

10. Why do Latter-day Saints try to convert others?

Robert L. Millet,
Noel B. Reynolds

Mormons believe that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints contains a *fulness* of the gospel of Jesus Christ and that this fulness is not found elsewhere. Therefore, they feel a responsibility to make the message of the restoration of Christ's Church available to all who will hear. They profess to have received the same commission from the Lord Jesus that he delivered to his followers anciently—to preach the gospel to people of all nations (see Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–18; see also D&C 68:8). This is the basis for the missionary system within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

One president of the LDS Church expressed these thoughts to those not of the LDS faith:

We have come not to take away from you the truth and virtue you possess. We have come not to find fault with you nor to criticize you. We have not come here to berate you because of things you have not done; but we have come here as your brethren. . . . and to say to you: "Keep all the good that you have, and let us bring to you more good, in order that you may be happier and in order that you may be prepared to enter into the presence of our Heavenly Father."⁴²

The Need

Latter-day Saints affirm that the answer to the world's problems—starvation, famine, disease, crime, inhumanity, and the dissolution of the family—is ultimately not found in social programs or legislation. Instead, the answer lies in the promise that God will change the hearts of those who have faith in Jesus Christ. There is much good being done by people of many Christian denominations to bring this message of Christ to a world that desperately needs it. Yet the Latter-day Saints declare that there is more truth to be known, more power to be exercised, and more profound fulfillment and joy to be found than is available in any other church. As one church leader pointed out, "We seek to bring all truth together. We seek to enlarge the circle of love and understanding among all the people of the earth. Thus we strive to establish peace and happiness, not only within Christianity but among all mankind."⁴³

The Message

The restoration of the gospel came about as a divine response to the famine in the land foretold by Old Testament prophets—not a famine for bread nor a thirst for water, but a yearning to hear the word of God (see Amos 8:11–12). The fundamental message of Mormonism is:

- **There is a God. He is our Father in Heaven.**
- **Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God and the promised Messiah. Salvation comes only in and through the redemption of Christ.**
- **Thus there is purpose to life. Our Heavenly Father has a plan for his children, a plan intended to bring peace and joy to all the sons and daughters of God through faith in Jesus Christ.**
- **God the Eternal Father and his Son Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith in the spring of 1820. This appearance began the restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

- Heavenly messengers have restored sacred truths and divine powers. Through those powers the church and kingdom of God have been reestablished on earth.
- God loves his children in this age and generation as much as he loved those to whom he sent his Son some two thousand years ago. The Father's perfect love is manifested not only in the preservation of the Bible, but also through modern revelation, modern scripture, modern apostles and prophets ordained with divine priesthood powers, and an inspired church organization.

The Custodian

It is important to be a good person, a moral person, a person of integrity. Latter-day Saints believe, however, that the gospel is intended to do more than make us good persons. The gospel contains the power of God unto salvation (see Romans 1:16), the power to transform good people into Christlike people, noble souls into holy souls. The Church of Jesus Christ is the custodian of the gospel. Christ himself has given his restored church divine authority and the truths of salvation. So Latter-day Saints do not believe one can fully come unto Christ—and partake of all the blessings he offers—independent of (or in opposition to) the Church of Jesus Christ. They believe there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5) and that the sacraments or ordinances of salvation, administered by the priesthood held in his restored church, are prerequisite to entrance into the kingdom of God.

At a time in which there is a waning of belonging and in accordance with the scriptural command to share the gospel so that all might “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32), the Latter-day Saints invite all people to come home, to return to the family of God. The First Presidency of the LDS Church in 1907 declared, “Our motives are not selfish; our purposes not petty and earth-bound; we contemplate the human race, past, present and yet to come, as immortal beings, for whose salvation it is our mission to labor; and to this work, broad as eternity and deep as the love of God, we devote ourselves, now, and forever.”⁴⁴

Notes

42. George Albert Smith, *Sharing the Gospel with Others*, comp. Preston Nibley (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1948), 12, 13.

43. Howard W. Hunter, *That We Might Have Joy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 59.

44. Cited in *ibid.*