



SHOOTING THE MESSENGER

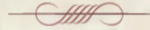
KEN CLARK



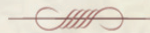
I need to admit up right away that I'm a little bitter.
I feel lied to and used. The church had every
opportunity to be truthful from the time
my wife and I took the discussions
to the time we left.

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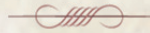
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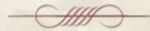
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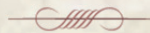
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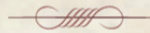
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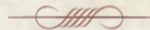
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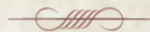
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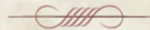
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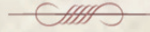


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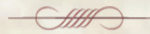


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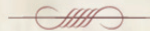
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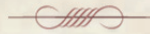
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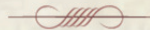
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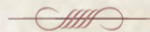
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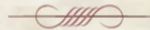
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OUT OF THE MORMON CHURCH

My wife and I left the LDS Church on August 7th, 2002, the same day that I resigned as Institute Director of the Pullman Washington Institute of Religion, and the LDS Church Education System (CES). I had worked full-time for CES for 27 years. I'm also a former bishop, high councilman, stake young men's president, high priest's group leader, ward mission leader, ward young men's president, and more. I wasn't a casual Mormon who lived on the fringes.

I had been seriously looking for another job for some time due to harassment from Priesthood (PH) leaders and CES administrators. I couldn't take it anymore. They were not crazy about my teaching style. I was honest in a gentle way with institute students about the church's history and doctrine. I wasn't impressed with their denial and dishonesty. CES and PH leaders refused to acknowledge that superior resources on church history and doctrine are available from books, journals, and websites labeled by church leaders as "anti." And that most of the independent sources are not anti at all. They are objective.

I felt compelled to teach the truth about the church's drastic revision of history and doctrine. It was an ethical bind: by remaining loyal and teaching the LDS viewpoint about history and doctrine, I was being dishonest but valuable to the church. However, by being honest with the students I was branded as disloyal and I could be fired. I found out that it is impossible to change the system from the inside. The humility that the church encourages members to adopt – to remain teachable – is not present in church leaders when they feel it necessary to protect the church's image.

As one general authority told church educators, "Some things that are true are not very useful" (Boyd K. Packer to a Church Educational System Symposium at BYU in 1981). It was a commandment to professionals to hide uncomfortable truths about Mormon history and doctrine from students instead of teaching it accurately. I gradually learned that loyalty is and always has been more important to church leaders than honesty. Mormons from the beginning have revised their history to create a sympathetic image of a people who have been persecuted and driven by ruthless, godless, hypocritical mobs for no good reason. It isn't true. It's also a myth that Mormon prophets and apostles have always been godlike, infallible, and exemplary representatives of God. Much of the time they have, but many times they have broken the commandments they are supposed to model. Nevertheless I felt tremendous pressure to teach what CES ordered while trying to find another job. I gradually lost respect for the church leaders because in annual temple recommend interviews (interviews to determine one's worthiness to enter temples) they demanded that I be honest. Yet they wanted me to be dishonest with my students. When I tried to be honest they called it undermining students' testimonies or undermining the

authority of the prophets of God. The vast majority of students found the honest approach in my classes refreshing. The pressure from leaders resulted in weekly migraine headaches requiring a prescription to manage and regular prescriptions of acid reflux medication to prevent ulcers.

THE SECOND TO THE LAST STRAW – BISHOP L

On August 4th, 2002 our bishop called my wife and I into his office for an interview. He began with friendly chit-chat and a huge smile that misrepresented his intentions. After some small talk, I asked him why he had called us in. His facial expression changed immediately from happy to deeply troubled. He's a chemical engineering professor at the university and has no professional training in theology or counseling of course. He's more task than people-oriented. Most members in this area considered him to be difficult because of his lack of social skills. Like all bishops he enjoyed enormous power granted to him by the church. (See Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 1 pages 11-22; especially page 21 under the heading of "Counseling.") If a thought came into his mind and he interpreted as a revelation from God it was so. But that is the case with all PH leaders. He had a thoughts/revelations/inspiration and wanted to talk to my wife and me about them. David Nye White, senior editor of the "Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette" in 1843 reported that Joseph told him that "when he was in a quandary he asked the Lord for a revelation, and when he could not get it, he followed the dictates of his own judgment, which were as good as a revelation him." (Dan Vogel, "Early Mormon Documents" Volume 1, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books 1996) 181.

The bishop announced that he was dissatisfied with our church attendance because we hadn't been to church enough to suit him. I reminded him that in May I had written him a letter as a courtesy informing him that we were going to be out of town much of the summer because of an unusual number of out-of-town and family commitments. He seemed irritated about the letter and indicated that the letter appeared to him to be a lack of respect. I told him that on the contrary, my intentions were to grant him respect. He argued with me about it and I saw that I could not convince him that my motives were pure. Because I remained steadfast he changed tactics. He suddenly demanded that Teresa enter the conversation. He literally shushed me and said, "Let's hear what Mom has to say! C'mon Mom, what do you say?" She agreed with me of course and tried to restate our intentions. He directed rapid-fire questions at her for some time. It appeared that he was trying to make her contradict what I had said – drive a wedge between us. His facial expressions and tone of voice were tinged with anger and desperation. He wanted to

prove a point. It wasn't working so he finally stopped badgering her. He wasn't finished. He was just getting warmed up and began to pursue another angle.

He asked me how often we attended church when out of town. I told him that it depended on where we were visiting. When conducting CES business in North Central Idaho I always attended the ward I visited. What about when I was visiting an out of town relative? I told him "not very much on those occasions." He demanded that I be specific and tell him how many times I had attended and how many times I had missed. I told him I couldn't be specific because I couldn't remember. I wasn't in the habit of carrying a calendar with me to document my meeting attendance. I didn't know I had to. No one else I had ever known in 33 years of church activity had to. I could never remember another member being grilled about this issue – ever.

He became more aggressive and his voice became louder and he demanded to know, "so most of the time or not?" I told him that "some of the time would be accurate I guess." He again demanded that I be more specific. I told him I couldn't. He said, "So are you saying not much of the time?" I said, "No probably most of the time," trying to remember if most of my visits that summer had been to wards where I visited for CES business or whether I was out of town visiting parents or relatives. He continued to bear down on me. Finally, he concluded this segment of the grilling with "I cannot renew your temple recommend because worthiness requires that you attend YOUR OWN HOME WARD." I had just been released as a bishop a year and a half earlier. I remembered nothing in the handbook suggesting that that aspect of meeting attendance should be given the disproportionate emphasis he had just given it. By that standard worthy members who travel a lot with their jobs or even general authorities would not qualify for a temple recommend. He seemed bent on convicting us. I was taken back. It was a little surreal. Before I could reflect he listed another complaint against us.

"Why haven't you paid any tithing during the year?" I replied that we were going to pay our tithing in a lump sum or pay it with some investment stocks that we would turn over to the church at the end of the year, using the provision provided by the church in their handbook of instructions. I went on to tell him that my secretary at the Institute in Moscow, and the stake relief society president in the student stake had been recommending for years that I try the stock option for paying tithing. A member deeds to the church, the equivalent amount of stock in lieu of a check or cash. She and her husband had done that for several years and said it had many tax advantages. (Her husband was the stake clerk in the student stake. A stake is like a Catholic diocese. It contains anywhere from 6 to 14 wards on average. Each ward is a congregation of about 200 to 600 members.) I told the bishop that I didn't see any tax advantages to using the stock option, but I wanted to reserve the option just in case. I told him we were saving our tithing in a

savings account in the event we decided to pay it by check or cash. He wasn't pleased and fired back, "But you've never done that before!" He was growing more perturbed with us. He was not letting official church policies found in the church's official handbook get in his way. He was not letting the obligation to behave like a Christian deter him either. He believed that he was being directed by God and reminded us of that several times.

He startled us and suddenly moved on to the next problem, without any closure on the tithing issue. "You read the scriptures too much in Sacrament Meeting and Sunday School!" he blurted out. He seemed pleased after injecting the accusation. I looked at Teresa in amazement and she looked at me questioning if she heard him right. I wasn't sure either so I asked him if he really said that I read the scriptures too much in church. He told me it was rude of me. I patiently explained that I had begun taking my scriptures to church years before it became fashionable. For 33 years when talks and lessons were being given I followed along or looked up related verses. Anyone who knows me can vouch for that. He continued to insist that I was rude. I was growing impatient and protested that he should talk to the people who sleep during church, play tic-tac-toe, and wander around the hallways out of boredom. He insisted that I was rude in an effort to make sure he got the last word in I guess. I let him. It was obvious by now that the outcome of this "interview" with my "spiritual shepherd" was decided before we walked in the door. He announced that we were not temple recommend worthy.

He complained about some other things, and I told him that I wanted to appeal his decision not to renew our temple recommends. "Fine, but the stake president is going to have to tell me that I am wrong!" He seemed confident that that would never happen. I was absolutely confident that it would because his case against us seemed so petty, unchristian, and bizarre. How could the stake president support him? He was acting crazy! I wouldn't have dreamed of roughing up members the way he had. I didn't know that he and the stake president were in complete agreement because of meetings they had held prior to our encounter.

THE LAST STRAW – PRESIDENT D

The next day (Monday, August 5th, 2002) the stake president and I met during lunch hour at my office at the Pullman Institute. He was cordial in his "ah shucks, I'm just a simple farmer" way. It was appealing and made him approachable to some people in the stake – those who willingly engaged in the hero worship of PH leaders that the church seems to encourage. He was famous for his homespun earthy stories about his farming experiences and family when he spoke to the saints. He began to tell me about the wisdom

that my bishop possessed because "he bears the mantle of PH authority, as one called of God to be a judge in Israel. He has the gift of discernment." He said his usual mode of operation in situations where the bishop and a ward member had a serious conflict was to talk to the bishop, then the person; and then "bring the bishop back into the loop to see if a miracle can occur."

He listed the bishop's concerns. I told the stake president that it sounded as if the bishop thought I was lying. He admitted that indeed the bishop didn't trust me.

I discussed reading scriptures during the meetings too much and the stake president clearly didn't want to address it. I pointed out how absurd and bizarre it was that I should be accused of such a silly thing. I thought it demonstrated just how crazy and out of hand the rest of the bishop's accusations were. He said that he doubted if it was the heart of the bishop's concerns. I reminded the president that we spent as much time on that issue as any other subject. He clearly didn't want to talk about it however. I am guessing that it was so indefensible, that he couldn't support the bishop's point of view. He wanted to get to the stuff he felt he could defend.

He said that he too was worried that I wanted to pay my tithing at the end of the year as a lump sum. I told him that I didn't see what the problem was. Did he call everyone in for an interview that chose to pay tithing in a lump sum at the end of the year? "No," he admitted. He asked why I hadn't been to tithing settlement in a while. I told him that when I was bishop I was too busy. I was busy conducting tithing settlement too. I think I had missed one tithing settlement after my release. I had written a letter with my last check (to bring us up to the right amount) declaring that we were full tithe payers. He told me that the bishop was pretty upset about the letter. (I must be a terrible letter writer because the bishop didn't like any of them.) The bishop hadn't said a word to me about it. I learned that because I had failed to show up in person to the last tithing settlement, Bishop L had listed me as a part-tithe payer the previous year despite the letter declaring us to be full-tithe payers. "Why hadn't the bishop said something to me instead of sneaking around behind my back if he was so upset?" I asked. It seemed a little passive-aggressive.

I asked the stake president, "Does the bishop think I didn't pay a full tithing because I pay it on my net income?" I've always done it that way, since being converted in 1970. Apparently it bothered the bishop. I was supposed to pay more to the \$6 billion per-year corporation. They held the threat of not receiving a temple recommend over my head. A condition of my employment with CES was that I hold a valid temple recommend. Refusing to renew it is a strong arm tactic to keep me and other church employees in line. I could not remember Jesus threatening disciples because he demanded more money from them. His emphasis seemed to be on loving one's neighbor. Jesus wasn't wealthy like the

Mormon Church is. Jesus of Nazareth rejected crass materialism (Matthew 12:16-21, The Parable of the Rich Fool.).

I'm distressed about the guilt heaped on members to pay tithing, even when they don't make enough money to buy food and pay their rent. "He that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming," so says Doctrine & Covenants 64:23 (scripture and revelations revealed to Joseph Smith by God in addition to the Book of Mormon). Teresa and I were not able to provide food in the early 1970's, yet we were continually coerced with guilt and fear to pay up. In Yakima, my first teaching job paid \$6800 per year. Those were poor wages even in 1972. We couldn't accept food stamps because the church forbade it – the dole, or welfare support from the government constituted sin. I should have quit all my church jobs (I was on the high council) and worked at a second job. I was afraid that if I did I would offend God. While it was true that our meager tithing didn't amount to much compared to the billions in income the church made each year, it killed us to pay it. We were afraid not to, for fear of losing our souls. I was uncomfortable as a bishop following the guidelines and instructions. They direct bishops to give food to needy members but make them pay tithing anyway. In my view, when you're baptized a Mormon, you are asked to essentially give up your rights – such as the right to decide what to do with your own money. If you decide to think for yourself instead of conform you may be penalized through the withholding of church privileges and eventually eternal life if you truly believe what you're told. Besides you're routinely reminded, "you pay tithing with faith."

The stake president addressed the meeting attendance issue next. I was tired of lying down and being treated like a doormat. So I argued with him rather than lie down and take it anymore. He was still trying hard to be folksy and cordial while we debated. He needed to get back to work and wanted to cut to the chase. He said he had a simple solution to this problem. I could do two things to earn the bishop's trust: (1) I should bring in my paycheck stubs and let him and the bishop calculate my tithing for me; and then pay that amount by-the-month. I was supposed to forget about the options of paying in a lump sum or turning over stock in lieu of tithing; and (2) When visiting relatives out of town, I was to attend church and bring back information so my bishop could call the out-of-town bishop and verify our presence there. He smiled proudly and said, "I think that will solve everything. You'll gain his trust back in a few months or a year." This wily stake president, with his "ah shucks" way was not only being heavy handed, but he was misleading me. He knew that in a week Bishop L would be released and a new bishop would replace him. There was no way that I was going to solve any problem with Bishop L "in a few months or a year." He wouldn't be around. And I was the one being accused of dishonesty.

I nearly fell off my chair. He could tell I was stunned, bewildered and upset. He seemed to enjoy the obvious advantage because he sat there with a big toothy grin. I asked him

why I was being singled out and persecuted. He told me that it wasn't that at all. It was a matter of my being in a very prestigious position in the stake. I was an Institute Director. "Why you're almost like a stake president. You are an example and should be held to a higher standard." I told him that there were no separate standards for different members, and asked him to justify his separate standards in the handbook of instructions. He said he felt sorry that I wasn't being more cooperative and he was worried about my testimony. He wondered if I was "tough enough" to stand the chastisement. We talked more, but to be honest it's all a blur. (The reason I remember the things I do is because I took notes of the conversations and I keep them in my files.)

He left giving me a good-hearted handshake. But I was angry and confused. For 33 years the standard line from leaders has consistently been, "Your tithing is between you and the Lord." (The Church Handbook of Instructions Book 1 page 134 defines tithing as "one-tenth of all their interest annually." It goes on to say, "No one is justified in making any other statement than this.")

I had never heard of leaders telling a member to bring their paycheck stubs to a leader so he could calculate their tithing and demand that they pay it by the month. I had never heard of attendance Nazis checking up on a member's out of town meeting attendance. If they did institute the practice, the majority of members on vacation would be in for a shock. It was bizarre. According to the Book of Mormon pride is a terrible sin. What I had just experienced was over the top smugness and arrogance (See also Ezra Taft Benson, Beware of Pride, Conference Report, April 1989). I told myself "never again."

I left work immediately after the interview because I was devastated and depressed. I had already worked the 320 hours that I committed to CES. In fact, every summer, I always worked at least 80 to 100 hours more than I contracted to so I would be prepared for the coming school year. Didn't that kind of effort count for something or indicate something about my character? I never received a word of support, gratitude or encouragement for my effort to put in extra hours during the summer months – time I could have used for vacation (or really exciting home projects)!

As I climbed into my truck, I called my wife on the cell phone. She was at work and when she answered, her first question was, "How did it go?" I answered, "Great!" She was relieved. We had been through quite a few of these inquisitions before so she was glad to be through another one. I asked her to meet me for dinner after she got off work and I would tell her all about it.

After our conversation my pain changed to anger. Sometimes anger speaks to the mind with greater clarity than anything else. I was determined to figure out a way to quit.

It became clear to me what to do and for the first time in 33 years I wasn't afraid to quit. Teresa and I could do anything we set our minds to. I refused to waste another minute being scared and depressed because I was dependent on the church. I was no longer trapped by their threats of reaping eternal misery. That had ended years before.

I was tired of working for a group whose main method of control is heaping guilt, shame and fear on members and threatening them with eternal separation from God and family. I wasn't willing to give up my right to question and think for myself another minute so I could pretend to be loyal. I was sick of being blindly submissive; pretending that leaders of the church possess some special gift of inspiration or discernment when it is obvious that their judgment is mediocre, arbitrary or sometimes ridiculous. I was tired of being told that I was unworthy. I was tired of having them try to convince me that I ought to feel inadequate because I reserved the right to put their "inspired counsel" to the test. I was tired of being told that I needed to be more orthodox. Why didn't they value honesty above orthodoxy? History proves that dictators always insist on orthodoxy and unquestioning obedience. I was weary of being told it was wrong to teach the truth to members about the church's history and past leaders. I was tired of pretending that simple-minded men (always men) are the wisest among us. I did not believe that when the prophet speaks the thinking has been done. In truth, members are supposed to believe that when their bishop or stake president speaks, the thinking has been done too. In my mind, it's just silly.

Church leaders often appear incapable of dealing with the real complexities and subtle nuances of real life. Almost everything is seen in purely black and white, absolute terms. They offer cookie cutter, simpleton advice to all members no matter what the problem – read the Book of Mormon and pray about it. "The Holy Ghost will tell you what to do." Trouble is, when you pray and reach a different conclusion than one of your leaders, you are the one who didn't do it right or you weren't worthy enough to receive the right answer. They never entertain the thought that Joseph Smith or one of the living leaders is just plain wrong. I'm offended that the Mormon leaders expected me to respond as a dumb child who needed the church to tell me what to think, say, and do. An attitude of arrogant entitlement and control leaves little room for humility in church governance. And too often the trivial and peripheral are treated as fundamental. It's the "don't tell the emperor he has no clothes" syndrome.

I spent the rest of the drive home figuring out ways to quit and avoid financial ruin. If we needed to, we would rob our savings and/or retirement and pay off the house, and I would find another job. After all, I had a Ph.D. in Education Administration (emphasis in Higher Education), a Masters in Counseling and a teaching certificate, K-12. Why couldn't I find something else? I began to feel happy and excited by the thought that I would no

longer be subject to mind numbing and tortuous inquisitions, arbitrary rules, and unyielding leaders who insisted that we regard their every decision as inspired of God. I had pulled back the curtain and saw that the wizard was only an old white guy trying very hard to prop up the fairy tale created by past Mormon leaders. Traditions trump honesty in the church.

When my wife and I met for dinner that evening, she reached across the table, grabbed my hands, smiled, her eyes gleamed (she has the most beautiful eyes) and she kissed me. I was eager to share the news. I waited for the waitress to finish her duties and after she left, I blurted it out. "I want to quit CES and the church!" She barely hesitated. She giggled and immediately cried out, "YES!" She couldn't believe I was finally ready to do it. She had wanted me to quit CES for years because of the amount of abuse heaped on me by insecure administrators for awful offenses like, "You say "stupid" a lot. (I endured a 3-hour verbal roast because of that one.) She had been waiting for years for me to believe in myself enough to quit.

I can't describe how happy we were. Making the decision and then saying it out loud lifted an enormous load. We ate our meal and planned our escape from Mormon domination. We both had ice tea – a sign of real rebellion!

ESCAPE FROM THE CHURCH

The next day was Tuesday, August 6th. I called a good friend in Salt Lake who worked for CES's benefits department. I only told him that I was thinking of making a change. I kept my cards close to the vest. He had attended dinner with Teresa and me at a Mid-Year Convention a few months prior. We told him then that we were thinking of getting out. So he wasn't surprised when I called. Furthermore, he was gracious and helpful.

I spent the rest of that same day trying to determine what options to pursue to keep the financial pain and strain my quitting would create to a minimum. I made a pretty good income with CES. My base salary had been approximately \$62,500, plus an extra \$8,000 to \$10,000 in summer income. We had grown used to living pretty well because in addition to my salary, Teresa worked as part-time as a Registered Nurse. We were comfortable financially but it just wasn't worth it anymore. I refused to give up my right to think and speak honestly for money.

My training and work experience for 27 years was in a narrow field. Working in CES is all about teaching religion with a Mormon slant, being clever and delivering the party-line

to kids who come with questions – follow the prophet. It doesn't hurt if you are really good at sports and ping-pong either. There are 2 universities and 1 college within 35 miles of Moscow, Idaho and they really weren't interested in my credentials or giving me an interview. I had tried for several years to find a job with no success. I thought I had a chance of getting on with the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Idaho. I had written a course for them and after it had passed the Curriculum review, I had taught it since 1999. I loved that course – Religion 204 – Religion and Society. I was now living through some of the issues we discussed in class – what happens when an institution doesn't live up to its promises or doesn't deliver the acceptable goods and services? Members leave. It's called disaffection.

I couldn't even get an interview as night supervisor at the student recreation center for 1/3 of my present salary. Truth is, they already had people in place or knew whom they wanted to hire before they advertised the position. They advertised it to make it look like they were interested in finding the best candidate. I don't blame them. But I got scared. I liked being scared about this problem instead of worrying about getting into more trouble.

I once got calls from two CES Zone Administrators from Salt Lake grilling me because I had referred a 30-year old married, law student to an article by Lester Bush out of *Dialogue* about why the church denied black members the opportunity to hold the priesthood (PH). (See also *Neither White nor Black: Mormon Scholars Confront the Race Issue in a Universal Church*, edited by Lester Bush and Armand Mauss, [Salt Lake City Utah: Signature Books, 1984].) I was told to be prudent and not undermine the testimonies of students. I informed the administrators that the person they were referring to wasn't an institute student – he was a member of my ward who asked me for information as his bishop. Besides, the information I directed the man to was responsible and accurate. I asked what my actions as a bishop had to do with my CES employment when in this case they were not related? I never received an answer, but I got warnings to be careful what I discussed with students. It was a veiled threat to avoid anything that the church doesn't want to have to answer questions about – especially if the answers reveal flaws in its leaders or the church bureaucracy. Apostle Dallin H. Oaks chiseled it in stone, "It does not matter that the criticism is true." (Dallin H. Oaks, *Reading Church History*, Ninth Annual Church Educational System religious Educators' Symposium, August 16, 1985, Brigham Young University.) In CES it's your duty to keep the mystique alive that the leaders are infallible.

On the morning of Wednesday, August 7th, 2002 my wife and I looked at each other – both giddy and conducted a final check (before take-off). I asked her, "You want to go through with it? She said, "It's your job, do you?" I answered, "Are you kidding? ABSOLUTELY!" We were thrilled and scared in a good way.

I picked up the phone and called my friend in SLC at CES headquarters and told him that we were submitting our formal resignation, and asked for directions on how to proceed. He offered some wonderful words of encouragement and gracious support, and then told me what to do.

I called my Area Director in Seattle and told him that I wanted to submit my formal resignation to CES. His reply was odd. He said, "Oh, so you're going to do it then." I answered "yes," but I was puzzled by his response. He said, "Okay" and told me to put something in writing – an email would work. He needed something in writing for the files. That was the end of the conversation. I had anticipated that he would express concern, offer encouragement, double check to make sure I really wanted to go, or ask why we're leaving. Instead, the conversation ended abruptly. It was anti-climactic and weird. I learned later that the stake president had previously called him and warned him that I was having problems of some sort. I don't know exactly what he said to this day. I don't care. But it had to be something like, "Ken is not being honest in his tithing commitments and we're very concerned." Whatever it was, after having given them 27 years of great teaching I was shocked by the lack of support and encouragement. I had always thought the church lacked class when it came to the way it treated good people. Leaders often use them and sometimes abuse them, and then fail to praise them. That warm feeling inside is supposed to be reward enough.

BREAKING THE NEWS

I called 3 colleagues who I still love. They worked with me for 12 years while I was at the Moscow Institute. I told them of my resignation. They knew that I had been really unhappy and intended to find another job. They were upset when I told them about the bishop's and stake president's interviews but of course were not about to protest. To this day I'm offended that they were not outraged by the treatment I received. Their passive response to my wounds pained Teresa and me. We hoped that they possessed a greater sense of justice. That's how loyal members treat you when you've been mistreated or abused by a PH leader. They begin to make excuses like, "they are only human." Then they let you know that you are wrong if you quit the church. They never condemn the PH, protest in your behalf, or offer to join in your outrage. You quickly become the problem. You are left to yourself. And they let you know that you're about to commit apostasy (renounce religious beliefs) and be condemned eternally if you leave.

My friends had heard me threaten to quit CES after enduring some awful roasts in the past. My colleagues were sad for me but they were torn. They wanted to offer their

sympathy, but they would not cross the line – the one that would make them look disloyal to the PH. Each CES colleague was a counselor to a different stake president. One of them is the second counselor to the student stake president – one of the stake presidents who had made my life a living hell. My other colleague was first counselor to the stake president who I had met with just two days before – the one who wanted to examine my paycheck stubs and tell me how much tithing I should pay. They were absolutely loyal to the PH. I hated it. They knew that the priesthood guys were way out of line, but they couldn't bring themselves to admit it out loud. They circled the wagons to protect their own jobs. They had told me in previous conversations how terrified it made them to think about leaving CES and find a job. They were convinced that they couldn't make it outside church employment. I used to believe that too. Because of their fear induced paralysis they wouldn't give me a lot of support – unless silence and "I'm so sorry" count. Some of that is due to the fact that I not only opted out of CES but out of the church as well. Contrary to the lip service given to the principle of obedience, loyalty is the first law of heaven in the church.

It bothered me that PH leaders are unaccountable for nearly everything they say and do. I told my friends that a system that rewarded atrocious behavior on the part of its leaders was sick and uninspired. It was a systemic problem and not a problem with an individual as they tried to persuade me. I explained to my friends that I didn't plan on ever coming back to church. I had lost so much respect for the system, rules, the hierarchal organization and the demand that "when the leaders speak the thinking has been done." I was tired of being ordered not to think.

I was embarrassed that I hadn't had the courage to leave earlier and I shared that weakness with my friends. It really hurt their feelings to hear me talk that way. They love the church. They took it personally. I didn't go out of my way to hurt them. I only wanted to let them know that when I said I was fed up and wasn't going to take it anymore, I really meant it. I didn't intend to submit to another phony, pompous PH leader's arbitrary behavior again. There was some weeping on the phone. It wasn't me. I was too happy, scared, enthusiastic and anxious. I suspect they believed in their hearts that I had lost my soul. That's effective brainwashing on the church's part.

It's a common theme that you cannot possibly be happy without the church. When we would go to church dutifully on warm summer days and see our neighbors take off for boating and fishing trips or different church meetings, I think we all tried to convince ourselves that they were weren't really happy – they couldn't possibly be happy – they weren't members of the true church! After all, we were righteous Mormons, who went to church even when it hurt. Members frequently stand and declare that if they weren't

members they would probably be very unhappy and living a life of sin. They honestly believe that. That cliché breeds dependence and then smugness.

I love my friends, and used to drop by the institute in Moscow to see them on occasion but I have to admit I have a hard time respecting them. One of my colleagues had a favorite saying around the institute when he lied, bent the truth, or skirted church rules or policies while covering his tracks so administrators or PH leaders wouldn't catch him. He sermonized, "Ken, you just have to learn to play the game." I told him that I wasn't very good at the game-playing thing because it seemed too dishonest. I used to admire him because he was so clever and well respected in CES and by the PH leaders. His usual reply was, "That's how the system works Ken!" It represented "the end justifies the means" ethic (ethical relativism or situational ethics). I had heard church leaders preach against situational ethics a thousand times. Yet, when you work for the church, you don't survive unless you recognize its part of the system. The church is a bureaucracy as much as any other large organization. You have to play the game and know how the system works to get along. An old saying at the church office building in Salt Lake City is that it's the easiest place in the world to lose your testimony. I felt dishonest playing the game in an organization that advertises itself to be morally superior but rewards hypocrisy. That's why my friends in CES will retire comfortably on a church pension and I won't.

It's my opinion that the leaders of the church encourage the use of devious tactics. Unwittingly or otherwise they have taught CES employees and some PH leaders that it's okay to exaggerate or minimize (lie) to protect the church and its leaders. Joseph Smith made it a time-honored tradition in Mormonism to "beat the devil at his own game." Many Mormons believe that it's okay to compromise the truth in order to protect the church, because you're accomplishing a greater good. God's laws trump the laws of man. Interviews by Church president Gordon B. Hinckley to various media in the past decade prove my point. He has denied that the church teaches that God was once a man and that Mormons can become gods and goddesses. He knows that's blatantly false. He has declared that only a small percentage of Mormons ever practiced polygamy (2-3%) when he knows it was ten times that number or more (he's an amateur church historian and has authored at least one book on church history). He denied that DNA evidence exists which contradicts the Book of Mormon teaching that Native Americans are descended from Israelites. The DNA evidence is clear and undercuts the Book of Mormon thesis that colonies of Hebrews are the direct ancestors of American Indians. He denied that Mormons led and carried out the Mountain Meadows Massacre though he knows differently. Members watch the Mike Wallace and Larry King interviews and learn that prevarication and deception is alive and well in the highest echelons of the church – all for a good reason – to create a sanitized image of the church and its people, and protect the church from embarrassing criticism. When President Hinckley acknowledges his deception

publicly with a wink and a nod to members gathered at a church general conference, members laugh approvingly (see Richard and Joan Ostling, *Mormon America*, p. 296).

The colleague I worked closest with, the one who served in the student stake presidency gave a talk about me in ward conference (an annual meeting where stake leaders attend and focus on goal setting) not many months after I dropped out. He told the audience how sad he was that I left the church. Though he never mentioned me by name his hints and clues were clear to my son and everyone else in the audience that he was talking about me. He said that my problem was pride. He said I stubbornly refused to humble myself before my PH leaders. When I confronted him about it in person he frankly admitted his error and apologized. He was pretty scared as I stood over him and visited with him. I told him if he ever wanted to give that talk again, he needed to invite me along and give me equal time so I could give them the real story. I forgave him and told him never to do that to me again. My son reported that he had not told his audience about the PH harassment I had endured. It was a typical dishonest account designed to defend the outrageous behavior of flawed leaders who want to appear sinless by distorting the truth to help them maintain their blameless image. As I keep saying, loyalty is more important than honesty in the church. Deception is acceptable when defending the church and its leaders. To paraphrase, truth is the first casualty when defending the church and its leaders.

The deliberate ignorance and overwhelming indifference to mistreatment by ecclesiastical leaders is discouraging to me. Members are trained to turn their heads and treat those who refuse to take it anymore as "lost sheep." It's disgusting that they are willing to give up their right to think, question and demand answers. But it won't change anytime soon.

CONVERSION TO THE CHURCH – WHERE IT ALL STARTED

Teresa and I joined the church in 1970 approximately 6 weeks after marrying, during my sophomore year at Central Washington University (it was Central Washington State College when I attended). A friend introduced me to the church and it appealed to me. Without exaggeration, nearly everything he told me turned out later to be untrue. Church leaders are aware that members are often pretty uninformed, misinformed and generally incapable of teaching others about the church. Nevertheless, there is never a word from Salt Lake about being careful to be honest or completely accurate. Instead the focus of the talks is motivation through guilt. "What will you say if nonmember neighbors ask you in heaven why you didn't teach them the gospel?" Or, "What day this month do you plan on

holding a cottage meeting with your nonmember friends so the missionaries can meet them and tell them about the church or show a church video?" Members feel a lot of guilt pressuring them to do missionary work even though they know they aren't very good at it. They admit it all the time.

I didn't learn that until after I was baptized that my friend had totally misrepresented most of the things he told me about the church. He wasn't being malicious or sneaky. He was simply uninformed about the church's history and doctrine. That's not uncommon. After all, 19-21 year-old boys (and some girls) ride their bikes around pedaling Mormonism all over the world and they are the full-time "pros." I used to prepare those kids in seminary and institute classes and send them out on missions. I can vouch that they don't know much about church history and doctrine. Most had never read the Bible or Book of Mormon from cover to cover. By their own admission, most don't have "testimonies" when they decide to go – often under tremendous pressure from parents, seminary and institute teachers, girlfriends, etc. Missions are breeding grounds for all kinds of misinformation. Missionaries routinely learn mocking terminology when talking about other churches. They aren't particularly mean or malicious. They just don't know any better. They have no life experience. They are trained by other 20-21 year-olds in the mission field. I got frustrated and weary listening to them mock "J-dubs" (Jehovah's Witnesses), "Holy Rollers", "wicked Catholic priests", and other religious groups. It was always based on incorrect and distorted information. I corrected their misperceptions every chance I got and pointed out to them that all of my extended family belonged to different churches or no church and they did a better job of practicing Christianity than most Mormons I knew. They used to look at me like I had eaten one of their parents. How could I be so disloyal?

My new wife wanted to please me so she agreed to take the discussions with me and together we joined in April of 1970. Because the missionary discussions are pretty bland and don't really teach you about the strange beliefs of Mormonism (plural marriage, barring black Africans from PH privileges, man can become god, God was once a man, etc.). We weren't aware that we weren't getting a lot of the "inside" information. We were joining because we were confident that we were getting the full Monty. That's what we were led to believe.

Conversion is based on emotions stimulated during missionary discussions and church meetings, and being loved by a whole group of people who seem extremely happy that you are investigating their church. Pray and "feel" the spirit. Listen to your "heart." Does it "feel" right when you read the Book of Mormon and pray? Independent sources, independent evidence or factual information that may contradict what is being taught, and may be more accurate is absent. An emotionally charged atmosphere is sometimes

present during missionary discussions. Sometimes when it's quiet a missionary or member may tell you in a hushed voice, "that's the spirit telling you it's true. Do you feel it?" Virtually any good feeling is the Spirit as long as it confirms something you're supposed to believe.

Mormons believe that when you feel good about Mormonism, the Book of Mormon, etc. the Spirit has just given you all the evidence you need to know that it is true. They believe the good feeling is superior to any other kind of evidence. You are strongly discouraged as an investigator to seek out independent sources to investigate the truth of their claims. I like to compare the validity of a testimony of the Mormons to the Karo Tribe in Africa. The Karo tribe "knows" that a toddler who cuts teeth on its top gums first, is a bad sign, and that it must be killed. The feeling is so strong and so many feel it that they know this must be so. So the tribal elders sneak into a family's shelter at night, steal the offending toddler, and kill it by throwing it in the river or leaving it in a wilderness area to die. They "know" that this is true the same way that Mormons know that the church is the only true church of God on earth. They have strong, undeniable feelings that confirm it. They both claim to possess the truth from a Divine Source. There is no need to investigate whether their testimony is actually true or not.

The members of the church were convinced that Elder Paul H. Dunn was a special vessel of God's Spirit because he told miraculous stories about war and baseball to Mormon audiences. He also wowed (translate: fooled) fellow general authorities. He was a member of the church's Quorum of Seventy (they are said in the Doctrine and Covenants to be a quorum "equal in authority" to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (D&C 107:26). Leaders and members felt the truth of his message in their bones. He was also the most entertaining speaker of all the general authorities. After all, who could top those stories? Everyone "knew" God had anointed him with a special gift and calling and had a special purpose for him. God had given him those experiences so he could teach the youth to be faithful, unquestioning, and loyal Mormons. Trouble is he turned out to be a liar. None of his stories about baseball or war were true. (Repeat that sentence again for effect emphasizing the word "none".)

It's a dangerous thing to trust feelings completely without some system of checks and balances. But that's exactly what Mormons want investigators to do. Returned missionaries used to tell me how distressing it was when an investigator would actually study independent sources to check out their stories about the church. From the missionaries' point of view, Satan invariably led those studious investigators away from the church. If only they wouldn't study!

Using the Bible to prove that Mormonism is the only true church is one cornerstone of missionary work. The scriptural evidence that's provided to investigators consists almost entirely of proof texting. A verse here and a verse there are lifted from the Bible to prove a point, regardless of its context. For instance, missionaries and teachers in church classes, and of all places in general conferences held every April and October, frequently use 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 to prove that the Word of Wisdom, the church's prohibition against alcohol, tobacco, coffee and tea, is supported by the Bible. This particular passage at first glance seems to indicate that one's physical body is sacred and should be kept pure or God will not be pleased. In reality, if one begins reading from the first verse and continues it becomes obvious that Paul is comparing Christ's community of believers to a building – a temple. He's admonishing the church collectively to exhibit humility and spiritual maturity and rid themselves of problems that plagued the church. It is not remotely related to the Mormon health code or any other health code.

It disturbed a fair number of people when I pointed out this common error. At first I was told that scriptures can have many different meanings. I countered with, "Not when the meaning is spelled out clearly by its author on a subject as clear as the one in 1 Corinthians 3." I need to point out that because Mormons insist on using the King James Version most of the everyday members do not understand much of what they read (based on their own admission). So they think that you can interpret passages of scripture almost any way you want as long as it inspires you and motivates you to become Christ like. I know charismatic seminary teachers who testify to it. They assume it's all confusing and scriptural authors don't really say what they mean and mean what they say. In classes I encouraged students to read the New International Version or others that put scriptural language in an understandable format. Some thought it was heresy.

I was also accused of mocking the leaders of the church by pointing out verses they had taken out of context. It's wrong to point out a mistake. The general authorities are nearly all former businessmen, lawyers, and CES employees. They aren't theologians by any stretch – even the studious ones. I was supposed to pretend that they were right when they were wrong to preserve their image. (The emperor has no clothes syndrome.)

I was too inexperienced and vulnerable at age 20 during the missionary discussions to stop and say, "Emotions are not evidence that something is true." They are just feelings. Sometimes they are indications of what kind of mood you're in (I treated members with bipolar disorder and during depressed periods they were full of self-loathing and feelings of unworthiness. When they were "up" they felt spiritually in the groove); sometimes feelings are the result of getting carried away in the moment; sometimes they are wishful thinking; sometimes they are the result of hearing only one side of a story. In any case feelings are not dependable measures of truth, facts or knowledge. I wasn't mature

enough at that time to fully understand that. I was carried away with the feelings attending the missionary discussions and church meetings where we were treated like royalty. It was very flattering and I loved to be flattered. At that age I desperately wanted the approval of the missionaries and the members. I was thrilled by the considerable attention the members gave us. Though the Book of Mormon preaches against it, flattery is an important missionary tool for the church.

I did not know that our progress was being carefully monitored and "helped along the way" by the ward leaders attending weekly Sunday leadership meetings. I did not know that tactical plans and coordinated assignments were made to insure that we felt loved and welcomed. I didn't know that ward members were assigned to invite us over to dinner, offer us rides, with the responsibility to report back. I just loved all the attention and though these were the best people in the whole world. My wife wasn't moved nearly as I was by the slavish attention. She carries a wonderful sense of healthy skepticism with her. Had I listened to her we would have never joined the church.

If I had been more mature then I would have questioned why the Mormons demanded such an unquestioned devotion and obedience to elderly white men. It was hero worship when I later stepped back and thought about it. It was sort of like the reverential awe paid to the pope, except he is much more limited within the confines of papal infallibility than Mormon leaders are. They were treated like old rock stars. Joseph Smith and the living prophets were elevated to exalted status. According to Mormons Joseph Smith was the greatest mortal who has ever lived because he did more for mankind than anyone else except Jesus Christ. (Doctrine and Covenants Section 135, verse 3) Why didn't I question that cult-like demand for obedience? Why didn't I question that Jesus and the atonement were pushed to the background and obedience to Mormon prophets was thrust into the foreground? Why didn't I question, the Mormon mantra, "Obedience is the first law of heaven," or "The prophets will never lead the church astray," or "Obey the prophets and even if it's wrong you'll be blessed?" That's crazy! If there is a first law of heaven, it's free will, the right to think and choose for one's self. Only later when I was teaching for the church did it occur to me that a lot of time and talk is invested in reminding members that we fought a war in heaven to preserve the principle of agency – the right to make choices. Yet you were supposed to surrender your agency to God. That translates into giving it to the Mormon leaders because they speak for God. What they say is exactly the same thing God would say if He were present (D&C 1:37-38). They are literally the mouthpiece of God. You wouldn't dare question them for fear of offending God. The power attributed to these guys is stunning if you think about it.

Mormons contradict themselves and each other when teaching or defending the faith. I used to do it too. It's not the members' fault. Their leaders have said some really silly

things but you're not supposed to point them out or notice them. You're also not supposed to notice that leaders routinely contradict each other, while claiming to receive clear and direct messages from the same God. Imagine for a moment what kind of mixed up and confused being God must be to say one thing through Apostle Dallin Oaks (homosexuals may have something in their genetic make-up that makes them that way) and the opposite thing through Apostle Boyd K. Packer (homosexuals are the way they are because of mischief and sinful behavior – there is no such thing as a genetic tendency). There are hundreds of striking contradictions that you are supposed to turn a blind eye to or preferably never discover by reading studying.

It began with Joseph Smith who translated the Book of Mormon (BM) as God wrote the correct English sentences on a peep stone in a hat Joseph thrust his face into. At least that was the first claim. It had to be changed when Joseph promptly began changing the awful grammar and some doctrines of the BM in 1837 when the second edition was published. Smith had written in 1 Nephi 11:18 that Mary "was the mother of God." When he changed his theology about God, he changed that passage in the 1837 version to read that Mary was "the mother of the *Son of God*." In D&C 20:28, the church constitution, he wrote that the "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, infinite and eternal, without end." As Richard and Joan Ostler comment (Mormon America), this "resembles traditional Christian creedal formulations." However, by 1835 in the Articles of Faith, Smith changed his view of God and said that God and the Son were two distinct personages, with the Holy Ghost being the mind of God. Later in the 1840's Smith proclaimed that God, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are all separate beings. There is no real systematic theology in Mormonism. It's always on the move, without repudiating the past statements that contradict the new position. (Thomas G. Alexander, "Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints", 1890-1930 [Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996] especially pages 272-306.)

Joseph also made drastic changes to the Doctrine and Covenants (revelations to Joseph Smith) between 1833 and 1835 without the consent of other leaders. It caused David Whitmer, one of the most prominent leaders next to Joseph Smith, to lose faith in him. He accused Joseph of receiving revelations for the purpose of reserving power for himself and contradicting his own claim that God was speaking to Him (David Whitmer, "An Address to All Believers in Christ").

The new and changing views of the most basic doctrines provide cover for those trying to explain the faith and find something in common with traditional Christians. If Mormons are accused of being brainwashed sheep who are supposed to obey leaders without question, the Mormon can simply quote another leader who contradicted that idea and said the opposite – that Mormons are supposed to think for themselves. Mormons can

rarely be pinned down in a debate about religion due to the many contradictory positions they may hold. Their explanation is that God is merely giving new knowledge "line upon line, precept upon precept" as mankind becomes ready for it. In addition, having no concrete definition of doctrine allows them to neatly sidestep any question they personally don't agree with by saying, "that's not official doctrine." They don't seem to notice the absurdity of that position. For many years I didn't.

The missionaries were eager for us to "feel" the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Because I admired Elders B and A, we wanted to please them and to feel something during the missionary discussions. They are trained to try and baptize as many converts as they can. They were only doing their jobs. I "felt" something because the pressure was on to feel it. I was 20 and Teresa was 18. Basing your entire life on some sort of unidentifiable feeling instead of rational evidence places the vulnerable and insecure investigator in the uncomfortable position of wanting to please the missionaries and members who have lavished kindness on them. If they are weak like I was, they will try hard to do that. Being such young newlyweds, we were also susceptible to a new religious group after a dramatic life-changing event. I wanted their approval and everyone else's too come to think of it. I grew up wanting approval. I can also look back and remember guilt and the superstitious feelings I carried inside about God, human nature, religion and spirituality. I was ripe for the picking. Mormons bring concrete answers to all of life's most profound questions and it appealed to me. I was too young to see that it was all too pat. But I wanted to learn all those simplistic explanations to all of life's hard questions. I wanted easy answers for virtually every question. They had them.

Ideally, an investigator is supposed to learn a little about the church, hopefully not be introduced to the serious historical and doctrinal problems the church desperately wants to keep hidden, and then join the church in about 2 weeks. It's a little like a used car salesman who doesn't want a prospective buyer to check out their "deal" with other dealers, Consumer Reports, or other good, independent information. The quicker you buy and the less you check out their claims the better. The big tool the used car salesman doesn't have is one that the Mormons use routinely. "If you are given the opportunity of joining the true church then turn away from it, you face an uncertain eternity. You will have rejected an opportunity from God's servants to join God's true church." That's what the missionaries told us or words to that effect. We were young and impressionable and I believed them (Teresa didn't).

Another point that deserves attention when referring to the missionary discussions is the principle of informed consent. Ethics related to the practice of medicine require that a patient be given all pertinent information about the risks and benefits of a procedure before consenting to it. It's understood that the choices (autonomy) of a patient cannot be

honored unless they have good information on which to base an informed decision about their health (See Beauchamp and Childress, "Principles of Biomedical Ethics," (New York: Oxford University Press 1994) Fourth Edition). Similar ethical standards exist in other helping professions. Mormon leaders feel comfortable ignoring this fundamental ethical standard. When we were being taught by the missionaries we were not given a full disclosure of what Mormonism is all about – no one is, by design. The discussions, whether missionaries used a flannel board, 3-ring binders, or the little tiny spiral bound picture sets, are non-offensive and homogenized for a reason. They carefully avoid what is/was central to Mormonism:

- (1) God was once a man who lived on an earth, was married and a polygamist.
- (2) He lived such a good life he earned his exaltation through good works.
- (3) After he died He was resurrected with a perfect body of flesh and bone.
- (4) Ditto for his plural wives.
- (5) He received power to create worlds including this earth, from His Father (Grandfather God) in Heaven (who received it from His Father in Heaven (Great Grandfather God), etc.
- (6) He impregnated his wives in heaven in the way that women get pregnant on earth, (Brigham Young added that there is no other process of creation.)
- (7) Through procreation God and his multiple wives created billions of spirit children (it's a woman's duty to be eternally pregnant).
- (8) The spirit children fought a war in heaven to preserve agency and Satan (one of Jesus' brothers, a son of God, and one of the brothers of the rest of God's children) was cast down to earth to tempt mankind to sin.
- (9) It is the duty of women to prepare bodies for as many spirits as possible (women practice having babies on earth and will continue to do it for eternity) and men get to put them there. Polygamy is the order of marriage in heaven.
- (10) Jesus was one of God's spirit children just like the rest of us, making Him a spirit brother of mankind (equal but smarter and better behaved).

(11) Men and women are supposed to prove that they are worthy to live in the highest kind of heaven there is – the highest degree of glory of the celestial kingdom – based on their deeds in this life (Abraham 3:22-23). They have to prove that they are worthy to be a god.

(12) Only "valiant" members of the church will enter the highest degree of glory of the celestial kingdom (D&C 76:50-70). Others who are really good but don't become members will be declared "not valiant." (D&C 76:72-78).

(13) Jesus got his physical body because God the Father had sexual intercourse with Mary, making Him Jesus' biological father as well as his spiritual father. Bruce R. McConkie, a former apostle says that 1 Nephi 11:18 points to this truth (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1).

(14) Jesus' sacrifice on the cross didn't really pay for the sins of mankind – it was during His pleading in Gethsemane for the Father to "remove this cup from me" that He paid for everyone's sins – even though the Bible, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants all say He paid for everyone's sins on the cross.

(15) Mormon leaders taught for decades (late 1840's to 1904) that unless members practiced polygamy they could not enjoy the highest degree of the celestial kingdom because it was the most important law given to mankind.

(16) Mormon leaders taught that black individuals were unworthy to hold the Mormon priesthood because they had been cursed by God for their lack of valiance before coming to earth during the war in heaven. They had not been supportive enough of God and Jesus and were cursed for their lack of faith with a dark skin and miserable lives (Joseph Fielding Smith, "The Way to Perfection"). Brigham Young decreed that if a black male/female married a white person only death "on the spot" for both of them could atone for that drastic sin.

(17) Joseph Smith changed his story about the First Vision several times beginning in 1832 and ending in about 1840. Each new version was more impressive than the preceding one, but contradicted "facts" in earlier versions, and actual events in his life.

(18) Joseph Smith radically changed the meaning of many verses in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants after claiming that the original accounts had been revealed to him by God – leaving open the question, "Was God confused or did Joseph get it wrong after claiming to have gotten it right?"

(19) The Book of Mormon doctrines and beliefs revealed in the Nauvoo period, and still present today, do not resemble those that Joseph adapted, changed, revised, contradicted and altered later in his life and put forth as "official doctrines."

(20) Joseph preyed on gullible young women to carry out his sexual fantasies under the guise of obedience to God. He told adolescent girls as young as 14 that they would forfeit their own and their family's right to eternal life if they didn't marry him and consummate the marriage in the customary way. He would be indicted and convicted of rape and other sex crimes today. In Joseph's case however, he married more than a dozen young women, plus other men's wives, 5 pairs of sisters, and a mother and a daughter.

(21) A mountain of good scientific evidence proves conclusively that the Book of Mormon could not possibly be what Joseph claimed. The archaeological and DNA evidence alone are devastating to his claims.

(22) The Three Witnesses did not see anything. They admitted later in life that they saw gold plates "with their spiritual eyes" and not in a literal, physical sense.

(23) The Mormon Temple endowment ceremony is without a doubt taken from the Masonic ceremonies Joseph Smith participated in just weeks before he introduced the temple endowment. The grips, tokens, covenants, secret words, keys, etc. were word for word the same when first introduced. Members who were Masons previous to Joseph joining the fraternal order unashamedly referred to the Mormon endowment as "celestial masonry."

There is no attempt whatever to inform investigators what is at the core of Mormonism or what the controversial issues are. It robs investigators of the opportunity to make an informed choice about something they assume affects their eternal state. Instead they don't know what they're really joining. The process behind the strategy is this. The young missionaries, most of whom have never read the Bible through, are unaware of the facts that contradict the missionary discussions they repeat by memory. They think they have been prepared by the crack troops in the Missionary Training Centers to handle important questions, yet they have no knowledge of the history or doctrine of the church they represent. I speak as an expert on the subject. I taught, prepared, and trained the prospective missionaries for 27 years. One of the stated purposes of the seminary program is to train missionaries. (Seminary is a religious education program for those in grades 9-12.) Part of the Institute curriculum is a religion class called Mission Preparation. (Institute is weekday religious instruction for college students.) The class avoided any hint that there

are mountains of evidence that contradict and undermine the foundations of the church's doctrine and history. The counsel is, "bear your testimony because no one can dispute your own personal experience with the Holy Ghost" or words to that effect. It's unethical and borders on brainwashing. It mocks the principle of informed consent. Apostle Boyd K. Packer commanded CES teachers to teach only a version of history and doctrine that builds faith. Not only is this practice offensive, it is hypocritical coming from one who claims that the Mormon Church is superior to all others.

I recall that shortly after being baptized, the Branch President called us in to inform us that we were placing our eternal lives in jeopardy if we continued to use artificial birth control. It was quite an intrusion into the most personal aspect of our marriage. He found out because a gossipy member had been quizzing me on what kind of birth control we used, and I told him that we used the pill. He reported this sin to the Branch President. He retrieved dozens of quotations from church presidents and apostles from his files (none more contemporary than 1947) that warned the members against the evils of birth control. We had married young with the idea that we would finish college before we began to have children. Fearing that God would punish us for eternity, we stopped using the pill and Teresa immediately became pregnant.

We pretty much lived by the rule that "when the prophet speaks the thinking has been done;" and, "If you don't support your bishop [or Branch President] you don't sustain the prophet." In fact that idea was reinforced in various ways over and over again for the next 33 years. It made our lives miserable because the brethren made unreasonable and sometimes impossible demands. It often placed us in tortuous double binds. I was supposed to be a model family man, but I was supposed to never turn down a calling even if it meant being away from home way too much while my wife was having babies just over a year apart. We feel silly now for being so gullible and giving away our sacred right to plan our family ourselves.

Being a member of the Mormon Church meant that I was rarely at home to help my wife with our growing family. I was attending meetings and feeling very important. It was a nightmare for Teresa. She began to wonder way back then if the church was a bunch of baloney. It couldn't be true or else they would have more sense than to make such unreasonable demands on us. Having to raise a lot of small children without any help was killing her. But the church's view of women was that they were put on earth to have as many children as they could bear and raise them. We were told that Mormons were supposed to provide homes for righteous spirits that waited in the pre-mortal existence to come into our families. If Mormons didn't have a lot of babies, then those poor spirits would have to go to the homes of the Gentiles – non-members. That would be a tragedy. Surveys reveal that that Mormons freely admit that they usually have larger families than

the norm is because they see it as a religious duty ("The Religion & Family Connection: Social Science Perspectives" Edited by Darwin L. Thomas [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, Volume Three, 1988] 117-118).

Inherent in such an attitude is arrogance and a not-so-subtle dismissal of women as little more than baby factories though members deny it. When we joined the church females were counseled to raise up their children to the Lord, provide a perfect home, teach their children the gospel, always be happy and cheerful, make perfect home-made bread and rolls, visit the sick, do visiting teaching every month without fail, be a great and beautiful wife, be intelligent and conversant with world affairs, never turn down a calling, and (stay beautiful for your husband) – all the while having babies as fast as possible. We were never, ever, even slightly encouraged to use some sort of family planning or birth control to protect Teresa's health. We were however reminded in various meetings over the years to avoid being selfish and think of the millions of spirits who needed to gain physical bodies (Ezra Taft Benson, "To the Mothers in Zion," address given at a Fireside for Parents, 22 February, 1987; Salt Lake City, Utah). In recent years, stern warnings against the use of birth control were removed from the Official Handbook of Instructions. The new entry (1998) leaves the decision up to the couple "and the Lord." The elderly leaders decided it was time to hand over the reins of responsibility for family planning to the married couple. The vast majority had arrived at that decision a long time before, including the American Catholics.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s Mormons began to hear the leaders harp on having babies as fast as they could, less and less. After some overzealous PH leaders took it upon themselves to meddle too much by telling couples what kinds of sexual positions were approved of the Lord, they began to pull back. I remember sitting with President K in a temple recommend interview in Phoenix, AZ. He asked me if I had ever had oral sex. I was immediately angered by the question, but also under his thumb as a church employee and therefore required to answer. I asked him if he referred to . . . some technical terms I learned in college in a health class. He stuttered and seemed a bit flustered. He obviously didn't know what the words meant and I had counted on that. He regained his composure and asked if I had ever put my mouth to my wife's genitals. Before I could answer, and feeling more embarrassed than you can imagine, I was almost dizzy. Before I said anything he began counseling me that it is the Lord's will that men and women never engage in oral sex. He went on to describe in detail how putting my mouth on my wife's breast and kissing it was perfectly acceptable. There were more disgusting items that I can't remember. After finishing he asked me if I had any questions. I was too stunned to ask any. What a bizarre interview. Afterward I asked Teresa if she had undergone the same kind of "instruction" and she said, "No!" (Temple recommend interviews are annual visits with the bishop and stake president. Couples are required to interview separately. While I was a

bishop if the couple wanted to interview together I invited them to do so.) We both were so mad that we promised that if any meddling PH leader ever asked about our activities in the bedroom again, we would get up and walk out in protest and suffer the consequences.

Some overzealous PH leaders even went into great detail with teens, teaching them about sexual encounters they had no knowledge of before. The leaders received a lot of complaints about those interviews. Couples since that time have been given more control over their reproductive choices. PH leaders have been ordered not to meddle in the affairs of married couples. It only took 150 years for that enlightened counsel.

TEMPLE MARRIAGE

Pregnancy dragged Teresa through a knot-hole backwards. Morning sickness turned into all-day, everyday nausea. She never had that "glow" that the Mormon men insist women get when they are pregnant. The morning sickness increased with each of our five children. Teresa was ready to die after our last baby. She was worn out. Her tank was completely empty and yet she needed to do more, or so the church told her over and over again. She was called to serve in the Primary Presidency right after the birth of our 5th child. She couldn't say no because I worked for the church and it might cast a bad light on my employment. Most Mormons when being transparent and completely honest admit that they feel nagging guilt most of the time for all kinds of things. Sometimes it's because they would like to say "no" to a calling and sometimes it's because they feel they are not doing enough to be approved by God. The leaders use guilt in liberal doses to prod the members along. "A religion that doesn't require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation." (Joseph Smith, "Lectures on Faith" Kirtland, Ohio, December 1834.)

After our first baby, we needed to go to the temple, get married again so God would deem us worthy, (D&C 132:15-19) and have the baby sealed to us so we could live together in eternity as a forever family. Otherwise, no matter how Christ-like we were for the rest of our lives, we would never make it to the highest degree of glory of the celestial kingdom (D&C 131:1-4). Though there is nothing in the Bible or Book of Mormon about temple marriage being a necessary pre-requisite because he hadn't invented it yet. Joseph Smith added this ordinance to the Mormon requirements in the 1840's during the Nauvoo period. There is much evidence that his reason for adding the eternal marriage component was so he could use it to cloak his polygamous activities. Nowadays, the church never refers to it in those terms, and most members are unaware of Joseph's original intentions for the ceremony (Fawn Brodie, "No Man Knows My History" (2nd ed., rev. and enl., 1st

Vintage Book, July 1995); or Richard Van Wagoner's, "Mormon Polygamy: A History, 2nd Edition (Signature Books Incorporated, 1989); also David John Buerger "The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship" (Signature Books Incorporated, December 2002)).

We were told our civil marriage in the Methodist Church a little over a year before would not be recognized by God in the next life because it was not performed in a Mormon temple. We were prepared for our trip to the Idaho Falls temple by gathering in solemn meetings with the Branch President. He spoke with a sense of awe and reverence for everything associated with the temple. He also chose his words very carefully to avoid revealing anything that should remain secret – sacred. He also spoke in a really deep, low, quiet voice, with great sincerity. I was convinced that if I were worthy enough, God would let me see angels in the temple. That would explain the secrecy and whispery, low-talking by the Branch President.

We weren't very smart. Teresa was hemorrhaging pretty badly from the birth of our first child. The birth had been a difficult one for her. We had no business jumping in the car with well-meaning Mormon handlers determined to get us to the temple in Idaho Falls, Idaho from Ellensburg, Washington. We didn't have the money and Teresa needed to go see a doctor, stay home and rest. A blessing from a member of the Branch Presidency, who knew that her bleeding was only Satan trying to stop us from being sealed, anointed Teresa with consecrated olive oil and commanded her to be healed. She didn't stop hemorrhaging and wasn't healed. That meant it wasn't God's will or worse yet, we didn't have sufficient faith. We also had a good, long prayer before leaving to keep Satan from causing the engine in the Dodge Dart to fail.

I didn't see one angel, or departed spirit in the temple! I did get the jolt of my life. The ritualistic ceremony enacted by live actors in the temple was shocking and disappointing. The special covenants were the usual kind except for the extraordinary promise to be willing to give everything including one's life if the church required it. The penalties and oaths for not keeping secrets were bizarre and pointed to a kind of paranoia. I promised to have my throat slit if I ever revealed anything that I saw or heard in the temple. I wondered what all the secrecy was about. Years later when I learned that Joseph Smith borrowed heavily from Masonic ceremonies then added his own tweaks to it I learned why. His closest Masonic friends and church leaders admitted that Joseph wanted the people to learn to keep a secret. His oaths and penalties were designed to cloak his subversive behavior – sleeping with other men's wives, and preying on teenage girls with proposals of marriage – without his wife's knowledge or consent. It's estimated that 95% of the members during the Nauvoo period did not know that he was practicing polygamy, including taking other men's wives while still legally married to them, because he was so

adept at deceit and swearing others to secrecy. The church is still practicing the art of cover-up, jab and parry. A number of returned missionaries confessed to me during my years of teaching that they had no idea that Joseph Smith practiced polygamy. "I thought it started with Brigham Young," was the common response.

Teresa and I sat in our motel room after the temple experience in utter shock and decided that the ceremony was so weird we never wanted to go back. We weren't allowed to sit together in the temple during the ceremony. Men and women are separated. That bothered us and we couldn't figure out why. We were wearing the official Mormon temple under garment now too. It was a one-piece, awkward looking thing that you climbed into the neck to put on. A 90 year-old temple worker told me during the official instruction in the temple that the temple garment was so sacred that we could not take it off except to bathe. He emphasized that we could not remove them for any other reason (except bathing, sports and swimming)! It took us several years to learn that the guy was wrong and we sacrificed an important degree of intimacy because of it. I feel really stupid revealing that. It's humiliating. But I believe that the responsibility rests with the church leaders and temple workers. Why in the world wouldn't the church leaders make absolutely sure that members were clear about garments – that husbands and wives may share intimacy without them? I share this because as stupid as it makes me look, we're not the only ones who received this kind of counsel. Others I have spoken to received similar advice and acted in the same way, until like me, they received "further light and knowledge" on the subject or decided it was just plain dumb.

That's the result of being trained not to question someone in authority. For an interesting and alarming study about unquestioning obedience to authority figures by society read about Stanley Milgram's 1960's experiments in social psychology at Yale University. He searched for reasons why Nazi leaders and soldiers would comply with orders to kill millions of Jews. He was the son of a holocaust survivor. He found that experimental subjects placed in the role of "teacher" administered 330-450 volts of electricity (or so the subject thought) to "learners" if they answered a question incorrectly. An authority figure in a lab coat and carrying a clip board told them to administer lethal doses of electric shock. Despite their protests and troubled consciences, 65% of them complied with orders. His experiments have been replicated and show that otherwise upright persons will cause extreme suffering to others rather than disobey authority. (Stanley Milgram, "Obedience to Authority" [HarperCollins Publishers 1983]; also Thomas Blass, "Obedience to Authority: Current Perspectives on the Milgram Paradigm" (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. 2000). Mormon leaders have much to gain by promoting their authoritarian status. People are likely to obey.

I wish we hadn't let our handlers talk us into going back to the temple for another session. Our first impressions were correct. It's ritual devoid of any real meaning in my opinion. The atonement is mentioned but certainly isn't the primary focus of the endowment. I was a set apart veil worker in the Seattle temple and I've been through the temple ceremony hundreds of times (while living in Arizona we went every week). There really is nothing profound about the endowment for me or my wife, notwithstanding the removal of embarrassing chauvinistic and bigoted segments of the ceremony in 1989-90. God judges the heart, not the outward appearance (1 Samuel 16:7). I think I'm safe in assuming that God has not invented a certain kind of underwear to designate the faithful, if he can read our hearts. Why did I believe God would bar certain persons from entering heaven if they didn't wear Mormon underwear?

What does that say about Mormons' depiction of God? The God I worshipped as a Mormon represents a rather arbitrary, sometimes loving, sometimes cruel, and sometimes illogical Being (bipolar disorder). According to them He's always testing you by not answering a prayer to heal a loved one from cancer and death, yet He helps a tot find a toy after praying; or a distraught teen to find their homework. These are the kinds of stories common among Mormons – maybe other Christians too for that matter, although I never heard an abundance of those kinds of remarkable stories when I grew up as Methodist. After maturing a few years I could not accept the fickle God that Mormons described and worshipped.

I have done a lot of thinking about the temple. I had read and heard the quote by President McKay (a former church prophet now deceased) that he was just beginning to understand the endowment after decades of regular attendance. I worked so hard trying to understand the endowment that I got headaches after temple sessions. I memorized the whole session. I tried to mine the gold from the words and phrases of the endowment ceremony. I wanted to understand the mysteries of the sacred symbolism. I talked to temple workers and asked them questions. I compared what I learned with others. The symbolism is not clear. It's all a matter of individual interpretation. Everyone makes up their own ideas – some of them pretty bizarre. The symbolism makes sense to me when you connect it to its origins – Masonry, and swearing oaths to keep secrets. No wonder the leaders don't want members to describe the ceremonies outside the temple. The mystique would suddenly disappear and leaders would have to explain everything from odd temple clothing and underwear to the bizarre penalties that used to panic members. How would they explain the blatant anti-Catholic and anti-Protestant themes used to mock them until they were removed?

The endowment and marriage ceremony creates an elite group of Mormons who are superior to those not endowed. And a whole lot superior to the rest of the world. The

endowed supposedly possess secret knowledge that only the worthy and elect are privileged to have. It's not sacred, it's secret. It also pre-supposes that God is arbitrary and requires that any rewards in heaven are the equivalent to wages earned here on earth by good deeds. Grace from Christ becomes irrelevant and meaningless despite the lip service paid.

In the spirit of being the patriarch in my family I messed up a lot. To encourage her, I'd tell Teresa to try to be like Sister _____. Finally she warned me to shut my yap about Sister _____ or I could go find someone like her! I started to get it. I stopped trying to be a dominating, patriarchal male who is supposed to have the last word on all subjects. Besides she is smarter than me. I loved Teresa a lot more than the church. In fact, one thing that kept me trying so hard to be a good Mormon was so I could live with Teresa in heaven after this life. I promised to stop badgering her about doing more missionary work, writing in her journal, doing genealogy, praying and fasting, having the missionaries over for dinner, being more perky and happy, bearing her testimony, being more enthused about family home evening, reading scriptures to the kids, and about a billion other things that only made her feel like she could never do enough to please the church leaders or me. She told me to quit worrying about her eternal life. "Look Ken!" she would say, "I'm a good person and God isn't going to love me a whole lot more if I keep a journal! And you're a good man. You don't have to feel guilty about everything in the world just because they tell you to." She is wise.

Working hard to earn our salvation took place especially in the 1970s and 1980s before the church began to revise their teachings. BYU religion teachers and other writers reversed 150 years of doctrinal silliness and helped members learn that grace was a good thing. Up to the mid 1980's grace as a legitimate Christian principle was mocked and belittled. General authorities and BYU religious authors admit to teaching that being saved by the grace of Christ was false doctrine. Mormons hated being compared to certain conservative Christian groups who emphasized the role of grace in salvation. It was not uncommon at all in those days to hear testimony after testimony in general conference and the local meetings exhort members to do good works and earn their salvation. Grace was just a license to commit sin and still get to heaven. They called it "cheap grace." I think they were quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945).

Something happened in the mid to late 1980s and early 1990's though. So many national media reports were published about Mormon women suffering clinical depression in huge numbers and Utah being the Prozac capital of the world, that they backed off using guilt as a primary tool for motivation to do more and began to acknowledge that grace might play a role in helping a person gain salvation. Mormons desperately needed some hope! In addition, the church hired a high-powered image consultant from New York who

convinced the church to emphasize the idea that they too are Christians and value the role that Jesus played in bringing grace to mankind. I was a PH leader in Kennewick and saw some videos about savvy ways to handle the media and tough questions they pose based on the consultant's advice. They took the advice and renamed the Book of Mormon, *Another Testament of Christ*. Mormons not only proclaimed that they were true Christians, but they were the only *true* Christians, since they belonged to the only true Church of Christ on earth. After all Joseph Smith claimed that God told him that all the other Christian sects were wrong, an abomination in his sight, and corrupt. Bruce R. McConkie said, "so-called Christianity does not come much nearer the truth in many respects" than Greek, Roman or Norse mythology. "Believers in the doctrines of modern Christendom will reap damnation to their souls." Mormon scriptures dedicate nearly two dozen pages to defining traditional Christianity as apostate.

TEACHING FOR THE CHURCH

Almost immediately after joining the church I wanted to become an Institute Director in the Church Education System (CES), like Brother R, the Branch President/Institute Director at the Ellensburg Institute of Religion. He seemed wise to someone insecure and dependent like me. He had an encyclopedia-like brain when it came to answering church questions. Even when I was a Methodist growing up, I had always wanted to become learned in the scriptures. This was my chance. I was studying to become a school teacher at Central Washington State College. After baptism I decided to become a teacher for the Church Education System. It was a real status symbol to declare your intention to become an Institute teacher. Several of the guys in the small branch had confirmed that it was their life time dream too. They had served missions but I hadn't. I'd have to study extra hard, and serve more diligently than others to make the grade if I wanted to teach for the church. I knew that I was up for the challenge. Ironically, none of them made it and I did.

Working for the church meant I was going to be totally committed to it and do anything I was asked without question. Though I didn't realize it yet I had just surrendered the right to think critically for myself and question things the church told me was true but made no sense. I would just swallow everything without complaint, assuming that all the flawed mortal leaders were speaking for God, like a good CES soldier.

I gave up my right to question because I made it my calling to over-compensate for not serving a full-time mission for the church. I had to make up for the fact that:

- (1) I had not served in a 3rd world country, sleeping on dirt floors!

(2) I had no miraculous stories about passing through an angry mob unharmed because God miraculously blinded them.

(3) I had never raised anyone from the dead through a PH blessing.

(4) I hadn't spoken in a foreign tongue in the most eloquent way, converting a whole congregation without knowing what I had said (because I was overcome with the Spirit).

(5) I hadn't dusted off my shoes and later read about the village mayor's house burning down because he had cruelly treated some Mormon missionaries just the day before.

(6) I had never confounded a mean South American Catholic priest in the presence of a potential convert proving once and for all that Mormonism was true.

(7) I had never cast out the devil from anyone's house to rid it of spiritual phenomena – like the house in the Amityville Horror movie.

(8) An ancient, translated Nephite (Book of Mormon apostle) never appeared to me!

I worked with CES teachers who solemnly swore that they had experienced these things while serving their missions. I was at a real disadvantage compared to these other guys.

I wish I hadn't given up my right to question the teaching that was heard nearly every Sunday in church meetings and almost as frequently in Institute classes – the Lord's prophet will never lead the church astray." How silly. Of course a prophet can lead people astray. Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and the many of the LDS prophets have all taught things and did things that are crazy and border on incompetent. Many of them engaged in outright deceit. My counseling training led me to the conclusion that Joseph Smith was narcissistic and neurotic. If he were living today he would be viewed as another David Koresh or Jim Jones. LDS doctrine teaches that a war in heaven was fought to preserve the right to make choices. LDS prophets can make choices that are wrong and lead the church astray. The church leaders want to make sure that the divine mystique of general authorities remains intact. They cannot appear to be human, so myths like this one are kept alive. If you teach for the church you are supposed to make sure that you keep the myth alive in the minds of your students. Your charge is to convince them that the prophet can never lead the church astray and when he speaks on any subject he is essentially

speaking the words God would speak if He were present. I used to bear fervent testimony to that. I supported it with the conviction that God actually appears and talks to the apostles and prophets in person regularly. Lots of seminary and institute teachers believe that and teach it. When I began to question it I was treated like a traitor by other CES teachers and some students.

Teaching seminary or institute or serving in some "important" church calling puts huge pressures on the one called to serve to preserve the status of the role. There is good literature on the subject of living up to a "role" that you've been assigned. A famous experiment conducted at Stanford University in 1971 took place in a basement corridor in the psychology building. The researcher converted it into cells, exercise yard and other facilities to make it resemble a prison. Phillip G. Zimbardo, the experimenter, randomly assigned some participants to be guards and some to be prisoners. He gave the "guards" uniforms designed to make them look official. They were given night sticks, whistles, and reflecting sunglasses. The "prisoners" were issued muslin smocks with no underwear, a light chain and lock around one ankle, rubber sandals, and a hat made from a nylon stocking. They were also given a toothbrush, towels, soap, and bed linen. They were not given any personal belongings. A set of rules was developed. An important one was that the prisoners were addressed only by number. The prisoners were expected to work. Guards could give rewards for good behavior. In no time at all the guards began to act like real guards at a real prison and the fake prisoners actually began to act institutionalized and dependent just like real prisoners. This kind of experiment would never be approved now because it caused a scandal after it was stopped. The experiment indicated, when individuals are assigned in a role, they try their best to be a role model if the environment is "right." In Zimbardo's words, "In only a few days, our guards became sadistic and our prisoners became depressed and showed signs of extreme stress." Roles are attitudes, emotions, perceptions, and behaviors that are perceived as the norm for a group, organization or culture. They are primarily determined by the social situation. Many called to serve in "important" roles in the church feel tremendous pressure to conform to what leaders and handbooks say, even if they may not agree. They gladly give up their right to think in exchange for the role. (Consult any Psychology 101 text and it should give you some extra references if you want to read more about Zimbardo's experiments. He caused quite a stir among those arguing the ethics of his methods. Also see Zimbardo's website <http://www.zimbardo.com/zimbardo.html>.)

After graduating from college in 1972 I became a schoolteacher. I taught 6th grade just outside Yakima, Washington. My goal was to get hired by CES as soon as I could. But first I had to teach Early Morning Seminary and get some church experience under my belt. As a result I wasn't around to help Teresa even though "no other success can compensate for failure in the home" is one of the church's most popular slogans. I was a golden convert –

Wonder Boy! I loved the limelight and the church members and leaders loved my loving the limelight. I performed any duty they asked of me because I received a lot of strokes in return. I was ordained a high priest at age 22 (as a convert of only 2 years – it was a sign from God!) and served on the stake high council in the Yakima Washington stake (12 men who assist the stake president in administering the 6-12 wards in the stake). I later served as a stake mission leader for the Young Adults in the stake. I served as a young men's president. In addition to all of that, I was teaching school my first year and teaching early morning seminary every morning before school. I was never home, but I thought I was really something! I learned quickly that as long as I kept repeating the idea that "the most important work you'll ever do is within the walls of your own home" and other familiar phrases, I didn't need to be home. The Lord would raise my children in righteousness because I was always out doing His work. I was seeking the Kingdom of God first!

I wish I had noticed the contradictions in the words of the men in Salt Lake who spent their whole lives engaged in church work. They were in no position to give advice on being a good husband and father. They were never home as far as I could tell. It became a sore point with church leaders when I began to come to my senses and turn down opportunities to be away from home so much. I wondered, "if prophets are so smart, how come you don't understand that a young father needs to be home with his large family, instead of – building the kingdom – in meetings every night of the week and weekends too? Why isn't being at home with my wife and kids considered building the kingdom?"

A FULL-TIME CHURCH EMPLOYEE

I wanted to go to work for the church full time and enjoy all the prestige (the role) of being a walking encyclopedia of all things related to the church. I applied and was hired by the Church Education System in 1975. I should have never quit teaching sixth grade. I loved it and it was more fun than I ever had teaching for the church. But I admit, I also loved teaching the kids in Early Morning Seminary. I thought if teaching for the church is this much fun, I couldn't lose. As I look back, I could have taught a bag of hammers and it would have been fun. I just loved teaching. The interaction with the kids was the big attraction to me. I loved recess, tetherball, foursquare, and hitting flies during fly-up.

I was hired by CES after teaching school for 3 years. We were transferred to Phoenix, Arizona to teach Released-Time Seminary. Like everything it had an upside and a downside. I loved most of the kids, but I had a hard time with a few others. It was hard because as a school teacher I had a solid curriculum, excellent texts, best practices, tests and other assessment tools to measure progress. The kids and I were accountable. Teaching

Released-time seminary was like teaching Sunday school. It seemed pretty phony to me. My boss, Brother S told the teachers time and again that we were not to treat seminary like some "Mickey Mouse" operation. It was supposed to be a viable educational experience. It wasn't. If you had a winning personality and teaching style; if you were entertaining, you were a hit! It was all about getting the kids and parents to love you – being popular. Grades and standards didn't mean a whole lot. The kids didn't get credit for seminary in school, so what did they care if they skipped class, messed off while they were there, or never completed an assignment?

Brother S was the District Coordinator in Phoenix and he was a tyrant. He couldn't control his temper. He screamed at us young teachers and cursed at us when he got mad. On occasion he accused teachers of bringing the spirit of Satan to the meetings. He charged the atmosphere with guilt and nervous tension by telling us that the devil had gained a foot hold in some of our classes. It would become quiet and stressful because he might name you as someone who had done something wrong. You never knew if he was directing his wild accusations at you or someone else. It was hell to sit through those meetings. He announced that there were traitors among us who were actively at work with the adversary to bring down the church. He used all the tactics of a cheap con artist in my view. He would never give a lot of specific information or invite discussion for a thorough investigation of his accusations. He never gave the floor to those who might dispute his words. If someone questioned him, he flew into a rage. He routinely embarrassed and humiliated teachers in front of the group. I was on the wrong end of that experience more than once. So it was best to sit and wait it out. He was so moody. You never knew what might set him off. I wrote him off as a non-professional who didn't know the first thing about education theory or practice. He motivated me to question a lot of things. I decided to leave CES but got cold feet and came back for my second year of teaching seminary because we were in Phoenix and I didn't know what I was going to do to support my family if I quit. We were a long way from our roots in the Pacific Northwest. I probably had a lot of options, but I had become paralyzed with fear and was dependent on the church. I was convinced that they knew best what was good for my family and me. I thought I needed CES and the church to make a living and make me live a good life so I could make it to the celestial kingdom. I was insecure.

I endured a fair amount of harassment from the Church Education System District Coordinator. Once he accused me of partying with the kids all the time because I scored exceptionally high on a student evaluation during my first year of teaching. I had worked my tail off to create a rich learning experience that was fun. He gave me a good tongue-lashing. My wife who was present at the bizarre event was as stunned and bewildered as I was. I began to think back on my 3 years teaching in the public schools in Washington State. The school administrators in the district exhibited far more professionalism, dignity

and grace than this respected church administrator. The public school administrators I had worked with back in Moxee school district were actually students of education philosophy, theory and best practices. Brother S and the other CES leaders were experienced church leaders but were not acquainted with the fundamentals of educational best practices.

After 3 years in Phoenix, I was transferred to Kennewick, Washington. I taught there for 12 years, in a Released-time seminary. I served on the High Council there as well as in the bishopric and as a stake Young Men's President. I was getting tired of being the golden boy, and my wife didn't think I was so hot. She just thought I was gone way too much. She was right as usual. I was getting better at seeing the light and resisting the idea that you had to blindly submit and simply obey the leaders. I may have been getting sassy!

During my stint in Kennewick I was called in by the stake president for a serious interview. He informed me that if I had not needed the time to earn extra money (my wife and I established a janitorial business that required that we clean office buildings every night and weekends), I would have been called to be the bishop. Instead, he was calling me to be a bishop's counselor. It was bittersweet! The Spirit had told me that I would be a bishop before I was thirty-years old (or so I thought). I was on the fast-track to a sterling church career I thought. I began to lose confidence in a testimony and feelings from the Spirit. I hadn't admitted to myself yet that strong feelings I felt may not have come from God but from my own desires.

I reflected on the lack of objective study by me and others in the church. Before leaving Phoenix my wife and I attended a Sunday night fireside. A member of our ward told breathtaking war stories about Viet Nam. In each story he was miraculously protected or rescued and his faith was strengthened – exactly like Paul Dunn's stories about World War II. Teresa and I both were convinced that he was a fraud for some reason. I don't know why, I guess it's because I had seen liars before and he just fit the part. I felt guilty though because she and I were about the only ones not falling all over him, weeping because of the great spiritual feelings present in the room. Some claimed that it was one of the most spiritual meetings they had ever attended. Months later the bishop made the guy get up in a PH meeting and confess that he made it all up. It confirmed to me the necessity of being honest and at least somewhat skeptical about emotional feelings called a testimony.

READING AS THERAPY

In the mid 1980's I purchased a copy of a book by two LDS female authors. It was entitled *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* by Valeen Tippetts Avery and Linda King Newell. It was an unsanitized, objective biography about Joseph Smith's first wife. It rocked our world! I read it to Teresa as each new disclosure about Joseph's true character and behavior chipped away at my traditional beliefs about him and the church he created. Using impeccable sources it plainly revealed that Joseph Smith was a rank adulterer and compulsive liar for a good part of his life. He began as a con artist, bilking gullible people out of their money, promising them that he could "see" treasures of silver and gold far beneath the earth's surface using his peep stone. For the first time in my church career it became embarrassingly obvious that the church leaders had gone to great lengths to hide scores of flaws possessed by the church's revered founder. Others who were loyal Mormons minimized his deception and adultery and only grudgingly admitted that Joseph had flaws. "But all prophets have a few flaws," the orthodox reasoned at a CES Symposium at BYU. I had a hard time explaining away Joseph's glaring problems with adultery and lying.

I shared the contents of the book with a good Mormon friend and he told me that I was stupid for reading "that scum." He said, "You don't read Playboy to learn that pornography is bad. You shouldn't read garbage about Joseph Smith only to learn that he was human." He was going to extraordinary lengths to be loyal. I thought he was placing loyalty above integrity. Teresa and I agreed that Joseph Smith was not like the rest of us. The church ranked him far above the rest of us – a true representative of God. Yet he had the nerve to do things and command others to do things that were morally indefensible, and then lie about it to the members and the world if he needed to get out of a jam. I wondered if he was narcissistic, a sexual predator, and an obsessive liar. The intimidation and threats he used to coerce teen-age girls to marry him were inexcusable. I resisted these feelings however because I depended on the church for employment. I was too chicken to quit. I didn't figure I had much room to criticize Joseph Smith if I didn't have the courage of my own convictions, I reasoned. So I tried to make excuses for Joseph and find reasons why I must be wrong about him.

I began subscribing to *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. I also read *Sunstone* when I could get my hands on one. It was refreshing because these works were honest and objective about Mormon history, culture, literature. They were not afraid to discuss controversial issues. It wasn't the same old "rah-rah-rah, aren't we great!" stuff you're given in church all the time. I had a friend who I talked with in my ward in Kennewick who also liked reading objective sources. He had access to material that church authorities never wanted members to see. He showed me wonderful books and let me read all kinds

of new things about church history and doctrine that I never dreamed existed. It confirmed that the church had drastically revised its history to erase any trace of flaws and embarrassing mistakes by its leaders. He gave me information that proved that the church had prevaricated when it denied that Brigham Young taught the Adam-God theory. He gave me B.H. Roberts' *Studies of the Book of Mormon*. It indicated that after studying problems in the Book of Mormon, the greatest defender of the Book, concluded that Joseph Smith possessed the creative imagination to enable him to create the Book of Mormon using sources available to him including the Bible.

My friend introduced me to the writings of Gerald and Sandra Tanner, former Mormons, regarded as evil, unscrupulous, anti-Mormons by the members and leaders of the church. They researched and published Mormon leaders' duplicity and hypocrisy from 1830 to the present. I found that I could get more accurate and honest information about church history and doctrine from them than the church. I didn't always agree with their interpretations of the facts, but the evidence they presented was impressive. The Tanners were certainly more honest than the church leaders and scholars from F.A.R.M.S. (a group of polemics who sometimes use dirty tricks and character assassination to defend the church, no matter how tortured the logic or facts. The offices are housed on the BYU campus). The Tanners documented hundreds (I think) of incidents where church leaders routinely lied to protect the church (See *Shadow or Reality*, or their Utah Lighthouse Ministry website). Lest someone think that the Tanners led me out, I never read *Shadow or Reality* until last year. I discovered that the church regularly branded anyone who told the truth about church history and leaders as enemies, apostates, and anti-Mormons. I began to recognize that church leaders repeatedly engaged in a practice called "lying for the Lord" when they felt it necessary to protect themselves or the church's image of infallibility. They engaged in devious and mean-spirited tactics to punish those who threatened their version of history and events. It began in the days of Joseph Smith and was alive and well in the current church. Being honest isn't a primary objective when protecting the church's image.

I read many well-documented works that described the real history of the church. Then I noted what church leaders or CES leaders said about the author and his/her work. Almost without exception, the unbiased and objective works were heavily criticized. The church leaders circled the wagons and attacked the character of the author and sermonized against the evils of intellectuals who sought to destroy the faith of the members. If an author didn't use enough references he was criticized for that. If he used lots of them he was criticized for using too many. And in every case, the author would be attacked for undermining the faith of the members. The leaders demanded that everything be written to make it appear that God guided the church leaders in every thing – Ezra Taft Benson demanded as much of Church Educators. It seemed not to occur to those attacking

honest historians that it demonstrates a lack of faith in your message to react in such a defensive way; that church leaders should welcome honesty and fairness; and that it is unbecoming a Christian to react in such a non-charitable way toward well-meaning members trying to publish ethical and honest work. It saddened me to hear that excellent Mormon historians with impeccable credentials were threatened with loss of membership privileges, loss of employment in church schools, and in some cases, excommunication for being objective and truthful. I slowly stopped trusting everything the leaders claimed.

It appeared to me that they were engaged in a war with "intellectuals and academics." It seemed odd to me that on the one hand members bragged about the intellect of Apostles James E. Talmage, John Widtsoe, Orson Pratt and others, yet attempted to denigrate the contemporary intellectuals and academics. Armand Mauss pointed out in his book, "The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation," (University of Illinois Press 1994) that intellectuals were viewed as suspect when greater numbers of general authorities with a professional background in law, business and church education were called. Though there is an occasional thinker like Dallin Oaks or Neal Maxwell, they appear to have given up their right to exercise their intellect, in order to fill their role as protectors of the image of the church, as Zimbardo's experiments indicate.

GRADUATE SCHOOL

The evidence grew that the church wasn't what it advertised itself to be. I attended graduate school to become a licensed counselor. At first, I was a suspicious, narrow-minded Mormon who believed that all a person needed to know is the true gospel (Mormonism) in order to be successful at business, education, or anything else. I soon learned that I was a naïve, narrow, bigoted, little weasel. I learned that the theories of education, psychology and counseling were valuable to gain an understanding of how great theories were tested and knowledge has increased in the social sciences. I learned that many of the great men and women of science worked hard to discover and invent wonderful accoutrements to life though they may have been unbelievers. I marveled at the degree of Christian charity and compassion some of my atheist or agnostic professors exhibited. I felt small and wondered why I wasn't better than they were because I was a member of the true church and a high priest. I was supposed to be superior since I was a Mormon! It dawned on me finally, after breaking through the protective bubble, that the ingrained belief that the only good people were Mormons was wrong. I assumed that all the stuff the church leaders and members taught about not being happy unless you were a loyal Mormon was right in spite of all the evidence to the contrary. I hadn't questioned it enough before.

I began to test the hypothesis that Mormons were happier and better than everyone else. I stepped back and observed. The evidence was overwhelming that Mormons are not happier or better than everyone/anyone else. It sounds silly that I tested it. I didn't fully realize it then, but I began to discover that Mormons present false evidence to prove their superiority.

Some of it is social evidence. For instance a scientist (non-Mormon) in California found that Mormons who live the Word of Wisdom have a longer life-span than the population in general. Mormons cite his studies to prove that the church is true. What they don't tell others is that Seventh-day Adventists have a better health record and longer average life-span than Mormons. According to the logic of the Mormons, Seventh-day Adventists would be members of the only true church!

Another piece of popular social evidence is that Mormonism is the fastest growing church in the western hemisphere. Besides being inaccurate, it is hardly evidence that a church is the only true church of God. The real facts indicate that the Assemblies of God and Seventh-day Adventists consistently grow at a faster rate than Mormonism. By Mormon logic, the Assemblies of God is the only true church. In addition, Mormons conveniently forget to add that the retention rate of Seventh-day Adventist converts is somewhere near 80%. The Mormon retention rate is approximately 35% worldwide. That's dismal by comparison. (See David Stewart's excellent website, <http://www.cumorah.com/report.html>)

Mormons like to point to marriage and divorce rates and other statistics that prove that the Mormon Church is the only true church of God. But they have to be very selective. They must not reveal that the rate at which young Mormon girls report being sexually abused by family members is about the same as the rest of the U.S. They must not share that Utah is consistently referred to as the Prozac capital of the U.S. because of the disproportionate number of its citizens who use prescription drugs to combat depression. Since Utah is 70% Mormon it is highly unlikely that the Gentiles are making the rest of the state look bad.

HANGING OUT MY SHINGLE

After getting my Masters I opened a private counseling practice on weekends and evenings. I had a thriving practice consisting of Mormons. I enjoyed working with clients on developmental problems such as depression, anxiety, and stress related issues and marriage counseling. I tried my best to stay abreast of the best practices in the field and apply them.

I saw the good-old-boys network in action. In most cases an LDS woman would come in for help because she was being mistreated by her LDS husband. The woman usually blamed herself for her inability to please her husband or make the marriage work. Feeling responsible for all kinds of things she couldn't possibly control, invariably came from the church. Consistently she would quote some church leader or a Relief Society lesson that placed blame on women for not being able to keep a husband and children happy. After all, wives and moms set the tone for the home!

A bishop told a woman whose husband had begun an affair and stated his intention to get a divorce, to "learn to put on makeup, buy some prettier clothes, lose some weight, and fix yourself up and maybe you can convince him to stay." He should have told the damned loser who committed adultery, "She stayed by your side while you battled alcoholism for a dozen years and humiliated your family hundreds of times. Don't even think about accusing her of not meeting your needs!"

In one case, a man was excommunicated for committing adultery more than a dozen times during his marriage over a decade or more. I sat on the high council court. Instead of reaming the guy out and telling him what a rat he was, the stake president talked for no less than 30 minutes to the wife and mother of his 8 children. The stake president lectured her and told her to be a better wife. He accused her and her family of putting too much pressure on him – the same family that gave him money for land, a house, and everything else the guy owned. The adulterer listened to it all and beamed! The lesson from the stake president was clear: "if you had been a better wife, he wouldn't have been tempted to go to other women."

In another case, a woman reported that the children were being sexually abused by their father, a member of the Elders Quorum Presidency. I told her to kick him out and get the bishop to help her support the kids – Mormons are famous for helping members using their famous welfare system. She called me back the next day and told me something incredible. Her PH leader husband denied everything and instead of helping her, the bishop got mad at her and me. He told her that she was never to come to me for counseling again. I was out to destroy their eternal family, he said. He told her that he would handle the

marital problems and she was not to leave her husband or ask him to leave as I had advised her (Hello! Incest is not a "marital problem?!"). He spoke with her husband who denied everything and wept. He admitted to some lesser problems like losing his temper. The bishop confidently assured the wife that her husband was a repentant man and she had nothing to worry about. I was ready to explode. I didn't hear from her for months. She called me back in agony to report that her husband had "gotten to" another one of the little girls. I told her to leave. She said she was not only leaving her husband, she was leaving the church and telling the (insert expletive here) bishop to go to hell. She did. A popular teaching is that you are to follow the brethren and even if they tell you to do something wrong you'll be blessed anyway for being obedient. This is a paraphrase of President Heber J. Grant's statement, quoted by Apostle Marion G. Romney in 1960, "Always keep your eye on the President of the church, and if he ever tells you to do anything, even if it is wrong, and you do it, the Lord will bless you for it but you don't need to worry. The Lord will never let his mouthpiece lead the people astray." (Conference Report, October 1960, p. 78)

I could go on and on with literally dozens of stories about incompetent PH leaders who pretended some degree of skill in counseling despite never having spent one minute in formal training. Some have sense enough to know when they were in over their heads. Many more do not. They relied on their "mantle of authority" that gave them access to special inspiration from God. It's bestowed on all bishops and stake presidents by the laying on of hands. Most believe it gives them almost magical power to know how to solve any problem. In point of fact, I watched them ruin dozens of lives, and dispense destructive or patently stupid advice over and over again. One of my former bishops loved to rail against all the "worldly counselors" who were trained without the benefit of Divine inspiration. His solution to every marriage problem he heard was to "go on a date every Friday night." I'm not exaggerating or kidding.

I became convinced that women in the church did not stand a chance unless they happened to be in a ward with a bishop who was extra sensitive. That would have made him a rare exception. It was a hit and miss proposition. Yet, as every good Mormon knows, the person who doesn't sustain his bishop does not sustain the president of the church. By extension, that person does not sustain God. In other words, Mormons are supposed to presume that what the bishop advises them to do is what God would tell them if He were present. After some time watching the bishops dispense counsel I rejected the principle as ridiculous. It's so much a main thread in the fabric of Mormonism however, that members are routinely asked in interviews if they sustain the local leaders of the church. If they don't, they may face certain spiritual consequences and be considered unworthy to hold a temple recommend. Those not holding a current temple recommend are of course

unworthy to inherit the celestial kingdom. They are not valiant! (Doctrine and Covenants 76:79)

Counseling taught me how important it is reserve the right to think and make decisions about your own life. Never give it away, contrary to Boyd K. Packer's advice. It de-programmed me and separated me from the idea that church leaders always know best regarding personal matters. I remember arguing with a bishop about it in his office. He was reassuring me that he was inspired with regard to some counsel he gave that I couldn't accept. I countered with a question: "Please tell me what's going on right now in my sons' lives! Tell me what I need to do." Of course, he wanted information about my boys. I pointed out to him that if he was as inspired as he wanted me to believe, that he only had to repeat the words that came to his mind from God. I asked to know what God was telling him – it's just like giving a blessing. He stammered a bit and admitted that he didn't know about current affairs in my household as to "specific issues." I told him that that was precisely why I didn't think he was in a position to act infallible. If God truly spoke to him he wouldn't be fishing for information. It didn't impress him but it was a watershed moment for me. I began to declare my independence from the mindless submission to white males (always white and always male) who merely flew by the seat of their pants, pretending to be something they are not. Thankfully some bishops are humble and aware of their limitations.

MARK HOFMANN AND THE FORGERIES

Most Mormons were at first elated then troubled by the documents that Mark Hofmann, forger extraordinaire began marching through the First Presidency's office in the mid 1980's. Members first thought that the documents would prove beyond all doubt that Joseph Smith was a true prophet; the version of history taught by the church would be vindicated and the church would be proved to be the only true church on earth. It became clear that the message from the documents was that Joseph and others were superstitious and prone to "see" heavenly beings when convenient. It was embarrassing.

When the Salamander Letter was published (a forged document claiming that a white salamander gave revelations to Joseph instead of the angel Moroni), CES began to churn out all kinds of defensive statements and a packet of material to provide some damage control. I still have it in my files. The CES information indicated that sometimes a spirit was referred to as a toad or salamander. It admitted that Joseph had been prone to some superstitious practices in his younger days. Though Joseph had dabbled in the occult when

younger, he undoubtedly saw God and the Son just like he said, the printed material insisted.

President Kimball posed for a now-famous Church News photograph holding a magnifying glass over a forged document he thought was authentic, with Mark Hofmann (liar and forger) standing next to him – arm around his shoulders. It was not encouraging to learn that the Lord's prophet, who supposedly held all the keys of the dispensation, including the keys of discernment had been duped. He and all the other apostles didn't have a clue that Hofmann was a liar and murderer. Despite all the stories I had repeated in seminary to the kids about the all-knowing power of discernment the prophets possessed, it turned out that they were fooled as easily as anyone else. In their eagerness to suppress documents embarrassing to the church, they had shelled out over \$900,000 worth of rare church antiquities and cash to Hofmann.

I read books about the Hofmann affair – 4 of them. Except for the one by Richard Turley where his purpose for writing was to exonerate the general authorities at all costs, the other 3 admitted that the leaders had been tricked, had tried to suppress information from members if it was unfavorable, and perhaps obstructed justice. The authorities looked even more like old, incompetent, paranoid men when Turley's book revealed that the First Presidency's vault contained the famous McLellin papers that Hofmann had promised to produce. The Mormon leaders had no idea the documents were there – since 1908. When they were discovered in 1986, they told no one for six years, though that information would have been helpful for law enforcement. If after finding them they admitted that the collection had been there all the time it would have proven critics right who accused them of covering up information. They decided to stay tight lipped instead of turning over the documents to the police who needed them to make the charges stick against Hofmann. It was another example of cover-ups, deceit and getting caught red handed. Because the church advocates "obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law" (12th Article of Faith), it was embarrassing to be a member and learn how they conducted themselves.

It made me angrier when Dallin Oaks, through self-righteous posturing took the press to task for accusing the church leaders of shoddy conduct. He deliberately tried to deceive the public into believing that his error filled tirade was accurate and that the church had been a victim of unfair publicity. Facts plainly pointed to a different conclusion. I lost more respect for the church's leaders. They appeared to be just like a guilty politician when caught in a scandal – resort to lying and claim that the media is to blame for his/her troubles.

I spoke to a CES colleague about the Hofmann affair after he was sentenced to life in prison. I asked him how he felt about the church's conduct and the fact that the leaders seemed to be no more inspired than the average Joe on the street. He went to great lengths to defend the leaders. After all, they were gentle and trusting men who took people at their word in good faith, he insisted. Because the colleague was my boss I didn't challenge him. But it was obvious to me that when it suited them the Mormons regaled each other with stories about the God-given power of discernment prophets possess. Now when it was obvious that they were simply old white gentlemen who had been duped, they were extra gentle and compassionate, but not incompetent.

BURN OUT

I was burning out as a seminary teacher. After 12 years I think most of the kids knew that I cared about them. But I needed a change. I questioned what the church taught and I was getting cynical.

I almost took a job as the director of a weight management program run by a local hospital. I contracted my services to them as a counselor for an eating disorder program in the evenings. I didn't take the full-time job, even though I desperately wanted out of CES because I wasn't convinced that the program was going to survive. I figured I'd be out looking for a job within a year. I was wrong. It took the program a year and a half to fold. Maybe I should have taken the job anyway.

CES offered me the opportunity to move to Moscow, Idaho, teach Institute and work on my Ph.D. I jumped at the chance. It took a little wrangling, but we finally made the move. Though CES promised me the position, they wanted to back out of their commitment when it opened up. I argued until they agreed to move us. While I was arguing with the Zone Administrator from Salt Lake I thought to myself, "you're going to get fired for being so bold." I kept reminding him that CES makes me put my promises in writing so they can hold me legally responsible for them. They should keep their word to me.

It was a refreshing new start for me. I decided to rededicate myself to teaching what the church told me to. After all, if I was going to crow about ethics I needed to be ethical and stand behind commitments I signed my name to. So I tried to overlook all the faults I could find with the church's leaders, the doctrine, the drastically revised history and all the rest. I wanted to avoid controversy. I had experienced some in Kennewick. In fact, the summer we were moving I was put on probation by CES for not paying a full tithing. I freely

admit that I didn't. I had all kinds of financial difficulty. I didn't manage my money well, and besides the move from Kennewick to Moscow was really expensive. My house in Kennewick sold for \$25,000 less than the one we bought in Moscow, though it was "less-house" than the one in Kennewick. We had to borrow money for the down payment so we could qualify for the loan. My Area Director was compassionate and told me to get my tithing in order.

After settling in at Moscow I learned to teach Institute and administer church programs in the Lewiston Idaho and Pullman Washington stakes as the CES stake Coordinator. My plate was full. But it was different and I liked it. I had grown tired of high school students, though most of them were great and I really cared about them. It was refreshing to work with university students. I looked forward to researching church history and beliefs in greater depth.

I thought that the church expected me to become well-read and knowledgeable about all things connected with the church's history and doctrine in order to answer questions and teach interesting lessons with some depth. The entry under "Church Education System" in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism says that a fundamental principle of Mormonism is a strong emphasis on education. It quotes Joseph Smith: "receive truth let it come from where it may." Teaching Institute was going to be great. I studied hard and loved it. I also thought that since the kids were older I could be more honest with them about church history, scripture, and doctrine. I shared articles like Lester Bush's on the history of Blacks the PH, articles from a Phoenix newspaper about the church's finances, some revisions to the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C), the fact that Brigham Young really did teach the Adam-God theory, and that the Book of Abraham was not a direct translation from Egyptian papyrus. I shared things gently and tried to soften it all by telling the students that just because the prophets were human didn't mean that they weren't prophets. I used Old and New Testament prophets and apostles as examples of leaders with flaws – just like modern LDS leaders I told them. I tried to convince myself that that was true too.

The kids responded positively, I exposed them to objective sources and information in a limited way. When teaching Presidents of the Church I exposed them to the idea that prophets are human rather than infallible beings. Rather than passing out "Fourteen Fundamentals of In Following The Prophets," an address given at BYU, Feb. 26, 1980, where Ezra Taft Benson claims that "*The Prophet is Not Required to Have Any Particular Earthly Training or Credentials to Speak on Any Subject or Any Matter at Any Time,*" I used President J. Reuben Clark's famous talk entitled, "When Are the Writings or Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture?" (Dialogue, Vol.12, No.2, p.68) President Clark frankly admitted that the authorities err. Sometimes it was received very well,

sometimes not. I taught the kids that Bruce R. McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine* is not official doctrine. It represented his private views rather than the views of the church. The students were receptive but the seminary teachers I in-serviced in two stakes were not. Some thought it was apostasy to teach that church leaders could err and are human. I got in some trouble for it. I brought out President Clark's talk to show that President Clark said it, not me. I was told not to use it anymore. "Don't confuse them with facts," seemed to be the message. "It will undermine their faith," I was told. I thought it would inform their faith. What good does it do to build faith in an incorrect concept? Let's exercise faith that we can jump off tall buildings and fly and see how constructive that is. You go first.

MORE GRADUATE WORK

In 1992 I took some coursework for my Ph.D. in Education Administration with an emphasis on Higher Education. I wanted to pursue a counseling degree and entering private practice but it didn't happen. I wasn't eager to spend the rest of my life counseling people with serious problems 40 hours a week. Besides that the University would not accept 2000-plus hours of supervised clinical work I had already completed. They wanted me to repeat the hours. Instead I chose a higher education administration major, thinking I could find a job at the University of Idaho after finishing.

I was impressed with the teachers who taught my graduate school classes. They were respectful of my Mormon profession, though they didn't agree with the church's views. Once again, I realized how narrow my church and profession was. I learned again that the best people in the world aren't Mormons. I mentioned to colleagues that it would be good if members of the church showed more respect for those who are not members, rather than assuming to be superior. One earnest member looked at me with a puzzled look, and shot back, "but we are better and happier! We have the true gospel." Gee, what was I thinking.

Learning about higher education was new to me. I was not familiar with significant theories and practices of administration and management. The structure of institutions of higher education was unfamiliar too. I knew nothing about the appropriations process and state funding of higher education. But I was eager to learn. I also wanted to meet with as many UI administrators as possible to build a network of people to help me find a job.

I took a course in critical thinking. I enjoyed looking at a problem from all points of view instead of harboring biased feelings and defending a point of view in spite of the evidence. That got me in a little trouble with a CES colleague. M and I attended the critical

thinking class together one summer. One exercise involved presenting persuasive arguments for both sides of an issue. During one of those exercises I was asked to defend homosexuality or abortion and be as persuasive as I could. I did my best. After class, M took me to task for throwing my principles out the window. I told him that my principles were still intact. All I had done was practice some critical thinking skills. It occurred to me that he represented the typical church leader and CES colleague. They were afraid or unwilling to participate in exercises which might expose them to other points of view. They preferred to remain convinced that they could not be wrong, or could not be taught anything new. My counseling experience had placed me in contact with Mormon gay men. After working with them I refused to believe church leaders who insisted that they were sinners and condemned before God. I didn't want to become a narrow minded bigot.

During one CES region faculty meeting I remember telling the teachers that I didn't think it was wise to put all R-rated movies under one umbrella – bad! I told them that I had seen some that were thoughtful and enriching. I insisted that we ought to ask our students to think for themselves and help them develop parameters for making decisions that were consistent with their values. I was assailed and accused of being disloyal to the prophet. I defended myself by saying that I was not defending material that was gratuitously sexual or violent. I was defending violence like that in *Saving Private Ryan* (although I don't think I used that movie as an example – I can't remember). It was necessary to portray the evil and the good of a World War and it was impossible to do that unless an image of the brutality was shown. They vehemently disagreed, and asked me how I could justify telling a student that it was okay to see nudity. I presume that they thought they could argue from a nudity point of view more easily than a violence point of view. I told them that nudity is a matter of context. I asked them to consider the LDS doctors who not only see nude men and women but they feel for lumps in the women's breasts and closely examine their pubic regions for problems. I told them that my wife was an RN and she routinely had to check and handle men and women's sexual organs when working at the hospital. Nudity is a matter of context I repeated. If it is intended to merely gratify some sensual desire it is probably gratuitous. If nudity served some valid, higher purpose, it wasn't sinful as far as I could tell. They were totally unconvinced and thought of me as some kind of pervert. In defense of my colleague at the Moscow Institute, he defended me. He had his Ph.D. in Family Science from BYU and had opened his mind to explore more than the sheltered ones. Besides he liked talking about sex. It made me feel good to hear him defend me.

I missed some CES meetings because of graduate school. I got in a lot of trouble for it. One resentful Area Director actually yelled (yes, he yelled) at me on the phone on more than one occasion because I was going to miss a meeting. He called Salt Lake and told on me. I had to miss our Mid-Year Convention because I had to take a Mid-Term. A Zone Administrator warned that I couldn't use school as an excuse to miss meetings. I explained

that whatever I missed I could learn from my colleagues in Moscow and Pullman. The Area Director explained that I would be missed because of the camaraderie. I told him that I didn't have control over the schedule for Mid-Terms or the CES conventions. I was a pawn caught between the university and CES.

I was friendly to my CES colleagues but I felt different. I didn't really feel like part of the group. No one read the things I did. With one exception they didn't follow sports or watch much TV. I try to do as much as that as I can. I like it. They were more loyal to the church than me. If I saw a flaw I admitted it rather than try to explain it away or deny it. I tried to be as honest with my own faults. I figured the church was fair game too.

When I wasn't at a meeting I was told I was missed the next time they saw me, but it was done in a snotty way to make me feel guilty, rather than express concern. When I did attend, they teased about my tie, my coat, my shirt or missing meetings – "Oh you decided to come this time huh?" I couldn't really express my opinions because I was thought to be too radical. One CES wife told me that she thought I was a bad influence on her husband and didn't want him hanging around me. When I did express opinions I had to temper them to the point that I didn't really believe what I was saying. I was acting loyal. I withdrew quite a bit. Teresa hated going to Mid-Year Conventions so badly that she did not go sometimes and I was a bachelor. Anyway, I got in quite a bit of trouble for not going to meetings. A couple of grizzled CES veterans were just as cynical about meetings as I was. But they were more loyal in other areas. It appeared that meetings were more important than being effective and doing your job well.

I grew to dislike most church-sponsored meetings. I dreaded Sunday meetings – all 3 hours – isn't that just too much time? My colleague K was branch president of a small unit. They didn't hold Sunday school for 2 years because they met in a facility that lacked walls for classrooms. His attendance shot up to record levels. They qualified for a new building and they had to resume the 3-hour schedule. The record attendance disappeared.

I didn't care for stake conference meetings either – especially the Saturday afternoon and evening ones. I thought they were a waste of time. Projects that benefited the community never grew out of those meetings. I cannot believe that all the time spent in meetings made much of a difference. The church is intramural and enclosed. Meetings are a way of keeping members attached and busy doing church-sponsored things. Besides, the majority of meetings consist of repeating clichés and catch-phrases to build faith. There was no intellectual stimulation for me, except in rare instances. The preferred material harped on the same dumbed-down slogans and formulas over and over, "obey to your leaders."

At one CES meeting participants were divided into small groups. We reviewed general conference talks to find deep insights from "the brethren" and Shari Dew. For 45 minutes Teresa and I listened to our group members (a group of 5 couples) talk about how worldly their non-member neighbors were. They watched videos that were not always up to the standards of the church. They didn't keep the Sabbath holy. They did all kinds of things that made these poor Mormons' feel so very uncomfortable "living in the world." They didn't want their children exposed to such sinful practices. Finally it was obvious that Teresa and I were the only couple who hadn't contributed anything to the discussion. They coaxed us to say something. Teresa wasn't about to and I was afraid to. If I told them what I was really thinking I'd have been fired on the spot! After they prodded for some time I said in the kindest way I could, "I guess I don't share the same experiences. My non-member relatives and friends are often better examples of goodness than me. I try to learn from them. I don't believe that because I'm a Mormon I'm morally superior." I tried not to be judgmental and pompous, yet I wanted to be honest. I wasn't trying to "straighten them out." They began to back-pedal, "Well when I spoke about my neighbor I didn't mean " I was trying to say that Mormons don't have a corner on the market when it comes to spirituality or goodness, despite what is implied or they tell each other.

GRADUATION

I completed my coursework and took a 6-month sabbatical to complete my dissertation. I had been working on it for over a year and a half when I took the time off. I received a lot of encouragement and advice from those who had taken terminal degrees. Most of it helped. One piece of advice I kept getting from the majority of my CES colleagues was to "just get the piece of paper so you can get respect from the educators across the street!" That meant that I didn't have to learn anything. I just had to get through it. It also implied the naïve assumption that at a research institution – a university – the only reason the teachers and administrators there have a degree is so they can advance. That's just plain wrong in my experience. Those that I know love research and teaching. Finally, it gave away the fact that CES professionals by and large rarely use the excellent knowledge and resources they receive from an intense focus on some area of academic interest, at great cost to the church. I never considered getting the piece of paper as the only desirable product of my education. I wanted to enjoy the process as well. I wanted to learn all I could to become more competent and grow as a person. I had the added motivation of wanting to become the kind of professional that the university would hire.

I graduated in May of 1997 and it was exhilarating. I had achieved a goal I never dreamed I could. I was a goof off in high school and enjoyed all the sports and social

opportunities. I don't know how many of my classmates know I've achieved the milestone, but they will tease me mercilessly about my awful handwriting, my bad grades, the million pranks, and the fact that I couldn't stay in the lines when I colored in first grade (maybe every grade). I still can't, but I learned that it's because I'm special and creative!

CES policy requires that after receiving a terminal degree an employee owes them five years of employment or they must pay back the money CES paid for the degree. That's a fair policy. Since I wasn't getting into that much trouble, I wondered if I might find a way to remain in and retire from CES. After all a person can retire at age 55 and I was 47 at the time. Could I stand it for 8 more years? Teresa didn't think I could do it.

I had written a dissertation on recruitment to LDS Institutes of Religion. I studied the literature on recruitment practices in business and higher education for my literature review. CES lacked a coherent, research based recruitment program. I also found that most of the methods and tools they used were not the most effective, based on the surveys of LDS students at the University of Idaho. I applied the Azjen-Fishbein Theory of Behavioral Intentions model to the surveys. My findings were not popular with the Area faculty. So I put the dissertation in a drawer and forgot about it. My wife and I look at it in the campus library from time to time.

I guess it suggested that CES had something to learn but the message didn't come from the general authorities. It came from some punk in Moscow, Idaho who had studied the matter in a systematic way. My colleagues in CES (the ones I could trust) used to sit around and discuss how silly CES's methods were. They supported my research because their experience told them it was valid. We all knew that LDS college students made the decision to attend Institute (or not) based on their own internal values. Parents or leaders couldn't persuade or coerce them. They had minds of their own. We used to laugh about the kids that we were close friends with; who sat for hours in our offices and talked about all kinds of things, and became good friends; but they never came to Institute class. We shared stories about the years we recruited our brains out and it didn't increase our attendance at all, it may have declined. Then another year, when we didn't recruit much, our attendance might shoot up. This was consistent with the findings of my dissertation. Internal values and motivation are the best predictors of attendance, rather than the methods involving persuasion or coercion by PH leaders and Institute faculty. In the church credibility isn't based on the merits of the information provided. It's based on who said it.

CALLED TO BE BISHOP

In 1997 I got another strong prompting – really clear – "you're going to be called to be a bishop." This sounds cynical but I knew that it would help me avoid controversy. When CES guys are called to be bishops or members of the stake presidency, they are treated differently. They are accorded much more respect. You're given instant credibility and freedom that you would not possess otherwise because of the position. Often times in CES meetings instead of addressing a colleague as "Brother Davis" they are addressed as "President Davis." It's a real status symbol though many will deny it. Well, I waited for the prompting to come true.

I was summoned to the office of the stake president. I told my wife, "I'm going to receive a call to be the bishop of the Moscow 2nd ward." I wrote it on a piece of paper and took it with me to the stake president's office. The stake president, an attorney and one who resembled a god-father figure in mob movies (according to my kids) said in his gruff, gravelly voice. "I'm going to call someone to be a bishop in your ward. I thought, "Hey, maybe I actually got a real message from God." Then he continued, "How come your name was not even on the list of potential candidates?"

I was fingering the piece of paper with my prediction on it in my coat pocket. Dang! I was wrong again. I was speechless too. I asked him what he was referring to. He said that he thought I was inactive because I wasn't in church all that much. I told him that my calling was to teach Gospel Doctrine and I shared the call with 3 other teachers, so I only taught once a month. I told him that I took the opportunity, since I had a light-weight calling to visit wards in our stake and the other stake that I administered CES programs for. It gave me a real good opportunity to meet with PH leaders on Sunday when they actually have time set aside to discuss issues that are important. I told him that I also visited my parents in Southeast Washington once a month. He wasn't happy. He said he wanted me to be in my own ward more often.

I was assigned to be the stake president's home teacher. I actually enjoyed it. He was gruff but likable and funny. I loved his wife who was funny too. But they were definitely more conservative than me. We had good visits. I wasn't a 100% home teacher so I wasn't a model in that area. Some months it was impossible to visit them because of his schedule. That didn't bother me. He used to tease me about not coming every month and I would counter that if he went inactive while serving as stake president that was his problem; not mine. We always had a good laugh together.

I was called to be the bishop about a year later. The same stake president asked me if I thought I could refrain from so many CES visits to other wards. I said, "Yes, I do it because

it's my choice and I like it." He handed me a letter signed by the Church President (or the signature machine) calling me to be a bishop. I was happy!

I loved being a bishop. I was called to serve a married student ward. It was a pretty good sized ward and I was called just before the students left for summer vacation. Most of them got a good look at me and then left town.

I came to the position knowing exactly what I wanted to do. I wanted to focus on the grace and mercy of Christ as the Bible teaches it. I wanted to be quiet about Joseph Smith and exalting him as the premiere member of the human race. I wanted those called to teach classes to encourage discussion and set an atmosphere that is receptive to questions and opinions without criticism. I wanted to skip meetings where possible. I wanted to love the members and put everyone on notice that no one in the ward will be coerced by guilt. I wanted to allow members to quit church jobs if they weren't happy serving or turn them down if they didn't want to accept them. I wanted to announce publicly and frequently that I was no more inspired than they were. If I gave them counsel it was from Ken Clark based on his limited experience and knowledge. They should be as ready to leave it as take it. I wanted to visit them in their homes as often as I could and eat their cookies and enjoy their kids. I wanted to model PH administrative methods for the young men and women in leadership, so they would learn that guilt and shame are not good administration tools but a good sense of humor is. Finally, I wanted to emphasize that those in other communities of faith were often better examples of Christ-like living than we Mormons were – we should learn as much as we can from them and humbly thank them rather than assume that Mormons are superior.

The effect on the members was wonderful. I wouldn't change a thing. I didn't kill myself and put my family last on the list. All my kids were grown and out of the house. My wife took a job working at an Assisted Living Facility in Pullman on weekends and didn't come to church. We transferred her records to my ward so another bishop did not make trouble for her.

During sacrament meetings about once a month I asked people to come up and create a "Spontaneous Ward Choir." We didn't guilt people into joining the choir if they were too busy or just wanted to be home with their families.

I skipped meetings whenever I could. We held PEC, Welfare and other meetings of that kind via e-mail on Wednesday nights when the ward leaders reported their activities. I asked them after "discussing" things with them if they thought we had enough other business to hold PEC. Most often they said "no" and I agreed.

We focused the sacrament meetings on Christ and the effect His life, example and atonement has had on us. I took time to instruct them on the concept of grace – we really are saved by grace!

I cancelled all the meetings after sacrament meeting several times a year so we could enjoy time at home with our families.

I got called to task by a ward member now and again for not emphasizing the life and service of Joseph Smith. I always smiled and responded with, "I prefer to emphasize the Savior and his mission."

Two of my sons attended my ward. What a blessing.

I injected humor into our meetings though I didn't want to appear goofy. I wanted the members to know that if we possess the good news then we can be "of good cheer."

I was released after 3 years. I was not aware that the student stake president harbored a lot of animosity toward me for my style of administration – particularly the practice of canceling meetings wherever possible.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

I was released in May 2001. I had not met or seen the stake president for over 8 months. I contacted his second counselor, my CES colleague at the Institute; because that was the only way I could get information about my release. I tried to prepare the ward so whoever was following me as bishop could step into a smooth running operation. I didn't know that the stake president was purposely avoiding me because he disliked me. In fairness to him I should mention however that he had a terrible bout with singles and missed a lot of meetings trying to recover. It took months before he was on his feet.

After I was released I felt good. I didn't know that trouble was brewing. I got a big shock when my CES Area Director (AD) from Seattle came over for an annual evaluation a month after my release. He told me that he had some serious discussions with the student stake president. That stake president had written on an evaluation form (when you work for CES you must agree to let the stake president release any kind of confidential information to CES that he chooses, without your knowing about it) that I was not worthy to be hired as a full-time employee of CES! I couldn't believe it. What had I ever done to him? His complaint was that while serving as a bishop I didn't attend the number of

meetings I should have – particularly Personal Interviews with him (They are called monthly PPIs: Personal Priesthood Interviews). As I mentioned before, in my experience, it doesn't matter what your performance is, meetings are the number one priority.

I asked my AD (CES Area Director located in Seattle, Washington) if the stake president had said anything else about my performance. He had. He admitted that all the kids in the ward loved me, my ward led the stake in all important statistics, and in all other ways I had done a great job – but I had missed several interviews with him. I could remember missing at least one. That was the time I apologized to him afterward and asked if he wanted to reschedule. He curtly answered no. I honestly couldn't remember missing others unless I had to conduct faculty meetings in other regions of Northern Idaho. In those cases I called his executive secretary to inform him of those conflicts when they arose. CES policy states that when it comes to CES work requirements, they trump ecclesiastical meetings. The other stake president who I had served under before the formation of the student stake had realized that they had made a mistake by scheduling interviews (PPIs) with me on nights that I was required to conduct faculty meetings or teach an Institute class. He and I only met once in a year and a half but he understood that my work took precedence and was fine with it. He could have rescheduled the PPIs but he didn't think it was a big deal. This stake president (a former colonel in the Air Force) was not in the mood to understand. He made a huge issue of it though it was unrelated to my employment in CES.

I didn't get any help, support or sympathy from my AD. He wasn't about to question a PH leader in my behalf. I questioned my AD about it. After recovering from shock, I asked him what justification the stake president had for claiming that I was unworthy to work for CES? Wasn't ecclesiastical administrative style unrelated to my work in CES? My tenure as a bishop was not a condition of employment. That was something CES administrators drummed into our heads. Besides, if the stake president had a problem with me why hadn't he talked to me about it instead of harboring it like a festering sore? Wasn't he supposed to be the premiere example of Christian conduct? I saw his behavior as petty and mean spirited. That didn't help my job security because the AD wouldn't go to the mat for me. The last thing a CES employee wants is a stake president on the hunt for his job. It didn't matter how illogical, how untrue, or how invalid his criticism were, I was in the cross-hairs and my AD wasn't going to help me. I was in trouble! My AD told me so. He told me to get the stake president on my side. I was put on probation until we became friends. I thought the stake president would call me in and try to work it out. It never happened.

I'M IN THE CROSSHAIRS

Even though my Area Director (AD) could not muster the moral courage to support me he recognized that I had a lot of success as a teacher. He appointed me Region Faculty Chair, responsible for planning and conducting in-service meetings for CES full-time faculty in the region. I sat on the Area Training Council, the group responsible for planning the training meetings for the Area (Washington, Alaska, and Northern Idaho). I think he valued my opinions. I honestly don't know. He began to nit-pick at things that I thought were moronic from that period on.

He called a meeting with me about something a colleague had complained about. I had written an email to those in my region giving information about a CES meeting where participants would share their feelings about President Hinckley's book, *Standing for Something*. I added a silly note because I thought it was funny. Sometimes I poked fun at the seriousness with which members regard anything written by the church leaders – elevating it to the level of sacred text. I said in the email that I had heard that President Hinckley's less active brother had also written a book called, *Sitting for Nothing*. Most of the guys got a kick out of it and told me so. I certainly didn't mean to offend anyone. My AD gravely informed me that I had hurt someone's feelings. I laughed because it was so much like a sixth grade level issue. He got upset because I wasn't taking the matter more seriously. I asked him how I could when it was so juvenile to tattle on me. If someone had a problem with a sophomoric and admittedly silly remark by me, let them come to me and tell me. "I'll apologize and be done with it. Why make it a major issue?" was my response.

The AD surprised me and replied, "Well, that brings me to another serious matter." My colleague was too afraid to confront me with the issue because I intimidated him the AD reported. I told the AD that if the guy was about my age (1) he should be ashamed for acting so childish and helpless, (2) be willing to admit that it was juvenile to play the role of the victim as an excuse not to do the right thing and talk to me, and (3) it was silly to tattle to the AD. Besides I added, "R, as the AD you're adding fuel to the fire by allowing the guy to get away with this nonsense." I tried to make the point that scripture says to talk to me directly (D&C 42:88) if there was a problem. I thought I'd better find a job or I was going to get fired or go crazy. My observation is that when it is convenient to use scripture to whip the members into shape, leaders never hesitate to use it to create guilt. When leaders are violating scriptural commandments, they simply ignore them.

Believe it or not, R brought that issue up at least two more times in the next year. He wouldn't let go of it. Once was during a meeting with my wife. I was stunned when he brought it up again. I asked, "When are you going to let that issue go?" My wife questioned

him and asked why he continued to bring up such silly issues. He began to quake and shake and said, "I don't know what to say Teresa."

I got into trouble again when a member of my region faculty called R to report that I had said in an in service meeting that I was sure that my non-member relatives were all going to be together as families in heaven. The colleague hadn't asked for clarification in the meeting. But on the phone, he and my AD decided that I had committed a serious sin. I had disregarded the need for sacred temple ordinances. According to Mormons if non-members don't accept the opportunity to join the church and get married in the temple, they will be consigned to a lesser kingdom, without the reward of living with their families. I told those in the meeting that I thought God would judge us by the content of our hearts. He thought I was a radical.

I had to endure another big inquisition – a watershed event – the kangaroo court to trump them all. It was in February of 2002. My colleague at the Moscow Institute, K contacted me and told me that I was in a huge amount of trouble. He told me that President M (the stake president of the student stake who complained about my missing PPIs) had been given an email that was very incriminating. He said M called him to tell him that I committed a major transgression. He told K that the email was very damaging to my career and he intended on calling Salt Lake CES Administrators about my mis-step. M was searching for something to discredit me again.

The next thing I knew I was on the phone with the other stake president in town. He said that we needed to sit down and talk with the Seattle CES AD, President M and himself (Pres. D was the one who later told me to bring in my paycheck stubs so he could calculate my tithing). I told him that I'd be happy to visit. They were all very concerned about some things I had written in my email as well as some other "serious" problems which they would not reveal before the meeting. At the time I was serving on the High Council under Pres. D and we were getting along famously, even though he admitted that he didn't like me at all before he got to know me. I never felt like I could fully trust him even when he liked me. I was right as it turned out. He loved the spotlight and had a way of speaking in a folksy and humble way that always managed to make him the "star." I thought he tried a little too hard to be admired. It also bothered me that he betrayed confidences. In his talks when he would get carried away (by the Spirit of God) he had a habit of telling confidential stories about the personal lives of individuals in our stake boundaries. I did counseling for free as a gesture of good will and I knew who some of the people were he was talking about and so did their friends. It was terribly embarrassing for them when they heard about it. I lost some respect for him because of that. I thought it indicated an insatiable desire to be admired, at the expense of members' privacy.

He is also careless with the truth. He promised me that he would not let President M go on a tirade again about my missing some interviews with him when I served as bishop. He lied to me and betrayed me. I'll explain.

We met for the inquisition at 4 p.m. They had been meeting since noon. Half of me was sick with worry. Half of me was comfortable because President D had promised me that he would not allow President M rail on me about missing PPIs – for the umpteenth time.

Of course the first item was the email message. I wrote it because some returned missionaries in a class chastised young women for bearing their testimonies using, "*I believe. . .*", instead of "*I know.*" In our discussion and in the email message I defended the girls and told them that it was fine and probably more honest. I told them that I did it and intended to do it more because it made me feel more comfortable than declaring, "*I know the church is the only true church on earth!*" I showed them scripture where Jesus exhorted his disciples to "Be not afraid, only believe (Mark 5:36)." I pointed out the root word in Greek for faith (*pistis*). It means to believe. The Mormon Articles of Faith, composed by Joseph Smith all begin with the words, "We believe. . . (with one exception)." I gave those who say "I believe" a great deal of credit for being humble and demonstrating integrity.

I've mentioned several times before that loyalty is more important than honesty. The logical extension of that idea is that conformity is how most leaders define spiritual unity. You must give up your own ideas or keep them quiet. You must walk lockstep with the orders leaders dictate. They call it obedience. It resembles coerced conformity. I was guilty of both disloyalty and nonconformity in their eyes.

It didn't matter that I had written a substantive and valid message about the concept of belief and faith. It didn't matter that all my examples from scripture were verifiable. President M wanted his pound of flesh. He said I had undermined the faith of the students. President D and R (CES AD) all solemnly agreed. I couldn't have won that argument if Jesus had appeared and said, "I'm on Ken's side." I meekly apologized and admitted that I must have not put enough thought into my email message. I apologized for offending any students. I informed them however, that not a single student had expressed any dissatisfaction with the message. I suggested that they tell me who exactly was offended so I could personally apologize. They couldn't or wouldn't identify any. In fact they couldn't name a single student who was offended because none had contacted them. I asked them if they wanted me to apologize to the entire class and explain my sin and ask for their forgiveness. They didn't think I should do that either. I wondered if I was just being called in for a good dressing down to make President M happy and feel good about himself. It

was obvious he didn't want me walking out of the meeting still gainfully employed with CES. Why is it wrong to encourage students to be honest about their level of belief? I thought they deserved credit and support for being honest and brave.

By the way, I did go back to my class and apologize for the email. They had no idea what I was talking about. They wondered what was going on and asked me about it. I told them that I had gotten into trouble over it. They were truly bewildered and a protective of me. They wanted to know if I wanted them to go talk to the stake president. I asked them not to.

The next cardinal offense: Pres. M wanted to know if it was true that I had once told a woman (about my age) who attended Institute, "you have a right to your private political opinions, I have a right to mine and Gordon B. Hinckley has a right to his. We are not required to agree." Yes I had. We regularly read messages from the First Presidency reminding the members that Mormons are free to hold their own political opinions without any coercion from the leaders of the church (unless leaders declare it a moral issue – then they tell you exactly how you must vote). Members are encouraged to exercise their views by voting at the polls I reminded them. They agreed and seemed stumped for a second until President M added that he thought that *the way* I had said it was the problem. This was a new tactic. I defended myself adding that the woman had displayed more than a little "attitude" toward me during our discussions, and in the interest of simply agreeing to disagree, I turned around in the hallway – she was following close behind and wouldn't drop the issue – and I did in fact cut the discussion short after begging her to drop it several times. He did not want to concede the point. He was seething. She was a close friend of Pres. M's wife. He may have promised to put me in my place and be her hero.

The third cardinal sin I had committed was that when asked by a young woman in class, "Brother Clark, have you ever seen an R-rated movie?" I answered, "Yes." She asked me how I could ever do that since the prophet had advised members against seeing R-rated movies. I explained that despite what the prophet says, members are not robots and general rules rarely apply to all specific situations. They still have to make informed decisions. It's wise to establish some criteria for making decisions like that. I explained that I never saw R-rated movies that displayed gratuitous sex or violence. I made the decision to attend ones that I thought had a noble and uplifting message such as *Saving Private Ryan* or *Schindler's List*. Somehow word got back to the president that I had undermined the prophet's counsel.

All present expressed their horror and righteous indignation that I would ever go to an R-rated movie and then compound the sin by admitting it and undermining the faith of the students. I asked them if they were advising me to lie. They said they there were ways to

answer the question without admitting the error. And they stressed again, I should have never gone to an R-rated movie in the first place. I pressed them again and asked if they were telling me to deceive the students. They never did tell me not to lie to the students.

R, the CES AD sat silently all the while, piously nodding in agreement every time Presidents D and M scored a hit. Ironically R and I had attended an R-rated movie together in Provo, Utah several years before at a CES symposium! He didn't admit it of course. It must have selectively slipped his mind.

Another twist is that President M, the pious stake president who was going for my jugular, had a reputation for being one of the most foul-mouthed baseball coaches ever to work with the young 15 year-olds in Moscow! Those poor kids endured some of the worst crude and vulgar language one can imagine. A bishop whose boy played on the team told me.

I stopped trying to explain to them that an R-rated movie isn't necessarily the worst thing in the world. I didn't go into a lot of detail except to say that I would have invited Jesus and President Hinckley to watch the movies with me. I felt good about my choices. I thought university students ought to think about setting some standards they feel comfortable with to guide their choices instead of blindly refusing to see any R-rated movies at all. Besides, most of the institute students attended R-rated movies regularly, and not necessarily because they were carefully thought out choices. I was trying to give them some criteria to use. Wasn't that better than pretending that they never attended them?

I began to apologize when I saw I wasn't going to persuade them that I might have a valid argument. I needed to walk out of there with a job. President M misjudged me. I guess he thought I would throw chairs or something. He didn't expect the apologizing. My guilt had already been established before I walked into the room. They didn't want to confuse the issue with facts.

They hadn't pinned anything on me at least to the degree that President M had wanted. So they began to change the reason we met. They decided that admittedly, none of those offenses was all that serious, but collectively they "revealed a pattern of disturbing behavior." To make the case, President D decided to bolster their argument by using my administrative style as a bishop – the exact material he had promised he would not allow President M to bring into the conversation. He fed me to the lions.

I hadn't attended enough Personal Priesthood Interviews (PPIs) to satisfy President M. Same old song; here we go again. I defended myself and he became so angry that President D gently said something to both of us that was obviously pointed at M. I

reminded M that he had cancelled many PPIs because of his bout with shingles. He vehemently denied it though it was true. He was being honest to win. He seemed more interested in victory than understanding.

President M asked me if it was true that while serving as a bishop I had wadded up and thrown away a letter from the First Presidency commanding bishops to hold 3 hours worth of meetings on the Sunday closest to Christmas Day. I had because I didn't intend to keep my ward for 3 hours of meetings. I had already promised my ward that we would go to sacrament meeting and then be dismissed to go home and spend the holiday time with our families instead of sitting in church meetings. The 3 amigos were filled with resentment at my irreverence for the prophets' orders. They inflated themselves with renewed indignation. Now they were getting somewhere.

President D told me that I was not orthodox and he didn't see any way that he would ever let his daughter attend my classes if she attended Institute. I was dangerous. I couldn't be trusted. All I could do was listen. They were not interested in reasoning together. If they were interested, Jesus condemned orthodoxy and advised his disciples to obey the spirit of the law instead.

R got into the act. He asked me why I had a sign on my door "telling students you don't want to see them." I corrected him and told him that the sign on my door "asked" students to please make an appointment to visit. I explained office hours to the group. They were all very displeased and ordered me to get rid of the sign. "It tells kids you don't want to talk to them." I explained that I was the one at the institute who spent the vast majority of time visiting with the kids, not my colleague, and that's why I need to post office hours. I'm the one who dispensed free professional counseling, and plenty of it. I'm the one who the single ward bishops referred their problem kids to. I'm the one that the bishops in the town wards and the student married wards referred their tough marriage cases to. How could I possibly be accused of turning students away? Again, the facts weren't about to get in the way. They had a duty – to humble me, and perhaps fire me.

After they all took turns pummeling me for no less than 3 hours, we began to talk about my future. President M had to excuse himself and missed this part of the discussion or I would probably have been fired that night. President D I think, was too afraid to confront President M, but being fair minded enough to know that I had been railroaded somewhat, held the discussion while he was away. They decided that they needed to move me. President D asked me what if CES wanted to move me to Southeast Idaho. I told him candidly, "I'd quit." He believed me. He looked to R. R said that there was going to be an opening in Pasco, Washington. I could be moved there perhaps.

I had to excuse myself to go present a lesson to the Relief Society of my ward on healthy family relationships. I was supposed to go and act cheerful and upbeat. I was beaten to a pulp. I had saved my job but I was definitely going to be moved. I gave the lesson. I was supposed to meet Teresa and R for dinner at a nice restaurant afterward. I was so depressed. They had successfully beaten me down, and I had nothing left.

Teresa and I had dinner with R. He didn't offer any concessions. He said that when a stake president and a CES man lock horns, there is only one thing to do – move the CES man, no matter how wrong or pig-headed the stake president is. Teresa appealed to him to explain that crazy rationale. R's reply was, "Teresa I don't know what to tell you." And that's all he would say. R told me that he and President M would have more meetings to figure out what to do with me.

As it turned out, President D got hold of President M and talked to him some more that same night. He tried to calm President M down because he was fuming and had a hot temper. President D told me later that it bothered him that President M was so intent on exacting revenge on me. President M was livid because I was still employed. President D told him to try and reconcile and give me a chance. He didn't want to.

There was a lot of talk about me being transferred. K, my colleague at Moscow, (President M's second counselor in the stake presidency) tried to be upbeat. K told me he was trying to protect me. Looking back I think he threw me to the wolves. He tried hard to get me transferred and tried to convince me it was for the best. I think he wanted to distance himself from me. T, my other CES pal and colleague at the Pullman Institute (President D's first counselor) was also encouraging but it appears he caved in when I needed someone to defend me. That information came from later conversations with President D. He admitted that he always asked about me and gathered behind my back. The reviews my colleagues gave me, at least the way he reported them, were never very good. They were always so reassuring to my face. I think those scared little guys were not about to risk their secure employment to stand up for me. After all, I was going to be okay – just uprooted and moved away perhaps. Why risk your own job? Because of later public comments by my Moscow colleague and "friend" it was obvious that he thought I had brought all of this on myself. That's a big part of CES – if things get tough, save yourself.

After the initial shock wore off and I had a day or two to talk about the infamous inquisition with Teresa, we became angry and decided to leave CES as soon as we could, even if it meant settling for a lot less money. I told my colleagues as much and President D too – after I began speaking to him again. He called a meeting a few weeks after the inquisition and I told him that I couldn't believe that he had lied and betrayed me. He admitted that he let President M have a go at me. He wanted to make up. I told him I

wanted to be released from the high council to look for a job. He quickly agreed, and two days later, they sustained a "professional" from the area to take my place. The man had had an affair a few years before so the rumor mill attested (no church action was ever taken). No one who worked there respected this "good Mormon" because of his flirtatious behavior. Part of the reason was because his wife was one of the most respected people in town. She has ethics, morals, and more character than all the Mormons put together. But she had quit the church years before and joined a Protestant Church. He betrayed her and people resented it. He was known all over town for being very "touchy" – hands on thighs, rubbing, caressing, etc. if a beautiful, young girl visited his office. He was my replacement on the high council because I was no longer worthy to serve.

I received a phone call from R from CES headquarters in Seattle. He said we ought to talk. I told him that I couldn't talk yet. So we didn't talk. We attended a Mid-Year Convention in Spokane about a month later. He approached me and shook my hand with his big grin and patted me on the shoulder pretending nothing had happened and said, "What's wrong Ken?" I looked him in the eye and answered, "What do you think?" He knew, and left me alone. Later he scolded me because I "made" his wife feel badly because I wasn't my usual, jovial self. That was my cue to take responsibility for her feelings. My counseling background wouldn't allow me to.

We ended up leaving the convention early to get me to the doctor. I had a sinus infection. I was never so happy to get infected. It felt much better than sitting in meetings with a bunch of earnest and intensely sincere guys and their wives who (1) "know that this is the only true church on the face of the earth; and, (2) know that the Lord will never let his prophet lead us astray." There's always a testimony meeting on the last day of convention. It's so everyone can stand and reassure everyone else that they love CES, the Church, President Hinckley, and the rest of the brethren, "who treat us so well."

At one CES meeting in Spokane the benefits guy from Salt Lake reminded us that the brethren are generous with benefits and we ought to be grateful. He said he was sick about some who tried to take advantage of the prophets' generosity. He told about a young girl and her mom who requested breast reduction surgery because of chronic back and neck pain. The benefits guy said that the CES CEO slammed his fist on the desk angrily and said, "well let her cut em off then!" He felt they were trying to cheat the benefit system for surgery that wasn't needed. Teresa and I should have walked out in protest but it would have come back to haunt us. It was shameful we didn't hear one word of protest about his outrageous behavior. My colleagues heard plenty from me but they made excuses for the guy. I was confused.

After a couple of weeks, R decided to tell me that we had to meet. I told Teresa to come. He was a little hesitant when she showed up. She asked him why he failed to defend me instead of contributing to the feeding frenzy at the last inquisition. Something odd and remarkable happened. He began to tremble and shake uncontrollably. He answered, "I don't know." His voice was quivering. She asked him why 27 years of exemplary teaching meant nothing to him and the stake presidents who tried to take my job. He said, "I don't know what to tell you Teresa." He kept quaking – every inch of him – and he was a big guy – six-feet-four and 250 pounds at that time. Teresa asked again, "R, what are we supposed to do?" He was still shaking and gave his repetitious reply again, "I don't know Teresa. I don't know what to say."

Teresa asked him what the *real* complaints against me were, "Because those other complaints were ridiculous." His answer again was, "I don't know what to tell you Teresa. I thought he was going to cry under the strain.

He was still trembling and from our vantage point could not make it stop. I wanted to know why he didn't admit that he had gone to see an R-rated movie with me a few years ago, instead of lecturing me about morality and acting innocent during the last inquisition. He said he forgot. I told him I was absolutely unimpressed with his administrative ability because he sat there and let them cover all the old ground about my not attending enough meetings to suit President M. "Why didn't you put a stop to that?" He answered, "What was I supposed to say Ken?" "You tell them that we've been over all that and it doesn't have anything to do with Ken's employment! That's your job R!" There was no response from him.

He brought up some other issues that we had covered long ago – all old that supposedly had been dealt with such as the one about my joking around about the inactive brother of President Hinckley writing *Sitting for Nothing*. I was really upset at him by now. I couldn't believe that he dredged that up again. I didn't care if I got fired at that moment.

The meeting ended with Teresa and I looking at each other wondering (1) how does this guy climb to the top of his profession as an administrator; (2) was he merely a lackey for the stake presidents to control like some puppet; (3) why would it have been so hard for him to be honest and more assertive with the stake presidents? (4) Why in the world would he tremble and quake uncontrollably when he was the one with all the power and authority in the room?

He promised to do all he could to relate "my side of the story" to Salt Lake. He said they would decide what to do with me. I asked him as we stood ready to open the door for

him, why he hadn't understood my feelings before. He gave his usual response, "I don't know."

Teresa and I were desperate to get out of CES! The church is under no obligation to provide a fair hearing, due process, or any other guarantees that workers for a state, federal or municipal entity are entitled. They can fire you in the middle of your contract for no reason other than they don't want you anymore. It says so on every letter of appointment – their preferred term for contract. In the last paragraph of my last contract dated 7-9-02, it reads, "It is understood that your appointment may be discontinued *without cause* (italics mine) at any time by CES." I needed to quit before they invented some reason to fire me.

Because my colleague T, at the Pullman Institute felt burned out he wanted to switch positions with me. He got his wish. They appointed me as the Director of the Pullman Institute. His enrollment has been declining. He and others thought the Institute needed some fresh blood. CES and the PH leaders wanted me to get the enrollment back up to where it needed to be.

DIRECTOR OF THE PULLMAN INSTITUTE

I began moving my things from the Moscow Institute of Religion to the Pullman Institute. It was odd that I was on probation, skating on thin ice, one foot on the banana peel, and all the other clichés, yet I was being promoted to Director. Things were getting more and more bizarre and I was discouraged. The job market wasn't good and I was sick that I might have to stay in the church teaching one more year. I was wracked by guilt too. I was too scared to quit; because I was afraid of losing our home; our cars; retirement benefits, health insurance; everything. I felt guilty because I was taking the church's money but I didn't believe the falsified history and doctrine. I felt unethical for teaching their version; but I was scared not to.

As I packed my 96 boxes at my Moscow office and laboriously unpacked them again in Pullman, I tried to think of a way to get through the year without stirring up trouble by teaching with an honest approach. I decided that I would teach courses that were less controversial. I decided to teach Old Testament, New Testament, Biblical Hebrew, and the Book of Mormon. I also determined that I would ask volunteers to teach any courses dealing with church history or the latter-day prophets. That way I wouldn't be as likely to be asked questions that might evoke unseemly stories about church leaders. Most of those questions come up in church history, Pearl of Great Price, or Doctrine and Covenants

courses. Because the church leaders have revised and re-written so much history and latter-day doctrine it is difficult to avoid questions that I would feel required to answer truthfully. For instance, in church history, evidence clearly points to Joseph Smith's 1832 version of the First Vision as the most accurate. Yet it is not the official version approved by the church. In fact most members don't know that an 1832 account exists and contradicts the official version. The 1832 account was written before Joseph felt it necessary to embellish and add details that cannot be substantiated. It describes a vision not unlike visions that Christian ministers of his day. Its message is one of forgiveness, like common visions in his day. There was no charge that all the churches were wrong, and that he was called to organize a new one. It did not cause Joseph to change his behavior as he suggests in his later, revised accounts. It wasn't a call to the work as his other "official version" suggests. It sounds just like other evangelical Protestant epiphanies until he began to change it, to sound much more dramatic. All the evidence supports the earliest accounts of his experience with prayer and a forgiveness of sins, rather than the expanded and re-worked version produced later in his life (1838) that Mormons regard as the official version. (Grant Palmer, "An Insider's View of Mormon Origins" [Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books] 2002)

That is only one problem of dozens and dozens that honest seekers discover when studying church history, Pearl of Great Price, or the Doctrine and Covenants. The translation of the Book of Mormon presents problems as well. Evidence indicates Joseph never translated anything. He used his imagination and sources available to him. It appears he made up stories about the restoration of the priesthood also. He never mentioned anything about a miraculous visitation from angels to restore the PH until 1834-35 when he felt the need to bolster his position in the eyes of the members. His revelations when first prepared for publication in the Book of Commandments were later revised and expanded making many events appear more miraculous than first explained. Members are unaware of the duplicitous nature of the history and doctrine of the church. In my view it resembled false advertising and propaganda more than church history. Why teach students something they must unlearn later?

I was resigned to remain in the church and do my best until I could find a job. I had made up my mind that if I could find something before the school year ended, I would resign immediately. I just couldn't find anything. I had applied for jobs I felt confident about but never received a request for an interview. One of the funniest was when I applied for the night supervisor's position at the University of Idaho Student Recreation Center. They wanted someone with administrative experience, a Bachelor's degree, and a list of qualifications that I possessed 10 times over. I never even got an interview. I let them know that I would be delighted with the pittance they offered as salary. The one interview I did get was for a 5th grade teaching position in my hometown of Benton City,

Washington. I received serious consideration but didn't get it. I can understand why. I had been out of public education for 27 years.

Mormon students from Washington State University dropped in the office and offered me some very gracious compliments that summer as I moved in. They had seen the list of advertised classes for the fall semester and were very enthusiastic. I thought the classes would pique their curiosity and then my teaching style would keep them in the classes. I had developed a pretty unique teaching style at least for the church. I tried not to dominate the class by being an expert, or talking head. I developed questions that stimulated the students to think and ask questions of their own. I didn't find it necessary to give the students all the "right" answers as CES faculty are trained to do. The normal CES class is teacher-centered. I loved student-centered approach and students responded enthusiastically. It was different than most were used to. I had observed my colleagues teach over the years and the vast majority were stuck in the rut of stand and deliver – dominate and moralize. I don't know how the students stand it.

HELLO LEWIS–CLARK STATE COLLEGE

After spending weeks getting the institute's web site up to date, the course schedules out, and lots of other tasks accomplished; not to mention the sheer load of unpacking, I was ready to accept my fate. I wrestled with my conscience. I was conflicted and miserable. I didn't believe a thing I was going to teach the next two semesters. I was doing it for the money. I was too chicken to simply quit and take my chances. I couldn't respect myself for that.

I continued to search for jobs but it wasn't working. I had visited with the president of Lewis-Clark State College, who I had known when she served as an Assistant Dean and later Associate Provost at the University of Idaho. I conferred with the Vice-President of Student Affairs at the University of Idaho who was a good friend. I took classes from him when I was in grad school. Neither of them had anything to offer me. Both generously offered to write me outstanding letters of recommendation. They understood and sympathized and wanted to help me escape from Mormonism. Those are two of the finest people I know.

My 27 years working for the church was a problem for most employers. They didn't believe that I had knowledge and experience that would transfer to a higher education setting. I thought they were wrong but that didn't matter. While the church hadn't given me any experience, solid philosophy, theory and practice of administration in higher education, my academic coursework had and so had my teaching at the University of Idaho

as adjunct faculty. I thought, "If I can get them to interview me, I can convince them that I am smart enough to learn quickly." I couldn't get an interview. I asked the Department Chair of Religious Studies to hire me. She said she didn't have any money. I had the highest evaluations in the department. But if there's no money it doesn't matter. The economy took a hit after 9-11. Stocks lost value, unemployment rose, tax revenues shrank and institutions of higher education made drastic cuts. They were laying people off. They weren't hiring.

I was getting depressed and I was scared. I didn't know what to do. I pictured going to church and hating it. Was I going to keep paying tithing (taxes) so I could keep my job? I was so worried because I just couldn't see the stake presidents leaving me alone for another year. I felt like a carcass that the buzzards were circling.

That's about the time that Bishop L called us in for the interview that we flunked for not paying tithing by the month, reading scriptures too much in church, and not attending our own ward enough. Of course the stake president pushed me over the edge when he said to bring in my paycheck stubs so he could calculate how much tithing I should pay, and let them check up on meeting attendance every time I left town to visit out of town relatives.

A few days after I quit I contacted both my friends again by email – the president of LCSC and the VP of Student Affairs at Uofl. I told them that I had resigned because I couldn't take it anymore. I didn't have a job and needed some advice. Should I agree to do something like janitorial work, take classes; do an internship, or what? I was at the Pullman Institute when I emailed them. I was packing all my boxes again. After sending the email and before heading for home, I called my home and checked my messages. I had a message on the machine from the president of LCSC. She said she might have something for me. I couldn't believe it.

I called her from the Institute. She said that their Director of Grants and Contracts was taking a leave of absence. The President and Provost were discussing how they would replace her. She came from that meeting to her office and read my email. She phoned me and left a message on my machine. We talked about the possibility of a job, but she didn't want to tell me too much before she did some checking with other senior administration. She had meetings in Boise and couldn't get back to the matter for a while. She said she would call back in a week or so. Was I interested? I told her "Absolutely."

Hope is the mother of peace. I had some misgivings though. I didn't know a thing about grant administration. While I waited for a week to hear some news from the President, I checked some websites to learn what I could about writing grants. She called

back about a week later. My grandson Jacob and I were shooting baskets on the driveway. The president told me that if I wanted the job of Interim Director of Grants and Contracts it was mine. I would begin sometime in September on a part-time basis, and start full-time duties on November 1st. Neither of us was sure I would like it or could learn it. It was a steep learning curve. I had to learn a lot more than grant writing. I needed to learn the entire process of grant administration – both pre and post award duties – grant writing was only one small piece of the job. I would take a \$35,000 a year salary cut. That was just fine with me. Both the president and I were happy. She is a caring person, who is spiritual, approachable, warm, and extremely intelligent. She wanted to help me. I'll always be grateful. Amazing grace!

She invited me to her investiture and an all-campus meeting afterward. The Provost introduced me to the faculty and staff. I felt uncomfortable because I didn't know anyone and for the first time in 27 years I wasn't going to teach for CES which was easy and familiar to me. But I was also happy and optimistic. I kept telling myself that I had written an excellent dissertation. If I did that I could do this.

I completed a year at LCSC as the Interim Director and we brought in a record amount of external funds. The search process for a permanent Director of Grants and Contracts resulted in my being selected as the permanent Director in August 2003. My salary rose considerably, and none of it will go to Mormon taxes. My net income is slightly more than it was when I left CES. Teresa and I have enjoyed this last year more than any since we were married. We feel so much joy and peace. We are in control of our lives for the first time in 33 years. We do not dread Sundays and the hours of required meetings. We are no longer assigned to spend evenings out every month home teaching and visiting teaching and attending ward and stake meetings, We're no longer force-fed a monotonous diet of "the leaders of the church will never lead the church astray – be submissive and obedient to them."

In time we will have our names removed from the records of the church. I resent it that bishops and ward leaders talk about us in their meetings because we have become projects or assignments. We've given ourselves a little time to think about it because we don't want to injure the feelings of a grown son who is active. He's a terrific young man. Our other children left the church before we did. They tease us about not taking their advice sooner.

THAT'S OUR STORY

Are we still friends with the members? I think so. We're like lepers in the context of Mormonism. If they bump into us at the store there is awkward smiling and general conversation about the weather. Once in a while, some of the non-judgmental ones talks to us just like old times and we enjoy it.

Will we ever go back to church? Never.

Are we Christians today? Yes, but we are not members of any organized denomination.

Mormons assume that if you leave the church you can't be happy. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are happier than ever. I really mean that.

Mormons assume that if you leave the church that your spiritual life will suffer. We feel closer to God than ever before, yet I am free to combine reason with my faith, think critically, doubt, and ask hard questions. That produced uncomfortable tension in the church.

Mormons assume that you need the church to prod you to be good and do good for others. We feel more like reaching out to others now because we're not coerced.

Mormons assume that your family life is better in the church. We are closer as a family now. There is less judging based on narrow church beliefs. Instead of measuring everyone in the family against what the church says is right and wrong, we simply love each other and allow everyone to explore their own spiritual path. We know that God loves us and his grace is sufficient. We don't assume that our children who haven't served Mormon missions and married in the temple are scarred for life and lost. It makes for a much better relationship.

Mormons assume that Christians believe in a kind of cheap grace that gives you license to sin, while claiming to be saved. That's nonsense. Most Christians believe that they are saved by the grace of God because of Christ's death and blood shed on the cross. They believe that grace entices one to be good. Mormons try to earn grace by living well enough to qualify for it. Grace, by definition, is a free gift and can't be earned nor can you qualify for it.

Mormons deny that Christ paid for their sins on the cross and claim that He did it in Gethsemane. The Bible, Book of Mormon, and D&C all teach that Christ paid for our sins on the cross. Jesus' own words in the D&C are clear in about a dozen places. For instance,

D&C 35:2 says, "I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world. . . "There are many other passages in the Book of Mormon and D&C just like this that they ignore for some reason.

On occasion a former student (I still write to one from a class in 1972 and others) or member of my ward when I was bishop remarks, "You inspired me to believe. I still remember the things you taught. You had such a good influence on me. How could you have a testimony one day and deny it the next? What happened to your testimony?" I think this is the answer. When I said, "The Church is true!" I believed it. I gave myself permission to investigate the church's beliefs and I discovered that I had not been given the whole story. The church used its considerable resources to hide important facts from me and the rest of the members. I explored to learn for myself what was true. I cannot find evidence to support the truth claims of the Mormon Church. I searched. I wanted to find supporting evidence. It's not there. Sadly I found the evidence indicates that the church is less than honest in the presentation of its history. The church left me. What you refer to as my "testimony" (Divine assurance that the church is true) was/is the force of my personality, my enthusiasm, and my teaching and interaction style. I brought that with me into Mormonism and I took it with me when I left. It's not a function of the Spirit. It's a function of who I am and how I relate to people. You're confusing personality and character traits with a metaphysical (things outside the physical world) experience. Being a gifted and inspirational teacher isn't a sign that one is inspired or has received revelations from God. Joseph Smith and Paul Dunn proved that.

Some have said to me, "Most of your experiences aren't directly connected with the official doctrines of the church. They only represent aspects of the social gospel where certainly one can point out flaws in leaders here and there. That doesn't make the whole church bad. Those were just a few bad apples."

Yes it does describe the whole church rather than a few bad apples. The leaders are not accountable for abusive treatment they administer. They may have been praised by their superiors for handling my case. Something is wrong with the philosophy which drives those abominable practices. That makes it a sick system or organization. It presumes that treating people like garbage and spitting them out is a good thing, if they think out loud, ask questions, or aren't cheering loudly or wildly enough. In my case, I was not paying enough to the corporation of the president, in tithes or in obeisance. Leaders sometimes behave in a vicious and unchristian way while claiming to be the only true representatives of Christ on earth. And please don't trivialize my experiences by claiming abuse by "only a few bad apples." That flippant remark mocks and diminishes the abuse suffered by innocent victims. The church doesn't view the mean spirited leaders as bad apples. If they were bad apples, the church would remove them from office, discipline them, and take

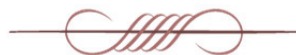
immediate action to make compensate the victims. Instead, because they did exactly what they are supposed to do if they are obedient, orthodox, loyal, conforming, leaders, they will be sustained as true representatives of God. People are expendable in their view; like collateral damage that is regrettable but necessary to protect the church. Members ought to condemn that kind of cowardice rather than defend it. My beef isn't with a few leaders per se. It's with the system that encourages ruthless and insecure individuals, drunk with the power given to them by the church, to exercise unrighteous dominion. The bad leaders (bad apples) are only an outward symptom of the cancer that thrives within.

I tried to reason with the leaders and convince them that honesty about the church's history and doctrine is ethical, honest and more effective. It didn't work. They circled the wagons and rejected me and my ideas. And I'm one of the luckier ones. I quit before they fired me.

I hope some can benefit from this account. It is true. But I don't want to mislead you into thinking that I hold myself up as one who is without faults. I have plenty of them. I also don't want you to think I dislike the hundreds of members whom I have met and known well over 33 years in the church. On the whole they are as nice as anyone else – no better, but no worse. They are like the rest of us, including me – trying to be mostly good, while working on our flaws. By writing this I'm not declaring war on the church. I wanted to share my experience. It's therapy for both of us I hope.

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<http://www.mormonthink.com/personalstories/kenclark.htm>