

A Mormon Testifies of his Christian Faith

By ama49

August 2010

Recently, a fellow friend from another Christian faith asked me to share my thoughts on Jesus Christ with the intention of posting it on his site in order to help other Christians with the concept of Mormons (members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) being Christians.

I'll open with a quote taken from C. S. Lewis' book *Mere Christianity*. When defining what a Christian is, Lewis references Acts 11:26 and states: "the original, obvious meaning . . . Christians was first given at Antioch to the disciples, to those who accepted the teaching of the apostles" (p. 15).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' (LDS) *Bible Dictionary* shares a similar definition of what a Christian is: "A name first given to believers in Jesus Christ at Antioch in Syria, about AD 43 (Acts 11: 26)."

Therefore, the heart of what it means to be a Christian is first believing in Jesus Christ and then following Jesus as His disciple.

With this definition in mind, I will move on to share my thoughts on a brief history of Mormonism and what following Jesus Christ as a disciple, or in other words, being a Christian, means for me as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Following Jesus Christ was the young boy Joseph Smith's most pressing desire. In the early 1800's he was seeking truth and struggling in knowing where to find it. He saw much truth in many Christian faiths, but at that time, the Christian faiths were contending with each other. In regards to this time he states the following (which can be found in Joseph Smith's History, 1:5):

. . . there was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region of country. Indeed, the whole district of country seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the

different religious parties, which created no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying, "Lo, here!" and others, "Lo, there!" Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist.

He goes on to write (1:8-11):

. . . so great were the confusion and strife among the different denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong.

My mind at times was greatly excited, the cry and tumult were so great and incessant. The Presbyterians were most decided against the Baptists and Methodists, and used all the powers of both reason and sophistry to prove their errors, or, at least, to make the people think they were in error. On the other hand, the Baptists and Methodists in their turn were equally zealous in endeavoring to establish their own tenets and disprove all others.

In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?

While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

Joseph Smith then decided to act on this scripture. He went to a nearby forest, knelt down and prayed out loud and in pure sincerity and earnestness. As he was praying, he received an amazing answer to prayer and saw a vision, similar to the one Stephen had in the New Testament. Joseph Smith says in his own words (1:16-17):

I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*

Through a sincere desire to follow Jesus Christ by searching, showing faith, humility, and prayer, Joseph Smith was able to be instructed by

Jesus Christ himself as to how He wanted His church and followers to be. One of these included bringing forth the *Book of Mormon*, which acts as another witness of Jesus Christ, which the Bible states is necessary for all truth to be established (see 2 Cor. 13:1). It is a collection of writings that are similar to the Bible about the sermons and letters of other prophets that believed in Jesus, but didn't live in the same area as Jerusalem, where the Bible takes place. The *Book of Mormon* is necessary because it confirms and clarifies truths about the gospel of Jesus Christ that are found in the Bible.

For example, we read in the Bible about how to be saved through faith, or confessing the name of Jesus, and we read about people needing to be baptized in order to enter into the kingdom of Jesus. We read about the Holy Ghost and we read about salvation through the grace of God and being judged for our works after this life. For someone seeking to follow Jesus Christ, it can be confusing to know how exactly to follow Jesus, just as it was for Joseph Smith.

Thankfully, we have the answers in the *Book of Mormon*. In the book of 3 Nephi, Jesus appears to a group of his disciples after his resurrection. This group of disciples was struggling with issues on how to follow Jesus Christ completely. Some of what Jesus tells them is that the church should be called by His name and that the gospel of Jesus Christ that leads to salvation is: Faith, Repentance, Baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and enduring in faith until the end (see 3 Nephi chapter 27).

I will conclude by sharing some personal experiences along with my testimony.

At a certain point in my life, I too was struggling with faith and a testimony of Jesus Christ. Similar to the experience of Joseph Smith, I read scripture found in the Bible and also in the *Book of Mormon* that testified of Jesus Christ. I wanted to have my own personal witness that there is a Jesus and how to follow Him. As I prayed for the first time in sincerity to know, I was filled with a sweet, peaceful feeling that spoke to my soul. I knew it was God speaking to me through his Holy Spirit. I decided to embrace the Church of Jesus Christ's teachings and follow the gospel of Jesus Christ through faith, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.

As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ I have made a commitment to God through being baptized that I will be His disciple. Baptism was just the beginning though. Being a disciple of Jesus to me means asking for

His Spirit to give me strength in following His example in all things and repenting and asking for His mercy and grace when I fail (daily) and enduring in faith by taking up the cross and following Him (Matt. 16:24). Taking up the cross means that I should deny myself of ungodly things and strive to do what Jesus would have me do as a father, neighbor, employee, brother, husband, son, and friend. As I do this, my life is richly blessed and so are the lives of those around me. I believe this is the greatest contribution I can make to society to help fight the evils we see around us today. Through the blessing of the Lord's atonement when he suffered for me in the garden of Gethsemane and died on the cross, as I do these things, I have faith and hope that I will sit at the feet of Jesus someday and hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt. 25:23 KJV).

ama49

GraceforGrace.com