

TRANSITIONING FROM MORMONISM TO CHRISTIANITY

ERIC JOHNSON

MORMONISM RESEARCH MINISTRY



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CHRISTIANITY



TO MORMONS

A Practical and Comparative Guide
to What the Bible Teaches

ERIC JOHNSON

INTRODUCING CHRISTIANITY TO MORMONS (HARVEST HOUSE, 2022)

- Chapter 10: Hal and Jenny—looked like they were in their late 60s or early 70s
- They walked in to the Utah Lighthouse bookstore in the fall of 2015. *Let me read...*

“What should we do now?” Hal asked

“I’m not sure what you mean,” I responded.

“We have belonged to the ‘Church’ since we were born. What do we do now that we no longer believe in Joseph Smith?”



HAL AND JENNY (READ)



“Let me get this straight,” I said.
“You have been members of
The Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints for your entire
lives. And now the two of you
have decided that Joseph Smith
was not a true prophet of God?”

HAL AND JENNY (READ)



“That’s right,” he said with a firm resolve, adding that he and his wife were each 80 years old. “We learned that Joseph Smith could not have been authorized by God. And we think the church is in error.”

WHAT CAUSED HAL AND JENNY TO THINK THE LDS CHURCH WAS IN ERROR?

- Gospel Topics essays (from Nov. 20, 2013 through Oct. 23, 2015)
- 13 original essays on historical topics
- Not well known by all Mormons
- One LDS teacher in Hawaii released from calling in mid-2015—claim was erroneous information!

ONE BYU-IDAHO STUDENT SAID:

“Once I started searching, I came across this recently published essay on LDS.org. It talked openly about the translation process of the Book of Mormon. It shocked me. My issue with it was that the narrative it laid out was completely different from the one I’d grown up learning about. I frantically searched the footnotes of the essay for some sort of an explanation. However, the more I searched the more confused I became.”

Matthew L. Harris and Newell G. Bringham, eds., *The LDS Gospel Topics Series: A Scholarly Engagement* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 2020), 23.

MOST TROUBLING FOR HAL AND JENNY

- Seer stone in a hat (Book of Mormon translation)
- Joseph Smith married 30-40 girls/women
- Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham spiritually, not literally



See “Joseph Smith and the Seer Stone: The Art of the Book of Mormon Translation Process,” www.mrm.org/paintings-book-of-mormon

HAL AND JENNY (READ)

I remained puzzled by Hal's question from earlier in the conversation.

“When you asked me what you should do *now*, what did you mean?”

He responded, “If the LDS Church is not true, then what do we do? Should we stay in this church? Or do we leave it?”

HAL AND JENNY (READ)

Some have advised those in this situation to remain in the church, yet I wanted to be upfront with the couple and explain that this was a bad idea, even if leaving would be costly.

“I believe that staying in a religion not based on the truth doesn’t make sense,” I explained. “It’s your decision, but I recommend you find a Christian church that teaches biblical truth.”

WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOUR CHURCH IS FALSE?

“When the church is apostate, a Christian must leave. You may think you should stay within the church and try to work for its change and recovery, but if the church is in fact apostate, you’re not allowed to be there. Consider the showdown between the prophets of Baal and Elijah at Mount Carmel. After God displayed his power over Baal can you imagine somebody saying, “Well, I see now that Yahweh is God, but I’m going to stay here in the house of Baal as salt and light and try to work for its reform”? We’re not allowed to do that. If the institution we are in commits apostasy, it is our duty to leave it.”



R.C. Sproul, *What is the Church?* (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2013), 68.

A grayscale photograph of a man and a woman running through a field with their children. The man is on the left, wearing a white t-shirt and a dark jacket, with his arms outstretched. The woman is on the right, wearing a striped shirt, also running. Two children are running between them. The background is a hazy, open field.

LEAVING MORMONISM COULD BE COSTLY

- For one, a marriage could be at stake
 - Some bishops have advised the other spouse to separate and divorce
 - My friends Dave and Ken
- What about the kids? Heart wrenching!
- Extended families could treat you differently
 - My friend Dave was told by his family that they considered him “dead” –he broke the “family chain” eternally
- Mormonism is supposed to be about families!



**LEAVING
MORMONISM
COULD BE
COSTLY**

- “Friends” might leave
- Employment situation could be threatened
- Standing in the community could be at risk
- Many remain in church to save the marriage, family, friends, job, and reputation

WHY DO PEOPLE LEAVE?

- Jana Riess: Mormon blogger, author *Flunking Sainthood*.
- *The Next Mormons: How Millennials are Changing the LDS Church* (Oxford, 2019)
- Ph.D. in American religious history from Columbia University



TOP 7 REASONS MORMONS LEAVE THEIR CHURCH

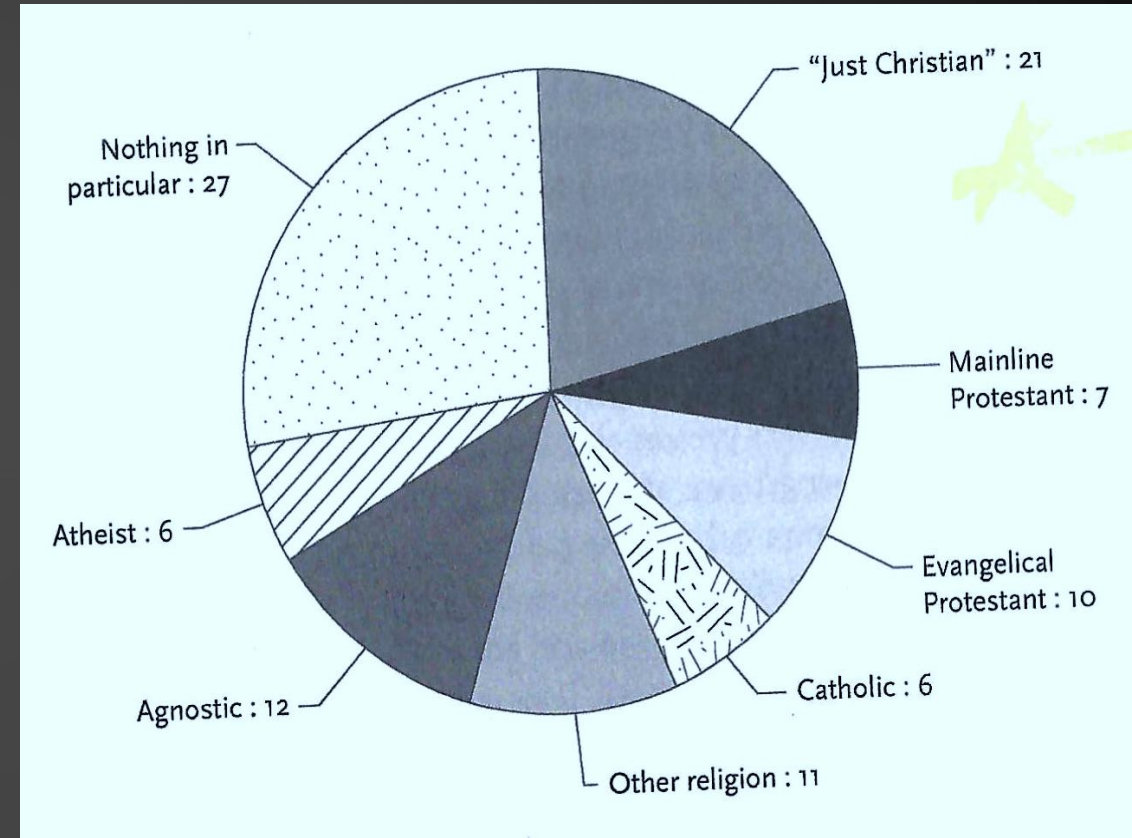
1. “I could no longer reconcile my personal values and priorities with those of the church.” 38%
2. “I stopped believing there was one true church.” 36.5%
3. “I did not trust the Church leadership to tell the truth surrounding controversial or historical issues.” 31%

TOP 7 REASONS MORMONS LEAVE THEIR CHURCH

4. “I felt judged or misunderstood.” 30%
5. “I drifted away from Mormonism.” 26%
6. “I engaged in behaviors that the Church viewed as sinful.” 25%
7. “The Church’s positions on LGBT issues.” 23%

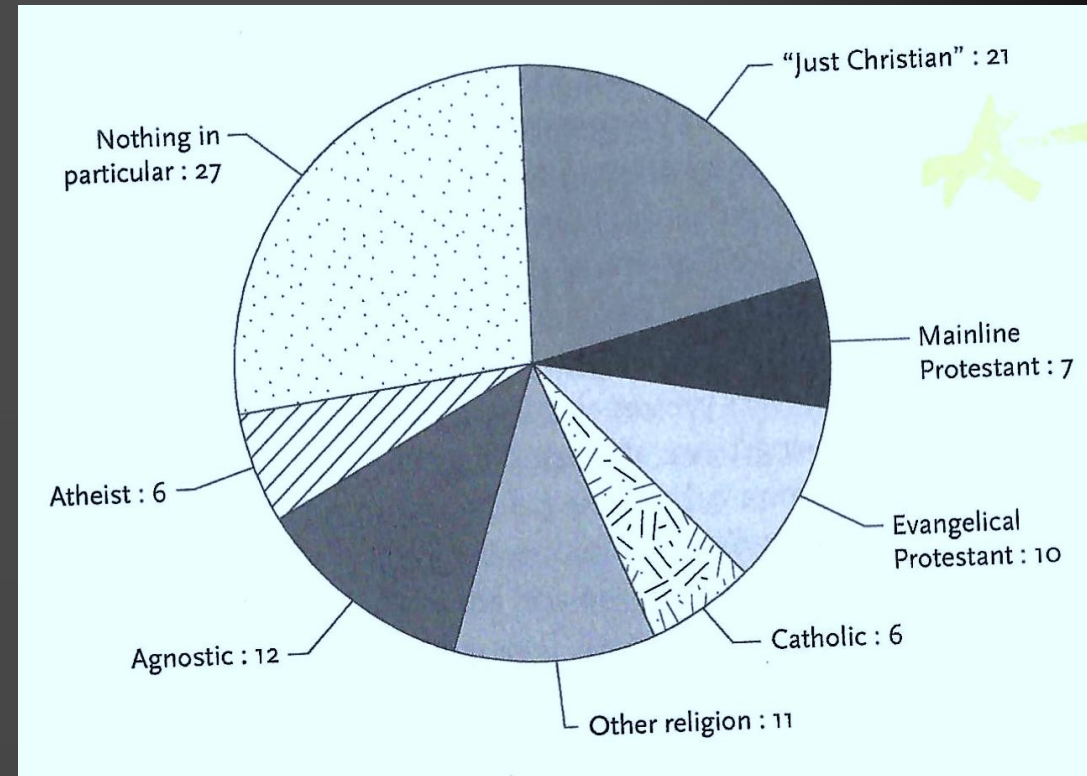
SO WHERE DO FORMER MORMONS END UP?

45% total say
“Nothing in particular”
27%
Agnostic/Atheist 18%



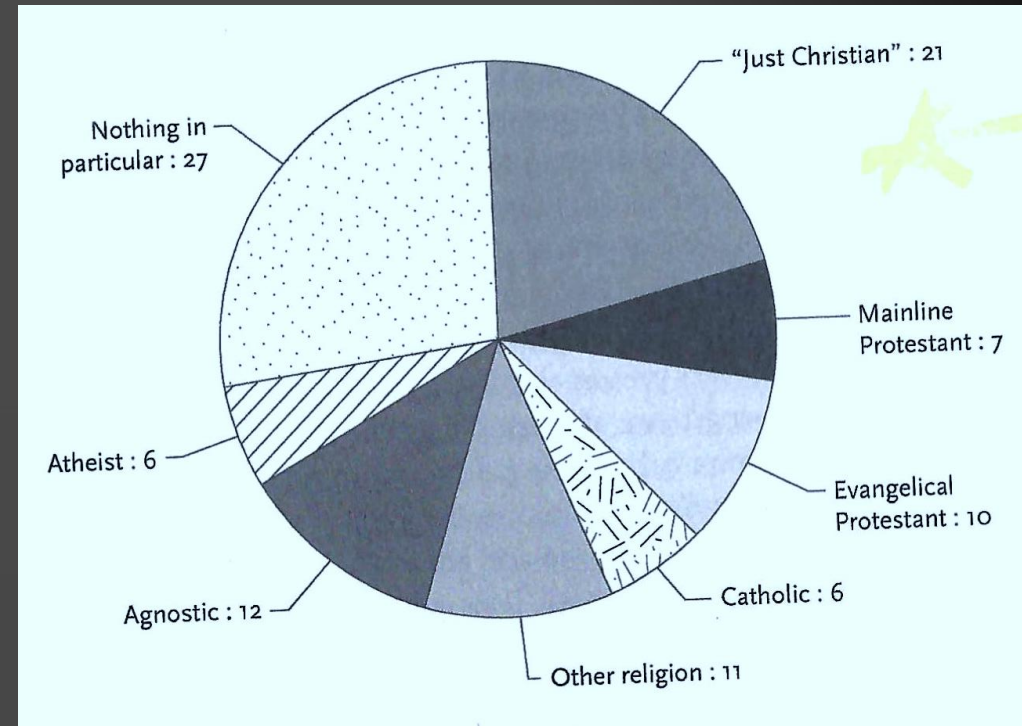
SO WHERE DO FORMER MORMONS END UP?

- “Just Christian” (21%)—
According to Riess, these people
“consider themselves ‘just
Christian but do not specify a
particular church, which likely
means they have retained
Christian beliefs but are not
regular attenders.”



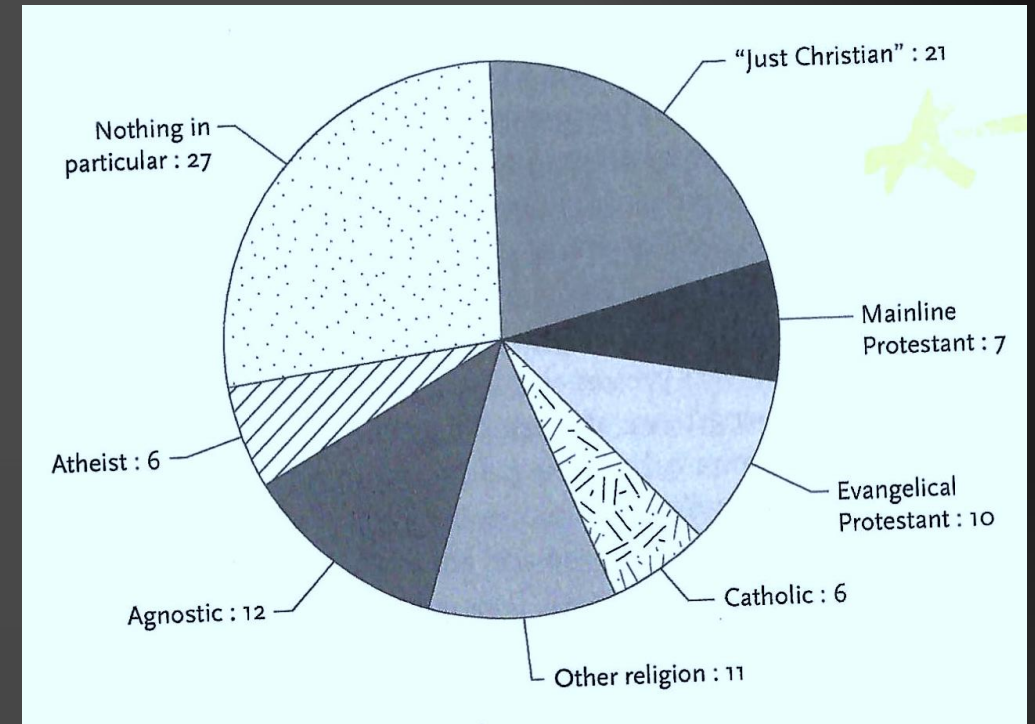
SO WHERE DO FORMER MORMONS END UP?

Problem: If “Just Christinas” are not being taught/disciplined in a Christian church, how have they been able to “unlearn” LDS teaching and assume Christian teachings?



SO WHERE DO FORMER MORMONS END UP?

- Only 10% become “Evangelical Protestants”
- Are you concerned by this #?



AN OBJECTION MADE BY SOME SKEPTICAL MORMONS

- “If the Church isn’t true, then nothing else is.”
 - This is probably the main reason why those who leave Mormonism do not seriously consider biblical Christianity
 - “Great Apostasy”

JOSEPH SMITH- HISTORY 1:18-19

18 My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, then I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join.



JOSEPH SMITH- HISTORY 1:18-19

19 I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.”



WITNESSING TIP

- *Ask: Where did you learn about the Great Apostasy?*
- The LDS Church? Do you accept anything that your church said is doctrinally true? including:
 - The Book of Mormon is ancient scripture?
 - Joseph Smith is a prophet of God?
 - Drinking coffee is sinful?
 - Is going to a temple is necessary to be with family forever?

For more on the Great Apostasy, see Crash Course Mormonism
mrm.org/great-apostasy-doctrine

SOME SAY “BUT I’VE BEEN BURNED BY RELIGION.”

Possible Responses:

- “Christianity is not about a religion (trying to work our way to God) but about a personal relationship with God.”
- “If Mormonism isn’t true, does it mean God does not exist?”
- “Yes, I agree, you were burned. And I’m sorry for that. But doesn’t it seem like throwing the baby out with the bathwater if this means you reject God and Jesus?”
- Would you be willing to consider the claims of Christianity?



**LET'S
CONTINUE THE
CONVERSATION
WITH HAL AND
JENNY (READ)**

Hal said they had considered visiting services at a local Christian church, but they were unsure who could be trusted. His next question floored me because of his sincerity.

“We’re not sure what to do at a Christian church service. What do we wear? When do we kneel? Could you help us?”

HAL AND JENNY

- They were concerned about what to wear
- Most Evangelical churches emphasize “come as you are”—shirts/ties and dresses not expected in most churches



I'VE BEEN AROUND CALVARY CHAPELS FOR A WHILE
AND KNOW WHAT TO WEAR!



HAL AND JENNY

As far as procedures, I explained how there were differences, but that generally most congregations have a leader (pastor) who will provide clear instructions

One issue: Music (especially bass guitars and drums in contemporary services)



GOING TO CHURCH

Direct people to God-fearing
congregations

In Utah, we have a website
you can suggest:

utahchurches.org



GOING TO CHURCH

- If you know someone who is willing to go to church, invite them to go with you to yours
- If you meet former Mormons in a service, sit with them
- Invite them to lunch, on your dime!



GOING TO CHURCH

- What are your priorities in picking a church?

Mine are:

- Correct doctrine
- Stimulating preaching
- Near-by location



OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES

- Wise stewards of finances
- Clear discipline standards
- Emotionally healthy
- Training the youth / families



HOME BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Bible study in a
smaller setting
where a group of
people can invest in
your life



GET DISCIPLED

- Someone of same gender willing to meet regularly and assist
- Preferably someone from your church

GET DISCIPLLED

- On-line resources:
 - Ex-Mormon Christians:
www.facebook.com/groups/XMChristians
 - Mormons in Transition:
www.facebook.com/groups/139462380423
 - faithaftermormonism.org/
 - eric@mrm.org
 - I would be happy to get you set up with someone, hopefully in the area you live

STUDYING THE BIBLE—REGULARLY

- Many methods
- But learning to feed yourself
- Highly recommended: Using a modern translation for comprehension (even next to KJV)
- Not a check-off list

STUDYING THE BIBLE—REGULARLY

- Prayer
 - Formal, stylized prayers are OK—yet prayers of all types
 - Best from the heart
 - Luke 18:9-14 (Pharisee and the Tax Collector)

**DON'T THINK
BECOMING A
CHRISTIAN
WILL SOLVE
ALL YOUR
PROBLEMS**

- There will be hard times
 - Having a good attitude
 - James 1:5: “Consider it pure joy whenever...”
 - Always go back to God’s Word (Matthew 4:1-11)



**WHERE ARE
HAL AND
JENNY
TODAY?**

- Today Hal is 87, still sharp and in great shape—a Christian believer!
- Jenny, 87 (a few months older than Hal) has just recently surrendered her life
- Regular attenders of my weekly home Bible study since 2015!

SHOULD YOU TELL THE GROWN CHILDREN?

- Hal and Jenny's assigned ward in Utah is in a different part of town than the children
- Departure kept quiet to children
- Hal thinks they know now...but don't want to discuss
- Fear: Losing Grandkids/great grandchildren

WHO MAKES THE DECISION?

- Easy for us to say, “Come on, just tell them.”
- This is Hal and Jenny’s decision, not ours
- Not a decision we can force
- In last couple of years, they seem more open

ONE FINAL THING: DEALING WITH ANGER

- Ecclesiastes 3:1: “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens”
- Imagine the frustration of being lied to for so many years, like Hal and Jenny
- Anger is going to be natural

ONE FINAL THING: DEALING WITH ANGER

- Ecclesiastes 3:7a: “a time to tear and a time to mend.”
- Loss must be acknowledged
- But anger cannot control your world
- The journey for this couple was through
Mormonism

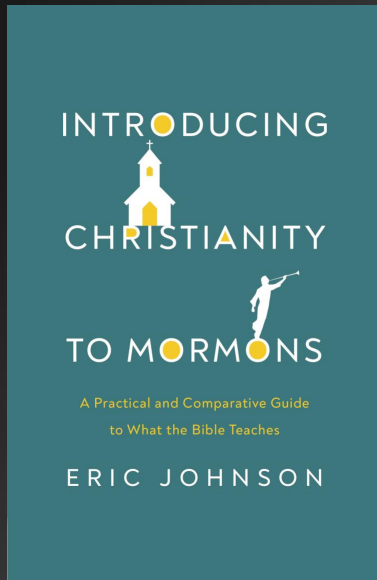
CONCLUSION

- It *is* possible to transition from Mormonism to Christianity
- We need to be willing to share our faith!
- Former Mormons make the best Christians! (once lost, now found)
- Philippians 1:6: "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

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New!

