



Summer 2005 *GOstudents.net* Bible Study

## Reaching Out to Mormons

### Materials:

- *GOstudents.net* Download Video: *The Truth About Mormonism*
- Computer, monitor or video projector to display video
- One copy of *GOstudents.net* Group Activity for “Reaching Out to Mormons” for each student
- A chalkboard, whiteboard, overhead projector or large sheet of paper on which to write
- Optional: Printouts of the *GOstudents.net* article about Mormonism called “Why Your Friends are Mormon.” You’ll find it through the Beliefs section of *GOstudents.net* by clicking on “World Religions” on the left side of the page. (Or click this link in your PDF document:  
<http://www.gostudents.net/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=ejINI5PNKpG&b=317034&ct=366837>)

### Group Activity:

Hand out copies of the Group Activity to each student. Explain that today’s study will focus on reaching out to Mormons, also called members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). To begin, ask your group to work individually to answer True or False for each of the eight questions on the quiz about Mormonism. They won’t be required to show their answers to anyone and the page is theirs to keep.

After they’ve finished, ask how confident they are about their answers. Do they feel like they know much about Mormonism? Would they be comfortable talking to Mormon believers about their own faith in Jesus Christ? Walk through each of the True/False questions to help your students gain some basic knowledge about Mormonism.

1. *The Mormon church supports having multiple wives.*

False. Although certain groups still practice polygamy, the church officially banned the practice in 1890 after claiming to receive a special revelation from God about the issue.

2. *Mormonism is one of the fastest growing religions in the United States and in the world.*

True. Membership in the Mormon church keeps climbing very rapidly. Currently, there are over 12 million members worldwide, with more than five million in the United States alone.

3. *There are five times as many Mormon missionaries as there are Southern Baptist missionaries.*



True. In the United States, Mormonism seems to be growing faster than Christianity. There are likely several reasons for this. Some feel Christianity has gotten a bad name in recent years, turning people away who don't take the time to understand the truth. Others believe that the Mormon church is sometimes deceptive with new members about what they actually believe. Mormons also offer a strong sense of community, family and patriotism that many people are hungry for. Finally, Mormon teaching puts a strong emphasis on performance and work in order to earn rewards and climb to the highest reaches of salvation. Some feel this legalism motivates the spread of the movement through their own evangelism and outreach.

*4. Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses basically believe and teach the same thing.*

False. Though sometimes confused by Christians, the two groups teach entirely different things. And both religions are separate from biblical Christianity.

*5. Mormonism was started by Joseph Smith in 1830 after he claimed to receive a special revelation of the Book of Mormon from God.*

True. Smith claimed that he received a visitation from God 10 years earlier with special instructions to start the "true church." He did so, starting with six members and eventually moving west. His successor, Brigham Young, moved the church's headquarters to Utah and founded Salt Lake City in 1847. Today, LDS followers still believe that the Mormon church is the one, true church.

*6. Mormons believe Jesus is the one and only begotten Son of God and that salvation comes only to those who trust in Him through faith.*

False. However, many Mormons are a little unclear on what exactly they believe and what their church teaches about Jesus. Mormon Scriptures are clear, though, that Jesus was just the first of many of God the Father's literal children, that His crucifixion brought "general salvation" to everyone whether they believe in Him or not, and that He and the Father are completely separate from each other, not part of the same being.

*7. Mormons believe God is a flesh and blood person, once a man like us, who is one of many gods in the universe.*



True. They call Him Elohim or Heavenly Father, and they believe Him to be the god of this universe only. The church teaches that there are many gods over other universes who were also formerly human, earning their own godhood by following Mormon teaching exactly.

*8. Mormons believe that those who closely follow the teaching of the Mormon church may one day be rewarded by becoming gods over their own planets.*

True. Mormons believe that if they do really,

really well at following the teachings of the church, they may become a god in the same way the god of our universe did. Non-Mormons do not go to hell after death, but simply to a lower level of heaven.

*9. A Mormon is just another kind of Christian.*

False. Hopefully, from what we've discussed so far, you're getting the idea that Mormons are not biblical Christians. In recent years, the Mormon church has spent a lot of time and money trying to rearrange their image to make others see them as another branch of evangelical Christianity. They're not, for all the reasons listed above. Mormons are unbelievers who are lost in sin. Our job is to reach out to them with the truth of the gospel, salvation by God's grace through faith in Jesus alone.

**Video:**

Play the video *The Truth About Mormons*, produced by the North American Mission Board. It's 3 minutes, 41 seconds long. Ask your students to pay attention to this brief clip that explains the basic beliefs of Mormonism and the need to reach out to Mormons with the truth about God's grace and mercy available only through faith in Jesus.

**Three Keys to Reaching Out to Mormons**

As we've seen, Mormonism is one of the fastest growing religions in North America. The problem with this is that believers in Mormonism are not really trusting in Jesus for their salvation, despite what they may tell you. If you have Mormon friends or family members, you can reach out to them with the truth about the real gospel of Jesus. Let's talk about three important factors in reaching out to Mormons.

**1. Know the facts.**

Before talking to anyone about your own faith, you've got to have a pretty good handle on what you believe and why. In fact, it's much better to be clear about your own beliefs than making sure you know every aspect of someone else's faith before you talk to him or her. Still, it's good to know the basic differences between biblical Christianity and Mormon teaching. Let's talk about a few of them.

**The One Church**

**Mormon Teaching:** Mormonism is the one true church of Jesus Christ.

**Biblical Christianity:** Jesus promised in Matthew 16:17-18 that His church would not fail, meaning it's been ongoing since shortly after His resurrection from the dead. It didn't take a "time out" until later in history. Also, according to Acts 2:42, the true church does not compromise the teachings of the apostles. Mormon teaching, instead, creates new doctrines they see as superseding those of the apostles.



## Prophets

Mormon Teaching: The president of the Mormon church is God's prophet on earth, through whom He reveals His will, in part, to people on earth. The first Mormon prophet was Joseph Smith, and he has been succeeded by several presidents since he died.

Biblical Christianity: God did appoint prophets in the Old and New Testament. However, their proclamations never disagreed with Scripture (as Mormon teaching often does). God does not disagree with Himself.



## Scripture

Mormon Teaching: Mormons look to four different books as Scripture. These include the King James Bible, the *Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants* and *The Pearl of Great Price*.

Biblical Christianity: Christians hold that only the Christian Bible, including the Old and New Testaments, is actually the error-free Word of God. In fact, we're convinced the Bible is alive and active and strong (Hebrews 4:12) and fully inspired by God Himself (2 Timothy 3:16).

## God the Father and Jesus

Mormon Teaching: God the Father was at one time fully human, just like us, and still has a body of flesh and blood. Jesus is God's physical Son, but He is a second, lesser god.

Biblical Christianity: The Bible teaches that God exists in spirit form, not flesh and blood (John 1:1-14). We believe He has always existed as God. Jesus is the Son of God, but is also fully God according to John 1:1, among other passages.

## Salvation

Mormon Teaching: Everyone has eternal life, but only those who hold strictly to Mormon teaching will reach the highest levels of salvation: godhood and entrance to the celestial kingdom. That level of salvation can only be earned through careful obedience that includes staying away from alcohol, tobacco and caffeine; tithing to the church; attending weekly meetings; supporting the prophet; missionary work and other duties.

Biblical Christianity: We believe all people are eternal, but we also believe that those who reject Jesus Christ as Savior will spend eternity apart from God in hell. According to John 14:6, Jesus is the only path to God. And Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us that we cannot earn our salvation; God gives forgiveness and eternity in heaven for free to all who trust in Jesus by faith. Nobody could ever earn their way into heaven. (See John 1:12; 3:16; Romans 10:9-13.)

## 2. Tell your story.

Mormons, especially missionaries, are trained to debate and redirect conversations with evangelical Christians back to their teaching. That's why a great approach when talking to friends and family members is to just be honest about what God has done in your own life. It's hard to debate away someone else's first-person testimony.

How did you become a Christian? What did you believe? How did that prompt you to put your faith alone in Jesus for salvation? What does that mean for your future with God in heaven? What about sin?

Point to verses like John 3:16; Romans 10:4, 10-13; and Ephesians 2:8-9 as the basis for your faith. Explain what those verses clearly say about God's grace and the fact that faith in Jesus is the only path to the free gift of salvation. Don't stop saying things like, "This is how God saved me." And, "Here's how I know I'm a Christian, forgiven of all my sin, and going to heaven."

## 3. Stick to the basics, emphasizing God's grace through Jesus.

It's easy to get sidetracked in a conversation with anyone about spiritual things. This can be especially true in conversations with Mormon believers. Keep coming back to the central doctrines of Christianity:

- There's only one God, and He is eternal and exists as a spirit.
- He made available only one path to heaven: forgiveness of sin through faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, God's Son.
- All who reject Jesus Christ as their Savior will spend eternity in hell, apart from God.
- All who trust in Jesus receive the free gift of salvation, which cannot be earned.

The last point is important, because Mormons can feel burdened by the weight of their duties to the church. They can feel pressured to perform and live up to the expectations of the church in order to receive the highest level of salvation. Make sure they know that you are convinced the Bible teaches salvation is free and that works are useless in receiving it.

Finally, be loving and kind to Mormon friends, neighbors and family members. Make sure they see the hope you have in Christ and your respect for them (1 Peter 3:15). But also be firm about what you know the truth to be from God's Word. Don't compromise that truth in your conversations. Ask God to give you wisdom to know what to say, how to say it, and when to get out of a conversation that's not being helpful.

### Conclusion:

Close in prayer, asking God to help all of you to live according to the truth you believe. Ask



Him to help it show up in your life choices, attitudes and words. Ask Him to send people to tell Mormons about the real Jesus and how a relationship with Him is the true path to God. And ask that if He gives anyone in your class the chance to tell that truth to Mormon friends, neighbors or family members that you'll be able to clearly communicate what you believe with love, gentleness and respect.

Remind your students to check out *GOstudents.net* and *www.4truth.net* for more info on reaching out to Mormons or people of other world religions.

*Copyright © 2005, North American Mission Board, 4200 North Point Parkway, Alpharetta, GA 30022,  
www.GOstudents.net/leader*