

BYU Professor and her family leave the Mormon Church for the Jesus of the Bible

Lynn and Family: From Mormons to Biblical Christians

Although in a secure position as an associate professor at Brigham Young University (BYU), tenured, and a member of the Mormon Church for almost 30 years, I began to question my faith. The questions led to a total surrender to the Christ of the Bible during a cold Utah October in 2006. Moved to weeping after watching the movie, *Luther*, identifying with Martin Luther in the film who left behind the legalism of the Catholic Church for the trusting arms of a personal relationship with the Christ of the Bible, I laid on the floor in our home with face down, arms outstretched and said, "I'm yours. Save me." His answers to my queries and my choice to give everything to Him changed my life forever. As a Mormon, I had always tried to live a life pleasing to the **Christ I knew in Mormonism**, but I had never surrendered everything to the **Christ of the Bible** and trusted Him completely. These Christs are different, I learned. Whew, what an incredible ride! I came along but some days I was kicking and screaming and holding on for dear life. He began to remold me, clearly a never ending lifelong process. God had drawn me I learned in John 6:44 (New International Version) where Christ says, *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.*

When God first began to draw me two years before I surrendered to Him, my smug self-righteousness had to go. I (through Mormonism) did not have many, if any, true answers although I was overly confident at that time that I did. The Holy Spirit began to show me errors in LDS doctrine—lots of them—through the living Word of God, the Bible. Sitting in LDS Sunday School class, the instructor is telling us how David lost his salvation for committing two unforgiveable sins. Open in front of me is Psalms 51 where David repents of his adultery and his murder. Later the Prophet, Nathan, tells him God has forgiven him (2 Samuel 12:13 *Then David said to Nathan [the Prophet], "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin..."*). The wheels are turning. If God Himself took away his sin, why does D&C 132: 39 say about David, "he hath fallen from his exaltation?"

I got to thinking about this some-sins-are-too-big-for-forgiveness-thing (the atonement doesn't cover them?) and I began to think about the practice of excommunicating someone when they went to their bishop to repent. Wasn't excommunicating someone placing a limit on Christ's atonement? Some things are atoned for and others not? Deity really tells the bishop whose sin is forgiven and who must be punished and for how long? I questioned the morality and ability of church authorities to remove someone's salvation and reinstate it based on man's judgment. Wasn't Christ's atonement enough for all sins? This insight came to me while reading a Mormon book, *The Peacegiver*, one of my earliest a-

has before I gave up literature outside of the Bible for a time. While serving in leadership positions in the LDS Church, my husband had seen repentant individuals ex-communicated or disfellowshipped by their bishop or stake president when they went to see the bishop to *repent*. Outcast *after* repentance? Why hadn't this bothered me before? Isn't it up to God to decide whether the individual is forgiven? I read we are to forgive all men. No matter what I read in the Bible or where I went throughout the day, God drew me and taught me. I couldn't get enough! Although, I must admit, sometimes the journey went too far too fast and I would pull back to try to connect with my old "normal" life. Sometimes I felt too old for all these changes. This certainly isn't what I had expected and it wasn't easy.

He drew me and then began to affect the needed changes in me, He showed me my sins. This was and is a painful ongoing process of realizing one sin after another. Now, Mormons may read this and say, "Yup, I knew it. She couldn't stay in the church because of her sins," but I suspect these sins aren't much different than yours. Naming them and realizing He paid the price for them freed me from them and bound me to Him in a way I could not have imagined and cannot adequately describe. I developed this growing and awesome relationship with Christ through His Word. I learned I no longer had to try to work my way to perfection—the thing that I had noticed tortured many of my Mormon students at BYU. Even if I were the only human, He loves me and would die for me. He is God, whom I had sold short in Mormonism, and not my literal brother as I had been taught. Sometimes I weep with the joy of it! About the same time I experienced these changes, my future son-in-law Joseph—a member with two of our own sons in a Christian band called Adam's Road—wrote a song about the cross called, *I Would Die for You*. See www.adamsroadband.com

I believe our entire family's conversion out of Mormonism and to Biblical Christianity was set in motion by God himself. He loves you personally. What a miracle we all came along in our own way in His time! He first drew our youngest son, Micah, to Biblical Christianity on his Mormon mission—of all places—in Orlando, Florida. Three months into his Mormon mission, he encountered a preacher who challenged his Mormon doctrine. Micah began to read the New Testament in an effort to refute this preacher and God's work began in him over time. Through all the studying, Micah came to realize Mormonism was not Biblical and he chose Biblical. He developed a poignant personal relationship with His Savior that took him through his mission. After the mission having stayed in Florida, he answered his brother's questions over the phone and Matt accepted the true Christ. Then we, his parents, and his sister and others, many others, took the journey toward the real Christ of the Bible. Micah, Matt, Jay, Steve, and Joseph (all former Mormons, 4 having served LDS missions) felt led to birth a music ministry called Adam's Road to tell the amazing story of what God has done in their lives. God even prepared spouses and others as a part of the Adam's Road band family. Such a respect for the individual! We were each drawn in His time in our own unique way for His purpose, all included in His web of care.

A little Wilder family background: My husband, Michael, and I joined the Church of Jesus Christ of LDS, much to the chagrin of our Protestant Baptist and Presbyterian parents, at the ages of 25 and 24 in Indiana in 1977 when Mormon missionaries knocked on our door and taught us. We had no children at the time and immediately dove into a life of active participation with our new “family.” For nearly 30 years, we were always temple recommend-holding members of the Church and held numerous leadership positions. We made an honest effort to “live the gospel” as we understood it and to know Christ as we understood Him. Mike and I now have 4 grown children, all of whom were once active LDS. Our three oldest children, sons, served honorable missions in Russia, Denmark, and Florida respectfully. We all bore testimony of Christ often in Church and were sincere, active members of the LDS Church, but, oh, so deceived into thinking we could be good enough to work our way to the highest, the Celestial, kingdom. We moved from Indiana to Utah in 1999. Mike is a mortgage broker who has had a successful business in Utah and was blessed to ride the tide of the housing market growth spurt. We felt happy to be so successful at earning our way to godhood as good Mormons. What pride and deception! The focus of this life was on being good and striving to be perfect but what this brought to me, I now realize, is pride—raw, unadulterated self-righteous pride.

Back to our journey, while still on his mission and methodically figuring out the truth, Micah had written home and encouraged us to read the Bible, specifically the New Testament. What could it hurt, I thought, Mormons believe in the Bible (as far as it is translated correctly). I was eager to know Christ’s will—hear Him speak—and was convinced that I would find it in His Word (John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God, and [Revelation 19:13](#) He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.*). Christ and the Word of God were the same.

One day at BYU, I expressed to a colleague who taught religion that I was curious to know more intimately the words of Christ. This professor encouraged me to read different versions of the Bible for enlightenment. There are different versions? Being a researcher, I began to read about these new versions. There appeared to be a plethora of evidence that these versions were accurate, having been translated from original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic texts many not available at the time the King James Version was translated. I began to question why Mormons didn’t trust and use these versions when hundreds of linguists and scholars had worked tirelessly on translating from texts written and preserved by individuals from Christ’s time. Relieved to have “Mormon permission” from my colleague to read other versions, I soon became enamored with the New International Version (NIV) Student Bible. As I read the NIV and checked with the King James Version, I came upon contradictions in the Bible with LDS Church doctrine. The LDS Church is full of the Old Testament Law (temples, ordinances, positions of authority, Word of Wisdom, etc.), I decided. I read in the New Testament that Christ had fulfilled the Law and it was no longer in force for those who believed Christ. Now here was a contradiction extraordinaire. There were numerous passages in the New Testament on His fulfillment of the Law. For

example, *Christ* (Romans 10:4) *is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*. In Galatians 2:21 *do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain*. And in Galatians 5:4 *You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace*. This was so clear and repeated over and over. There could be no mistaking the contradictions between the words of Christ in the Bible about Christ having fulfilled the law and there being no further need of the law and how Mormon doctrine taught Law.

Some of the poignant passages for me were: John 14:16 *The world doesn't accept Him because it doesn't see Him or know Him*. Ooh, I could not expect worldly acceptance? But as a Mormon I had worked so hard to make sure everything appeared perfect to the world. And I read in [2 Corinthians 12:10](#) *That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong*. And Romans 5:3-4 tells us to rejoice in our sufferings because they (Hebrews 12:11) *produce a harvest of righteousness*. Not only was Christian life supposed to be tough and we were obviously weak, but trials were good because they refined me? I thought the “good Mormons” were “blessed Mormons.” This true gospel was not the one I learned in 30 years of Mormonism. The Mormon gospel we had followed was largely from the Doctrine and Covenants and the words of modern Prophets, NOT the Bible or even the Book of Mormon (e.g., the Book of Mormon was clearly against polygamy but the Church still teaches it, see D&C 132). Doctrine in the Bible and doctrine taught by Mormonism were not the same!

Then I found this passage in 2 Corinthians 11:4 *For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough*. Another Jesus! That's exactly what we had. A little research proved that even President Hinckley had said in 1998 and again in 2002 that Mormons do not follow the same Jesus as other Christians. Wow. It was sinking in. Mormons could become Gods? They could have multiple wives in the next life and rule worlds? Other faiths were an abomination to God? We had taught this to our children! I felt sick. I did not believe that places where the Bible was allegedly translated incorrectly could explain away all the differences in doctrine! I believed Christ's words in the Bible. It was not looking good for the Mormon Church. In the meantime, my husband was off researching LDS history—things like polygamy. One of our neighbors had told us the story of her grandfather who was called by the Prophet himself to practice polygamy long after the 1890 Prophet's manifesto had supposedly banned polygamy. That wasn't looking good, either, for the Mormon Church.

As I read, I developed a voracious appetite for the Word of God like never before! Especially hungry for the words of the Savior and for the words of those eyewitnesses to His words and His work on the earth and realizing the New Testament was the richest source for this, I covenanted with God to read nothing

but the New Testament for a year—except what I had to read for work—and listen to what God wanted to teach me. Funny, previous to January of 2006, I had wanted to hear Christ's own words but I was bound by my "obligation" from the Mormon Prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, to read the Book of Mormon through as a family. It took us 18 months. As soon as we finished, the Prophet admonished us again to read it as a family in 3 months and we did! Finally in January of 2006, I began to read the New Testament by myself and my eyes were opened to see new contradictions between the doctrine of Mormonism and Christ's own words in the New Testament. He had already shown me a few. The walls of Mormonism came tumbling down now at breakneck speed and I could hardly absorb it all. What a shock! In the book of John, I read in John 5:24 *I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.* I wanted to cross over and leave the pride and self-righteousness and untruths behind. On that October day of 2006 after months of reading and realizing the contradictions in the Word of God, leaving from our LDS ward's Sunday meetings to hear Biblical preachers, and talking and praying many hours and nights with God, by His grace, I crossed over from death to life! As Jeannie my new Christian friend would say, Thank you, Jesus!

The Bible has become my constant passion. I cannot read enough of His Word. Wonderful things were happening to me as I began to not just believe in Him but to believe His words. I've gained such faith in the Bible, the Word. I believe God speaks to me through His Word. My journal is filled with amazing stories, here is one of my favorites during the journey out...

After I gave my life to the true Christ, I used to wear the cross around my neck at BYU when I could under clothes, but I didn't have enough high necked clothes to wear it every day (the cross of Christ is considered an evil idol in Mormonism), so on the days my cross might show, I would put it in my pocket and reach for it often. One day I had worn it in my pocket and realized it was gone! I'm guessing it fell out of my pocket when I went to the restroom. I dashed in there to find it but—no cross. I strode across campus to the lost and found, gave the nice female student who was working there my faculty i.d. and asked her to look for a cross on a necklace. I described it in great detail. She looked at me shocked and said, "We wouldn't have any crosses here." "Would you please just look? Thank you." She disappeared in the back and returned with about 4 crosses. I had to smile. I guess I wasn't the only one on campus with a cross. She seemed stunned; but none of these were mine. As I was leaving, she seemed genuinely concerned, I suppose she saw the anguish on my face, and called out, "I'm sorry we didn't find your family heirloom." She had assumed it was a family heirloom. That was the only way she could imagine a Mormon would care about a cross. As I was walking to the parking lot quite far from the lost and found office, a very cold day I recall, to get into my car and drive home, I was deep in thought/prayer. Suddenly I was interrupted by the sound of running feet. The young woman from the lost and found was running toward me yelling,

“You won’t believe this. As soon as you left, someone came in with your cross. I wanted to make sure you got it. I’m glad you got your heirloom back.” BYU has 35,000 students and I’m surprised she could have found me—there are so many parking lots in different directions. Well, uncanny things were happening to me frequently now. I was beginning to expect them and recognize that my God could do ANYTHING in my life when my life was His. My journal is filled with story after story of what He has done. Oh, how we had sold Him short in Mormonism, saying He had a body of flesh and bone! I had always thought of Him more as a man, but now I was beginning to know the God of the Bible, a Spirit with such different personality traits than I had been taught. I learned all of this by reading the Bible. Upon receiving my cross, I sat in the car and wept, thanking God for His goodness and mercy, this relationship with Him becoming more and more personal.

The last point I’d like to make is that this new life has required me to learn about submission. There are 8 things noted in the Bible that believers are to submit to. The first is God. The second is TRUTH. This one I need to address. *John 18:37 You are a king, then! said Pilate. Jesus answered, You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.* Truth does matter. In fact, this journey is all about the truth. I implore you to seek the truth from the words of Christ and from the eyewitnesses who knew Him, heard Him, and loved Him. My first desire when leaving the LDS Church was to run as fast and as far as I could from Mormonism, but I have since realized that my journey (my Adam’s Road) was planned by God. Now that I know Him better, I want to tell anyone who will listen what He has done and can do! I count my life and the lives of my family and extended family a veritable miracle and consider it an honor to tell the truth as He has revealed it to me through His Word. God bless you, Rauni and Dennis Higley, in helping Mormons to find the truth about Christ.

Lynn