

INFORMAL MORMON MISSIONARIES

Everyday Mormons tell others about their religion. The Mormon church encourages all members to be missionaries, of a sort, by their manner of living and when appropriate by explaining their beliefs. Here is an example, summarized from an article titled “Sharing What Really Mattered” in the church’s flagship monthly magazine, *Ensign*, February 2014:

Two Mormon women on a long flight were seated next to a non-Mormon man. They introduced themselves and “started a casual conversation.” When he learned they were from Utah, he asked if they were Mormon. “Our response was an enthusiastic ‘Yes!’,” the author reports.

When the man asked if they were Christians, the women told him yes—“that the name of the Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, should be solid proof that we are, indeed, Christians.” Then they told him at length “how many of our beliefs were similar to other Christian denominations.”*

Initially the women “were satisfied that we had enjoyed a successful missionary moment.” However, the author soon realized that what they had done was “nice” but “not all that we needed to share.” She decided to renew the conversation to explain the *differences* of Mormonism, or to tell “more about the gospel.”**

For a couple of hours the women discussed “the fundamental aspects” of their church and addressed “many rumors relating to our doctrine” and “misconceptions.” They talked about Joseph Smith...the Book of Mormon,...and other important teachings of the gospel.” The author finally offered to send the man a Book of Mormon and was excited that he accepted.

From the experience, the author learned, she said, “that it is the Restoration of the gospel and all that it encompasses that makes The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints so extraordinarily different.”

*A Mormon in casual conversation may call the church a denomination, but the Mormon church insists that it is not, but is the only full expression of Christianity.

**Mormons commonly use the term “gospel” to mean their church’s message of the Restoration: the “restored gospel.”

Key points: •It’s the differences, not similarities, that count—for Mormons and for you. •Mormons are hypersensitive to perceived “rumors” and “misconceptions” about their religion. •The religion’s core is the “Restoration” (stories about Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the Mormon church).

FORMAL MORMON MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

The Messengers. In 2014 more than 82,000 full-time Mormon missionaries (up from about 60,000 a year earlier) serve worldwide for one-and-a-half to two years. Most are less than 25 years old—many, teenagers. An increasing number, nearly one-fourth, are women. This surge followed an announcement

by the Mormons’ prophet in October 2012 which lowered age requirements for male and female missionaries.

An increase in the number of missionaries is not the only new effort to “hasten the work of salvation” (as the Mormon church calls it, often with emphasis on “hasten”). According to a report in the church’s weekly newspaper, *Church News*, December 29, 2013, the church has taken these (and other) steps:

- The church added 58 mission headquarters in 2013, bringing the total to some 405 globally. (A typical mission has about 200 missionaries supervised by a president, often a veteran from business, medicine, education, law, sports, or other professional life, and now, with his wife, a missionary himself.)
- Genealogy is used to “spark interest and spiritual awakening.” Youth involvement will be increased. (“Family history” research is part of Mormon life to “help save the dead.” It is also a missionary effort, exposing many to Mormon facilities, activities, and the most tantalizing Mormon doctrines.)
- More missions will be authorized to do “online proselytizing” using Skype, Facebook, the church’s websites (lds.org and mormon.org), texting, emailing, and blogs. A reported example: “In its first full month of online proselytizing, Arizona Phoenix Mission missionaries taught online lessons in 35 [states] and 31 different nations” and increased in the second month to 42 states and 50 countries.†
- The Mormon church has started issuing iPads and iPhones in selected North American and international missions for online proselytizing, planning, and reporting.

†More information on Mormon missionary lessons will be published in p.s. #10 and posted at immanuelbible.net.

Key points: •Mormons are fully invested in technology and “boots on the ground” to “[help] God’s children...progress through life and back to God’s presence,” as they say. •To Mormons: Everyone is a literal child of God and lived in heaven (thus the idea of *returning* there), and progress always includes adoption of Mormon tenets (in this life or the next).

DO CHRISTIANS PREPARE THE WAY FOR MORMONS?

A Mormon professor at his church’s Brigham Young University wrote in *Ensign* magazine, “Latter-day Saints have ‘more’ than persons of other religious traditions.” His “other religious traditions” are “other Christians.” They help in converting people, especially Christians, to Mormonism. They “prepare the way for the gospel’s restoration.” He explained:

...from a Latter-day Saint perspective, there is yet *more* to say than other Christians can say. Yet they speak as much of God’s word as they have received, just as we speak the truths we have received. Often, the fundamentals given to people through Christian missionaries are essential to their ability to understand and accept the *restored gospel* when they have that opportunity.‡

‡Emphasis added. More at www.lds.org/ensign/1991/03/do-i-know-my-neighbor?lang=eng. The professor also recounts his and his family’s emotional conversion from ministry in two Protestant denominations to Mormonism.

Key points: •Christians are targets. •Christians—even clergy—if uninformed, can be vulnerable to Mormonism’s “more.”