the saints (Rom. 8:29; Rev. 1:5–6).

MORMON PLAN OF SALVATION: The Mormon plan of salvation is built on the idea that all people have eternal life, but only the most faithful Mormons have godhood or enter

the celestial Kingdom. In order to obtain this ultimate step, Mormons must exercise faith in the God of Mormonism, its Christ, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; exercise repentance; and be baptized in the LDS Church. Additionally Mormons must keep the “Word of Wisdom” by abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine; tithe to the church; attend weekly sacrament meetings; support the Mormon prophet; do temple works; and be active in their support of the church.

Biblical Response: Salvation, according to the Bible, is due to God’s grace and love. He provided Jesus as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. It is through faith in the crucified and risen Jesus that we may be saved. Works are excluded (John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9–13; Eph. 2:8–9).

EVANGELIZING MORMONS

- Know clearly the Christian faith and the gospel.
- Be aware of the unique Mormon doctrines as presented here.
- Remember, Mormons use Christian vocabulary (gospel, atonement, god) but radically redefine their meanings. Define clearly what you mean when you use biblical words.
- Present a clear testimony of your faith in Christ alone for your salvation.
- Show your Mormon friend that the Bible teaches salvation alone through the cross of Christ (John 3:16; Rom. 10:4,10–13; Eph. 2:8–9). Emphasize that salvation is a gift to be received, not a merit to be earned.
- Warn the Mormon about trusting in feelings (i.e., the burning in the bosom) for a validation of Mormonism’s truth claim. Without historical, objective verification, feelings are useless.
- When Mormons use a Bible verse, read carefully the verses before and afterward to make clear the exact meaning and purpose of the passage. Don’t let them take Bible verses out of context. Read carefully the full reference in the Bible before deciding what any one verse means.
- Keep the central doctrines of the faith as the focus of your discussion.
- Do the basics: pray, trust the Holy Spirit, and be loving, patient, and steadfast.