

# FAITH CRISIS CHRONICLES

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Proprietary and Confidential

Humans are story making, story-telling and story-listening creatures. Stories are what we live by. As soon as someone says, “Let me tell you a story,” “Once upon a time,” “Have you heard?” or, as they say in Africa, “I hear tell,” we are all ears—and heart. Stories are what bind us to one another and to those who have lived before.

In the Book of Moses, when Enoch converses with God, it is as if we ourselves were entering into the conversation, and so we weep with God and with Enoch; in the Iliad, we see Achilles’ petulant behavior at Troy and foresee its tragic consequences for Greece; and in Shakespeare’s,

King Lear we weep with the deposed king as his older daughters batter him with their cold, indifferent reason. Through stories, worlds come alive. As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales:

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... as I read

*I hear the crowing cock, I hear the note  
Of lark and linnet, and from every page  
Rise odors of ploughed field or flowery mead*

Stories transcend time, place, language and culture, and they are universal. It is why we listen to and love them.

In the August 2008 issue of *Scientific American*, Jeremy Hsu, notes, “Psychologists and neuroscientists have recently become fascinated by the human predilection for storytelling. Why does our brain seem to be wired to enjoy stories? And how do the emotional and cognitive effects of a narrative influence our beliefs and real-world decisions?” In a way, stories are like fine-polished mirrors in which we see others but ultimately see ourselves, however distantly. As Hsu notes, “stories have such a powerful and universal appeal that the neurological roots of both telling tales and enjoying them are probably tied to crucial parts of our social cognition.”

One of the gifts of storytelling is that stories enhance empathy—the ability to emotionally place ourselves in another person’s heart, mind and skin. They also help us keep track of members of our family, group or tribe. As Hsu notes, “As our ancestors evolved to live in groups, the hypothesis goes, they had to make sense of increasingly complex social relationships. Living in a community requires keeping tabs on who the group members are and what they are doing. What better way to spread such information than through storytelling?”

We especially may be a-tuned to stories about members of our group or tribe who are in trouble or pain. If so, the stories in this collection may have a particular resonance for Latter-day Saints because they are stories written by those among us who have experienced or are currently experiencing what has come to be known as a Faith Crisis.

These are true stories—and they are poignant, sincere, and often heart-breaking. They were written in response to a request sent out over social media for narratives of people who had experienced some kind of emotional or spiritual rupture in their relationship with and commitment to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As such, they represent a challenge for every leader and member, for every family and congregation.

Unless something is done to address the issues and concerns raised by these personal narratives, the Church also faces a crisis, for, as is evident even with a cursory glance or sampling of these stories, these are stories written by Latter-day Saints who, by and large, have deep roots in Mormonism and a serious commitment to its values. It would be foolish to dismiss these stories as coming from Latter-day Saints who are rebellious, unrepentant, or uncommitted. As with data gathered from other avenues, in general, these stories tell a tale of deeply religious and spiritual saints who unexpectedly experienced a sense of betrayal and broken trust—which often caused them to experience deep anguish and in some instances what has come to be known as the “dark night of the soul.”

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Read these stories; try to feel what they are telling you. Don't argue with them; **just listen—and understand.** And then, when you meet someone with a similar burden, walk alongside them, put your arm around them, and put your ear against their hearts. If those of us who continue to be connected and committed to the Church can do these simple, loving acts, there may be cause to hope that some of these brothers and sisters will remain in communion and fellowship with us. It is what Jesus taught us to do.

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# To bring the Faith Crisis challenge to life in human terms, an online-based anonymous survey was administered to collect first-person Faith Crisis narratives.

This survey, which was part of the pro-bono *LDS Personal Faith Crisis* report, collected demographic and Church service data and allowed participants to submit a summary of their Faith Crisis experience. The survey launched in May 2013 and was distributed via social media. The average participant spent 45.81 minutes completing the survey. Over 1,500 stories were collected in the survey's first few hours from participants in North America, South America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania.

Survey participants were encouraged to express themselves using 700 words or less and were asked to consider addressing the following points:

1. What was the type of faith you had prior to your loss-of-faith (e.g., fully active, semi-active, non-active)?

2. What is the reason or reasons for your loss-of-faith?
3. How have you felt and what have you experienced as a result of your loss-of-faith?
4. How have others (family, friends, ecclesiastical leaders) responded to your faith crisis?
5. How would you describe your current belief and relationship with the LDS Church?
6. What might have prevented your faith crisis in the first place?
7. What, if anything, might help rebuild your faith?

**THESE STORIES UNDERSCORE THE EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL TRAUMA EXPERIENCED BY MANY MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.**

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$200,000+
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Relief Society Presidency, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Nursery

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I GREW UP AS MY MOTHER AND FATHER'S SPIRITUAL CHILD. ALL THOSE WHO KNEW ME WELL WOULD SAY MY NUMBER ONE CHARACTER TRAIT WAS THAT I WAS SPIRITUAL AND EXTREMELY SINCERE IN MY DEVOTION TO THE SAVIOR AND HIS CHURCH.

I was the daughter that would strengthen the testimonies of my siblings by bearing it frequently. I read my scriptures and wrote in my journal daily. I was constantly praying to my Heavenly Father. I was on the seminary council and worked very hard to strengthen the testimonies of all those around me.

I went to BYU and there my spirituality and testimony increased. I went to the Jerusalem center and had great spiritual experiences.

I was nothing but pure dedication to my testimony of the "gospel." Neither I nor anyone in my family would have ever believed I could lose my testimony. In fact my sister said she would've believed pigs

would fly before I could lose my testimony.

That is why it is so bizarre that I am sitting here in that exact situation. I have lost my faith in Mormonism. Writing that statement actually brings tears to my eyes. I never thought that the little girl, who 25 years ago was more excited than she had ever been in her life, because she was getting baptized, would ever be in this position. But looking back with my eyes wide open, I now see that it was happening all along. I just ignored my sense of reality to maintain faith.

I was married in the temple to a very loving, good man whom was considered by many to have huge potential in the church. He was a very devoted, successful missionary. He loved the people in his mission and was one of the best at bringing people to "the gospel."

Early in our marriage, he started asking questions about the church and God.

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There were things on his mission that he found disturbing that made him want more answers. The more he read and tried to find answers to those questions, the more he struggled in his testimony.

All he was trying to do was strengthen his testimony, but the more he searched for answers the more his testimony crumbled. Soon he became quite disaffected and wanted to take a break from church. I was still completely believing and devastated by this.

I decided to give him his space, knowing that he would eventually figure out the truth and return to complete activity and be even more devout than he had ever been. I made huge sacrifices and took our three children to church each week. He would join us sometimes, but most of the time it was a very painful struggle for him. But I was willing to do this for the rest of my life if I had to. I was going to single-handedly keep our little family in the church.

Well, then something happened. My brother-in-law decided he wanted to strengthen his testimony of Joseph Smith. He began reading church sanctioned books and looking into church history. He kept digging and digging for answers. By the end of it, he told my sister he no longer believed. She was furious and threatened separation, but her husband settled her down and found a story about a woman that stayed with her husband despite his loss of faith. She listened to the story,

then decided I could benefit from it too.

To make a long story short. My sister and I and our husbands have now all looked into the church and after almost a year of investigation, have come to the conclusion that the church was never what it seemed to be. Joseph was not a prophet and the Book of Mormon has no real evidence proving its historical authenticity. Our lives have all been changed in good and bad ways because of this truth.

The most painful thing is our believing family members and friends don't understand, so we have faced a lot of sadness. The best thing is we have a lot more love for all people because we no longer feel we are more blessed than they are.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Some College
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary Sunday School, Teacher Primary Teacher Nursery, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Choir / Music, Young Men's Presidency, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President

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### I WAS ALWAYS ACTIVE AND A FIRM BELIEVER.

Some items I recognized were not that clear or understandable to me, i.e. as a young 19 year-old sitting through my first endowment experience with a good friend as my escort. I questioned the penalties but was assured by the others doing the same thing, and later other members re-assurance, that this was all part of the process.

I served a full time mission and watched how the end result was more important than the means of achieving the baptisms. Although obedience and paying the price were taught at zone conference, regular actions of leaders and mission president were far different. I surmised it's just people using their agency, some for good, and other's struggling.

I had to reflect in my own life had I had raised four children, served in numerous callings, many very demanding. I prayed

continually, attended the temple, paid a full tithing, but never felt the blessings spoken of or promised. It became so difficult that anything that wasn't a disaster or extremely bad was looked as a "Good Thing" in life.

I watched my spouse use lessons from Relief Society and Conference talks to be a tool to justify poor decisions or reasons for not finding work, when at several points in a 26 year marriage, it was desperately needed. I kept looking for answers and the "Blessings" promised. I clearly recall life changing decisions that I needed answers to, making a drive several hours round trip to the temple to meditate in the Celestial room praying and having fasted, yet still NOTHING!!!

I'd then self flog wondering what I hadn't purged for that must have obviously been denying me even the simplest of answers to my prayers.

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It wasn't until I started hearing things mentioned about Joseph Smith where I thought, wow, the anti's can really embellish on polygamy stories. I heard that Joseph Smith married the wives of other men, and I thought this is really ludicrous. I then began to research this. When I could validate it, I asked myself about other related matters pertaining to our history.

I had heard of pedophilia (i.e. Joseph Marrying a 14 year old girl while he was in his late 30s.) This couldn't be true of a prophet of the Lord. Imagine if President Monson or any of the current leaders would have tried this, or even a legal 18 year old bride. This would be a disgrace. But as I checked it out, sure enough it was true.

I began to see the money I have paid in tithing and fast offerings and then seeing how the church has invested in real estate and businesses and as honest as we are asked to be when giving an account for this tithing, the Brethren feel zero obligation to follow their own advice.

The more I dug the more clear it has become that this church has no more connection or face to face with the Lord than any other church or congregation. Our foundation is sure to crumble as it's built on the vision and imagination or a individual that may have meant well, but having a narcissistic desire for power built a wonderful tool for creating

wealth, adulation and glory unto himself. I can't see it for anything more than this.

It's a depressing state to be in and the cost of exiting is great.

Someone LDS can announce their dissatisfaction with the church and a desire to leave, but chances are the price will be your marriage.

I asked a dear friend and former co-worker if she announced to her husband that she no longer wanted to attend the Methodist Church if her very active husband would divorce her, she said "Heaven's No." He loves me and wouldn't choose a church over his marriage and family. Yet in our church, it's quite the opposite.

I'd love to see the leaders expose the truth and they themselves come clean and be set free so to speak. Let the church purge itself and reform based on reality not a 180 year old fantasy.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE

<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women’s Presidency, Relief Society Presidency, Sunday School Teacher, Nursery, Gospel Doctrine Teacher

I STILL CONSIDER MYSELF AN ACTIVE MEMBER AS I HAVE BEEN MY WHOLE LIFE.

I believe deeply in God and my Savior but I have lost faith in the church as a institution. My concerns began during Prop 8 in California (I have always felt “pro-gay”) and my faith was really shaken once my aunt passed away. I questioned the healing power of the priesthood—if anyone had the faith to be healed, it was her. And if there was anyone who had enough faith to heal, it would have been my family. This was very difficult for me to reconcile. My husband and I are able to talk openly and agree on a lot of the concerns we have. However, I have not spoken with other members of my family because I know that any doubt I expressed would be devastating to them, specifically to my mom. This past year I feel as though the more that I learn the less I really know, or thought I knew. I am still very much in the middle of this

journey trying to navigate my deep personal and social desire to stay in the church with the historical inconsistencies and the lack of answers I am able to find within the church.

I want so badly for there to be a safe place within the church where I can go to address concerns and find answers. It’s difficult for me personally to know who and what sources I can trust. I wish I could express concerns to other members of the church without people automatically assuming I am going inactive, sinning, being misled by the devil, reading “anti-mormon” literature, etc.

I love the church I was raised in. I want to make it work for me as I move forward in my future.

ANONYMOUS MALE

<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$150,001 - \$200,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Seminary Teacher, Sunday School Teacher, Nursery, Choir / Music, Young Men’s Presidency, Young Men’s President, Ward Mission Leader, Elder’s Quorum Presidency, Elder’s Quorum President, Financial / Membership Clerk, Stake Auxiliary Calling, Bishopric Councilor

I REMEMBER TESTIFYING TO MY BROTHER OF MANY THINGS GOSPEL RELATED. MY TESTIMONY WAS AN ATTEMPT TO STRENGTHEN HIM.

I told him that I felt there was nothing that could take me from my faith and testimony in the gospel!

Within three months of trying to answer his concerns and studying documents and church history, I concluded that his concerns were legitimate and that I had been very naive in my belief and faith in the church.

I continue to attend and serve in callings. I keep my understanding to myself, struggling in how I should proceed. It is getting harder to be involved. My wife knows what I have discovered and is in agreement with me. It has been very difficult for us to find out the many problems, and the dishonesty of our

highest leaders, who certainly know these things, but continue to play us for fools.

I love my many friends who I have served throughout my life, and I hate to think of them struggling as I have. I know the leadership will never come clean on this, it would hurt so many! However, I wish they would, it is the right thing to do!

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Temple Worker, Seminary Teacher, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Young Men's President, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President, Stake Auxiliary Calling, Bishop

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### I HAD A PROFOUND CRISIS OF FAITH AT 19 AFTER GOING TO THE TEMPLE.

I was poorly prepared and felt betrayed. I got a testimony of God and Jesus Christ in the MTC. I never fully gained a testimony of the Book of Mormon. I have read the Book of Mormon daily for years, but I don't feel anything when I read it. I rarely feel the Spirit when I pray. I rarely feel the spirit in the temple.

Rough Stone Rolling and other intellectually honest scholarly approaches to the gospel pose a problem. Friendly sources show me there are significant problems with our foundational claims. I question the translation of the Book of Abraham and Joseph Smith's interpretations of the facsimiles. I question the 2nd Isaiah in the Book of Mormon and the existence of the 1769 version of the KJV

errors in the Book of Mormon. Our once proud search for archeological and historical evidence sustaining the Book of Mormon has failed. We have found nothing in the dirt to support the Book of Mormon narrative.

I question the profound variations in the 18 First Vision stories. I don't believe that polygamy was good for families. Joseph's polyandry was disgusting. I hate the fact that he swore this practice to secrecy. I don't believe that the ban on blacks in the priesthood was inspired. I question our treatment of girls and women (priesthood, sacrament meeting prayers and talks, exclusion from leadership positions, ERA, excommunication of feminists, disparate leadership training for youth, disparate budgets and programs). I wonder whether priesthood and leadership must be linked. I don't like

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how we whitewash our history. It is dishonest. Our curriculum has become all milk, no meat.

I live the Word of Wisdom, but I question why a word of wisdom, "not by way of commandment" became a commandment. We now judge others by it in crazy ways. A person who uses coffee, tea and wine which have health benefits is excluded from the temple, but a person who consumes fried foods, Twinkies, sugary drinks and energy drinks and who weighs 400 lbs is temple worthy? Consider the unhealthy paradox.

Like Arabs, we tell young girls and women that they are responsible for where men's eyes go—we are wrong.

I love my fellow Saints profoundly, but I have come to mistrust the Brethren. It is hard to justify spending \$5 Billion for a shopping mall (with the Prophet appearing at the ribbon cutting yelling "Let's Go Shopping") and simultaneously cutting back DI workers' hours to avoid paying health insurance. We celebretize GA's and emphasize obedience to them over other far more useful values.

We shame young men by benching them from sacrament participation but we don't bench missionaries who engage in porn and masturbation. We need to stop benching any of them for just porn and masturbation (honestly, I don't engage in either, but I also don't see how either is a "sexual relation outside marriage.") I came to wonder as Bishop, why I couldn't follow

the example of the Savior—love them and tell them, go and sin no more, as many times as the person needed to repent. We shame these young men. In small wards, everyone notices.

Our war against gay marriage is hurtful. We gave \$10K because Elder Clayton asked us to. When we saw the ads, we felt so betrayed. Those ads were hateful and deny all the good we have on the Church's gays and Mormon's website.

We have carefully correlated and branded to the point of stripping ourselves of the charismatic gifts that characterized our early church. The closest thing we get to revelations come through the Newsroom, not through the prophet. We once flowed with revelation. No more. We once flowed with healings. No more. We once flowed with an increase in knowledge. No more--in fact, we pull back on the quest for knowledge, dumbing our manuals down to the most basic concepts.

I feel lonely in my doubts. Where can I turn?

I experience my greatest doubts when studying the Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price, when praying for answers and when watching the SLC administration of the gospel.

I experience my most meaningful joy in the gospel when teaching and meaningfully serving others.

I WANT TO BELIEVE.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$0 - \$25,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Young Women's President, Relief Society Presidency, Primary Presidency, Spouse of Bishopric, Primary Teacher

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I HAD A TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST. I HAD A TESTIMONY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON. I HAD A TESTIMONY OF THE RESTORATION OF THE GOSPEL.

I was a Stake Missionary and was an instrument in bringing many people to the waters of baptism. I'm still fully active because I simply can't leave for family reasons.

I lost my faith while on a missionary assignment to defend the church online. I soon realized I knew nothing about the church. Those who had left had not 'sinned.' They were not sleeping around or being deceived by Satan. They knew more about the history of the foundation of the 'restoration' than I did, after thirty-five years of active membership and temple marriage and attendance.

They also knew more about the present church and its fudginess with honesty and integrity. You tell me—who can believe in

anything, rely on any sorts of feelings, when the premise of the foundation of your faith is filled with half truths, serious omissions and complete and utter fabrications.

When you are taught from primary to revere the character of the early Prophets and are explicitly told they lived 'saintly' lives only to discover 35 years later that 1) Joseph Smith lied and got others to sign sworn affidavits to lie also. 2) Polygamy was nothing to do with 'widows.' 3) Joseph's martyrdom was more to do with polygamy and masonry than his religious beliefs 4) Martin Harris is quoted on two separate occasions that the church is probably false but he might make money from it 5) The true details surrounding why most early apostles (including Whitmer) 'apostatized' 6) Book of Abraham 7) Early church leaders paid per blessings / sealings etc - the very definition of priestcraft, etc. 8) Learning more about the

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cultural times Joseph and his friends lived in. 9) Similarities between visions had by other people at the time, 10) View of the Hebrews 11) treasure hunting stories about Captain Moroni Joseph knew about 11) Joseph's legal conviction for being dishonest, 12) Masonic story of Enoch 13) The Emperor's New Clothes moment about the temple when I realized the Masonic link—it never felt right anyway 14) Why prayer never seemed to work for important decisions in my life 15) The realization that I know NOTHING about the church I dedicated my life to

When I first learned of these things, I at first was in denial. I thought I was being deceived. I looked for church 'answers.' There were none, only 'spin.' Every day, I discover something else that I was never taught. I feel like a fool. I've been on my knee's for over four years begging for the truth to be revealed to me. Perhaps God has been doing exactly that over the past four years.

I found myself at a Terry Given's fireside and was surrounded by lots of people in very high callings, who now know the same things I do. It was another Emperor's New Clothes moment. It was very depressing. Several ward, stake and regional leaders I know now are considering leaving the church. My husband—he says he doesn't care if it's true or not. He said he will divorce me, so I now pretend to believe.

This has ripped out my soul and I feel I am being made a scapegoat for the leaders of the

church—the 'emperors with no clothes'.

I have been depressed, suicidal, angry. My brain hurts because rationally there is no truth to anything taught at church.

Last month, sacrament consisted of the following talks: tithing, obedience, don't hug or kiss in public, talks about aspects of restoration. Where is teaching about Christ? Sunday School lessons are D&C. Relief Society lessons are early prophets. I repeat—where is the nourishment from Christ's teachings?

What would restore my faith? If I'd known the truth, I wouldn't have believed. Only a sharing of personal revelation / something powerful that can only be from God from the First Presidency would restore my faith.

I need a miracle and so do countless others.

Don't insult my intelligence with Farms or Fair spin. Don't 'choose' for me what I should think / feel / believe about something.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Young Women's President, Relief Society Presidency, Relief Society President, Primary Presidency, Primary President, Spouse of Bishopric, Primary Teacher, Primary Music

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### I STARTED TO DOUBT AFTER MY ENDOWMENT.

It was the darkest day of my life. It was the opposite of uplifting. I had been a fervent LDS member my whole life and...this is what we believe?

I didn't get it. It was oppressive and offensive to my spirit. I saw symbolism but only symbolism of obedience, fear, submission, humiliation and power.

I reiterate again - - the darkest day of my life!

Is this what my 'endowment on high' is all about? Power with promises of kingdoms without end? Secret oaths to sacrifice even to death for 'the church' as an institution? Sounds very much like Gidiantan Robbers scenario.

To cover my face in front of God because I'm a woman? I've never felt second class as an LDS woman until I received my endowment.

But who to turn to?

No one can talk about it—discuss it openly. It's 'sacred / secret.' I soon realized that people would say the same 'things' when you mentioned the slightest bit of 'I don't get it.'

"It's all in the Old Testament."

"Oh the temple prep class gives you all the information you need."

"But listen to the words of the initiatory, aren't they beautiful?"

"Just keep going, you'll get it eventually."

Everybody just recycled the same stuff they were told when they obviously went through the first time. Problem though—the endowment is NOT in the Old Testament. The clothing is the only similarity to the Old Jewish rites. I looked it up and there's

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a neat video on The Temple Institute's facebook page detailing a day in the life of the temple. Nothing like what we do.

The link to the Solomon's temple hogwash is completely false. However, if you care to lift up a book or look at a website about Mason's, then you see the similarities. What about Asian Tia Chai movements? Yep. Key's of the Priesthood in old martial arts moves.

Where else was I supposed to go to learn about the temple? No one talks about it in the church.

The temple has led me to where I am today. It's led me to delve deep into church history and doctrine. It has led to my complete loss and trust in the church as an institution.

It has led me to my loss of faith we have leaders of integrity and honesty, of Joseph Smith as an honest and righteous man, and to our current leaders as 'unpaid' (can't believe I was fervent telling my friends in my youth no-one got any money in our church!).

Why should a quorum of 15 self-appointment men (paid with my tithing and who are all now millionaires) decide what my underwear should look like, how many children I should have, and what I should think, feel, and do in every aspect of my life?

I stay Mormon for family reasons—otherwise I would walk. I'm also an agnostic Mormon. I'm not angry. But my psyche is hurt. My soul has been destroyed.

My faith in Christ has been shattered by those who throughout the last two centuries have professed to be prophets in his name. I have been deceived.

I can't find ONE UNIQUE THING that makes our church different from any other Christian denomination that has not been lied about / spun to make look better / spun as to why it's now false when it used to be 'true.'

My life is in tatters. My psychological wellbeing destroyed.

At a recent Given's fireside about doubt, there was a plea to 'stay active' because 'the church does so much good.' I think this is deluded. You are stealing agency from people. You have become Satan's plan. You are causing pain and suffering. There is good on the earth without Mormonism?

I urge the leaders of the church to humble themselves, repent, stop buying malls and stop preaching tithing every month from the pulpits.

The members are not to blame here. We had firm roots established long and deep in the soil. But it turns out the soil was in a basin and the roots hit the bottom of the basin and with nowhere to go, the tree is withering.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Some College
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Young Women's President, Relief Society Presidency, Relief Society President, Primary Presidency, Primary President, Spouse of Bishopric, Seminary Teacher, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Nursery, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Choir / Music, Stake Auxiliary Calling

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IN JUST A FEW WEEKS, THE SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION I HAD ALWAYS THOUGHT WAS FIRM, BUILT UPON A ROCK, CRUMBLING OUT FROM UNDER MY FEET.

It started with an innocent question from my daughter about the "White Horse Prophecy" and the presidential election. I turned to the internet for answers. What I found was far beyond that.

With the age of internet, there are few secrets that can remain hidden.

After weeks of searching and reading, not only the internet, but books by LDS historians, I found that the history of the church is not what it is said to be. Slowly, all the problem issues, which I had put on the "back shelf" of my non-understanding, all came together like a jig-saw puzzle, and the realization

shattered my very foundation of faith.

Church history has been rewritten, forgotten, whitewashed, and even now flutters about on the winds of change.

I felt dizzy and free-falling, like the rug of my existence was yanked from beneath my feet. It's hard to describe what it's like to find out you have been deceived your whole life. That everything you know as reality must be re-examined.

At the time, my husband was Branch President and I was Primary President. I was afraid of what he would think, but when I presented to him the information that I'd found, he could see the truth, also.

He is 5th generation Mormon with strong pioneer stock. My parents were converts who

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dedicated their entire lives to this religion that they believed in. But once you know the real history, you cannot go back. I will never look at Joseph Smith, The Book of Mormon, the temple nor priesthood authority as something that I believe in. Yet my whole life was dedicated to the church, fully active, raising 5 children, our son serving a mission, 4 married in the temple. I served 35 years in a small, strong branch, usually serving with several callings at once.

So ironic the words of Joseph Fielding Smith:

"Mormonism, as it is called, must stand on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned, or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground."

So with no middle ground, I came to the point at which my conscience and integrity required me to ask to have my membership record removed from the LDS church. I could not teach what I no longer believed, and it was hard to listen to people "testify" of truths, when they had no knowledge of the actual history!

It was not an easy decision. I love the people in our branch and stake. The church is full of the most wonderful, hardworking people of integrity. But I can't live a lie. I invited two of my sisters to walk with me on this journey, as sometimes I would find things so incredulous, that I had to talk to someone about it. Both

of them realized the fraud, and have left the church as well. One of my temple endowed children has read and studied and has come to the same conclusion. My other seven siblings and three children feel that we have been deceived by Satan and are now apostates. The branch members have no idea how we could go astray after so many years of faithful service.

I have no belief in the restoration or Joseph Smith. What I know about his life and history that the LDS church has tried to hide, but what historians have discovered and published, I conclude that he was a fraud. I will never believe in priesthood authority, nor modern prophets. The Book of Mormon will forever be a fairy tale written by Joseph Smith and others. It sickens me that the General Authorities know this yet still deceive.

For me to come back, the LDS church would have to acknowledge the non-historicity of the Boof of Mormon, negate the First Vision, temple and Priesthood restoration, and try to build a church based on Jesus Christ, not Joseph Smith... then I might reconsider my membership in it. Now, I feel calm, happy, stress-free, and at peace with my life and my God.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$150,001 - \$200,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Elder's Quorum Presidency

WORDS ARE INADEQUATE TO EXPRESS THE LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY AND PAIN I FEEL.

I have beat my knuckles bloody trying to avoid the transition from full belief to current bewilderment.

Ultimately, it was my reading of history that overcame my faith, combined with only inadequate or deceitful answers from those "in the know." I begged God to let me put it all back on the shelf if he would but make himself known to me. I could live with all the history if I could only know that God was there and that, somehow, he was in charge of it all.

At the request of an Apostle, I gave up a fine career and went to work for the church for nearly a decade. The apostle promised me that after a leap of faith, an answer would come. I put my name on the temple rolls each week as I walked to work. I prayed, worked hard, studied, and served. The heavens were silent. The more I tried to understand the

problematic areas, the less divine and more human / ugly they became. I worked directly with problematic history (polyamory) that many I worked with actively wanted to hide from those with "little faith." I finally left church employment, just short of the decade mark.

I now survive church each week only by taking Clonazepam. I have repeated anxiety attacks when anticipating or participating. But I go because my family goes and were I to disengage, the church would separate my family from me in meaningful ways. After more than 15 years of begging, praying, studying, and continued service in the church, the heavens are completely silent while my local bishop wants only to find out why I lack faith or have some secret sin. It is utterly hopeless; the church does not want people like me.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Primary Presidency, Primary President

I KNEW MY HUSBAND WAS STRUGGLING.

He was Elder's Quorum President and was inactive. I found the articles he was reading (DNA and the Book of Mormon, studying difficult questions about JS and BY, realizing GBH endorsed attacking Iraq preemptively). I read them all. I told him I still believed and would raise our children in the gospel. He has been inactive for nine years now—supportive, but uninvolved. I find my faith crumbling by the way the church doesn't teach the truth about aspects of our history and doctrine. I have also struggled with being treated like a second class citizen because my family and I do not fit the mould of the perfect, Mormon family. My children and I are met with weird stares / comments because we must not be as "strong" or stalwart as everyone else. We are too easy to be made into ward projects. Sincere friendship is what I desire, not platitudes and patronizing.

Why does the church keep secrets? Why did I have to be an adult before I ever heard

of Mountain Meadows or peep stones. Why did the Lord let someone as racist (it appears) be prophet? Why are women told that motherhood is the counterpart to priesthood when clearly the counterpart is fatherhood—motherhood has no religious or faith requirements like a calling / priesthood. Why am I in trouble for my questions and my doubts? I seek truth. I seek God. I seek to find a way to happily stay a Mormon.

I still go to church. At the moment, I'm not paying tithing. My children are active and all three are in presidencies. I will tell them things they should learn from the church (blacks and priesthood, Joseph Smith, Relief Society history, DNA discrepancies, etc.), because they deserve the truth.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Some College
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Nursery, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Young Men's President, Elder's Quorum Presidency

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I WAS A FULLY ACTIVE, MARRIED IN THE TEMPLE MORMON. I GREW UP IN THE COVENANT.

I'm a direct descendant of a member of the original Twelve Apostles. I also have ancestry that came to Utah in the Martin Handcart Company. I graduated seminary of all four years. I served an honorable two-year mission to Germany. My highest calling I served in was Young Men's President. I also was a counselor in the Elder's Quorum presidency—along with many other callings.

I remember since I was 11 years old struggling with a belief in God. I went through many levels of belief, always thinking if I just keep following the church's teachings, I would get a stronger knowledge of God. What I found out is that my testimony in serving others was growing, but my testimony in church and God was failing.

I never got a confirmation of church or God through any of my prayers. I eventually just gave up on prayer, and eventually God.

In 2009 at the age of 36, I told my wife I didn't believe in God anymore. It was very hard, and she cried for days. I kept going to church, but started searching online for ways to be an active, non-believing Mormon. This quickly led me to all the historical, scientific, and doctrinal issues of the church. Prior to this, I never knew Joseph Smith practiced polygamy.

I shared everything I was learning with my wife. Within a month, she was done with the church also. All my children followed us into unbelief.

The bishopric tried to keep us, naturally, by scaring us with threats of the devil taking over us. I honestly haven't heard one peep from Satan yet.

Both of our families have been pretty

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quiet over this. It's pretty interesting to go from being strong valuable members of the church in your families' eyes, to being considered crazy and misguided people, in a society in which I'm quite normal now.

The only relationship I have now with the church is through neighbors and family members that are members of the church. We do not attend church services.

I am also on the scout committee in our ward, but I did make it clear that I will not be involved in spiritual endeavors and that I'm an Atheist. They still accepted me. I only accepted the calling because my son is active in the troop and the Boy Scouts announced that gay boys are allowed to participate.

I have hope that they will except LGBTQ leaders and Atheists eventually. I hope my participation as an Atheist will rock the boat.

The only thing that would have prevented my faith crisis is if God actually existed and communicated with me. After 25 years of trying to find God, it was time to give up.

A one person game of hide and seek is frustrating.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Primary Presidency, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Nursery

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I WAS BORN INTO A VERY STRONG MORMON FAMILY WITH PIONEER HERITAGE PADDING MY FAMILY TREE.

My father's job took us out of Utah when I was 4 years old, so I was raised in "the mission field." We were all fully active throughout my entire childhood and everyone in my immediate family of seven is still active. I always had a strong testimony of the Gospel, especially when I was attending BYU.

I never questioned the truthfulness of the church until I was 30 years old. My husband, who's background in the church was very similar to mine, came across an article on the Internet in the summer of 2012 related to Mitt Romney and Mormonism and was shocked to see that the article accused Joseph Smith of practicing polygamy and polyandry. He wanted to be able to intelligently refute these claims and did some research, only to find that the article was historically accurate.

He came to me with his concerns and asked me if the church were not true, would I want to know. After serious thought, I realized I would want to know the truth.

I was hesitant to question anything, but I was sure researching things about the church would only strengthen my testimony.

Much to my horror, I found that Joseph Smith's polygamy and polyandry issues were just one of many troubling aspects of church history that I had never been taught. I was completely devastated and sickened that I had been raised in the church without ever having heard about a seer stone, or the Kinderhook Plates, or modern translations of the Book of Abraham papyri.

I felt betrayed and misled by the ways I was taught about the First Vision and the translation of the Book of Mormon. I prayed and fasted for months to know if the church was true

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and I never got any answers. I was overcome with a need to know the truth and I would cry myself to sleep many nights because the answers I found did not align with what I had been taught to believe my whole life.

My interest in anything related to the church was piqued and I realized that I had never listened so closely in church or general conference as I did when these doubts were blooming in my head. My husband was going through the same feelings as I was so we were able to talk it out together, cry it out together, and question everything together.

He was, and still is, the only person I have been comfortable talking to about my doubts and loss of testimony. We both have been able to make it through the darkest days of our loss of faith with a desire to stay connected to the church.

We still attend church weekly, hold callings, and participate in ward activities. We have not renewed our temple recommends.

Right now I do not know where I stand when it comes to belief in the church, or even belief in God. After many months of needing to know the truth and finding no answers that satisfied me, I am finally able to say that I don't know what is true, and I am comfortable saying that now. I feel like this journey has brought my husband and me closer together and has helped us communicate more in all areas of our lives.

We are no longer relying on the church to tell us how to live our lives and how to raise

our children. It has been empowering to feel like I am making my own choices for the first time in my life and I love being able to dig deep and truly contemplate who I want to be and what I want for my family.

I don't know if my faith can be rebuilt, but I do know that I am not ready to throw all of Mormonism out of my life. I will be sure to teach my children the challenging issues that surround the church. I will teach them that actions are more important than beliefs, something that I am just learning now and wish I had realized earlier in life.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Men's President, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Sunday School Teacher

I WAS A FAITHFUL, TEMPLE-ATTENDING PRIESTHOOD HOLDER. MY WIFE AND I DUTIFULLY TAUGHT THE GOSPEL PRINCIPLES CLASS FOR OVER TWO YEARS.

During that time, I developed a desire to understand more and gain a deeper understanding of God's mysteries. Accordingly, I poured myself into study of the scriptures and other works.

One Sunday, I was thumbing through my scriptures and came to the images found in the Book of Abraham. I'd never studied them before, but was taken by an odd curiosity. Then I had the brilliant (though incredibly naive) idea. I would do some research on the Egyptian writing in the images to see how closely Joseph's translations lined up.

I couldn't wait to get home from church to begin my study. This would prove Joseph was a seer and prophet.

Unfortunately, what I found was shocking.

Joseph got it all wrong. Worse, he didn't even get the gender right in F. #3. This sent me into a deep search for the true meaning. Obviously, God was about to share one of his hidden truths with me, if only I could continue to study.

It didn't pan out, though. After weeks of study and the discovery of dozens of other very similar images in museums around the world, I could draw no conclusion but that Joseph's mummies included a copy of the Book of Breathings and that was all there was to it. The text references the drawings, and the drawings clearly were not drawn by Abraham. It was, in the end, a demonstrable fraud.

Oh the crushing heartache this gave me. I scrambled for an alternative explanation, but came up short again and again. FARMS efforts were obvious spin, unofficial, and completely unintelligible. It was obvious that they thought the appearance of scientific effort would assuage the anguish of my searching soul.

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Then it got worse. I shared my newly discovered doubt with my sister. She informed me she was dealing with some uncertainty herself and explained the concept of Polyandry to me. I was shocked. There's no way that could be true! Immediately, I decided that the best way to overcome my own faith crisis was to settle the issue my sister was dealing with.

There, again, I was hit squarely in the face with a truth that I'd never heard of in all my years in the church. How could God endorse this horrific practice? How could God allow a man to take and seal his another man's legal wife? This would leave men, like Henry Jacobs, without hope of gaining the Celestial Kingdom, though they had done everything right. I could not reconcile this; it was horrible. The stories of the clandestine nature of Joseph's adulterous affairs only reinforced the conclusion in my mind that this could not possible be of God.

I remained in this shell-shocked state for about a month before I got up the courage to tell my wife. At one time, I had mentioned to her that I would not have married her if she weren't a member. I believed that a Temple marriage was the only way. I told her about my concerns. She listened carefully and then, within a few days, drew the same conclusions I had. What relief! I was so scared that I would lose her.

We then had the most painful family home evening ever, when we told our teen aged girls what we had found.

Talk about ripping one's hear out.

We left the church as a family. We've had contact with the church on two occasions in the three years since we left. A kind bishop visited my daughter when she was in the hospital, and the missionaries mistakenly knocked on our door.

The alienation that takes place when leaving creates an enormous vacuum. The social adjustment is very difficult. However, on the other side of it, I can say that I am happier now than ever before. My marriage is stronger now than ever before. I cherish life now.

I am now an atheist. I see the church as all others: a tool to usurp power over men and take their money. It was just a matter of time before I left.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$200,000+
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Executive Secretary, High Priest Leader, Bishopric Councilor, Bishop

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I WAS A FULLY COMMITTED BELIEVING MEMBER OF THE CHURCH, A BISHOP IN TWO DIFFERENT WARDS, A HIGH PRIEST GROUP LEADER, HIGH COUNCILMAN, AND HELD SEVERAL OTHER CALLINGS DURING MY CHURCH ACTIVITY.

I was also a BYU professor at the time I finally lost my faith in the church. The most significant first contribution to my loss of faith was the realization that the probability the Book of Mormon was historically accurate and true was so small that I needed to re-evaluate what I really thought about the church.

I decided to really investigate the church history and doctrine, and prayed about it for a long time. I read the Book of Mormon five times, and attended the temple to receive a spiritual witness for myself. I lived the gospel as well as I could. However, in the end, I received no confirmation, and the more I studied, the more illogical everything seemed. So I finally came to

the conclusion that the church is not true, and the Book of Mormon is not what it claims to be.

Also soon after this, four of my five adult children—independent of my search—figured out the church is not true and left the church. My fifth child also knows it is not true, but is now married to a believing spouse, and continues to attend and to serve. So at least I am happy that most of my children and grand children will not be exposed to the dishonesty of the church.

My wife believes, and has said that no matter what, she will continue to believe. I love her deeply, and for the time being I have decided to support her, and I do attend church with her. She pays a full tithing from our income which irritates me, but I figured the money is not worth the trouble, so she continues to pay. It is OK with me since we are luckily enough not to miss the money.

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I live the word of wisdom, and basically do not have any hang ups with any commandments, so I am temple recommend worthy, except that I do not believe any of it.

I do have a temple recommend, and plan to keep it active just in case my daughter falls for an LDS man and opts for a temple marriage. No silly church rules will keep me away from my daughters wedding if this were to happen. And also, if I really want to make my wife happy, we go to the temple, even though she knows very well that I am not a believer. I think she still holds some hope.

The rest of the Church leadership has no idea how far gone I am.

My current relationship with the church is cultural only. I have been a member more than 50 years and most of my social relationships are within the church. I am personally friends with several General Authorities, so I will likely continue my loose relationship with the church, at least until my wife also figures out that the Church is not true. Then we will re-evaluate.

I think the one thing that could have prevented my faith crises would have been if the church had been honest and transparent about their truth. I think I would have been happier in an honest church, even if it were not based on revelation, than I am in a church based on dishonesty and total lack of transparency.

The only thing that would rebuild my faith would be totally open, transparent,

sincere, and honest church leadership.

Any fake attempts by the leadership to keep up appearances will only drive me farther from the church.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$200,000+
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Relief Society Presidency, Relief Society President, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Nursery, Choir / Music

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MY CRISIS OF FAITH STARTED TWO YEARS AGO WHEN MY BELOVED FATHER-IN-LAW PASSED AWAY.

This event triggered a comment from my ever-faithful husband and he stated that “the church better be true.” After the passing, we felt nothing: no warmth or comfort. Nothing.

He said that he felt he had theoretically “paid into the program like an insurance policy and he was going to be upset if he did not get to be with his dad after life.” This shocked me and I made it my goal to ensure that he felt the truthfulness of what we had been born into and spent so much of our time cultivating and eventually bring two children into.

This was the entry into my two years of hell on Earth. As I researched the church, I started with the First Vision and upon learning that there had been several revised and finally one publishable version, I felt like the carpet was pulled right out from under me. This led

to further questioning, scripture study, and prayerful pondering when one day after feeling I was completely crazy and surely destined for outer darkness, I sat at my desk and determined that what I had been taught is not the truth.

This was the defining point and I was terrified and shaking because I felt that same warm feeling of assurance that I felt so many times when I would ask for confirmation of my choices.

At this time, I had to discuss the issue with my husband who did not know of my two year personal journey. I asked to speak with him and before I could start, I knew that either he would understand and be okay with me not believing, or he would not be and it could ultimately be the end of everything as we knew it.

I was lucky. He had been struggling the same and on his own personal journey

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and come to the same conclusion a few months before but continued to attend meetings and fulfill callings because he loved me and would do anything for me.

About a month after I had disclosed my feelings with my husband, I was speaking with my sister who had been struggling for months with her own issues. Neither of us had spoken to each other about our trials of faith, each one of us believing the other to be completely happy with the LDS church. She said something to me and I responded that not everything is as clear as it used to be as a child and that opened her floodgates of self-doubt and I found that she was struggling just as I had.

I did not offer her any advice except that I believed that we are all on our own path and what is right for one may not be right for another. She continues to struggle. I hope that she will find peace with whatever decision she chooses to be best for her and her family.

I believe that God is constant and that he does not waiver, which is why the LDS church is perplexing. The views of the LDS church seem to adjust to the changes in society; 1) blacks and the priesthood 2) women’s rights (not priesthood rights but voting) 3) Temple ordinances should be constant and not adjusted 4)Viewpoint on homosexual behaviors—nature vs. nurture.

I do not believe that the LDS church teaches its members and prospective members an accurate portrayal of history. I am not

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angered by this, but I am sad that the LDS church did not lay all of the cards on the table and teach me an accurate version of how the LDS church was formed.

I may have chosen to believe the true version but now I will never know because I was taught a foundation based on bias and revised versions of events.

We have not discussed this aspect of our lives with any LDS church members outside of two siblings and we have not attended church in over six months. We have not been approached by any church leadership.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Young Men's Presidency, Young Men's President, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President, Stake Auxiliary Calling

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### MY LOSS OF FAITH STARTED INNOCENTLY ENOUGH.

One night, as I was flipping through my Netflix documentary options, I was intrigued by a documentary that followed the history of humans over the last several million years. That triggered an intense passion and anthropological study over the next several months, which led me to an area somewhere between agnostic and atheist.

While I continued to attend church with my wife and three beautiful daughters (and serve diligently as a counselor in the stake young men's presidency), I knew at some point I would have to choose which path my life would take.

During this time of unbelief, I read a book about a man's near death experience, which in turn triggered an interest in studying the topic diligently. As a result of my study of near death experiences, and because

I put more credence in their first hand accounts of what they experienced "on the other side" than I do in spiritual leaders of organized religion, my faith in a supreme creator of our souls began to take shape.

As fate would have it, just as I was settling back into a framework of faith that could appease my conscience and allow me to remain in the church, a non Mormon friend of mine asked me what my take was on the reason why our temple endowment ceremony followed almost verbatim the Freemason's initiatory ceremony. Not knowing much about Freemasonry, I told him I would look into it and get back to him.

I guess I would have to say that was the real beginning of the end of my faith. I was shocked and quite disturbed to learn that Joseph Smith had initiated the endowment ceremony just weeks after his own introduction to Freemasonry. Of course, as an inquiring

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human being, I wanted to know if there was more that I didn't know about key elements of what I had been taught was the restored gospel.

As I wanted to remain in the church and not ruffle feathers of my wife, parents, siblings, and virtually all extended family, I should have abandoned my search into the church's history and stuck my head back in the sand.

But I didn't.

And what I would come to learn over the next couple of weeks of study that literally consumed me during that time, would destroy my belief in the pillars of the restoration; namely Joseph Smith's first vision, the integrity and character of Joseph Smith the man, the veracity and authenticity of restored ancient scripture such as the Book of Abraham and the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the priesthood, and saving temple ordinances.

I was deeply disturbed when I learned that Sections 2 and 13 of Doctrine & Covenants were not in the original Book of Commandments, and that the restoration of the priesthood was never even mentioned until 1834, five years after the events had supposedly occurred.

I find it quite dishonest, or disingenuous at best, that the church represents these revelations as occurring in chronological order. Unfortunately for the church, there is ample evidence to undermine and disprove each of the fundamental pillars of the restored gospel.

When your faith in these fundamental elements of the gospel is completely shattered, there is nothing else to hold onto. But the truth is, I don't want to have anything to do with a church that would lie to me and millions of others, while creating a culture that threatens to destroy my most sacred relationships when I decide that I can't be a part of it any longer.

Fortunately for me, my wife has an open mind to truth, and we are together in our decision to leave the church. We have been to church only once since December, and none of our family knows yet of our exit.

While we know the fallout of our decision will result in damaged or lost relationships, we hold dearly, the happiness and freedom we feel cannot be measured.

We wish to express gratitude to the historians and others who have fearlessly pioneered this truly latter day movement. God Bless.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Young Men's President, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency

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MY WHOLE LIFE I HAVE BEEN A FULLY ACTIVE, FULLY BELIEVING MEMBER.

I dedicated my life to the church. I put a lot of time and effort into every calling I had. My Saturday's were usually spent preparing a lesson (sometimes up to 8 hours). For the most part, I enjoyed my callings and felt satisfaction from my commitments. However, most of the time I spent took a negative toll on myself, and my relationship with my wife and kids.

The reasons for my disbelief are two fold. The primary catalyst was Proposition 8 in California and Prop 102 in Arizona.

Living in Phoenix at the time, we had a special presentation from Salt Lake City regarding the importance of the family. It was heavily emphasized to take civil action in "protecting the family." My personal feelings opposed the council given by "the Brethren" on this political

matter. However, I trusted in my church leaders and I voted against my conscience. This came to be one of my biggest regrets in life. It also was the catalyst of my cognitive dissonance with the teachings of the church.

The second catalyst to my loss of faith was having my marriage and family life start to fall apart. I strived to do what the church had taught me...go on a mission, marry in the temple, didn't delay in starting a family (I was in school full time and working full time with two kids.)

With my world falling apart around me, I decided to really try to understand my religious beliefs. I began to study church history.

After three years of intense study, I realized the Church was not what it claimed to be, and it was not making my life happier. My family left the church (not yet resigned) on July of 2012.

There are about 1,000 emotions I experienced

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when losing my faith. It was extremely painful. I would also say it has been equally rewarding. I am in a much better place physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually having gone through this process and left the church behind.

One word sums the reaction to my loss-of-faith: Misunderstanding.

With exception to an inactive brother, my family and church leaders simply do not comprehend it. I don't blame them. I once sat in their shoes. I once wondered how people could leave "the one true church." I never thought I would be the one to leave. I guess it's something you have to go through to really empathize with and gain understanding.

I now consider myself a believer in science. The world makes so much sense without "God." I'm open to spirituality, but I no longer believe in anything supernatural.

In terms of preventing my loss-of-faith, my wife and I would have benefited from relationship classes, or real meaningful teachings from the church on marriage. Instead, we were taught things like "Just go to the temple, pray together, read the scriptures, and everything will be okay." The truth is those things only mask and delay addressing real issues in a relationship.

I would suggest having church curriculum heavily emphasize communication techniques, problem solving, money management, sex, children, and learning how to be equals in a relationship. Instead, the church often teaches

predefined and predetermined roles that are strict. We didn't fit those molds, as hard as we tried. Following church counsel and guidance helped little. It wasn't until we got marriage counseling that we learned some of these basic things to having healthy relationships.

What now? I don't know. What place could I realistically have in the church with my shattered faith? I don't pay tithing, so I will never have a temple recommend again. I have no problem saying "NO" to church leaders. I don't believe the Quorum of the Twelve is what they lead members to believe. I've lost my respect for Joseph Smith. I see the Book of Mormon as containing inspiring stories, but not of divine origin. I view Jesus as any other god of the past; mostly mythical. So to answer again, I don't know. I don't see it being likely to ever rebuild the faith that I once had.

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ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Young Men's Presidency, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President

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I HAVE NOT EXPRESSED MY LOSS IN FAITH TO FAMILY MEMBERS AS OF THIS TIME.

I still pay tithing and attend church. I eventually will come out, but I find it extremely difficult because of the church's teachings on those who leave for apostasy. Rather than being looked at as someone having a different view, I will become the topic of conversation about how one is not to be.

I do not wish to hurt my family or have them look down upon me. I do not want them to fear for my salvation. I believe that I am fine and understand the feelings of those who believe. I was one of those believers for many years and found comfort in that belief. So, I know what people will think and say. Although, the members of the church are friendly I know I will be looked at as someone who is lost. When in my reality, I feel stronger than ever. I do not regret my friendship with any member and those I came to love on my

mission. I believe the LDS church may be what some people need, but not what I need. I prefer to look to myself for truth rather than turn that over to others to do for me.

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ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Doctorate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President

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I AM A SCIENTIST.

I have been fully active my entire life. I have six active and well-adjusted kids.

I had problems with evolution and the age of the earth. Therefore, I couldn't believe the Adam and Eve story, the flood, etc. Then I found out truths about the foundation of the church and that I had been deceived most of my life.

I no longer believe the church is true. I am still active for my kids' sake and for my wife and friends, but it causes me angst. I'm angry that I have been deliberately deceived by church leaders who knew the truth, but chose to "bear false witness."

By their own words, omission can be as serious as commission.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Relief Society Presidency, Temple Worker, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Nursery, Gospel Doctrine Teacher Choir / Music

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I WAS ALWAYS A MODEL, STRICTLY-OBEDIENT MORMON GIRL.

I took all of the scriptures and words of the prophets and apostles literally. The church and being righteous meant everything to me. I know I was overly zealous to the point of being annoying and preachy at times, but I always had the best intentions of trying to “stand for truth and righteousness.”

At college and afterward, I was exposed to a lot of new people and places and ideas that changed the way I saw the world. I let myself analyze and question. In the process, my “shelf” of questions became very heavy—full of questions about things like polygamy, human suffering, blacks and the priesthood, LGBT issues, the origins and historicity of the scriptures, and the difference between the spirit vs. emotions. Then, when I was 25-years-old, my shelf collapsed.

It was devastating. I tried and tried to pick up the pieces, but it didn’t work. I realized that my whole worldview had changed, and no amount of prayer or research or fasting or scripture studying could change it back.

Luckily, my husband and I both went through this together, so we were able to support each other through it all. The Mormon Stories Podcast was a lifesaver for us both.

Today, a few years after my initial crisis, I still feel forever changed by this experience. I no longer believe that my spiritual feelings come from the Holy Ghost. I believe they are just that—my feelings. I no longer KNOW that the church is true. I THINK the gospel is mostly good. I believe it teaches many true principles about family, service, love, and sacrifice. But I don’t believe that ours is the one and only true church. I don’t take the scriptures literally like I used to. And to be completely honest, I don’t

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know if God exists. I hope he does, but it’s hard to tell. I call myself an agnostic Mormon.

My husband, my daughter, and I attend church 2-3 times a month. We live in Utah and enjoy close relationships with our active Mormon family and friends. We don’t want to put those relationships in jeopardy. We plan to continue to live by the church’s standards: word of wisdom, chastity, clean language and media. We hope the church will be a positive influence on our daughter’s life. We try to establish ourselves as the “token liberals” in the ward. It can be difficult, but we just take one week at a time.

How have others responded to my faith crisis?

I haven’t shared my loss of faith with very many people. I have hinted about it to my family, and I’ve opened up completely to a few friends who have experienced similar things. My husband decided to tell his parents about us in an email, and they were heartbroken. They bear their testimonies to us all the time now, and they keep trying to facilitate experiences for us to feel the spirit again. It is awkward and sometimes hurtful for us to be around them now.

I have never opened up to an ecclesiastical leader about it, and I don’t see how that could be helpful to me.

What might have prevented my faith crisis?

I don’t know that anything could have prevented my faith crisis. Maybe not thinking

about life so much. Not traveling. Not meeting people who were different from me. Not studying scriptures. Not asking questions. Not praying. Not being so committed to seeking truth. Not being so curious.

I do think it could have been helpful to grow up with a more realistic view of church history and church leaders. It would have been nice to be able to feel free to ask questions at an earlier age. I think a less black and white view of religion and the world could have prevented my most intense feelings of sadness and betrayal and hurt.

What, if anything, might help rebuild my faith?

I don’t think my faith can be rebuilt, but a more open and liberal Mormon church could make it easier for me to stay.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	18-24
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Choir / Music

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I WAS A FULL-ON, ACTIVE, PARTICIPATING, MAKE-PEOPLE-CRY-BEARING-MY-TESTIMONY MEMBER FOR 24 YEARS – RAISED IN SEATTLE.

I was never a judgmental Mormon though: I accepted and loved everyone. I converted two of my best friends growing up, my ex-boyfriend of 3 years, and my ex-husband. The church was my all and I'd do anything for it. I was married in the temple, and almost served a mission before that.

When I got divorced, because my husband stopped going to church, I was depressed, and sad my perfect actions all my life didn't fulfill my dream of a lasting eternal marriage.

I messed around with a guy. Not sex. I was lonely, and hurt. That doesn't excuse my actions, and as a true-blue member, always wanting to do the right thing and not "hide" my sins.

I went to the stake president and confessed.

I was disfellowshipped. I was in a great family ward in Montana and they loved and accepted me no matter what – because they understood the intents of my heart.

After 3 months of striving and doing no wrong, I had another disciplinary counsel where I was excommunicated "for 2-5 years" because the bishop thought I was lying about not having any sexual relations and thought I was tape recording the counsel.

WHAT?! I was a devout member doing everything right. And this happens? I was HEARTBROKEN. The church had taken away my identity, my being, my everything. How could they do this? That is where I wanted to be.

I took a step back, and reexamined everything. I moved to SLC to take a job, talked to a coworker, and my brother, who had lost their faith. I started doing

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research and it BLEW MY MIND.

It didn't take much for me to realize that the church was a fraud. I prayed to Heavenly Father, not this "Mormon" Heavenly Father I had known. The love I felt was overwhelming.

My parents are sad, but they know the church can only take away WHAT I was, not WHO I am. My friends understand, and are mad about how poorly I was handled. My whole family doesn't know yet, and it will shock them, but I hope they will still accept me.

I will not share with them what I've read about the church, because I don't want to crush anyone's world. The morals of the church and my parents example have honestly raised me to be a great person, and I'm grateful for that.

I feel pressured and tricked, having been told stories that are made up—like Joseph Smith and the First Vision, the temple ceremony, the ways certain "Mormon commandments" came to pass, and other things that are so well hidden to active members.

The General Authorities have to know the complete history of the church, and yet they still go on persuading and controlling millions of people. It makes me so sad that it isn't true, because it would be magical if it were. And that's exactly what it is – magic / made up / make-believe.

I don't look at the members differently because a lot of them probably don't know

any of the real truth behind the church. I consider myself an intelligent person and also with faith, but yet not blind to facts, and it took me 24 years to come across this information, so I don't judge them.

If I hadn't been excommunicated, I'd still be trying my best to have my full blessings restored as a disfellowshipped member of the church. I would understand the consequences to my actions and would go to church, being completely humiliated because of the lack of participation – because it was "the right thing." But then I wouldn't be where I'm at now.

I'm grateful it happened, because I now know the truth. A weight has been lifted off my shoulders.

I could never go back to the church, because of what I know. What man can separate me from my God? NO MAN CAN. My faith now, is that there is no middleman, and there doesn't need to be. I've never been this happy in my life, and now I know why. God loves me.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Temple Worker, Seminary Teacher, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Nursery, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Choir / Music, Young Men's Presidency, Young Men's President, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President, Financial / Membership Clerk, Executive Secretary, High Priest Leader, Bishopric Councilor, Branch President

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ABOUT 5 YEARS AGO, AT AGE 45, AFTER BEING RELEASED AS COUNSELOR TO A BISHOP AND HAVING 4 OF MY 5 KIDS GROWN AND RELATIVELY INDEPENDENT, I FOUND MYSELF WITH MORE TIME TO STUDY AND READ ABOUT THE CHURCH AND RELIGION IN GENERAL.

Prior to that calling, I had served on the Stake High Council, and I have lived in the same ward and stake for nearly 20 years. I mention that only so that the reader may understand the many personal, social ties I have to the Church and Church culture.

I live and have lived in this same area outside of Utah, but in a still heavily Mormon, politically and religiously conservative city in the Intermountain West.

Having obtained a master's degree in my early years—and enjoying very much the opportunity to research and learn again with more free time—I began to discover many serious problems with the methodology used by the Church to teach its members. Not just problematic history or Book of Mormon anachronisms or Book of Abraham translation issues, but what seemed to me to be purposeful teaching by Church leaders that was misleading in the extreme.

Complicating these newly discovered doubts of my faith was the fact that I had hidden my homosexuality from my family, my children, and my wife of 27 years, in large part because of teachings by the so-called living prophets of my

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era who had taught me a myriad of conflicting things about homosexuality such that I became despondent, even suicidal, after coming out gay to my wife and family in February of 2013.

During my week-long stay in the psychiatric ward on suicide watch in April, 2013, I came to realize how very conflicted my mind was about the Church and its teachings. I had tried with all my energy and will-power to control and change my homosexuality.

Being told from an early age, and fully realizing what I was being told at that age because of my astute and early-developed mental capacity, that I was “impure and unnatural” and that my homosexuality was “a crime against nature” and that it was not inborn, I had become a mental case of the highest degree.

I loved reading even at the earliest age, and read such adamantly black-and-white books like “Mormon Doctrine,” “Doctrines of Salvation,” and “Miracle of Forgiveness.” While fully believing that the authors of such books were speaking God's will directly to me, and without any opportunity or understanding of how to process paradox, irony, or even to doubt just a little, I tried to fit myself into the mold that the Church had built for young men.

Boyd K. Packer, especially, was one of the most influential people in my teenage years and into early adulthood, but since he was and is so homophobic and too proud to even admit that something as scientific as biological evolution

could possibly occur in our world, and being unable to process nuance or contradiction myself, I became trapped in my own mind.

Now, at age 49, my emotional life is in ruins, and I have only been saved by my own preparations for a solid career, which I have and continue to maintain.

When I couple my being gay with the many problems of Church history, doctrine, and methodology, I cannot help but turn away from the Mormon Church and look elsewhere for a loving God.

The mind is a wonderful gift from God, and Mormonism ruined my mind. Thank Heavens for God being in more places than one, and for His gifts to all of his children in the world. My one anchor has been my wife, who now says she learned how to love unconditionally from me, when I had to fight against Mormon culture to teach my family about Christ's grace and love.

Mormonism has become ironically pharisaical.

ANONYMOUS MALE

<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Temple Worker, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher Nursery, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Choir / Music, Young Men's Presidency, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum President, Financial / Membership Clerk, High Priest Leader

I WAS BORN IN THE COVENANT, SERVED A FULL-TIME MISSION, ELDERS QUORUM PRESIDENT, IN THE HIGH PRIEST GROUP LEADERSHIP, AND TAUGHT IN ALL OF THE AUXILIARY SERVICES: SUNDAY SCHOOL, PRIMARY, AND PRIESTHOOD.

I attended Church faithfully for my entire life, until age 45. I was a faithful tithing-payer, had daily family prayer, weekly family home evening, daily scripture study. And I attended the temple at least monthly—often weekly.

The genesis of my loss of faith began with reading the Book of Mormon (for the 10th time.) There were several parts of the Book of Mormon, which made no sense in relation to scientific evidence.

The Tower of Babel for example is clearly metaphorical and not a real event as portrayed in the Book of Mormon. Steel swords, steel bows, armour, fortifications,

two million killed at Cumorah (of which there is no archaeological record.)

Relying upon my feelings in important decisions resulted in some very naive financial mistakes that hurt my family. The promised “blessings from paying tithing” never materialized, even after decades of sincere service and full payment of tithes. Several decisions I made after sincere fasting and praying resulted in disastrous financial outcomes. Most importantly, the sexual indoctrination taught to me and to my wife as a teenager resulted in a sexless, joyless marriage filled with the hurt that comes from emotional and sexual rejection.

Pouring ourselves and our efforts more deeply into the church resulted in less communication, deepening depression, and a sense of hopelessness. If living the “Gospel” is supposed

to result in happiness, why did I daily consider suicide? One day, I went into the mountains with the intent of ending my life. While there, considering my options, with the gun to my head, I thought, “if the church is this bad for me, why not try living without it for a while?”

I sought counseling, stopped going to church, and began to open up to the possibility that the church ISN'T true. I started an in-depth analysis of the history of the church, looking at all sources. Then I started searching for as much original source documentation as I could.

I discovered to my sincere horror, that the church had been lying to me, presenting a faithful history which edited heavily the events surrounding the formation of the church, which gave insight into the dishonest character of Joseph Smith, the murderous orders given by Brigham Young, the acceptance and then disavowal of horrific doctrines like “blood atonement,” the truth about Joseph Smith Jr.’s polygamy, marriage to underage girls, the changing story of the “First Vision,” The Kinderhook plates, the Kirtland bank fiasco, and the real reason why Joseph was imprisoned at Carthage. The factual history clearly paints a picture of a megalomaniacal narcissist, with delusions of grandeur, a sexual predator, and a conman.

My testimony lay in shambles at my feet, the entire paradigm of my life, shattered. I was betrayed by an organization which stole

my LIFE for 45 years. Add to that my still believing ex-wife who divorced me due to my loss of faith, and manipulated my children into avoiding me due to my “bad influence.” My children have been taught that I am a “spawn of Satan,” “not to be trusted,” both “deceived and a deceiver.” My bishop advised my ex-wife to divorce me and to keep my children away from me to the best of her ability. My Mormon “friends” abandoned me within moments of their discovering that I no longer believed and I had siblings which didn't talk to me for more than three years.

If this is an example of God's true church, then God is worthy of neither respect, nor veneration.

Could I associate again with the church? Possibly but there would be some requirements.

- 1) Actually use tithing for charitable works instead of enriching an organization.
- 2) Come clean about the factual history, acknowledge that the BoM and BoA is 19th century fiction.
- 3) Abandon all claims of Mormonism being the “One True Church.”
- 4) Cease and desist with all guilt manipulation and shaming over sexual behavior.

Currently, I am a non-believer in God or Christ. Nothing could rebuild my faith in a religion so foundationally flawed.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Primary Teacher

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I WAS A DYED IN THE WOOL TRUE BLUE THROUGH AND THROUGH 100% DEVOUT LDS MORMON FOR 30+ YEARS.

During my whole life growing up in the Church, I was taught a very different history of the Church than the one I now know and understand.

The reason I came to my senses (lost my faith) comes from a couple different angles.

First: getting educated after my mission and learning more about life, biology, humanities, evolution, cultures, etc. ...basically the real world ;).

Second was realizing how the LDS church is a microscopic drop in the bucket compared to the world population, 99.9% of the world is not LDS and even more if you only count active members. This was disturbing for me to think I'm part of the only true church and God is that inefficient. Although I was a victim of childhood indoctrination, professing over and over as a

young child that "I KNOW" the church is true.

And last, but definitely not least, the biggest reason for coming to my senses was at age 30, I took a really deep dive into LDS church history. I wanted to know what everyone outside the church kept talking about, movies like Gods Army portraying a missionary learning things about the church and losing his faith. To me, if the Church really was the only true church on the earth, then it could withstand investigation.

For 3+ years, using logic and reason with Occam's Razor like rules as guidelines to prevent being deceived on either side my investigation began. I was blown away to say the least! I felt so lied to and deceived by those I trusted most. My marriage suffered from my emotional roller coast as I sat in sacrament meetings listening to people regurgitate the same old stuff I now see as complete rubbish. I studied from books, websites, blogs. I became a scholar on church history. I read books like *A Rough Stone Rolling*,

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websites like fairlds.org and Maxwell Institute. And to make sure and get the other side of the story, I read books like *An Insiders View of Mormon Origins*, *Standing For Something More* and websites like mormonthink.com.

Oh how my world fell apart, how lonely I was. I don't recall crying harder in my life than during those 3 years. Who could I talk to? Not my wife, and not my family. Luckily, I had a couple of co-workers and one friend I could talk to. If it weren't for these people, I would have given up and just got back into it and tried to feel better. It makes me so angry sometimes. Only those who have gone through this will know what I'm talking about.

My current relationship with the church is waiting patiently for my wife to come to the same realization that I have. It won't be easy, but it will happen. And then we will call it quits.

True truth and the real world will prevail over silly indoctrination for those who love the truth more than the comfort of their indoctrinated lifestyle.

The only thing that would have prevented me from coming to my senses (losing my faith) would have been to stay ignorant. People who lack education and understanding of the real world will always see superstition and an LDS God in something when it is not there to begin with. An educated person will find themselves at war with logic and reason and the things the LDS Church teaches causing

cognitive dissonance until they break free from the bonds of childhood indoctrination.

Robert D. Hales gave a talk this last conference that made my stomach turn. He went on and on about how wicked this world is, how far from the standards of the Lord we have become. I thought...wait a second, does he not remember this world has always had wicked times. What about the holocaust or World War 1 and 2. I thought seriously he is off his rocker. We live in a time now where there is more tolerance than any other time in history. It is talks like this that scare the membership into thinking they need to cling harder and harder to the LDS iron rod.

ANONYMOUS MALE

<b>AGE</b>	75+
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Doctorate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men’s Presidency, Young Men’s President, Elder’s Quorum Presidency, Financial / Membership Clerk, Executive Secretary, High Priest Leader, Stake Auxiliary Calling, Bishopric Councilor, Bishop, Stake Presidency Councilor, Stake President, Mission President

I WAS ACTIVE AND FAITHFUL FROM MY YOUTH.

I never “KNEW” as others claimed that the church was true as others claimed and claim. But I believed that with faith and obedience, I would someday know and come to understand.

I had read much in church history, the discourses, etc. and had questions but had determined to be faithful. As a stake missionary and mission president counselor, I recognized—and rationalized—the half-truths and untruths missionaries taught. As a member and teacher, I had found the church curriculum and teaching outline and guidelines for members ludicrous. But I persevered.

President Hinckley’s declaration on April 6, 2003 that Christ came to bring war, specifically the Iraq war, triggered my first real doubts and my first real searching.

As I read and re-read and expanded my reading, it was the realization that all or most of the prophets and many of the apostles were and are dishonest and that dishonesty is all pervasive in the church was a challenge.

But the greatest challenge was the realization that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, in the Church scriptures or the teachings of the prophets, which is an enduring truth. The only constant is change, revision and evasion.

The many inconsistent scriptural teachings and the countless inconsistent, contradictory and even disgusting teachings of the Prophets inspired by the Holy Ghost defy rationalization and, eventually, accommodation.

I lived with and acquiesced in and participated, to my regret, in the cult worship of one man

and a small group of men and the near total forgetfulness of the teachings of Christ.

I covenanted to sacrifice all, even my integrity though I didn’t realize at the time, for the Church.

I never was put under covenant to sacrifice for Christ or for truth. Of course, I came to recognize, Christ is of lesser importance than Joseph Smith in the Church and that truth as to church doctrine and church history is unknown in the church.

On a personal level, I chafed at the intellectually oppressive church-thought policing, even as I enforced it and I have come to regret that aspect of my church service. My richest memories and deepest regrets and my most valued friendships are all embedded in the church.

But I have come to realize that I was used and used others and that the vast majority of church members are like sheep, victims of morally twisted organization, which perpetuates itself by preying on its members.

Still, I don’t plan to leave the church. Where would I go? I am as active as health permits, though I hold no position other than home teacher.

Perhaps, there are explanations for the factual issues I face. If so, an atmosphere of honest, open discussion would have resolved these.

No doubt my feeling of betrayal would not have

resulted in the Church leaders I have known and which I revered during my lifetime had honestly faced and explained or repudiated the teachings and actions of earlier leaders.

Moral, principled leadership by President Hinckley and decent, tolerant leadership by President Monson (both of whom I have had personal interaction with) regarding gays would probably have infinitely increased my respect.

I cannot say for certain, however, that these would have obviated my absolute rejection of polygamy as divinely inspired or the apparently insurmountable issues raised by the conflicting First Vision versions, Joseph Smith’s dishonesty, etc. Still, a little honesty would have gone far.

I doubt that anything could unring the bell and restore faith and confidence. At the very least, the Church and its leaders—all of them—would have to recognize and repudiate the vast ocean of dishonesty, deceit, secrecy and mistakes and misconduct of the past and open the Church’s archives and records. They would have to respect the members as children of God and not subjects of prey and exploitation and put the interests of the members first. Then, perhaps, I would regain confidence.

That, of course, will never happen.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$200,000+
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Doctorate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Gospel Doctrine Teacher

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### I AM STILL AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE CHURCH.

I've only shared my loss of faith with my wife of seventeen years and my younger brother.

I'm a business owner and have been blessed with great success in my profession. I have a very loving wife and four great children. I've always considered myself a stalwart member of the church.

Until a year ago I had a very strong testimony in the absolute truth of the Book of Mormon, the calling and character of J. Smith and the church in general. After reading Bushman's *Rough Stone Rolling*, I began to attempt to think more critically regarding the claims of the church given that the history I had been taught growing up in the church conflicted with the historical truths that are so easily verified from access to primary source documents on the Internet.

I began to research further and discovered many more "problems" with the historical

foundational claims of the church, the Book of Mormon and J. Smith. As much as I still do not want to admit it, these objective historical facts, many of which are referenced on MormonThink.com, make it very clear that the church is not what it has claimed to be. Just typing this fact hurts me to the core.

While I have discovered the courage to admit to myself that the church and the Book of Mormon are not what they claim to be, I still have not found the courage to openly express my doubts, concerns or issues with anyone at church. I do not feel safe expressing doubt to church leaders as I feel afraid of their judgment (formal and/or informal). Indeed, I have difficulty expressing these doubts to my wife as she initially informed me that she thought our marriage was at risk because "she married a return missionary and expected a forever family" (Over the last year, she has become more understanding of my doubt, however, I've learned it is simply

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not "safe" to express these doubts to her.)

I still live church standards and have fought to maintain faith in God as I've attempted to separate my past spiritual experiences from the false histories and half truths I've been taught as part of my LDS faith.

I wish there were satisfying answers to the problems caused by the discovery of so many truths, which conflict with the foundational documents and claims of the church. However, I've come to the conclusion that there are no satisfying answers to these problems because the truth is that the church is not what it has claimed to be despite my deep desires for it to be so.

I wish I could give you some guidance in how to help other members that are losing their faith in the church. However, I just don't know.

I do think the church could help with the pain that comes with the discovery of these facts by being more accepting of members who discover the facts and yet don't want to leave the church. I wish the church would encourage spouses to be kind and patient with a husband or wife that has expressed doubt because I do believe that even doubters can play a positive role in the church.

I recently confirmed my youngest daughter a member of the church and really enjoyed the experience with her.

I don't believe the Book of Mormon is what is

claims to be. However, I do believe God loves me and my family and wants us to be happy.

I still believe that the Book of Mormon can teach many good lessons. In fact, I've discovered that if you are honestly searching for God you can find his spirit and love in many books, movies, churches and temples.

I would like the LDS church to know that I believe there are likely many more members who are like me who will continue to attend, however, we will not stay quiet forever. I expect more honest and fair treatment of those who question. I hope there can be a more open and safe place for me and those like me in the church moving forward.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Some College
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Branch President

FOR MOST OF MY LIFE, I HAVE BEEN AN ACTIVE CHURCH MEMBER.

After high school, I spent about two years on a "Mormon Rumspringa" before cleaning up and serving a full-time mission (2005-2007.) Since then, I was married in the temple and have one child. I'm almost finished with my undergraduate degree at one of the BYUs. As I said, I have always been a Church-goer, but would never have described myself as a "spiritual" person. While I still consider myself to be an active member, my faith has certainly evolved.

A loss of faith is a very scary thing. My entire way of life is called into question, everything I have ever believed is potentially up for grabs. I risk losing my peer-groups and close family relationships.

Much of what has caused my personal evolution has to do with the LDS Church's tendency

to cover-up some of the less-than-flattering elements of Church History. That, coupled with the abuse of the LGBT community and the oppressive environment of Church school, and you have my current state of waning belief. I have not approached ecclesiastical leaders, though my wife and I have discussed these issues and we are both in similar circumstances.

I don't know what, if anything, could have prevented my faith crisis. However, more honesty on the part of the Church would have helped. A willingness to admit openly and candidly that even prophets can be wrong (ex. Brigham Young's racism) would have helped too.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$200,000+
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Primary Presidency, Full-time Missionary, Primary Teacher, Nursery, Choir / Music

I WAS FULLY ACTIVE, BUT HAD DOUBTS REGARDING SOME DOCTRINE.

I put those doubts on the shelf for years until I read Rough Stone Rolling. My shelf crashed immediately and I completely lost my testimony. I spent two years studying church history, basically putting my life on hold and living at the library. I wanted to make sure what I was reading was real.

I felt devastated, shocked, sad and sick to my stomach. However, I also had feelings of clarity, peace, relief, and was excited about my future. I did see a therapist for about four months to sort through all of my emotions. It was extremely helpful.

Most everyone in my life has shown me much love throughout this process and I am super grateful. However, no one talks about my faith crisis. I feel like it's the elephant in the room at every family gathering.

I have no belief in the truth claims of the church and I am currently inactive. My husband and four children have left with me.

I don't think anything could rebuild my faith, but better manuals and instruction could have helped me. I think seminary would have been a good place to start. It's very important to me that the things I taught as a missionary about Joseph Smith really happened. I shouldn't be surprised 20 years later.

I have much peace in my life, more so than I had in the church. So, for that reason, I won't return to full activity. A day here and there to support family and friends is all that I'm interested in and capable of doing.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Relief Society Presidency, Relief Society President, Seminary Teacher, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Nursery, Choir / Music

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SEPTEMBER 23, 2009, WAS THE DAY MY PREVIOUS LIFE ENDED AND MY NEW LIFE BEGAN.

It was the day my 18-year-old son approached me quietly and told me he needed to talk about something important.

I had felt earlier in the day that I needed to stay home that night and be available for my son. At the time, I was the Relief Society President and my husband was the Young Men's President. We had met at BYU, married in the temple, graduated together, and been very active in our religious community. We had "followed all the rules," and our family life seemed to be blessed as a result.

On that night, however, I heard something completely unexpected: "Mom, I'm gay." I sat stunned for a moment. I literally felt dizzy, as if I were going to faint. The world seemed to be spinning, and there was nothing to hold on to.

I have always loved my son and daughter unconditionally. Never for a moment did it cross my mind to turn on my son or exclude him from our family. I remember the first thing I said to him: "I love you completely, and always will, and yet I also think the Church is true."

As I look back on it now, with three and one-half years of hindsight, it's interesting that I so quickly articulated the unresolvable tension that would eventually pull me away from the Church.

This was cognitive dissonance raised to a new and terrifying level. I loved my son ferociously, yet now the "only true Church upon the face of the earth" was telling me that he would be condemned to hell if he embraced a homosexual lifestyle. I knew that if I couldn't be with him in the eternities, I would rather not exist. I can't describe the absolute spiritual, mental, and physical anguish that I

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swam through as I tried to make sense of this contradiction. Certainly if I thought enough, prayed enough, and read enough, I would discover a circle big enough to embrace me, my son's homosexuality, and Mormonism.

I struggled intensely with these issues for two full years. Finally, it reached a point where I knew that I did not believe in the Church any more. And I knew I couldn't go on associating with an institution that taught that my son was a second-class citizen.

Despite the Church's somewhat softened stance towards homosexuality today, I had reached maturity during the McConkie-Packer era. I had heard all the stories about how homosexuality was the vilest of sins. Yet as I looked at my son, I couldn't imagine him as vile. It occurred to me that if the Church had been wrong about homosexuality, then what else had they been wrong about?

At that point all the questions I had "shelved" as unanswerable came tumbling down: polygamy, women's rights, Blacks and the priesthood, and the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

Two years after my son came out, I stopped attending Church. (My husband had stopped attending previously.) I waited for almost a year to tell any of my family members for fear of hurting them. But eventually my "double life" began to make me emotionally and physically ill. I finally told them all, including my temple-

married daughter and her new husband. Luckily, my husband and I have ended up in the same place on this issue. We both feel very fortunate to have married someone with whom we could be completely open and honest.

At this point in my life, I am not CERTAIN of anything. I have chosen to base my religious quest on the "inductive" method proposed by Peter Berger in *The Heretical Imperative*. He advocates the turning AWAY from authority and the turning TOWARDS experience as the focus of religious thought. (Ironically, Joseph Smith himself followed this same method when seeking for his own truth. What is lauded and celebrated in his case is now condemned and feared in the modern church-member's case.)

No longer do I believe that a benevolent God would condemn anybody for honestly searching for truth: in fact, the contradiction inherent in such a being would render my ability to trust him impossible.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	High School Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Nursery, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Elder's Quorum Presidency

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I AM THE FATHER TO FIVE WONDERFUL CHILDREN & THE HUSBAND TO A BEAUTIFUL WIFE OF 18 YRS.

I was born & raised in the church, my family as a child went every week to a little ward house in Idaho 9:00am every Sunday.

I never once doubted the church was true my entire life never!! I was a good kid, I attended seminary & I was not rebellious against the church or my parents. I was sealed to my wife in the Salt lake temple we still go to church every Sunday.

There are a lot of people in the church that incorrectly judge those that no longer go to church, wondering what sin that person must have committed to lose his testimony. No one knows how I feel about the church accept my wife & my closest friends, you see I pretend to believe so that I have peace at home & my children have a stable foundation on which to grow.

I remember the first time in my life I became angry with the church it was about 6yrs ago. The Utah legislation was going to pass laws so that illegal aliens would no longer receive in state tuition & other benefits that I believe should be received by legal residents of Utah & the United States for that matter! The law was going to pass, until the church stepped in and said that the legislators should be more compassionate.

The bill died, I remember being so angry I was in tears. Why would the church advocate illegal behavior?! When I go to the bishop to get a temple recommend he asks "are you I honest in all your dealings with my fellow man?" Why would the leaders of the church have such a double standard for temple recommends?

This was the catalyst for me to start questioning everything about the church. I prayed for answers & I found a wonderful little website ran by Jerald & Sarah Tanner, [www.utlm.org](http://www.utlm.org).

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org. Utah Lighthouse Ministries there I found all the answers I was looking for. They have the real history of the church & not the manufactured version the leaders of the church have given us all these years.

What I found was very hard on me mentally, first I felt astonishment at what has been covered up & changed by the Prophets & leaders of the church, then I felt anger & betrayal. It took me while to finally accept I had been duped, just like when I was a kid & found out that Santa Claus wasn't real.

I had to hide my true feelings from my wife for a long time, finally one day I could not take the burden of hiding it from her any longer & told her the truth about how I felt about the church. She was horrified & heart broken & it killed me inside that day! The way she sobbed that all was lost & in my mind I had destroyed her, & she would never be happy again.

One day I called her from my car I could not bear the pain that I had caused her I was considering suicide. I was sobbing uncontrollably I couldn't talk & she was sobbing & crying out to me please don't hurt yourself I love you please your are scaring me!! That was the only time in my life I considered suicide & it was a terrible cold helpless feeling.

My wife loves me unconditionally & she truly has Jesus in her heart. I believe in My Savior Jesus Christ & I know he died for me that I might be forgiven & know

he was resurrected that I might live again with him in his kingdom forever.

There is no temple ceremony or sacrament or bishop or prophet that requires his unconditional love & mercy & grace! only that you accept him as your lord & savior!

One day when my children are older they are going to have to make there own decisions but there is no doubt in there minds that I believe in God & Jesus Christ & that is what is most important to me now.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Some College
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Relief Society Presidency, Primary Presidency Primary Teacher, Nursery

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I CONSIDERED MYSELF A TRUE BELIEVING MORMON EVEN THOUGH IN THE LAST 2 YEARS OF MY BEING A MEMBER I DEVELOPED FATIGUE LIKE SYMPTOMS THAT KEPT ME AWAY FROM CHURCH.

My husband was on the High Council during these years and later released to become the High Priest leader in our ward. I was raised Mormon by a single mother.

I gave an invitation to one of my friends at work to attend the opening of the Vancouver Temple. It was some of her questions and statements that led me to start searching our history.

I believe in a God of truth and light. God does nothing in secret. He is unchanging and doesn't condone or command anyone to sin. By the time I finished reading the different versions of the first vision (always believed there was only one), Joseph's polygamy & polyandry & the rock in the hat translation of the Book of Mormon, I became physically and

spiritually devastated. I knew without a doubt that I had been deceived by church leaders.

My mother was a secretary for over five years in the church to the son-in-law of one of the prophets. During my youth, she worked all day and then worked two or three evenings at church as well. Her life was the church. She held every Stake and Ward calling a woman in the church could possibly hold. She was a rock in the gospel.

The night I called her I started to cry and said Mom something isn't right. When she asked me what was bothering me, I started to tell her things I'd learned about the church. She started to cry and told me she had learned of these things several months previously but didn't know who she could talk too. She was 86 at that time. She had walked the halls of her apartment going without sleep and dealing with this all on her own. The devastation, the emotional turmoil that we experienced is hard to explain.

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I accessed every possible discussion about mormonism on the internet. I listened to John Dehlin & his Mormon Stories podcasts.

Imagine being lied to by men you trusted with all your heart. I started reading the real doctrine of the church taught by Joseph & Brigham and others. I was horrified. All of a sudden what was pushed into the background of Mormonism came alive and it was blasphemy.

From Brigham Young's Adam God theory, to blood oaths in the temple, blood atonement doctrine, polyandry, multiple first visions, rocks in hats, treasure seeking, etc. None of this could have been sanctioned or approved from the God I knew.

The song "Follow the Prophet" became distasteful to me. They can and do lead us astray.

What upset me the most is who they made God out to be. He was nothing more than an exalted man. One among many. Of all the religious sects in the 1800's Mormonism was one of the worst. The sexual immorality, the demotion and blasphemous statements about who God is are shocking. Satan attempted to remove God from his place. The Mormon leaders accomplished that in their doctrines here on earth.

The constant covering up of the true teachings of Mormonism is deceitful. When I read John Hyde's book online I had my mind opened. The lying that went on to get converts then is still being practiced by Mormon leaders today.

My mother, myself, my husband and four of my five children have left the church. We left the John Dehlins behind as we could not move forward in our spiritual lives with individuals who think they can compromise God only to accept some good teachings.

Self deception can be an awful thing.

I wouldn't want to be a Mormon apostle meeting the Savior of the world. They don't know him.

Honesty, truth, love, family values are taught in many good churches. Those teachings won't compensate Mormon church leaders from their false teachings about God and the Savior.

I've moved on. I love my new church family. I survived my loss of trust and can finally say by taking one baby step at a time I'm finally finding peace.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$150,001 - \$200,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Relief Society Presidency, Primary President, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Nursery, Choir / Music

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I WAS ALWAYS A VERY DEVOUT TEENAGER AND YOUNG PERSON.

I attended two prestigious non-Church universities for my undergraduate and graduate school, where I was active in the wards, attended institute, paid my tithing, and remained “stalwart” even though I routinely dated non-members and even had a Catholic boyfriend for over two years. I figured he would eventually come to see things my way and possibly convert if we ever were to marry. (We broke up after my first year of graduate school.)

I eventually married a return missionary from a semi-prominent Salt Lake family in the temple. We now have two children.

In short, my loss of faith has precipitated directly from my emerging feminism. Fortunately, my husband is completely understanding and went through his own loss of faith earlier in our marriage. We both still attend

church meetings in an effort to teach traditions and values to our children, but our hearts really are not in it any more than if we were serving in a school-affiliated youth group. Put simply, I just do not believe that patriarchy is divinely inspired. For a church that teaches the existence of a Heavenly Mother, we ironically do not teach that women are equal to men.

I'm tired of all the fallacies. I'm tired of hearing people say that women are more naturally gifted at nurturing than men. (I believe the sexes are different in temperament, but I'm a firm believer that nurturing can be taught, just like assertiveness in the workplace can be taught.) I'm completely fed up with the obsessive emphasis on girls' modesty. I'm offended by the notion of church courts, particularly for offenses such as “heresy,” and think they ought to be abolished. At the very least, women ought to serve on them. I'm tired of the excuses I hear

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for not ordaining women, such as, “We already do all the work anyway. I don't want the added responsibility.” To me, that is simply learned subservience. I have disliked the temple ever since my first endowment—Eve has almost no lines and zero after leaving Eden—and will only do baptisms, confirmations, and initiatories, though I currently have refused to renew my recommend, despite being temple-worthy.

To top it off, I have never really had a testimony of the Restoration. I roll my eyes when I hear the Joseph Smith story, particularly the parts about Moroni and the translation of the Book of Mormon. The more I have read about Smith as an adult, the more convinced I am that he wrote the Book of Mormon himself and concocted his stories about angels and visions.

I could actually excuse the fact that I think much of the Church is based on the fraudulent account of an egomaniacal, charismatic founder if the messages each week were in line with what I want to teach my children. So far, we are walking a tightrope. I am currently acting as Primary President. I love teaching children that they are children of God and that they have divine spirits and that they matter in this world. However, I could completely dispense with teaching anything about Joseph Smith, personally. The tipping point may come when my daughter, now nine, enters Young Women's. If the messages are as dated and sexist as they were when I was in the program, we may completely bow

out. I would be saddened because I have devoted much of my life to this church, but it simply isn't teaching messages that are healthy for girls and women, in my opinion.

Family members do not know how I feel about the Church. I have joined groups like Feminist Mormon Housewives to read others' stories, but it does little to help and sometimes just confirms my grievances with more stories of gender-based injustice in the Church. If it weren't for my being born into a family tradition of Mormonism, I would never have selected this church for myself as a convert and can't recommend it to others.

Right now, the only thing that could really rebuild my faith would be the ordination of women, which is clearly not going to happen.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$150,001 - \$200,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Young Women's President, Relief Society Presidency, Primary Presidency, Primary President, Spouse of Bishopric, Seminary Teacher, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Nursery, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Choir / Music

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I AM A LIFE-LONG MEMBER, FULLY ACTIVE, HELD MANY LEADERSHIP CALLINGS (I ESPECIALLY LOVED TO TEACH.)

I was born in Salt Lake City and grew up in Utah and California. I was raised in a very orthodox household with strict adherence to gospel values and principles. Patriarchy and Priesthood were heavily emphasized by my father in our home. I had a strong "testimony of the gospel" and remained "obedient" to its teachings.

At BYU, I developed a more critical and analytical perspective of the church, its teachings, and its history. Polygamy, gender inequality within the spiritual and secular aspects of the church, and racism were my initial concerns with the Mormon religion. As I sought answers, this internal conflict

expanded to include the validity of the "restoration," Book of Mormon and Doctrine & Covenants, temple symbols, and rituals (especially in terms of gender), garments, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the church's exclusive claim to truth and heaven, "saving ordinances," the lack of divine feminine, and issues with fear-based theology that created a conditionally loving God who required blood sacrifice for the redemption of humankind.

Many of the teachings did not feel congruent with my experience and personal "truths", and I found it problematic that I was deemed unrighteous, disobedient or not humble when I questioned, probed or disagreed.

I did a tremendous amount of reading, pondering and discussing over a period of several years, which allowed me to

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deconstruct my belief system and create a new paradigm that works for me.

My husband of 20+ years is a "liberal" Mormon, and although not entirely on the same page as me, is very supportive of my spiritual path. It took us many years to achieve this balance.

I have certainly been shunned by some friends and family members for my unorthodoxy but have generally felt love and kindness from most church members. I'm at a very interesting point with the Mormon church in my life right now. I would probably be labeled as an "apostate" by believers who were aware of my perspectives; but I am a regular church goer and feel that I am currently reaping many rewards of church membership. I enjoy going to church with my family on Sunday (husband and 3 teenage children). I find fulfillment in co-teaching Sunday School (12 and 13 year olds) with my husband every week. I have great friends within the church (most a bit unorthodox like myself) that create a rich social network for me. My children have incredible youth leaders that love them, care for them and are wonderful role models for them. They also have great friends who subscribe to similar values and that I am thrilled to have them associating with. My kids love going to the church dances with their friends on the weekends. We have wonderful opportunities for service within our church community (including interfaith service work). And our church activity provides a platform for spirituality in our lives.

I have successfully found many tools outside of the church to supplement my spiritual path. I currently find myself in a transitional place of feeling less combative and irritated or even actively advocating for change in the church, and just relaxing into a system that is flawed in many ways, but is also beautiful and valuable to me in many ways.

I don't do anything that doesn't fit with who I am and I make no pretense about my convictions or lack thereof. I feel authentic in my spiritual pursuit and religious practice, but also at the price of feeling disconnected from most of the ward members.

It has been an interesting journey, especially factoring in my relationship with my husband and children and their religious/spiritual life experience. I can't watch General Conference because it is so grossly steeped in patriarchy. I don't go to the temple or even have a recommend. I don't pay tithing, read the scriptures, or go to Relief Society. Yet, I feel a strong sense of gratitude for the Mormon church and people in my life at this time.

I do not think anything could have prevented my "faith crisis." I am grateful for it. Nothing could re-create the "faith" I had, but gender equality would ease my pain.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Doctorate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Nursery, Young Men's Presidency, Elder's Quorum Presidency

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IT IS HARD TO SUMMARIZE A LIFE CHANGE THAT COMES WITH SUCH DEEP EMOTIONS, AND HAS COMPLICATED CONTRADICTORY ELEMENTS, IN ONLY 700 WORDS.

Nevertheless, I will try.

I was born into a devout Mormon family. As a child, we attended every Sunday. I was baptized when I was eight by my father, and tried to listen to and follow the spiritual promptings I felt throughout my days.

My mother got a disease when I was 13 and died when I was 15. This event was pivotal to me and served to greatly strengthen my spiritual resolve. I completely believed in the gospel (or what I thought was the gospel), I was fully active, and I felt blessed for it.

I started to study church history so that I could become a more rounded church member. I read *Rough Stone Rolling*, and was shocked by all of the things I had never heard of: seer stones,

polyandry, Elija Abel, Masonry, and so on.

Still, I was faithful and read many more books, though never anything that could be called "Anti-Mormon." I just thought I would patiently read and wait for an answer.

Then, I went to graduate school in Chemistry and started to make close friends of other religions.

I lost some of my faith in Mormonism (though certainly not Jesus) because I realized that the primary method we use for determining if a religious idea is true—receiving a spiritual witness following sincere faithful prayer—is simply unreliable. I have Muslim and Catholic friends who also sincerely pray to God and ask if their religion is true and receive a spiritual witness that it is.

The FLDS are extremely faithful, have the same scripture we do, ask in the same way, but receive a different answer than I do.

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The only way to resolve this apparent dilemma is to allow some rationality into the determination. Including rationality, it is very hard to believe many commonly held Mormon beliefs...for example the idea that a Prophet could never lead his people astray when there are so many examples of Prophets, acting in their official capacity, teaching things were just not true, things where "the body of the church was not moved upon by the holy spirit." There are many other examples.

Going through this process has been painful. I often feel emotional about it. All I want is to believe the truth. If Joseph translated the Book of Mormon out of his hat with a seer stone, that is the way I want to believe in it. I feel much closer to God, having to rely on my relationship with him more, but it is hard to feel distance between myself and my Mormon community.

My church leaders have responded defensively. They think I am being deceived. I think that they simply are uninformed. My father has been going through a similar faith crisis, as is my brother, and many other people I know.

Currently, I still consider myself a Mormon. I wear my temple garments. But, my wife and I stopped attending church 6 months ago. We feel more comfortable teaching our children from home on Sunday.

After seeing how Prophets have made mistakes in the past, I now doubt current church policies. If Brigham Young was wrong about the Adam-

God doctrine, what are we wrong about now? So, I am in the church, but somehow out of it.

What could have prevented this from happening? It is simple: a commitment to being as truthful as possible. If there are widespread misconceptions in the Mormon Church, these should be frankly corrected. Yes, there would be consequences, but in the end, the church would be as truthful as possible, and this is right.

My faith could be rebuilt. I need to think of a way to participate fully in Mormonism while being honest with myself and others at the same time. I think if it were clear that a person such as I were welcome to participate, if people like me could raise our hand and ask our questions about polyandry or seer stones or whatever (in the right context), it would be easy for me to go.

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ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Doctorate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Temple Worker, Gospel Doctrine Teacher

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I WAS A FULLY ACTIVE TRUE BLUE MORMON. I ATTENDED MY SINGLES WARD EVERY WEEK AND WORKED IN THE TEMPLE ON SATURDAY MORNINGS.

It wasn't until my first year of grad school that I started to come across some "anti-Mormon" literature, which some people just call history.

I was completely blown away by some of the things that I was reading about Joseph Smith. He definitely was not the man / prophet of God that I had learned about in church my entire life. Soon, issues like blacks and the priesthood, polygamy, correlation, church investments, Book of Abraham, Prop 8, and Book of Mormon historicity made me call into question everything I had ever been taught.

I didn't know what to believe any more. I felt my world was crashing down around me and nobody understood me. I talked to bishops and my parents. They wanted me to not focus on my doubts or were very concerned with the path that I was taking,

respectively. What's funny is that neither parties had ever even heard of these issues before...and they are all in their 50's and 60's.

Let me just reiterate that these experiences were very negative and damaging to me. After all, who else can I turn to when I have a sincere problem? And this constituted a major problem!

I was not doubting because I wanted to sin or go against the teachings of the gospel. As a Mormon, I embrace truth and the truth I was learning about on the internet, in books, etc. was very different than the truth that I had learned about in church.

I felt lied to and deceived. This was (and continues) to be traumatizing. It was about this time that I decided that some things are just better left unsaid. They can believe how they want and I will believe how I want and they don't necessarily need to know the details of my life and how I believe.

Currently, I consider myself an agnostic

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Mormon. I don't really know what to believe. I do believe that there is a higher power at work here, but I don't know what that power is or if that power assigns us to different kingdoms in the next life. I just don't know anymore.

I attend church sometimes. I really love the community. I love the values. I love my heritage.

I can't say for certain whether anything would have prevented this faith crisis. I grew up "knowing" that these things were true. If these troubling historical issues had been presented to me throughout my life, I can't accurately say how things would be different. I could speculate that I might have just taken my faith less seriously (like some of my other non member friends and their relationship to their respective organized religion).

These truths were a part of me to the core. If I had known these truths differently, my "core" would most likely be much different. It is hard to say though.

I am in the process of reconstructing my beliefs (going on four years now). I believe in being a good and honest person. I am starting from there and seeing where that takes me. I am no longer burdened by guilt because I did not do my hometeaching this month. I try to focus on what is good in the world and how I can make it a better place.

Maybe some day I will realize that I was in the wrong for questioning. Maybe I am just

seeing things in the wrong light and I will be perfectly willing to admit that I was wrong.

I wish I was wrong. I was happy living in my ignorant bliss, but unfortunately I cannot ever go back to how things were before.

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ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Convert of less than five years
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Primary Teacher, Gospel Doctrine Teacher

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I WAS A SEMI-ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE CHURCH.

When I joined, I knew there was inconsistencies with what the church taught and what is scientific fact—but I overlooked them for the time being. Plus, the missionaries seemed so anxious to baptize me.

When I was first interviewed by the Bishop, he asked me if I ever went to anti-mormon websites. I didn't realize there was such a thing and questioned him. He said there were a lot of people who were influenced by Satan that were anti-mormon and wrote anti-mormon literature, Basically, I didn't believe the Bishop and started investigating myself. I soon discovered there was much to the church that I had not been told. Yet the final nails in the coffin were: 1. how the church thought about black people and 2, the church's stand again Prop 44.

The church goes on about how enlightened the leaders are and how they are supposedly in direct contact with God. Nope I don't believe it.

Because of what I saw in the Mormon church, I began an extensive and long investigation of religion, faith, and God. I now am an atheist. I guess I can thank the Mormon church for that.

If I the Bishop had never said anti-mormon, I would have never investigated the church closer nor would have I investigated other religion, faith, and God.

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ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Young Men's Presidency, Young Men's President, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Stake Auxiliary Calling, Bishopric Councilor

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AFTER MY MISSION, I MARRIED A WOMAN WHO HAD ALSO SERVED A MISSION.

I graduated from BYU. I had doubts after learning the details behind the Mark Hofmann episode. I spent 20 years convinced that it was all my fault that I was doubting. In 2008 I finally asked myself, "What if the church is NOT true?" I found internet resources and fellowship that eventually led me to stop attending during parts of 2009 (age 49), but went back in 2010 in an attempt to participate in a "Middle Way" type of activity.

I finally quit attending in 2011, resigned in 2012 and that, along with other factors, led my wife to divorce me.

I'm much happier now, but I still struggle with years of Mormon conditioning, which sometimes overwhelms me. My daughter married in the temple last month and I waited outside.

I served in two bishoprics, two high councils, two stints as stake Young Mens President, 25 years of scouting callings, etc. I was all in, but convinced that there was something wrong with me, until I realized that there is actually something wrong with the church.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Convert of less than five years
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	

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I JOINED THE CHURCH DURING MY FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE. I WAS DRAWN TO THE “WHITE-WASHED” VERSION OF CHURCH DOCTRINE THAT THE CHURCH SHOWS THE WORLD AND LOVED THE MEMBERS OF MY WARD.

Over time, I grew concerned that the church doctrines that have actually been taught tend to differ from the version in church manuals or missionary discussions.

I understand that the church tries to “use the spirit” to determine what is taught, but the church really needs a clear cut explanation of exactly what is taught—it gets confusing and frustrating when you think you’ve found a clear-cut answer to a question, only to find that the leader who taught the principle was “speaking as a man and not a prophet.”

If the church wants to try and give itself a mainstream look, then the touchy doctrines need to be completely renounced, otherwise offer a clear explanation.

This, however, was not the reason I left. I grew up as a member of the Lutheran Church. While I no longer share many of their views on many teachings, I was used to a very Christ-centered worship, where Christ’s teachings were taught, and scripture interpreted. You can only endure so many talks about the First Vision, Joseph Smith, tithing, the importance of temple work, the importance of obedience, the importance of missionary work, etc. before it all starts to feel like a Pyramid scheme.

I was a member for one Easter service and brought my non-member mother to church with me (thinking that the meeting would be special and spirit-filled). Instead, we sang “Praise to the Man” for an opening hymn, listened to talks about tithing, missionary work, and finally Joseph Smith (Jesus was only mentioned a few times, and even then, it was just by accident) and finally ended the morning with “If You Could Hie to Kolob.” The LDS Church is most certainly a Christian church, but it tends

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to put more importance on the words and deeds of its leaders than on Christ himself.

Finally, since leaving, the lack of charity performed by the church has started to bother me. Members of the church are some of the most caring and giving individuals I’ve ever met. They could be an unstoppable force of good in the world if their leaders would encourage them to be.

Instead, they are encouraged to only give to the church (which uses their money to build ugly temples and shopping malls) or focus on preparing their friends who most likely aren’t interested to meet with missionaries.

If Mr. Monson were to release a statement tomorrow encouraging members to volunteer for a charity such as Habitat for Humanity, I’m convinced that it would put a significant dent in the world’s homeless problem.

Since leaving the church, I’ve come to see it for what it is: a community of people who are trying their best, while their leaders try to keep them in the dark. I’ve found new faith in the Episcopalian Church and have absolutely NO interest in ever renewing my membership in the LDS church.

For the past 8 years, there have been several attempts to re-activate me. A friendly word of advice to any church member / leader who might read this: when an inactive member stops coming to church, or tells you that they aren’t interested in returning, respect that.

Don’t take it as a test and try to sick the missionaries or home teachers on them. Wish them well and let them know that you will be there if they need you. Anything other than that is disrespectful and insulting.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Primary Teacher, Stake Auxiliary Calling

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I AM CURRENTLY A FULLY-ACTIVE AND FAITHFUL LDS MEMBER, ALONGSIDE MY SPOUSE AND CHILDREN.

I served an honorable, full-time mission. I have had nothing but positive experiences so far in my lifetime with the Church.

I recently decided to start studying Church history more in detail, which ultimately led me to several concerning issues of which I was previously unaware; namely, Joseph Smith's polygamous and polyandrous relationships, his actual reported method of translation (peep-stone in a hat instead of the traditional Urim and Thummim alongside the plates), the Book of Abraham translation by Egyptologists, among others.

I have tried to confine myself to what I would consider to be LDS-approved sources, but I am discouraged by many of the unofficial apologetic answers from places such as FAIR or FARMS / Maxwell Institute resources. Research has led to other questions such as Book of Mormon

authenticity (King James verbatim quotes in the book, lack of archaeological evidence, etc.), which I am able to cope with had it not been for other purported behaviors I have read about concerning Joseph Smith (multiple First Vision accounts, his approaches to young teenage girls as well as other married women, including claims that he would be destroyed if they would not enter into a relationship with him, the sending off of husbands on missions while he performed some of this behavior, his alleged treatment of William and Jane Law, the Council of Fifty and supposed treason, the ordering of the burning down of the printing press, with which he denied ever having any polygamous relationships which are contrary to historical record)... and the list starts to grow even from there.

I do not profess to say that science or history has all of the answers, but I feel discouraged when the Church uses science when it shows the Church in a positive

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light, but immediately rejects any scientific evidence or historical record when it shows the Church in a negative light.

Upon reading much of this, I felt very deceived and have on many occasions started to literally hyperventilate. I have spent many sleepless nights contemplating this. I am afraid to bring it up to Church leaders or even my family for fear of rejection or being labeled as some sort of an apostate within the community.

I must stress once again that I am a faithful, active member of this Church who is greatly struggling on an internal level on the foundational claims on the Church. The lack of response from the Brethren on this issue has been even more concerning and my testimony is almost to the point where I would consider it shattered.

I feel like the very foundation of my beliefs is crumbling out from underneath me which has me questioning the very existence of Deity at all if the LDS Church is not what it claims to be.

For the moment—for fear of rejection or problems from family, friends, or my local community—I am continuing to remain active but feel almost hypocritical. I am worried that my children, who one day will be close to serving their own missions, will be presented with this same information. I don't want them to feel like they have been deceived. I don't want myself to feel deceived. I want that comfortable feeling that this is all indeed

true, that I have an actual Priesthood power and authority, and that through that power my family can indeed be together forever... but these questions, issues, and doubts, going unresolved, are making it extremely difficult to continue on with these beliefs.

Where at one point I felt like I had all of the answers to life, for the first time ever, I am feeling uncertain, scared, alone, and worried.

I am hoping that the Church will address these issues directly in a straightforward manner, and not in some regurgitated apologetic response as I yet to have any satisfactory answers from these resources.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Primary Teacher, Choir / Music

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WHILE I NEVER HAD THE "BURNING IN THE BOSOM" MORONI'S PROMISE MOMENT TO CONFIRM MY TESTIMONY, I STILL BELIEVED AS STRONGLY AS ANYONE COULD THAT THE CHURCH WAS TRUE.

I held tight to a conference talk that explained that not everyone has a monumental experience, that others just "know" and that's enough to form a testimony.

I was raised in the church and my parents held a good balance of orthodoxy and not cramming doctrine down our throats at every teaching opportunity.

As a teenager I strived very diligently to do everything, literally everything, I was supposed to. I was determined to be perfect and with the exception of a brief stint with masturbation, which I had never been told was wrong, I never did anything to make me an unworthy member. But, still when it came time for my temple marriage I couldn't get over the feelings of guilt. I had long since

repented of my "sin" and knew I was forgiven, but couldn't help feeling guilty over just the fact that I was human and fell short.

Certainly I was not good enough to enter the House of The Lord. As I expressed my feelings to my fiance he assured me that I was plenty worthy enough and after a few weeks of deprogramming my mind to think of myself in a sinful light, I felt prepared to go to the temple and get married.

We married young, had our children young, and were faithful tithe payers despite both being students and living off of just his small income. There were many, many months that we paid tithing and then charged gas and groceries on a credit card. We were taught to be self-reliant, so this is what made sense to us. No sense in asking the Bishop for assistance, there were people in our ward far worse off than us, we wouldn't be deserving of it. We hadn't quite suffered enough.

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I graduated college and put off graduate school and my career to begin our family. My field is one where taking time off is detrimental to being able to step back in a few years later because experience gained in the young, grad-school days is essential to getting paid work. But, The Lord doesn't like women to work outside of the home, so I just decided to give up my career entirely.

I had two children and when I had been home with them for four years, I had an awakening.

My life held little to no purpose and I desperately missed my career, the one that hadn't even had a chance to begin because I was busy having babies. I began the steps necessary to get back into a place where I could attempt getting work and opened up my mind to the possibility of creating my own future.

A few years later, when I discovered the Book of Abraham and Joseph Smith's polyandry and paedophilia, my world was rocked. This was not what I was taught in church, this was not the Prophet we revered.

From there, the snowball grew. I learned about the Masonic connection with the temple, and how the tokens I needed to get into heaven were just commonplace handshakes used by the Masons and other organizations.

I learned multiple problems with the Book of Mormon, the multiple First Vision and Priesthood Restoration accounts. My testimony was swallowed up in the abyss

and I knew I had been raised in perhaps the greatest lie to ever be perpetuated.

I was accused of getting into "anti" by family. I was patted on my head and told "I know you really have a testimony, you're just associating with a bad crowd." They insist on keeping that Elephant in the Corner.

But I'm free. And happier than I ever have been.

The daily burden of guilt is gone and my intellect is far greater than it's ever been. I've finally learned how to think logically and critically, easily able to detect fallacies in all facets of life. My faith crisis was the darkest period of my life, but the sun shines so much brighter on this end of the tunnel.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Primary Teacher, Choir / Music

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I WAS A LIFE-LONG FULLY ACTIVE MEMBER UNTIL MY BROTHER-IN-LAW SENT AN EMAIL TO ALL HIS FAMILY STATING HE DIDN'T BELIEVE.

My husband decided to research the issues my brother-in-law was having to help him back into the fold. What happened instead was we both left the church.

For me, I didn't leave because of a loss of faith, but because I gained knowledge.

The church is not true, because the history is all too revealing about the shortcomings and total lies told by the current church. The temple ceremony is a copy cat of the Masonic ritual, the Book of Mormon was translated using seer stones and a hat, and the Book of Abraham was completely falsely translated.

My family has taken my change rather well, but the ward and friends are a different story. Being in Utah, we get "looked down on" for not being in the church. Nothing could help rebuild my faith. There is too much false information spouted by the current church leaders.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Elder's Quorum Presidency

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MY DESCENT INTO DOUBT STARTED ON MY MISSION WHEN I WAS CONFRONTED WITH ISSUES RARELY DISCUSSED IN MY CHURCH CIRCLES.

The first was an invitation to study what really happened with the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Although I declined the offer, it sowed a spore that I would investigate later. When that later came, I found my seminary teachers had outright lied concerning the vital facts. With that incident in mind, I did a deeper search of other basic doctrines including the First Vision, tithing, temple ceremony and history, and translation of the Book of Mormon. Again, things went badly for my "faith" based understanding.

I also became overloaded with callings and would never get very intelligent answers as to why we were doing certain things. I felt more and more like I was expected to be a mindless drone for Mormonism and all lessons centered around me doing more

for the Church, pay more offerings, ask no questions, blind obedience, etc. Additionally, my leaders were more droll, dishonest, lazy, and demanding with no intellectual answers for anything. Soon it became a thought and attitude crime to even ask questions.

I still go to church, but I am letting my temple recommend lapse, accepting no callings, giving my tithing donations to my neighbors in real need, and asking touchy questions. I feel I would like to stay in the church so I can be a festering sore and cause others to question without offering any help to "spread the kingdom." I realize my family is not valued by anyone in the church other than what we can provide to advance some megalithic manmade organization. Also, our lessons are less and less centered on scripture or Jesus Christ. I no longer even bother to take my scriptures.

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ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Primary Teacher, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Financial / Membership Clerk, Executive Secretary, Stake Auxiliary Calling

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I AM A DESCENDENT OF WILFORD WOODRUFF. LIFELONG, FULLY FAITHFUL AND BELIEVING MEMBER.

I served a mission, I was in my seminary presidency in a large seminary in Idaho, I taught at the MTC, I graduated from BYU, I married in the temple, I was in an Elder's Quorum Presidency, and Executive Secretary, a Stake Clerk and I taught Gospel Principles as a ward missionary.

I waited until I was married at age 26 to have sex. I never drank a drop of alcohol or coffee or did drugs or smoked cigarettes.

I dedicated my life from sports fandom to politics to everything to building the church and it's cause. If anyone defended the faith and dedicated their life to it, I did. With passion.

Then, the Elders Quorum president I served with left the church suddenly. I had to save

him so I reached out to him to find out why he left. I told him to tell me, expecting to hear stupid lies that I would debunk.

What I learned instead, I was utterly unprepared for. I found first hand historical documents and historical facts that completely contradicted all I had been taught by the church. I was in shock.

I went through Hell the night I realized that everything I had lived for and believed in was a hoax made up by a predatory religious con man and perpetuated by more con men throughout the ages.

I remember walking down my street in agony, wondering why and how this could have happened to me. My despair and shock felt like losing a beloved child that I cherished.

But soon, the shock wore off and the anger set in. Anger for being lied to. Anger for

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never having heard the truth about Joseph Smith—which I would have never believed otherwise. Anger for having wasted two years of my life perpetuating the lie to others when I could have spent that time actually helping people. Anger that my mother will suffer and agonize over me as she serves in the Temple, believing I am deceived because a few leaders at the top continue to teach lies and won't confess the truth of the false origins of the church. She will never understand.

I almost lost my wife to the liars who continued to try to deceive her, but fortunately, she was smart enough to read the information herself and see the lies. I almost lost my wife and my children.

Now, I am happier than ever to be free. I am free to be a normal person and not be caught up in stupid, false traditions. I learned very quickly that the church uses classic cult techniques to keep members under control. Fear of information. Control of dress. Control of eating habits. Thought-stopping indoctrination and testimony bearing. Ritualistic punishments. Rituals you have to promise to follow before you are even told what you will be promising to do. Oversight and spying. Double-bind lying and telling you it's your fault if you don't get the answers the church wants you to have. Appealing to emotions and discarding logic.

Just like the Jehovah's Witnesses and any other cult organization, I have been

indoctrinated by a cult my whole life.

I am so happy to be out of the church. Nothing would ever bring me back. It was Hell, and it continues to be very difficult as I lose friends over this and family shuns us because of the horrific teachings of the Cult of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

But I am FREE!! For the first time in my life—I actually have my agency and I use it. And it isn't dangerous!!! Masturbation, drinking and pornography are awesome and don't destroy me!! They actually make my life fun and my marital sexual experience even better!

The only thing to prevent the faith crisis is to keep lying to members and keep them from the truth. Just like all cults do. They lie and cover up the truth. Good luck with that! The internet is here and the cult of the LDS has met its match! Be free ye saints!!!

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Doctorate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Convert of more than five years
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Sunday School Teacher, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Ward Mission Leader, Financial / Membership Clerk, High Priest Leader, Branch President

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I WAS BORN AND RAISED JEWISH AND HAVE BEEN ON A LIFELONG SEARCH FOR TRUTH.

I encountered the Church in college, while obtaining a degree in Religious Studies, and after over a year of intensive investigation, and despite some reservations, made a leap of faith and joined. My wife joined 6 months later. We were married in the Temple several months before the birth of our first child.

We spent over three decades fully active in the Church. My only son went on a mission, and he and the two married daughters all married in the Temple. I served in a wide variety of missionary callings, including initial Church attempts at directly proselyting to the Jews in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

As a Physician, with a life-long passion for Science, the testable claims made by the Church (historicity of the Book of Mormon, translation of the Book of Abraham papyri,

etc.) always concerned me. As the evidence weighed more and more against the Church's claims, rather than in its favor, and as I realized that the entire basis for a "Testimony" was invalid (subjective experiences are inherently unreliable to establish truth), I reluctantly came to the conclusion, after several years of research and soul-searching, that the Church was not what it claimed to be, and not what I had hoped and prayed it to be.

Half of my children left with my wife and me; half remain. Despite an otherwise very close relationship, and the passage of several years, they refuse to discuss our reasons, creating the proverbial 'elephant' in the room. This is a source of great distress to me.

Our 'friends' in the Church abandoned us except for a very few exceptions that I can count on one hand.

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I have enormous respect for the dedication and motivation of the majority of Church members, because they don't know any better, and are trying to do the right thing.

I have enormous disrespect for the organization of the Church because it hides the truth from its members, actively discourages them to look beyond 'approved' texts, vilifies those who think independently and actively look for the truth, spends billions of dollars on real estate and commercial ventures while ignoring the plight of the poor for all practical purposes, and seem always to be on the wrong side of social issues (Blacks and the Priesthood, Women's Rights, and currently Gay rights).

There is nothing the Church could do to "win" me back. The foundation is riddled with lies and dishonesty. The best they could do is to come clean about these matters, and change into an actual organization devoted to implementing the ideals that Jesus taught in the books they declare sacred. The RLDS Church did this, and I give them respect for their integrity.

I do not have a traditional "belief system" as such. I recognize science and reason as the only known reliable way to separate truth from error, and am willing to accept whatever can be supported by legitimate evidence. At this time, I am not aware of any evidence for the existence of the "God" as traditionally understood, and find that the usual definitions

of this type of God lead to unresolvable problems and contradictions (not the least of which is the existence of evil). I have reviewed the evidence presented in support of life after death, and find it to not be compelling. I do not have any reason to think my individual consciousness will survive my death, but as with all matters, I am open to being wrong.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE

<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Convert of more than five years
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Young Women's President, Relief Society Presidency, Relief Society President, Spouse of Bishopric, Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Stake Auxiliary Calling

PRIOR TO MY FAITH CRISIS, I WAS FULLY ENGAGED IN CHURCH.

After 47 years of active participation, I felt I was in danger of becoming apathetic in my testimony. I felt as though I was just going through the motions.

I wanted growth. I knew the basics, but I wanted to really understand Joseph Smith and some of the prophets who followed. I wanted to increase in my understanding of just who these men were and what they went through so that the saints today could have the fullness of the gospel. I have always said that once you have testimony of the truthfulness of the church, you are free to ask the difficult questions and search for answers. Truth has nothing to hide.

In my search to understand the prophet Joseph Smith, I came across FAIR. I had no desire to get information from any

source outside the church, I wanted reliable information from "People who knew."

As I clicked on the topic heading under Joseph Smith and began reading, I found things that shattered everything I had been taught. Worse than this, I found things that shattered everything I had taught others, both in the mission field and in various ward callings.

It is painful enough to find out you have been lied to. But to discover that you have been used to propagate that lie unknowingly is the ultimate betrayal. And this, coming from a church who has the nerve to ask me if I am an honest in my dealings with my fellow men in order to enter into the temple.

I could probably have gotten over the initial shock of how the church covers up the history of the church that "may be true but not very useful" if it weren't for

the fact the church continues to spin the image it has created of a false history.

Because of this constant spin and omission of the facts, it is impossible to enjoy General Conference when you recognize the propagation of the lies.

It becomes impossible to teach from the church manuals if you have half a conscience about being used by a church that wants you tell their lies for them.

Going to lunch with friends becomes painful as they talk about things you understand aren't true, and yet to protect them from the truth you keep quiet...again becoming an unwilling agent for the church.

And then there is family. Thousands of us risk losing our families, the respect of our kids, our parents, wives, husbands if we speak up. We are the ones left to pay the price for truth because those with the power to lay church history clean at our feet hide behind words like revelation, faith, authority, integrity, Prophet, priesthood...

We pay the price for the sins of our fathers while they have the nerve to blame us for not having faith.

I am seeded deep in the closet in regards to my relationship to the church. I have let people assume I'm inactive. No one in my family other than my husband has any clue. Since I can't hold a calling in good conscience, it's just easier to be labeled "inactive."

My parents are old and they don't need the heartbreak. I feel like I'm a prisoner. I feel like my life is a lie to my children.

The irony once you learn about the history, DNA, Pearl of Great Price...is that before you discover it, you're lying for the church, and once you discover it, you lie to protect your family and your relationships. Basically in or out of the church, your whole life is a lie.

The only thing the church could have done to prevent my crisis was to not found itself in lies. But that cat is already out of the bag.

For now, I would rather pay the price of silence. I think the church relies on this. I can't hurt my family. My kids will have already started drawing their own conclusions, and I support them in whatever road they take.

Within the next few years, both of my parents as well as my husband's parents will pass. At this point, I will loudly exit.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Primary Presidency, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Nursery

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I WAS RAISED VERY ACTIVE AND BELIEVING, ON SEMINARY COUNCIL, ATTENDED BYU, WAS MARRIED AT 20 IN THE TEMPLE, TAKING NOTES ON EVERY GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION.

When I was 26, I had been married for six years and was expecting my third child—when I had a feminist awakening.

It started with a typical discussion (disagreement maybe) with my husband about a topic I can no longer remember. I do remember it was church related and I was trying to make a point about women. I asked him, “Which women in the church do you see as your spiritual leaders?” When he paused, I realized that he didn’t even see his mother as a spiritual example to him (and he admires his mother immensely).

Suddenly I saw the conference Ensign and the centerfold filled with pictures of our male church leaders and I felt sick

inside. Women in our church are not seen as spiritual leaders. We are hidden.

When I found Mormon feminist blogs, I was relieved to realize I wasn’t the only one who felt that women were a shadow in the church. It was hard for me when I learned that Relief Society is now an empty shell compared to what it used to be—a strong, independent organization of women who write their own lessons, manage their own money, and work creatively for the good of community...for the relief of society.

The more I learned, the more disturbed I became and the more I began to question the church’s truth claims and even the existence of God. I still struggle to understand the inequality between the sexes and I question the patriarchal structure that claims its authority from God.

The way I see it, either God does not support patriarchy and thus does not

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support Mormonism, or He does, and I don’t want anything to do with that god.

I’ve also struggled to find and connect with a divine feminine, which I want to believe in. It’s not something I’m familiar with, so it’s taken me a long time to be comfortable with Her as a being of power and authority.

My faith crisis has been hard on my marriage, but we have grown closer in the last year. My husband is a strong member, has been Elders Quorum President, Young Men’s President, and Executive Secretary many times. I believe that he would be a counselor in the Bishopric if it wasn’t for my faith crisis. That’s really hard for me, but also I’m grateful because I often resent the time that he’s away from he family.

Currently, I attend church most weeks with my family, although only Sacrament meeting usually. I don’t pay my tithing and have asked my husband not to pay on the 50% of his check that we believe is my portion. I use that 5% of our income to donate to charities in the community. I don’t have a temple recommend and feel that the temple is a painful place for many women, with covenants that distance them from God, not bring them closer. I no longer wear my garments, and I have no plans of changing any of these things in the future.

I wish that the church environment was more open because I struggled for so many years with really difficult questions, but never felt like church was a place for asking real questions.

It’s a place for asking pretend questions and giving the answers that we already know. (What do you do if you’re tempted? Pray! Read the scriptures! Attend the temple!)

Another issue I have with the church is where it spends its vast wealth. Not on an orphanage or homeless shelter—but on City Creek Mall! What kind of God do Mormons have?

My three sons (ages 10, seven, and five) are being raised in the church and I’m starting to see it more as a bad thing than a good thing.

I would love to see the church embrace people with questions, gays, feminists, treat boys and girls equally, jettison scouting, and extend the priesthood to women. If I came back, it would be with a thoughtful faith—with a focus on serving all of God’s children and less on personal salvation.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Seminary Teacher, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Young Men's President, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President, Executive Secretary, Stake Auxiliary Calling, Branch President

I WAS BORN TO ACTIVE PARENTS IN A POSITIVE WARD (THIRD OF EIGHT KIDS).

I got an answer to Moroni's promise at 10. I had great active friends who 'got me through' my teen faith challenges. I served a mission (Zone Leader), married in the temple in 2000, three kids all born in the covenant.

My wife stopped attending in 2010 and believes there is probably not a God. Initially created a divide and contention between us, but was eventually a process of both being able to demonstrate that our love was bigger than each other's religious views.

I continued activity with our kids through 2011/12. At the time, I was happily serving in the branch presidency. A large part of my church fulfillment is being 'front of house.' I feel

validated through service and being a leader.

We moved abroad (Asia) in 2012 to a 200+ expat unit. Overnight, I was a 'back-seat Mormon' due to the huge number of people there. Culturally, they were very different (I'm European, they're mostly Utahn). At the same time, I had my eyes opened to the different cultures and faiths / philosophies of my work colleagues and associates. A realization that God works through Buddha, Confucius, Lao Tzu, etc. My wife is also a happier person as a non-Mormon. Me taking the kids away for most of Sunday also put a bit of a strain on our relationship.

It is my opinion that no-one leaves or joins the church as a simple reaction to new information (whether for good or ill). There is always a motivating trigger behind it. Even

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if we can't see it at the time. I recognise that my trigger to investigate church history / origins were a combination of family strains, a newly opened mind, and church not being as fulfilling as it used to be.

I started with the very firm commitment to investigate responsibly. I studied every source possible. I cross-referenced every critical article with a FAIR / FARMS reply (and read the primary source if I could). I wrote a letter to myself in August last year saying "I currently want to find a solution to the history and stay LDS. I'm not looking for a way out." I was fully active, serving on the EQ Presidency and keeping the commandments. My first desire in studying was to better understand my wife's conclusions (she never pushed them on me) and to see what Mormonisms' true place in the world was.

I spent about 6-9 all-consuming months reading every spare hour available. I sometimes felt physically sick at what I was reading. I felt betrayed. I felt duped. I considered, then rejected, Atheism.

Top issues were: head in hat / scrying, Joseph telling stories (Zelph!), polyandry, the Harris-Mitchill meeting, KJV New Testament in the Book of Mormon, Brigham Young not acting like a prophet, Book of Abraham, the casual early word of wisdom, the corporation today (City Creek), gay marriage. And most of all how badly the church and

correlation had buried it all for years.

They collectively brought me to the conclusion that Mormonism is a man-made construct. Probably not, in my opinion, a manipulative fraud. A well-intended, probably inspired and certainly inspiring spiritual / social vehicle among many other vehicles for travelling the path that all of humanity is on towards a God we call by different names. I consider Mormonism to be "a way" for me. But not for all. And certainly not the "only true way and all others false."

I joined mormondialogue.org and staylds.com. I blogged. I found articles / talks that showed me that some of our leaders are more open minded about other faiths and more tolerant. I accepted prophets / apostles are imperfect individuals and don't worry about some of them.

I currently still attend with the kids. I'm not sure how much longer I'll sustain this. I don't enjoy it much but I want to be associated with Mormonism. It's my tribe. I recognise it contains good principles.

The church could help by accepting mistakes. Being more open. And buy everyone a copy of "The God Who Weeps!" They could help the 'right-wingers' see that the world is full of good people guided by God. Not divided into Mormons or Non-Mormons. The "church of the Lamb" is broader than Mormonism.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Gospel Doctrine Teacher

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I AM CURRENTLY A FULLY ACTIVE, TEMPLE RECOMMEND HOLDING, LIFE-LONG MEMBER OF THE LDS CHURCH.

I recently discovered Boyd K. Packer's beliefs on homosexuality, women, and telling the truth. I feel like he is advocating dishonesty and lying about church history, doctrinal changes, and the Book of Abraham in order to maintain membership—and it is actually hurting the church.

My husband is a convert and feels lied to as well as we were never told the true history of the church. We also disagree with the church stance on homosexuality, as we have close family and friends who are gay, and we know it was not caused by masturbation or other sinful acts. It is ridiculous to say so!

I feel like the lies and cover up hurt the church more than just being honest.

None of the facts in church history make the gospel bad. I don't understand the

need to hide truth from members. I would be more comfortable in church if I didn't feel like what we learn is a whitewashed history and watered down doctrine.

I think the church is inserting itself too much into politics and telling people how to vote, and either needs to back away from that or start paying taxes.

I am currently questioning staying in church and considering being released from my calling and taking a step back to evaluate how I feel towards my religion. I feel betrayed and lied to. It is an uneasy feeling. I need to study out other religions for a while and see where I really stand.

Family, friends, and church leaders are unaware of my feelings at this point. I do not want to hurt any of them, as I feel they are good, misguided people. I worry about how they will feel, as I do not reject them, but I need to do what is best for me and my family.

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I believe that the biggest thing the church could do to rebuild my trust is to start telling the truth about the church history, stop whitewashing everything, start allowing people to use their brains.

I also think they need to seriously consider how they treat women and the fact that the leadership is predominantly white. I do not believe God is so racist as to call such a majority of white people to high up callings (with a token black guy).

I also believe women should hold higher position within the church and have more say. We are intelligent and God has called women to be prophets in the past and they have held the priesthood in the past.

I think the church has made changes in the past at a slower rate, but eventually got there, to reflect social norms, and it is time to start considering that this isn't the 1950s idealistic society of white suburbia with stay at home moms and getting rich on the backs of minorities, the poor, and women. It is time for equality to be prevalent in the church among all races, classes, and genders.

Basically, if the church wants to be seen as a beacon of truth, it needs to be honest, it needs to be fair, it needs to be kind.

One thing we have always loved about the church is its assistance during natural disasters and its ability to help people going through hard times.

We love the church programs and the fellowship and community in the church, but it often seems fake, since the words used are often based off of a lie. Phrases like, "milk before meat" when you are never given the meat, and "the church is the same yesterday, today, and forever" when you know there are definitely huge changes that have been made make me very uncomfortable.

The biggest thing for us is honesty! It is huge, as it is one of the big commandments, and when church leadership refuses to be honest, it is very telling.

By their fruits ye shall know them! If the church refuses to acknowledge their dishonesty and begin the repentance process and making things right, I and many others I know, will be unable to continue membership in the church.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE

<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Primary Presidency, Primary Teacher

I WAS BORN IN THE COVENANT AND ACTIVE MY WHOLE CHILDHOOD.

I married a returned missionary in the temple. After two years, my husband revealed to me that he no longer believed the church to be true.

I was very sad but he was the most important person in my life so I never considered leaving. We worked together and found a rhythm in our relationship. We were both fully supportive of each other while I remained active in church and he occasionally attended with me.

After a year, we decided that we needed to tell our families that he did not believe. I told my parents and siblings and their shared reaction was “when are you leaving him?”

That reaction hurt me immensely. Their outward and intense disdain for his “choice” continued for a few months until I told them that if they didn’t stop being so judgmental, I would be forced to choose which relationship was more important to me and I assured

them that they would not come out on top.

After that traumatic time, I decided to investigate the church myself. Did I really have a testimony? What did I believe? How could I believe the same things as my family when their treatment of my spouse was so contrary to the love I believed that the gospel taught?

I studied my scriptures, fasted, prayed, spoke with my priesthood leaders, paid my tithing, fasted, prayed, fasted, prayed, fasted, prayed. I was so faithful and was truly seeking for answers the way I had always been taught.

I got NOTHING from God. I concluded that I didn’t have a testimony of my own; I’d always just relied on the things that my church leaders taught. I had been obedient. That is all.

I started to read church publications about issues that had always confused me. I was still earnestly trying to build a testimony. My key questions included:

- A woman’s role in the church
- A woman’s role in the home
- Blacks and the priesthood
- The temple
- Evolution
- The Word of Wisdom
- Homosexuality
- Tithing
- Polygamy
- Peep Stones
- Changes to the church throughout history (“God is unchanging”)
- Noah’s Ark

remark about how “you need to smarten up and get back to church” barf).

I know that they are sad about my path but they shouldn’t be. I am happy. I love my life. Life isn’t easy, we have challenges and we overcome them without relying on magic or tradition.

We don’t need to believe in God to raise our children to be moral. Humanity is enough.

I could not get answers to any of these questions. I realized that my husband was right and I was not sad anymore. I was relieved. A huge burden of pressure and guilt had been lifted.

This path to clarity had taken almost a year and a half. By the end, our first child was about 4 months old. There was no way that I was going to raise children under a dark cloud the way that I’d been raised.

My family has never approached the subject with me since I gave them my ultimatum. They know that I no longer attend church. I haven’t for seven years. Our relationship is strained but civil (except for the occasional

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ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Relief Society Presidency, Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Choir / Music

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FOR APPROXIMATELY THE PAST SIX YEARS, I HAVE BEEN DEALING WITH A PAINFUL FAITH CRISIS.

I continue to be an active, tithing paying, word of wisdom obeying Latter-day Saint and always have been. My family and the majority of my friends are deeply entrenched in the church. My grandfather was a stake patriarch, my dad is currently a bishop, my mother has served as a relief society president, and I am a return missionary.

I have served as a Gospel Doctrine teacher and Sunday School teacher among many other things. I am a college graduate and wife and mother of two beautiful children.

I have everything to lose and nothing to gain by not believing the exclusivity claims of the church.

My questions began on my mission, but became a matter of personal integrity during

the church's involvement in Prop. 8 and while I was rigorously studying the Doctrine and Covenants for my calling at BYU.

I banished myself to primary and music callings, talked to my dad a little bit about my questions, and went to an LDS therapist.

Luckily, my father met me with love and acceptance but the therapist told me I should look into other churches and treated me like I was not a friend to the church. He didn't bother to ask me what I had been reading but assumed I was out to pick apart the church. I paid money I didn't have to seek help and came away feeling even more discouraged.

People who sought me out as friends stopped inviting me over or treated me like a project when I was honest about my sincere questions.

I feel isolated and confused. I'm still clearly a Mormon in behavior. I have no desire to

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change that, but I struggle with literal belief.

I don't know where I fit in at church anymore but I search to find my role every Sunday.

I don't want to go to my bishop because I don't want my temple recommend to be taken away. I love the temple. I haven't committed a grave sin and don't believe doubt and unbelief should be treated as such.

I am jealous of my Catholic friends who still participate in the ritual and culture of their church without literal belief. I hope someday my church will be a place where I feel I can be my genuine self without feeling scared of rejection.

I have devoted my life to the church. I have always been a Mormon and want to be recognized as such despite having very little faith.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's President, Primary Presidency, Full-time Missionary, Primary Teacher, Nursery, Choir / Music

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MY HUSBAND AND I WERE FULLY-ACTIVE, MARRIED IN THE TEMPLE, AVERAGE LDS FOLK.

I always felt more righteous and obedient than my husband. I am a returned missionary and he left his mission early and has always struggled with holding callings in the church.

About a year ago, my husband first admitted to me that he felt he didn't have a testimony and never really did. He questioned whether we could ever really "know" anything spiritual, and that in turn made me start to question.

He also was angry with our Bishop for chastising me as a Young Womens President for conversing about tattoos and breast augmentation. The parents complained and I was called in for a chat. It was very humiliating.

About the time I was released as Young Womens President in August 2012, I read something somewhere (in the newspaper, I think) about second anointings. There was a link in the

article that directed me to Mormonthink.org.

I began reading voraciously and was shocked at what I discovered. I was skeptical at first but after reading the bios of the administrators and the purpose of the site, I felt that it wasn't an "anti- Mormon" website and that I could trust the literature.

I also amped up my reading of "Rough Stone Rolling," a book I had begun reading years before (still am not finished).

I became obsessed with getting to the bottom of it and finding out about the real Joseph Smith. The biggest shockers were that Joseph translated the Book of Mormon without the plates, with his head in a hat that contained a seer stone, and also that there were several versions of the First Vision. I never knew that the texts contained in the Pearl of Great Price were not literal translations of the scrolls the Joseph obtained.

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I already knew that Joseph was a polygamist, so that was not a huge deal, although still hard to comprehend.

I did not know that Joseph ordered the destruction of the printing press and that it was a factor in his eventual assassination.

I am disturbed by the amount of information that is withheld from church members and although I have never been a black and white believer, I feel like my foundation has been severely shaken. Once I began to doubt Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon, I found myself wondering whether or not there actually is a "Spirit," since that is how I previously determined that the Book of Mormon was true.

I find myself daily questioning whether or not there is a God and an afterlife. My family does not know this is happening to me. It would absolutely devastate my mother and it gives me ulcers thinking about how one day this must actually be confronted.

I have spoken with a few trusted friends outside my ward and they have been wonderful. My bishop knows nothing, except that we haven't paid tithing in over a year and my husband has asked to be released from his Stake Young Mens calling.

I actually kind of wish we could go in for an interview and be up-front about everything. I feel that when I attend church that I have a huge secret, like perhaps how a closeted gay person would feel.

I am still interested in attending the LDS church—I think it affords wonderful opportunities to serve and feel uplifted. My husband is leaning towards a more secular approach. It is difficult to navigate these waters, especially with our three young children.

I am grateful to Mormonstories.org and Mormonmatters.org, in that I can find people and experiences that I can relate to. I don't sense that any of my friends in my ward are going through anything remotely similar.

We still attend church—I am the currently the ward organist.

I hope to be up-front about our church's history with my children to prevent something like this happening to them. I also hope to be open-minded about their decisions in the future—about whom they wish to marry and whether or not they want to go on missions. I don't want to use guilt or pressure to push them into anything.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE

<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women’s Presidency, Young Women’s President, Primary Presidency, Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Nursery, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Stake Auxiliary Calling

IT STARTED UPON RETURNING FROM MY MISSION:

I had to begin grieving my father’s death, which occurred while I faithfully serving. As I attended church every Sunday, I felt emptiness. At this most “righteous time of my life” (no problems with sin), there was no Spirit comforting my soul, or “mourning with those who mourn” from fellow ward members.

Instead, I would retreat to the canyons to feel connected with the divine. I wasn’t ready to openly acknowledge it, but thus began a certain nagging in the back of my mind: “If this is Zion, and we are all covenanted people of God, who have promised to carry each other’s burdens, why isn’t that my experience, among the Saints of God?” The lessons on food storage, tithing, modesty or other rules were far from conveying the Spirit that my soul craved.

Years later, after getting married and patiently waiting to become a mother, all I wanted to do was love and cuddle my new little baby, mine through the miracle of adoption. But instead, the church required MORE of me—more time, more money, more energy, and I felt that my Heavenly Father’s desires for me were different from what the church required of me. The nagging in the back of my mind got stronger.

My son is biracial African American, and together with my husband, studying the history of the Church-wide ban on Priesthood for males, and ban of temple blessings for African American families before 1978, was shocking. What was more disturbing, however, was our inability to find any Prophet or Apostle after 1978 who repented on behalf the institutional Church. The 2/29/12 press release was disappointing to

that end. It appears that the Church does not hold itself to the standards of repentance that is required of individual members. The nagging in the back of my mind got bolder.

During the election year of 2008, I was terribly disturbed to hear of the letter, endorsed by the Apostles and Prophet, that was read over the pulpit at Sacrament Meeting in California and Arizona—to have Church members fight against marriage for our LGBT brothers and sisters. I thought that our Church maintained political neutrality, and this was crossing that line in my opinion. The nagging in my mind started to scream.

The City Creek Mall business venture was the final straw for me. My mother, now a widow for over 15 years, is the most faithful of all Mormons I know. She serves every week in the temple and holds constant to her faith in Heavenly Father, the Prophet, Apostles and Church. She faithfully pays her widow’s mite. She housed the missionaries for two years for free. She sent 4 children on missions, and all 5 of her children married in the temple. And yet, I had to watch President Monson cut a ribbon in front of a multi-billion dollar corporate project and say with his fellow Apostles: “Let’s go shopping!” The nagging in my mind was causing my heart to become broken and bleeding . . . no prophet of any church in any dispensation should ever say that. It runs contrary to my testimony of the Savior’s teachings, as I learned in 40+

years of faithful dedication to our Church.

In one particular moment of clarity, I had a spiritual experience, which I cannot deny. The Spirit whispered to my soul: “Maybe this whole thing isn’t as true as they always told you it was.” And I experienced a rush of joy, peace, love, and happiness—a spiritual experience that answered that nagging, screaming voice in my head, and healed my bleeding, broken heart.

And so, my testimony has changed. There is no way that I believe that Joseph Smith restored the only one true church to the Earth. There is no way that this Church of my childhood contains the only one true faith of God. It simply can’t. And I think deep down, the Brethren know it. I believe that they just are not able to admit it to themselves, and they are not emotionally or psychologically capable of listening to that nagging voice in their own heads, too.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Young Men's President, Executive Secretary, Bishopric Councilor

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I WAS FULLY ACTIVE AND INVOLVED AND SAW OTHERS THAT PARTICIPATED LESS AS MAKING THINGS DIFFICULT ON THEMSELVES AS WELL AS MORE WORK FOR THE WARD.

I was able to hold-in the tension of conflicting ideas between church doctrine, comments by church leadership, and scientific discoveries and humanistic ideals.

As the burden of church service and mental tension (see above) increased, I had a desire to actually study history (church and secular) and to listen to educated individuals to find out which arguments truly had merit and which could be safely ignored.

Upon first experiencing my faith crisis, I felt frustration, anger, desperation, and isolation. I had uncomfortable encounters with church members and especially church leaders. It is still an ongoing story, but while I feel enlightened and satisfied that I have done

and am doing the right thing, it is difficult.

So far, what I have made publicly available has been very limited—I only discuss things with those who need to know, which is very limited at this time.

My spouse has been wonderfully willing to listen and allow things to take their course. I have doled out only limited information to church leadership, the response to which has been discomfort but tacit allowance, probably because I am not saying that I am leaving but I am saying that I am not a normal happy member willing to play my part. Basically I have said the equivalent of “it’s complicated.”

My current relationship with the church is one of constant flux. Some days I flat out hate the church, other days I can talk myself into acknowledging its redeeming qualities or an understanding of the culture issues vs doctrinal points. I attend on Sundays very reluctantly,

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mostly because at this point, I am not convinced of the direction I really want to go and so some previous default actions are maintained with the hope that in so doing a preference on a direction will be clarified in my own mind & heart.

It is hard to say what might have prevented my faith crisis, but I can imagine it would be a less destructive experience if the historical peculiarities and outright falsifications had, at the very least, been presented in a different light and context by the church in its official lessons and positions.

Even if the difference between what appears to have really occurred and the way the church represents an issue or event is of no material consequence, the fact that the church misrepresented it damages fidelity and trust.

Also, not living in Utah could have really changed the course of my relationship with the church. The reciprocal relationship between non-church and church life in Utah is exhausting—all the more so when I feel like I really need to just escape the influence of the church from time to time and realize that the church is not the whole of the world / existence.

In terms of what might help rebuild my faith, understanding, compassionate, and patient members and church leaders—both at the local level and in Church Headquarters. Some have referred to this situation as a maturing process, if that is the case then where are the members, local leaders, and

general authorities that share the experience, acknowledge the validity, and sustain & encourage individuals who are going through it?

Instead I fear that I am making myself an outcast due to the personal study I have undertaken. I recently moved and thus spun the wheel of church leader roulette. I’m still not sure what the result of that gamble will be, but I know that it can play a significant role in one’s future with the church (positively or negatively), which causes stress for my own future as well as anger that others can have such unpredictable and varied responses.

The church needs to encourage its adult members to act like adults, which it can do by treating them as such rather than as immature children.

If not encouraging diversity, the church should at least embrace (not tolerate) its existence.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary

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I GREW UP MORMON. I WAS AND AM THE TYPE OF PERSON THAT TRIED TO DO EVERYTHING RIGHT.

I always wanted to make other people happy by living up to their expectations. I attended and graduate from BYU with a degree in nursing. After a year and a half in the nursing program I put my education on hold to go on a mission. I served for 18 months in Southern California.

Shortly after returning from my mission, I met the man that would become my husband. At that time, he was not attending BYU, so he transferred about six months after we started dating. To make a long introduction shorter, we got married in the temple shortly after I graduated. He also served a mission.

About a year after we got married, my husband started having doubts. Initially, I shoved big ear-plugs in my ears and would not listen to anything he had to say. The church had been and was my life. If it wasn't true, the life I had always dreamed about and planned

in my head would not be my reality.

I resisted for quite sometime, but after a few months, I started to read some things on my own and listen to what he had to say. In the end, we both stopped believing it was the true church due to history issues.

While all of this was going on, my husband was still attending BYU and had about two years left to get his degree. It was a very difficult time for both of us. We were surrounded by TBM's (orthodox Mormons) and did not want to be judged because we no longer believed, so we did not tell any of our Provo friends.

As I stated before, I am a people pleaser. I did not tell my family about our doubt and disbelief until my niece was getting married and my husband and I would not be able to attend the temple wedding. Of course they were shocked, upset, and hurt. Luckily, they accept me for who I am and still love me very much.

Those two years in Provo were very hard.

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Sometimes I wished I could forget everything I had learned and just put my rose colored glasses back on my eyes, but of course I couldn't.

Sometimes I compared my husband to the other husbands I saw and wondered how my life would have been different if I had married someone else. When you have imagined your life a certain way for over 25 years, and then it changes, it is hard to figure out who you are and what you now want out of life.

For me, I still wanted marriage and family but now struggled whether or not my husband and I had just gotten married because we were both Mormon. My husband also struggled with this idea, probably more than me.

We have now moved away from Provo and have both finished school. After my husband graduated, we operated for about 4 months. Those were some of the hardest months of my life. I no longer had the belief in the church to comfort me but at the same time, I also no longer felt the weight and pressure from the church.

My husband and I have been back together about six months. We have not attended church since we left Provo.

We still see a lot of good in the church but can no longer be full participating members because we no longer believe in the authenticity of the stories from our youth. Down the road, we may participate once in awhile, but I never see us becoming full-time members again.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Choir / Music, Young Men's Presidency, Young Men's President, Executive Secretary, Stake Auxiliary Calling, Bishopric Councilor

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I WAS BORN AND RAISED LDS HERE IN AUSTRALIA. WHILE I DABBLED IN A BIT OF 'SIN' ALONG THE WAY, I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FULLY ACTIVE.

My faith crisis began via the web and learning of problems with the church that I wasn't aware of earlier. First I told myself that all this stuff was put out there either by disaffected ex-mormons or evangelicals, but it still caused a fair degree of cognitive dissonance for me.

At this time I had a good conversation with a close friend who was going through a faith transition. He talked about some podcasts but didn't want to tell me which ones they were for fear of putting stuff in front of me that my faith wouldn't be able to handle. Being handy with the Google however, I worked out that he was talking about Mormon Stories.

I didn't dive into it, I had a bit of trepidation but these problems with the church kept

popping up (i.e. Book of Mormon historicity issues, Negro doctrine, Mountain Meadows, polygamy etc.) just through my casual web browsing, without even specifically looking for it. Coupled with my interest in science and the general attitude toward religion in those circles, I slowly but surely started to consider the very real possibility that it was all a lie.

This possibility loomed larger and larger in my mind to the point that I could only really see two options, 'faking it' i.e. continuing to attend church faithfully and keep my unbelief private—it sounds ridiculous, however, the fact that I'm happily married to a faithful LDS woman and have young children meant that this felt like the safe option; or leave the church.

This whole thing was and continues to be complicated by the fact that I've been serving in leadership positions in my ward and stake. At this precise time, I was serving

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as first councillor in the stake young mens presidency. I told myself however that this was a calling I could bluff my way through, i.e. the church was a good influence in these kids lives whether it was true or not.

At about the time that I was at my lowest (almost totally surrendered to the idea that the church, god, all of it, could just be completely false), I got an email from the stake executive secretary asking for an interview. I had a premonition that a significant calling would be coming my way, so I put it to God then and there that he needed to reveal to me whether staying active in the church was the right thing for me and my family.

The next day I saw the Stake Presidency and was called to the High Council. I accepted the calling. The next day I had a fairly profound spiritual experience, probably the most significant of my life. The heavens had kind of been closed to me for years leading up to that, so it was a big deal for me. This was almost a year ago.

I wasn't naive enough to think this experience meant that the standard LDS story was 100% true. I'd asked if the church was right for me, and the answer was yes. At that point I really started to get into Mormon Stories and A Thoughtful Faith, mainly as a means of reconstructing my faith.

I have since been called to the bishopric in my ward. I've never discussed my crisis

or transition with my leaders, however I'm feeling like I need to soon, as my new world view may impact on my ability to serve in the bishopric with integrity. I only recently told my wife, and she has been very supportive.

I believe in God, but I don't pretend to know if he's the LDS God or another kind of force or power. I believe Joseph Smith may have been inspired by God. I believe the General Authorities are good men with good intentions but I'm not sure how much revelation is coming through them. I see the church as a vehicle to help me feel close to God.

Really, I'm still working this out and it may take a long time.

ANONYMOUS MALE

<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$200,000+
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Doctorate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Young Men's Presidency

I WAS VERY ACTIVE PRIOR TO MY CRISIS.

I started to have misgivings about the behavior / actions of the leadership over the past decade or so. To list the highlights:

- **EVASIVE LEADERS IN INTERVIEWS ON TV**—Hinckley not answering “yes” when asked if he is a prophet, brushing off man becoming god questions, Holland seeming extremely evasive with the BBC.
- **PROP 8 AND POLITICS**—the church I grew up in taught us to be involved politically but seemed to stay out of politics itself. When did we start legislating our morals? The handling of the MTC expansion—very dirty politics to tell residents they could act / vote how they liked, then send “an invitation from the brethren” to vote the party line. This felt like spiritual blackmail.
- **CITY CREEK MALL**—if we have billions sitting around, seems like there could be a much

more worthy cause to put it to good use

- **PRIESTCRAFT**—How in the world is it acceptable for the prophet and apostles to write books on spiritual matters, then sell those books for profit? This is by our own definition priestcraft. We believe they are our direct link to Heavenly Father, so when did it become ok to sell their spirituality? Can you imagine Isaiah telling the people he had some good thoughts on repentance, and they could read them for only a few Shekels?
- **FINANCIAL OPACITY**—Where is my money going? I've donated a LOT of money over the years. Almost every other church in the US gives its members a detailed report showing how much they receive and where it goes. If the money is legitimately being used for building up the church, what would be the harm in releasing that information? It looks like they (you?) are hiding something. Particularly when you change the tithing

slip and put a disclaimer on it indicating that donations will be used however the church pleases, regardless of how you want them used.

- **PAID CLERGY**—I was somewhat disturbing to find out that GA's and higher make a salary. Call it a stipend or whatever you want, they are making money for their spiritual work. I wouldn't be particularly opposed to that, if it weren't kept secret. There is speculation about million(s) being paid when someone becomes an apostle etc. Again, transparency in the finances would solve this (If there wasn't anything shady going on, that is.)
- **CHANGING DOCTRINE**—What good is a prophet if you can't tell when he is speaking as such? How is it that so many statements made by past prophets now are invalid / not taught as doctrine? (Adam-God, blood atonement, Negroes being fence-sitters in heaven, etc. etc.) Was the prophet who first taught those things wrong? If so, how would I know which words of the prophets to believe? If not, why aren't these things still taught?

These issues sparked some initial doubt in my mind over the years. Then the church recently made the changes to the scriptures, including backpedaling on the intro to the Book of Abraham. This sparked my curiosity and I started digging into church history. From there, I discovered all the troubling issues. My list of those issues would be “the usual” and I won't bother to list them.

How did I feel upon discovering this new information? I felt sad and betrayed.

Only my wife knows of my disbelief. She was very upset at first but has grown to accept it and questions some things about the church herself now.

My current relationship with the church is undecided. I don't believe it is everything it claims to be. I don't like the black-and-white truth claims the church makes, when there are so many obvious mistakes / problems with the church's past, as well as shifting doctrines / beliefs

What might have prevented my faith crisis? And what might rebuild my faith? I don't know. More honesty / less whitewashing of church history. Financial transparency. Not selling spirituality.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Choir / Music

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PREVIOUS TO MY “CRISIS,” I WAS JUST A KID IN THE CHURCH. IT’S DIFFICULT TO SAY I WAS ALL THAT FAITHFUL. I FOLLOWED THE RULES BECAUSE MY PARENTS MADE ME—MY DAD WAS A BISHOP. MY FORMATIVE YEARS WERE FAIRLY SATURATED IN MORMONISM.

I have an educated family full of critical thinkers. My dad has a library full of philosophy books. I read them. I was (and am) interested in ideas, cultures, peoples, psychology, society, organizations, systems, science, etc.

At some point, around 15 or 16, I couldn’t take the clannish arrogance, the idea that somehow this group of people attached so much unwarranted significance to themselves, claimed possession of “truth” and seemed to ignore/marginalize billions of other people, tens of thousands of years of history, and civilization, scientific evidence, logic and reason and so much more. What’s worse is that it all translated to an unwritten ideology where racism and xenophobia and blind conservatism

run rampant. All these other people and their ideas are wrong—but we can save them with our dead people baptisms and missionaries!

That’s actually bullshit. You really, honestly think you’re better than they are?

I had a seminary teacher tell the class that everyone will be resurrected as a white person. That was the moment. He was also the guy who told us all we needed to know about the outside world we can glean from scanning the headlines of the Wall Street Journal. Willful ignorance, and taught to a classroom of young minds as absolute truth. It’s absolutely shameful and I have no doubt this sort of thing continues today.

I heard so much judgement—from Relief Society women at my mother’s lap to my Sunday School lessons—my entire childhood. Not from my family, mind you. They’re quite the open-minded bunch actually.

I guess the scales fell from my eyes at some point. There’s a huge world outside of Utah

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and Idaho and their little microcosm.

How did I feel? I felt liberated in a way, I guess. I felt surrounded by antagonists, but that could have been my own perception. I felt uncertain. Suddenly, my life became my own responsibility. No more “right way” and “wrong way” to live life was laid out before me. That, I think, is that natural state of the individual. It was scary but also beautiful.

My family was quite upset, but I think they probably knew I wasn’t going to last long in that environment. My parents tried to save me by sending me to live for two summers with their even more fundamentalist friends in Utah. That was a disaster—in so many ways. Every time I moved, missionaries would inexplicably show up at my door. But I pretty much ignored it and went about my life.

Currently, I think Mormonism is on par with pretty much any other religion. It has its purposes, but it’s generally dangerous for the critical thinker. I don’t believe a word of the theology. I mean, it’s just absurd! And the basis of any claim is a fabricated text and the word of some old man who literally claims to talk to God. I think if you don’t have a religion to back you up, that sort of thing lands you in an insane asylum. No offense, but the church leadership is composed of normal human beings who are motivated by the same things anyone else is motivated by: power, status, money, respect, acceptance.

I can’t think of anything that would have changed the course of my life, but I will say there is a major social sea change happening in society at this very moment and unless the LDS Church can ditch the demanding, “holier than thou” stuff, the youth aren’t going to stick around. They don’t want to have large families with lots of kids, give 10% of their money away, they don’t want to spend two years of their youth knocking on doors, they don’t want to be told how to live their lives—and rightfully so!

The whole world is connected and the little bubble around the Mormon Church will erode. It already is. I’ve seen the numbers.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	18-24
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Some College
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Relief Society Presidency, Sunday School Teacher, Stake Auxiliary Calling

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I WAS A VERY DEDICATED MEMBER OF THE CHURCH.

I was born and raised in the church and descended from the pioneers. The church was my life, as far as I knew it, and my Southern upbringing meant I felt I had to cling to it harder, since I was often alone in my beliefs.

I served in every YW class presidency, a beacon of faith to the younger girls, and the “spiritual glue” that was holding my family together. Finally, at 18, I went to BYU, excited to, at last, be surrounded by people of similar faith.

But living in Utah meant learning quite a lot about the church that my little Southern ward had somehow managed to leave out. The fact that black people couldn’t hold the priesthood for so long, the fact that many members still seemed to think polygamy was still an eternal ordinance, and the feeling that my being a woman made me completely useless to the church beyond what I can use my uterus for made me think maybe the church isn’t

God’s church after all. No loving God would despise such a majority of His children.

I pushed this to the back of my head, as many doubters do, and it took me nearly four years still to leave. In fact, I left after my Junior year with the intention of serving a full time mission. All it took was a manipulative and controlling bishop (who was such a roadblock in serving my mission that I decided it really wasn’t worth the stress and humiliation and, after six months, finally told him I wasn’t going) and access to information about the Book of Abraham and the true history of Joseph Smith, and I was done with the church for good.

It hurt. I will not lie. I was devastated to realize that all I knew about the world and its mysteries was false, that these so-called Book of Mormon heroes I’d grown up admiring were no more than fictional characters developed by a charismatic con man. I hated that I, who consider myself a fairly intelligent person,

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could fall for such blatant lies for so long.

But slowly, I found peace in it, in realizing that I can find new worth in the world as a woman and as a person outside of the LDS church. I looked inside myself, and found strength, more than being a faithful member of the church had ever given me. I finally, finally admitted to myself and my family that I am bisexual, and that’s not a bad thing. I learned to love myself without the church, and as a result, I learned to love others completely, without any prerequisites. Friendships are so much easier when you stop trying to convert everyone.

Besides my mother and brothers, my family doesn’t really know yet. I’ll let them find out slowly, maybe softening the blow that might come from a large announcement. I’m afraid of their reaction, really. I honestly think some of them will never talk to me again. And that’s a painful thought, that a family that thinks it’s eternal can reject one of their own for something so small. Unfortunately, though, this was always going to happen, and I can’t turn back now. The church is far too false to redeem itself in my eyes. There is nothing that could restore my faith, besides perhaps a memory wipe. I know too much.

And I’m perfectly okay with that.

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ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Financial / Membership Clerk

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PRIOR TO MY CRISIS OF FAITH I WAS A FULLY ACTIVE AND PARTICIPATING MEMBER OF THE CHURCH, AND WAS ACTIVELY MAGNIFYING MY CALLINGS.

I lost my faith due to shocking inconsistencies I found between the factual historical record and the faith promoting history I had been taught my entire life.

I was horrified. My entire world view exploded. The mental and emotional toll was the most intense experience of my life. I felt that I had been lied to. I felt alone, like I could not talk to anyone about what I was going through. And I felt that I could not continue in the church. So I stepped down from my callings and stopped participating entirely.

Some of the ward leadership tried to dissuade me from my path, but I felt too betrayed to continue discussions with them. I worried that my friends and family would distance themselves from me. I have

become alienated from my friends. I have maintained better relationships with my family though I continue to evade discussing my feelings towards church with them.

The initial months were the most difficult, but the experience lingers with me. I still feel a great deal of anxiety revolving around my relationships, but I don't feel a crisis of faith anymore. I don't associate with the church directly, but I do monitor church news, blogs, and other church related media.

I am periodically pestered by the ward leadership to come visit. I ignore those solicitations.

I believe an accurate and forthcoming curriculum with regards to church history would have been helpful to me. I also believe if there had been less emphasis on being absolute truth and more on being a valid and meaningful path, I could have taken a more

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measured response out of my crisis of faith. The "absoluteness" of the church's stance basically mandated a reaction in kind from me.

I would like to see the church be honest when portraying itself. I would also like to see the church take measures to open lines of communication between members and apostates.

I generally like church members but my view towards the institution is summarily negative. The institution and its policies are extraordinarily damaging to the relationships between apostates and the family and friends of apostates. That needs to change.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Nursery, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President, Financial / Membership Clerk

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### NOBODY BELIEVED THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THE CHURCH MORE THAN ME.

I was absolutely, completely 100% convinced and converted. While I was growing up, my family read the Book of Mormon twice a day, with a prayer and hymn as well. I learned the Gospel forwards and backwards. I went on a mission, went to BYU, got married in the temple, started having kids, never ever even once broke the Word of Wisdom. I never even came close to breaking the law of chastity. I was not perfect, but I adhered to the rules as well as I possibly could. I would defend the church against any negative attack. The church was everything to me and it defined who I was, down to my very core. In short, I can't imagine someone being "more Mormon" than I was.

Then a funny thing happened. I began actually looking at the doctrine of the church. I never ever looked at "anti mormon" material. But I

started to take a closer look at what is actually taught in the church and how it relates not only to what the church used to teach but also how it all relates to what I was actually observing about the world around me. And the closer I looked, the more things just didn't add up. For example, the church teaches it is ONLY through membership in the church that we can be truly happy in this life. Yet I was observing many people from all over the world who had nothing to do with Mormonism who are actually happy. Not only that, but they are moral, upstanding and contributing members of society. It made me realize that people can in reality be happy without Mormonism. It's also possible to be moral and ethical and not have a belief in God.

Another example is that I began to realize all the things I had been taught to see as "evidence" for God, was in fact not evidence at all. In the Book of Alma, Alma states that

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the heavens and the planets all point to the existence of God. That's simply not true. The universe is no more evidence for the existence of the Mormon God than it is evidence for the existence of Zeus, or Thor or any other number of previously believed-in gods. There is simply no evidence for the existence of God. And I started to realize that's why the church puts so much emphasis on just believing, because there is literally NO evidence.

So I lost my belief in the Mormon God first, and then eventually lost my belief in God altogether. In addition, the Mormon Gospel simply does not hold up to scrutiny. It's a story with so many plot holes, I'm embarrassed I didn't see it long ago. It doesn't matter how fervently and passionately Elder Holland pounds the pulpit and claims he "knows" God lives and the church is true, even he has to acknowledge his words are hollow. At the end of the day, even he must admit his admonitions come down to nothing more than "please just believe, in spite of all the evidence against the church."

Belief in something for which there is no evidence, is simply faith. Belief in something in spite of a mountain of evidence against it, is delusion.

Months after my "faith crisis," I learned about all the issues that emphatically disprove the Mormon narrative. From top to bottom, Mormonism can be completely dismantled.

There is nothing that would ever convince me to come back to belief in the church. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. I will not be fooled again. And the numbers of members like me are growing. We were hoodwinked and we're not happy about it. The church is moving towards its swan song. Members are learning the truth and the church can't bury it like they have in the past. The truth is like cream, it always rises to the top. Sorry Mormon church, guys like Holland are now irrelevant given the proliferation and ease of access to truthful information. The end of the church is approaching.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Elder's Quorum President

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PRIOR TO MY CRISIS OF FAITH, THERE HAD BEEN MANY THINGS THAT STUNG ABOUT THE CHURCH, WHICH I JUST IGNORED.

One example is the idea, on my mission, of finding people who were "humbled" through life events or through other unfortunate circumstances where they would "need The Lord." Several would see this as an opportunity, I felt this was exploitation of people in a bad situation. While if someone was in need, I did share my beliefs on the subject to comfort them the best way I can, using that to get a baptism didn't feel right.

Several things kept building up through my college years when I would hear about how corporations use PR firms to give the company an image while doing horrible things in the background. I found several trends that the church were following as well, especially with Prop 8. There were facts that the church had claimed, I believed it and defended the church and soon found that my facts,

given by the PR of the church were false.

These things kept coming up but I had convinced myself that this was the true church. There's no way they would be like this.

Fast forward to myself two weeks before I was supposed to be married in the temple to someone. There were a lot of things that happened as far as drama and priorities that it got to the point that she just left me and went back to Utah. I was depressed. I was at the time working two jobs to try to pay for everything, my rent, car, student loans, everything. I had done everything I could at that point to follow the teachings of the church and follow the commandments. This depression however took its toll when I got fired from one of the jobs. At this point, I had no money to spare for tithing. My roommates wouldn't tolerate partial or late payments. They had life to deal with as well. The only alternative to SURVIVE was to not pay tithing temporarily and try to work the problems out. Fortunately I got another great

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job which made it possible to work only one job.

The end of the year came and the tithing settlements started. I met with the bishop and I was honest with him. I told him I wasn't a full tithe payer because I had some major financial difficulties from earlier in the year. He didn't even bother asking if I needed help or if everything was alright. He then told me that because I wasn't a full tithe payer that I would have to surrender my temple recommend. After this settlement, a question popped in my mind. If someone is desperate and in a bad financial position and needed the temple for some spiritual strength, but was denied because of that bad financial position if they chose to take care of the necessities rather than pay tithing, does the church really care about the people or their money? This experience indicates the latter. This is what broke the camels back for me.

I soon did research into the church as a corporation. I was troubled by the lack of funds used for humanitarian purposes. I was puzzled by the United Kingdoms records showing that the church asked for money for a disaster and yet stashed the money into accounts collecting interest. I was infuriated when I learned how much was spent on the City Creek Mall while the homeless go without shelter. All while invoking the name of Jesus Christ. Then when I learned about the deceptions in church history it was over for me.

I have not shared this with relatives in fear of damaging relationships. My current relation with the church is more New Order Mormon where I attend on my own terms. I go once or twice a month to try to find some gem to take away from the meetings only to be disappointed. I don't pay tithing. This may have been helped if the church just owns up to its flaws and acts like a church.

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ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Technical School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Primary Teacher, Nursery, Choir / Music, Young Men's Presidency, Young Men's President, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Financial / Membership Clerk, High Priest Leader, Stake Auxiliary Calling, Bishopric Councilor

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I WAS BORN AND RAISED IN THE CHURCH AND LIKE MOST PEOPLE MY AGE, BELIEVED THAT EVERYTHING WAS TRUE.

I paid my tithing, went to the temple and did everything the church asked me to. Somewhere around the age of 44, I started to have some small questions. I just wasn't sure it was true. I never felt like I had received that true witness promised in the Book of Mormon. I was told by anyone that I cautiously explained this to that I did have a witness, it was just nothing miraculous since I was born and raised in the church. For some reason I still felt a little cheated.

I voiced my questions privately to my wife. She admitted that some things seemed a little off but she was sure it was right. I put that all on the shelf and continued in full activity. Then a few years later something about the second

anointing came up in church and I decided to look online and see what I could find. That was the beginning of the end. While I found some information about the second anointing that was a bit of an eye opener, it was some of the other things I found that shocked me.

I at first tried to dismiss it as all "anti-mormon" stuff, but the more I looked, the more I realized that the history I had been taught since I was a little child was far from reality. Even on the church sites if you dug a little deeper you could find these things. Multiple First Visions, treasure hunting, rock in the hat with no plates around, Joseph Smith's polygamy and polyandry, justifiable arrests of Joseph, Book of Abraham, Book of Mormon facts that don't add up, missing archaeology for several million people, arguments within the church of where the Book of Mormon took

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place when I had been taught all my life it was in upstate NY, Prophets speaking as men when things don't end up as they predicted, current prophets trump old prophets, Journal of Discourses was just opinion not doctrine, Blacks and the Priesthood, Masonic Temple Ceremony, Mark Hoffman Forgeries... the list just kept getting bigger and bigger. Why had I been kept from these facts?

Then as I researched more and went to sites like FAIR and FARMS, they really sealed the deal. The reasoning they used was crazy. They verified that these "anti-mormon" facts were true and then tried to dismiss them with some of the most implausible reasons I could imagine. I wanted them to refute the information, not give me some half cocked reason why maybe God wanted it that way.

Then the current church hasn't helped. President Hinckley explaining that they think that giving financial information to those that pay it is disclosure enough for the churches finances. What?? I have never been given this information. Where does all my tithing money go, why won't they tell us? Why lie on a national interview and act like they give that info to us tithe payers. What do they have to hide? Then the PR department of the church says things like "We don't know why the Blacks could not receive the priesthood back before 78, we know that they can now and that is all that matters." Seriously? Maybe the PR guy should ask some of us who were around

a few years back. It was CLEARLY stated as doctrine from God. Now we aren't sure?

The church is too afraid of the consequences of being totally honest with us members that they keep rewriting history. Even history that is within my life time! I could possibly dismiss a few things here and there, but as a whole it is too much to put on the shelf.

I feel betrayed and misled. It has turned my life upside down as my wife cries at what I have lost and yet basically agrees that it makes little sense. I still attend so that I won't be a disappointment to my family. What a crock that is. I pray for the day when the leaders, even one leader, will have the integrity to just be honest.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Primary Teacher, Nursery, Ward Mission Leader, Financial / Membership Clerk

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I WAS FULLY ACTIVE, A FULL-TITHE PAYER, AND A GENEROUS FAST OFFERING PAYER.

I was once a financial clerk so I know my fast-offering donations were considerably higher than those from most of the rest of the ward.

What caused my faith crisis? The Book of Abraham. There are hundreds of other problems, but the Book of Abraham problems have no credible defense. Apologetic attempts just dig the hole deeper.

How did I feel after going through my faith crisis? I first felt devastated, but then exhilarated to be free of the betrayal and lies,

How did my family and friends react? My family, especially my still true-believing wife, have suffered horribly and continue to suffer as the church doctrines put my eternal destiny, that of an apostate, in such a dire state. Faithful members suffer greatly when they have no power to “save” people

they love. How sad it is that people have to suffer for lies of others. I too suffer to see them suffer but at least I am at peace within myself—peace they unfortunately don’t have.

What’s my current relationship with the church? I see two churches within the LDS church: 1. the church of the rank and file which consists of wonderful, law-abiding, caring, generous people, and 2. the church of the upper leadership, the paid leadership, who know the falsehoods being perpetrated but refuse to come clean.

What might have prevented my faith crisis? The only thing that would have kept me in the church would have been a mind lacking in curiosity and irrational fear. I had a hunger for truth. If the church was what it claimed to be, I would never have left. If it was what it claimed to be, scrutiny of it would be on its side. Instead, real scrutiny destroys the church. That’s why

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the church indoctrinates its members to not consider anything critical of the church’s claims, doctrines, or leaders. Members are conditioned to believe that any such thoughts are inspired by Satan. Fear keeps people in.

Nothing short of a severe blow to the head, or dementia, or Alzheimer’s, or anything that would cause me to forget all that I know about the church would bring me back. I thoroughly enjoy a life free of cognitive dissonance. Thousands of questions that used to trouble me about the church (i.e. questions about the church’s inconsistencies, contradictions, whitewashes, changes, shocking events, scandalous behavior, etc.) have now all been answered with answers that are satisfying. To go back would be to re-open all those questions by having to re-insert all the previous bad and unsatisfying answers.

As a final note: I can understand the concern of the General Authorities that those leaving are typically educated and financially stable (i.e. assets), while those who are currently attracted to the church are typically those with low access to information and the poor (i.e. liabilities). As we now live in an age of highly accessible information (albeit both good and bad, truthful and untruthful information), things will only continue to get worse for the church. Unfortunately, I expect the leaders will use the ever increasing exodus of members as a “sign of the times” with which to keep the remaining members even more devoted.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Temple Worker, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Nursery, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Financial / Membership Clerk

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I WAS ALWAYS THE “GOOD ONE” IN PRIMARY.

At 16, I was still fully active but I had some questions about why the Church was run the way it is: why we don't consider women to hold the priesthood, why dads had to be away from their kids so much for church stuff, and why my nonmember friends tended to do a better job of “living the Gospel” than my church friends. When I attended the broadcast of the Palmyra temple dedication, however, I felt the Spirit very clearly tell me “This is the Church where I need you to be.”

I threw myself into church stuff: BYU, where I took the Honor Code very seriously, mission, marriage, magnifying my callings (Gospel Doctrine teacher, SS President, ward missionary.) In 2007-2008, some of the old questions started to bubble up. I was troubled by other members' adoration for Mitt Romney even though he supported torture

(which had been legally justified by another Mormon priesthood holder, Jay Bybee).

I watched Prop 8 unfold, feeling like I had to support it because the Church, which I owed my loyalty, was behind it, and I voted for a similar measure that year in my state. The morning after the election, I realized that I had friends in same-sex marriages in California, and my church had just divorced them. I got to know more LGBT who are honest, good people dedicated to living worthwhile lives, and whenever I tried to defend the Church's position or muster arguments against gay marriage, it felt false and empty.

Around this time, my wife and I had our first kid and shortly thereafter I got called as ward mission leader. To make ends meet, my wife started graduate school a year after I did, and about three months after our baby girl was born I started staying home with her much of the day,

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doing my work while she napped. I learned how hard it is to stay home with a baby, how socially isolating, and how alienating as one wonders, “Who am I really?” As this was also how my wife felt, we started to question whether gender roles were as clear-cut as we had been taught.

Regarding the ward mission: we had a gung-ho Mission President, who instructed the missionaries to baptize new members after they had been to church just twice. Lots of Sunday afternoon baptisms (50 in 6 months). Lots of tracting in poor neighborhoods. Very little retention, for which they blamed the ward.

When I tried to suggest to the missionaries to contact in grad student neighborhoods as well, this got back to the Mission President as me saying “We don't want more n\*\*\*\*\*s in the ward.” I'm a grad student studying race / slavery—this was very hurtful.

I knew from General Conference talks and other trainings missionaries were also supposed to help with retention & less-active work. I told the missionaries, and once the Mission President, this. When they wouldn't listen, I asked my dad, a Sunstone-reading liberal Mormon, “What do I do when I receive a commandment from a priesthood leader that I believe to be wrong?” His response: “Do it anyway and you'll be blessed.”

This was deeply unsatisfying. Finally, a member of the presidency of the 70 told the Mission President the same thing I had told him, and

he straightened up. I resolved to never again do something just because a priesthood leader said. Remaining fully active but removing myself from missionary work and the Elders Quorum and diligent hometeaching for a while, my wife and I happily served in nursery.

Since then, I've been rebuilding my faith. I've learned that we believe prophets to be fallible, that all people imperfectly distill messages from the Holy Ghost. That's helped me resolve a lot of my concerns. I still doubt the ability of all-male leadership to really tackle domestic abuse on a systemic level, and quietly disagree with many teachings about LGBT issues and gender roles. But I'm fully active and just called as 1st counselor in the Elder's Quorum presidency with special assignment to set up more community service projects to which we can invite prospective elders and their significant others. That I will do most happily.

ANONYMOUS MALE

<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$200,000+
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Temple Worker, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Choir / Music, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President, Bishopric Councilor

THE TYPE OF FAITH I HAD BEFORE MY “LOSS-OF-FAITH” WAS THE KIND MY STAKE PRESIDENT SAID HE WOULD HAVE BEGGED TO HAVE IN HIS MISSIONARIES WHEN HE WAS A MISSION PRESIDENT.

I'd always been the one elected to teach difficult lessons like law of chastity, and polygamy, because I was well studied, and not shy about such things. Elders Quorum President, A.P. on my mission, always at the center of the ward helping out those with “struggles of faith.

The reasons I “lost my faith” were more numerous than the sands of the sea. I'm an educated man, but used to quote constantly 2 Nephi 9:28 because I wanted to always “hearken unto the lord.”

Well, after a while, I noticed a lot of people with faith struggles, and would teach classes

in which they would hesitantly share struggles afterwards. One of the elders said “well, it's ok to question the lord in faith, but never doubt,” to which I thought...That's cute and all, but we DO doubt, we doubt, “help thou my unbelief” and stuff. In fact the Church's version of the Joseph Smith vision was based upon the fact that he doubted, lacked wisdom etc.

Well, as somebody who tries to hearken unto the words of the Lord, I prayed often, and studied ravenously. Afraid to delve into church history too much, because some of the things about polygamy, Joseph Smith's money digging, changes in the Book of Mormon etc. had crossed my path just by people questioning me. But I was afraid to look into it all.

Eventually, “Rough Stone Rolling” came out, and “Joseph Smith Papers” and I thought, “yeah, stuff that the

church doesn't frown upon.”

Well upon studying the history and finding out about Kinderhook plates, The Book of Abraham being completely inaccurate, and citing to myself as many facts as possible, I was devastated...surely, there's got to be some explanation...so I turned to the apologist's views, in prayer, studying, listening to conference, working, fasting, etc.

The apologists views were textbook spin, and I felt broken, displaced, destroyed, humiliated, and in complete denial...if only I could go back to before I knew how the modern church covers up the past, doesn't take responsibility for it's follies. If only I could be naive again. But now, I uncovered the church for myself, and after thousands of tithing dollars, countless hours, numberless self shaming sessions for “not quite getting all my home teaching done,” I finally felt some light, some understanding, that Joseph Smith was a fraud, and the leaders today have repainted him by consolidating the different, evolving First Vision accounts, they've retold history in a VERY DOCUMENTABLE WAY.

And it made me sick to hear some of them lament that info is now “too available for members on the internet,” and that's been hard on the church. The lies were so deep, and so hard to swallow, but that's what they were!!! I couldn't begin to express it all in 700 words, but it was a very private, personal, prayerful, fastful, and temple attended

study that led me to understand what a scam the church was. This not mentioning the finances, shady political dealings and many other disheartening things about the church I had given 30 years of my life to.

My family has mostly left. My mom is having a hard time, but I'm pretty sure she's just about to realize how many lies are in the church.

My current relationship with the church administration is destroyed. I think there are narcissists at best leading the church. My trust has been betrayed, and my faith has been raped by the so called leaders of the church. They're liars. That being said, I don't feel anger much, I love Mormons...they are my people, and I feel such pain that so many are blind to the burden put upon their beautiful, kind hearts.

My faith crisis could have been averted if they didn't lie from the start.!!

ANONYMOUS MALE

<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Primary Teacher, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President, Financial / Membership Clerk, Executive Secretary

I AM STILL FULLY ACTIVE. ALTHOUGH THAT'S ABOUT TO CHANGE.

I'm currently serving as our ward's Executive Secretary. I'm about to let my Bishop and Stake President know how I'm feeling about the problems with the Church.

What are the reason or reasons for your loss-of-faith? There are many. I had heard of some of them before on my mission, but thought they weren't true. When I learned that a lot were true, that became a problem for me.

Here are the main points:

1. JOSEPH SMITH: married 14 & 15 year old girls.
2. POLYANDRY
3. BRIGHAM YOUNG: Blood sacrifices, blood atonement by members, Adam is God, etc. There are a lot of things wrong with what Brigham Young taught. Even if I believed

Joseph Smith was a prophet, there would be no way Brigham Young could be.

4. THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM: translation issues
5. CHANGING DOCTRINE: Joseph Smith originally seemed to teach the Trinitarian view. Even the Community of Christ (formally RLDS Church) still teaches the Trinity doctrine today.
6. CHANGES IN TITHING: Originally tithing was declared to be 2% by presiding Bishop Edward Partridge. Apostle Orson Hyde in 1847 taught... "The celestial law requires one-tenth part of all a man's substance which he possesses at the time he comes into the church (See D&C 119:1), and one-tenth part of his annual increase ever after (See D&C 119:4). *If it requires all man can earn to support himself and his family, he is not tithed at all.* The celestial law does not take the mother's and

children's bread, neither ought else which they really need for their comfort. The poor that have not of this world's good to spare, but serve and honor God according to the best of their abilities in every other way, shall have a celestial crown in the Eternal Kingdom of our Father." (*The Millennial Star*, 1847. Orson Hyde, editor). Compare *The Ensign* message in Dec 2012: "If paying tithing means that you can't pay for water or electricity, pay tithing. If paying tithing means that you can't pay your rent, pay tithing. Even if paying tithing means that you don't have enough money to feed your family, pay tithing. The Lord will not abandon you." Two messages on the same subject and a total contradiction!

7. THE BOOK OF MORMON: View of the Hebrews, archaeological and DNA problems and of course statements by Elder B.H. Roberts - "...the evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history..."

8. THE SUCCESSION CRISIS.

How you felt and what you experienced as a result of your loss-of-faith? I was confused and shocked about the church.

How have others (family, friends, ecclesiastical leaders) responded to your faith crisis? My wife is also concerned about the problems. My Parents have pretty much left the Church and so has my brother, who was on

the Bishopric in another Ward. His wife is also considering leaving the Church and has asked to be released from her calling.

How you would describe your current belief / relationship with the LDS Church. I no longer believe it's true. I've almost finished writing my letter to ask to be released. In the near future, I will leave the Church completely. I still wish it was true. But truth is more important to me than belief.

What might have prevented your faith crisis in the first place? Nothing. It's either true or not true.

What, if anything, might help rebuild your faith? It would be nice for the President of the Church to admit there are problems and be upfront about everything. Everything including finances should be an open book. That wouldn't be enough, but it would go a long way.

At first, I used to say—there are all these serious issues, but at least the Church is still true. But sometime ago, that statement changed to.... there are all these serious issues, is the Church really true? And that's when it clicked for me. I allowed myself to question everything.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	18-24
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Choir / Music

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I WAS BORN INTO THE CHURCH, A MILLIONTH-GENERATION MORMON AND DESCENDENT OF A HANDFUL OF IMPORTANT PEOPLE FROM WAY BACK WHEN.

I was the kind of kid my Seminary teachers loved: interested, enthusiastic, faithful, and well-versed in the gospel.

I was so excited to attend BYU-Idaho for college. The thought of incorporating religion into my secular studies was thrilling, and I eagerly looked forward to being surrounded by people who would encourage my spirituality. I found some of that there. But mostly, I found self-righteousness and hypocrisy among the students and unrighteous dominion in the school administration. I was bothered to think that THIS was what happened when you got a bunch of Mormons together, and confused that an administration supposedly led by the Spirit and the church's guiding principles of agency and accountability was so Gestapo-like.

But, I reminded myself, you can't judge the church by its members, or so everyone said. (Now I think that it's absolutely valid to judge a church by its members—by their fruits ye shall know them, right?) I was confused by the school's inconsistency between belief and practice, but decided that perhaps I just didn't have enough light and knowledge to understand yet. I would keep looking.

This remained my philosophy for the next few years, as my relationship with the church grew increasingly strained. Every time I ran into something that made me uncomfortable and ran opposite to my understanding of God, I decided I just needed to learn, pray, and ponder more. This was my philosophy during Prop 8. This was my philosophy when I ran across Joseph Smith's marriages to other women without Emma's consent. This was my philosophy when I couldn't invent good enough apologetics to explain the Book of Abraham away. This was my philosophy when I realized

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how much the church lies to its members, at the same time it hypocritically demands honesty from me in recommend interviews. This was my philosophy when I decided to take out my endowments in the hope that maybe I would get the answers I was looking for there, and this was my philosophy when I found the temple only offered more inconsistencies.

The evidence just kept piling on. Eventually, it led me to the conclusion that the church could not be true. The moment I accepted this, and realized I no longer knew anything about the universe, I felt peace for the first time in years. I believe God works through emotions, and I believe the Mormon doctrine of peace vs. stupor of thought is a solid one. I'd been in a stupor for a long time. I'm out of it now.

People at church tell horror stories of how horrible people's lives become when they abandon the gospel. Mine hasn't. Being half in and half out was miserable, but being completely emotionally disconnected is wonderful. I accepted that the church was false, and almost immediately, my career improved, my emotional health improved, and my spiritual life improved. To my shock, even my marriage improved. Though my husband is a believing member of the church, he has graciously and without judgment allowed me the freedom to draw my own conclusions. I will be forever grateful for that.

My faith crisis probably could have been

prevented. The church being honest about its history would have helped, and so would a church culture that favors love and universal acceptance over competitive perfection and self-righteousness. I don't think I'll ever spiritually go back, but I could get involved again for the sake of my family if church was a less painful place to be. Respect for women as more than wives and mothers would be amazing. Acceptance of sexually active gay members would be incredible. Financial transparency would rock my world. The church today, though, isn't any place I want to be. There are better places to get in touch with God, and better ways to spend my time than engaging with an institution that doesn't hold itself to the standards of honesty and morality I expect of myself.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Relief Society Presidency, Primary Presidency, Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Choir / Music

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I WAS VERY COMMITTED TO THE LDS CHURCH AND BELIEVED STRONGLY THAT JOSEPH SMITH WAS A PROPHET, THAT THE BOOK OF MORMON WAS THE WORD OF GOD, THAT THE CURRENT PROPHET WAS GOD'S PROPHET, THAT THE CHURCH WAS TRUE, THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS THE SAVIOR. I BELIEVED IN PRAYER AND IN FINDING ANSWERS ALL AROUND ME.

I started questioning my faith when I started just noticing how great people could be outside the church and how there were truths about life that non-LDS people had. Then I noticed how destructive my rigid beliefs in basic doctrines (like Jesus, personal sin, original sin) were to my psyche. I noticed that the church's doctrines were contradictory to themselves at times. I found that commandments / doctrines gave me a lot of stress about doing everything just right. I also started to sympathize with gay people and saw their plight in the church as unfair. I finally had the deciding moment of clarity when

I wanted something very strongly in my life and felt it would be a good decision. When I learned that the church handbook discouraged that thing, I started to conform my mind to the handbook's instruction. From another part of my brain I saw myself being told what to do and realized the intense allegiance I had to the church leaders and decided "no more". No more will I allow an organization, however well-meaning, to dictate my choices for me.

As I studied more, I felt shocked, betrayed, amazed, and elated. I felt freed, conscious, brave, and determined. Then I realized how atrophied my decision-making skills were, so I suffered from fear and uncertainty in finding a new path.

Because of the pain I caused my mother due to my loss of testimony, I decided to keep going to church, trying "not to throw out the baby with the bathwater" but to look for the

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good in the people at church and enjoy what I could. Attending church was familiar and comfortable, until a teacher / speaker opened his / her mouth. I felt totally unable to voice opinions and felt different from everyone because I simply didn't believe the church was true. Being a skeptic inside my mind while pretending to be a believer proved a difficult and lonely task. I also worried that my children would become indoctrinated into blind obedience as I had been. As of now, we haven't been going to church for about a month and I don't personally intend to return.

Our ward has been mostly quiet about this issue to us. When I gave back the primary manual and said I couldn't teach anymore, the primary president was very sweet and hoped we could be friends. She was surprised, but kind. Our bishop called and wanted to chat with us, just to get to know us better. We met with him and found him to be kind, but not really interested in discussing our concerns; which was OK because we didn't want to discuss them with him anyway. My family has been shocked and sad and some have been kind. My brother and his wife texted us and said "the church isn't what makes you a good person." My mom sent us several articles that she thought would help set us straight. My sister has been the most direct about it and wanted to know what I think. It's quite shocking to them and hurtful to my brother on a mission. However, none of them have been openly rude.

Today I do not believe the church is true, but I am not interested in actively trying to persuade people of that. I appreciate all the church offered me through the years. Now I think of myself as a humanist agnostic.

My faith crisis might have been avoided if I would not have opened my eyes to the reality of the world and or been willing to question my fundamental beliefs. My faith might possibly be re-built if church doctrine was more trusting of individual choice, understanding of people who don't "fit in," and based in truth. I could see myself going back to church if someday I felt like there was intellectual honesty there.

I hope this helps.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Nursery, Financial / Membership Clerk

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AT THE TIME OF MY FAITH CRISIS, I WAS ALL IN.

I was at the time a ward clerk (first membership then financial) for 2-3 years so I knew the bishop well. I was born into an inactive family and didn't get baptized until I was 16 and did not serve a mission, but I was married at 23 in the temple and had been fully active for 10 years prior to my disaffection.

The process started when I was doing genealogy and found some colorful family history. When I tried finding information about my ancestors in the (approved) church history books and sources I found nothing, so I was forced to go outside of the correlated material. This led me to studying church history in depth which also introduced me to Book of Mormon anachronisms and other issues. I tried accessing apologetic answers but found them condescending and pathetic.

I met with my bishop after counting tithing

one Sunday and talked about some of my issues, and I was careful to give deference to the church's authority but still pushed back when he would give me answers that I knew were untenable. We agreed to disagree on pretty much everything and agreed to meet at some later day when he had time to do some study on some of my questions. He called me in to see him 2 days later and asked me more forcefully about the state of my faith, and in the end because I couldn't honestly say that I believed the Joseph Smith story as taught in church to be 100 percent factual he released me from my calling and took away my recommend. He also would not allow me to baptize my son the following month.

I met with the stake president and he lectured me non-stop for 45 minutes, not allowing me to speak, and affirmed his support of the bishop in barring me from exercising any priesthood. My wife met with the bishop

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and pleaded to allow me to baptize my son but he called me an apostate. His words of comfort to her was that if she stayed married to me at least she could always get a (different) righteous husband in the afterlife.

The entire process was incredibly difficult. The best correlation I have heard is dealing with death because the grieving process is so similar. It is so devastating to have your world turned upside down that even political views and relationships change dramatically.

Once I stopped attending, the people in the ward stopped contacting me. My family is mostly inactive or non-members so I didn't have any negative reactions. My wife's family has been somewhat distant and I have had problems with a few in-laws, but they are prone to douchebaggery and not necessarily because of their religious beliefs.

I resigned from the church in 2012 and am an atheist. My wife and kids are all inactive but are all at this point atheist or don't really care as long as they don't have to go to church.

My faith crisis could have been prevented if the church was honest with me up front on the historical issues. The cover up is 100 times worse than any historical or doctrine issue. Also the heavy-handed approach to dealing with dissent that the church encourages is cruel and counterproductive to keeping people in the church.

I have learned that I am happier and more

productive without religion so faith serves no purpose for me anymore. I would consider a level of activity for service and socializing but I would never be allowed to maintain a comfortable level of activity without people constantly pressuring me to do more. But, the genie is out of the bottle and I don't think it's possible to ever have faith in the church again.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	High School Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Young Women's President, Relief, Society Presidency, Relief Society President, Primary Presidency, Primary President, Spouse of Bishopric, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Nursery, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Choir / Music

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I WAS MARRIED IN THE TEMPLE AT EIGHTEEN, MOTHER TO SIX CHILDREN (THREE MISSIONARIES) AND FOURTEEN GRANDCHILDREN AND LIFELONG FAITHFUL CHURCH MEMBER.

I always considered myself to be living the gospel and to have a strong testimony.

I started to have a crises of faith when my youngest son told us he was gay. It just didn't fit into the gospel plan and the teachings of the church felt like I had to choose between my son or my church.

I believe that gay people are good and fine just as they are and that they deserve to live a happy full life—not a celibate life without a partner. I see same sex couples striving to just live life like everyone else (and to be good parents) and it saddens me they don't have the same rights

as heterosexual couples. I watched the church fight Proposition 8 in California and it made me sick to my stomach. Church members' cutting offhand remarks about those who choose the 'gay lifestyle' were especially hurtful. I lost faith in the leadership of the church. I feel they are good men but not necessarily inspired as their teachings shift and change and just don't ring true to me—especially on this subject.

I am also troubled by church history—especially Joseph Smith's deceitful practice of polygamy, blacks and the priesthood, and women's issues—all are 'glossed over' and the truth is covered up.

It's amazing to me that the church spends millions (or billions!) of dollars to build a shopping mall full of high-end stores!

I am also troubled by the apparent Mormon

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'Republican' majority—oftentimes discussed in church meetings as if everyone feels that way. People like Glen Beck make the church look very bad, but the sad thing is, so many members agree with him!

I would go home from church meetings depressed and angry that nothing was ever honestly discussed or openly questioned—just rote answers and empty phrases.

Teachings that had bothered me for years surfaced—and for once, I faced them head on. It felt empowering to take a good hard look and ask myself, "Do I really feel that only those people who have received ordinances in the temple will go to the highest degree of heaven? For that matter, do I even believe in degrees of heaven?" It all started to crumble like a house of cards.

My husband and I met with our bishop and stake president and shared our concerns—no answers or helpful council other than we just need to have faith and they know it is true. Well, I can't live my life like that any more and so, we decided to leave.

It was a very stressful and difficult time for me, but also freeing. Four of our children are inactive (our gay son resigned his membership), so the news was hardest on our two remaining active kids. A very few concerned ward members have reached out in love and friendship—and I do miss these dear sisters.

I watch the church now from without with

a more critical eye and it has become even more clear to me that it is not an inspired organization. I feel so much more at home in the Unitarian church I now attend with it's focus on acceptance of all people and working for good in the world in a very practical, relevant way—and not just constant preaching about praying, reading scriptures, and attending the temple.

At this time, I can't see myself ever returning to the LDS church. I appreciate the good that it has brought into my life and will always consider myself of Mormon heritage, but I have moved on.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Relief Society Presidency, Sunday School Teacher, Gospel Doctrine Teacher

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PRIOR TO MY LEAVING THE CHURCH, I WAS FULLY ACTIVE AND SERVING IN MY WARD'S RELIEF SOCIETY PRESIDENCY.

My faith crisis began about six years before. After going through the temple, I started wrestling with women's issues in the church, particularly the covenants women make and Eve's representation in the temple. Utah church culture was really hard for me to handle, and I felt very alone.

I read blogs like Feminist Mormon Housewives, Times & Seasons, Mormon Stories, etc. constantly.

After moving from Utah, things got better temporarily. I began to realize I agreed less and less with things taught in church about the relationship between obedience and blessings, ongoing revelation, the necessity of temple ordinances, the structure of families and priesthood, etc. I had long wondered how

Joseph Smith could be the man who had done the 2nd most for mankind's salvation, yet he lied to his wife about polygamy. This did not seem consistent with church teachings.

I also wondered why the temple made me feel abandoned, silenced, shamed, and unloved. This was also inconsistent with church teachings about the spirit. I felt like my prayers were met with complete silence. It seemed like the church was working for everyone except for me.

I made comments and asked questions in Relief Society and Gospel Doctrine, but I found myself "playing the part" of a believing Mormon. I couldn't voice my actual thoughts, because I knew they were contrary to the teachings of the church. I felt like a fraud, and I felt dishonest.

Then my sister-in-law announced her homosexuality. I strongly believe that

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homosexuality is not a sin. I decided I could not be associated with a church that so blatantly denied my sister-in-law acceptance. I felt that God wanted me to be happy, and I was so depressed as a Mormon.

For so many years, I had tried to make it work or tried to convince myself I could fight for a place for doubters. So it was hard to feel like I was giving up. I had no idea how to not be Mormon! I didn't even know what my options were, and as a stay-at-home mom, I didn't know how I would ever make new friends. I didn't know how I would teach my daughter values and morals. My husband decided to leave at the same time, but then changed his mind, so I felt like I was creating this massive rift in my family. I connected with some other ex-mormons who were very patient as I navigated the road.

I met with my bishop twice. When I explained my issues, he focused on gay rights. He asked if I was approaching the issue out of bitterness, if I was keeping the commandments, if I had been offended. He told me I could not feel the spirit if I was not keeping the commandments. I felt incredibly misunderstood.

My siblings were all very supportive. It took almost a year to tell my parents, but they were both supportive, loving, and reassuring. I have not been very open with my Mormon friends. Those in my ward have a vague idea of what happened. It has not hurt our friendships at all, surprisingly.

Though I no longer have any belief in the church, I still have a lot of respect for it. I see how it work in the lives of so many people I love, and it honestly make them feel happy. I just don't think it works for me. I don't (currently) feel bitter or angry. Since my husband still attends on a semi-regular basis, I try to stay at least neutral.

The church is incredibly corporate, it feels like there is only one way to be Mormon. They might say you are allowed to doubt and question in the church, but until that is culturally accepted, the church will continue to hemorrhage. If the church focused on belief rather than knowledge, didn't claim to have ALL the answers, if women were TRULY equal, or if shame wasn't implemented as a way to motivate, I might have avoided a faith crisis. Even if that changed, I don't think I could ever believe in the church as The True Church again.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	50-64
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Relief Society Presidency, Relief Society President, Primary Presidency, Primary President, Spouse of Bishopric, Seminary Teacher, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music Nursery, Choir / Music

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I WAS BORN IN SALT LAKE CITY AND RAISED IN AN ACTIVE LDS HOME.

I married in the temple six days after I graduated from BYU, and I raised four children, who have all graduated from BYU and married in an LDS temple. I have served in numerous church callings, including twice as a ward Relief Society president, while my husband has served as a bishop and twice as counselor to a stake president.

My mother considered herself a feminist, as have I, and this has always caused me to have conflict with some men in the Church and with some policies and doctrine, but I just lived with the ambiguity until about six years ago when I developed a disability which the local leaders and members didn't understand and weren't very willing to accommodate. As a result, I had to quit attending church for awhile. The

rejection of ward members and my bishop was very difficult for me emotionally, but I was determined to make the most of it and spent my extra time researching ancestral stories.

I already knew a lot about Mormon history, but never could understand where polygamy fit in. I decided to really focus my study on that. After a great deal of research, I came to the conclusion that polygamy was not a true doctrine. This was the beginning of the unraveling of it all for me. I very quickly found myself to be a non-believer in much of Mormon doctrine, particularly patriarchy and the temple rituals.

My whole disaffection from the Church has been difficult for my husband, but he has also seen the grief that it has brought to me and has listened to and supported me. He saw the abuse I took from ward members first-hand, and it grieved him as much as it did me, perhaps

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more. Though he does not agree with my conclusions about the Church, we are more committed than ever to our marriage. In fact, our marriage (of forty years) is stronger than it ever was when I was an active member.

My children all know that I have "issues" with the Church, but I have not been really open with all of them about the extent of my disbelief. I have one daughter who, with her husband, is only marginally active in the Church, so I have been able to discuss my own disaffection with her. However, I have another daughter who, when she found out only a little bit about my disbelief, threatened to not let me see her children anymore. Consequently, I am pretty tight-lipped about what I really feel and think. It makes me feel two-faced, but the thought of not being allowed contact with three of my grandchildren breaks my heart, so I do what I have to.

I currently attend Sacrament Meeting a couple of times a month, mostly to have the pleasure of sitting with my husband, who, for about 35 of the past 40 years, has been in leadership positions which have kept us apart in church meetings. I do not have a current temple recommend and do not wear the temple garments. I don't pay tithing on my own income. I have changed my previous diet coke habit to organic black tea, but I have no desire or intent to drink alcohol or use tobacco.

If I had not been treated so poorly by my ward

members and bishop when I became disabled, my disaffection from the Church may not have happened so quickly, but, because I was already working on family research, I think I would have come to the same conclusions eventually. Nevertheless, I would still be culturally involved if I felt welcomed.

At this point, I don't see myself ever being actively involved in the Church again, and I don't think there is anything anyone could say or do that would change the way I believe. I know too much.

Because I love my husband and want to maintain relationships with all of my children and grandchildren, I doubt that I will ever ask to have my name removed from Church records. However, that is a frequent fantasy of mine.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Sunday School Teacher, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President

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I WAS THE TYPICAL BORN-IN-THE-CHURCH, PIONEER-STOCK, FULL-TIME MISSION, TEMPLE-MARRIED UTAH MORMON, WHO LIVED, LOVED, AND BREATHED MY RELIGION.

Both my family, as well as my wife's family, are very active members in the Church. However, that all came crashing down this past year.

It started with my first "holy crap" moment as I was preparing a lesson for Gospel Doctrine a few years ago and happened upon Joseph Smith's polyandry. And just like if I would've found a text on my wife's phone from some guy I didn't know saying, "I'm home alone, come over when you can," I started searching more and more for what I didn't know about Mormonism's history (Book of Abraham, peep stones, Masonic ties with the temple, Joseph Smith, etc). I became obsessed with searching for the truth. I incessantly searched online, bought and read numerous

books, listened to hundreds of podcasts, and soaked up any information about the Church from both inside and outside sources.

My trust in the Church soon shattered and I couldn't understand why the leaders would knowingly mislead their members about the history of the Church. More importantly however, the information that I uncovered destroyed my belief that the Church was what it said it was and that it was true.

When I first found out about the historicity problems of the Church, I was devastated. I felt as if my life had been a lie and that I had mislead people that I had taught and baptized on my mission. I cried almost everyday for months and I was an emotional wreck. My work life and family life suffered. But the worst part was when I told my sweet wife about my findings, and my feelings about those findings. She felt betrayed and told me that

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she felt like I had cheated on her. She still feels betrayed by me and it makes me both sad and angry at the dishonesty of the Church.

During this time, I was called as Elder's Quorum President of my ward, so I tried to put my issues with the Church on "the shelf" and regain my testimony. I looked at the calling as a way to serve others and find the good in the Church. But I quickly realized my viewpoint had changed and the "veil" had been lifted from my eyes. I started to see that not only did the Church have serious historical problems, but it also has horrific current problems. It's emphasis on strict obedience, inequality for women, poor treatment of the gay community, financial interests (mall & lack of charitable giving compared to income), complete dishonesty in its teachings, etc became overwhelming. After 2 1/2 years, I asked to be released from the Elder's Quorum President calling, requested for no new callings, and stopped paying tithing.

I currently attend with my wife and four children and try to look for positive things in the Church...it is hard. Only my wife and current Bishop know of my true feelings. I am also very cognizant of the negative aspects of the Church and try to prevent and mitigate the harmful effects on my children. I do not enjoy attending, but at this point in my life, I have decided that it is the best thing for my wife and family.

There are extremely satisfying consequences of

my disaffiliation with the Church however. I've found happiness in my newfound perceptions of this life and my journey through it. I feel more accepting of others and I genuinely care more about humanity as a whole rather than on just a small segment of humanity. I feel liberated in my thinking and enjoy exploring ideas and beliefs without judgement of correctness. I experience extreme satisfaction in true charitable giving and service to others.

Although there are still struggles as a result of my "faith transition," I am happier now and have a renewed energy and passion for life.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Relief Society Presidency, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Nursery, Choir / Music

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I'VE BEEN FULLY ACTIVE MY ENTIRE LIFE.

As a youth, I was often troubled slightly by “little” things. I remember reading Mormon Doctrine and feeling creeped out by its overall tone and upset with a few specific entries—but I plugged on assuming that one day I would “know” and my concerns would evaporate.

As I got older, I was troubled by the church’s reaction to Prop 8, the City Creek Mall project, etc.—not just what the church was doing, but by the seemingly blind acceptance by so many other members of these things. I decided my problem was that I still didn’t “know” the Church was true.

I’ve always had a hard time accepting the literal historicity of the Book of Mormon, and the older I got, the harder it was for me to believe. Finally, the year that my oldest child was to be baptized, I decided I owed it to her to “know” and dedicated myself to some serious study. As I began, odd things kept jumping out at

me—pieces lifted straight from the King James Version of the Bible, Nephi using the word “Bible” when the Bible as we know it didn’t exist, the Greek name “Jesus” appearing in a Hebrew / Reformed Egyptian text. I began pondering the Book of Abraham. Given that we still have parts of the papyri, if Joseph Smith had indeed gotten it right, shouldn’t every Egyptologist in the world be Mormon? I’d also heard “anti-Mormons” talk about supposed anachronisms (horses, elephants, certain metals, etc.) and wondered about those as well. I felt ashamed and somehow broken when the study-and-pray formula didn’t produce the “sure knowledge” that I felt I’d been promised. If anything, I felt I had MORE doubts.

I decided that I’d been doing enough studying in my “heart” and maybe studying in my “mind” would produce the “knowledge” I felt I needed. In my pursuit to find answers, I came across the Maxwell Institute’s

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website--and quickly found myself falling down the “rabbit hole” of church history.

I was deeply disturbed by what I perceived as secrets—the stone in the hat just sounded weird, the Fanny Alger affair and Nauvoo-era polygamy sickened me. I went through a period of extreme anxiety and depression in solitude. My husband and I both have siblings who’ve recently left the church, and the anguish this generated in other family members scared me into silence about my own issues.

It’s been over a year and I still haven’t fully voiced my concerns to my husband, although we’ve had a few conversations in which my new “unorthodoxy” showed a bit. I have no friends “in real life” with whom I feel comfortable voicing my concerns, but thankfully I’ve found incredible support online. Staylds.com, in particular, has been absolutely priceless to me in this journey.

Now, about 18 months later (and staying fully active throughout), I feel I’m in a much better place, although I do still struggle. I still don’t believe that the Church is the “one true church”, but I do feel it can be a wonderful tool for teaching and living the gospel (which, to me, is something distinct and separate from “the Church”). I may not believe in the literal necessity of ordinances, but I find great beauty and power in what they represent. I may not believe in the literal historicity of the Book of Mormon, but I still believe it to be scripture. I

believe Joseph Smith was a prophet, but what that \*means\* to me has changed dramatically.

I do worry about raising my children in a culture that can sometimes seem stifling (my 5-year-old started crying one Sunday because she couldn’t find a sweater to wear over her sleeveless dress and was afraid the kids at church would laugh at her!), but I can also see great benefit for my family in the Church.

Sundays are still difficult; I wish there was more room for me to be myself at church—less pressure to “know” everything in such a black-and-white way and be the 100% committed cookie-cutter Mormon, and more freedom to just travel side-by-side with people with all different shades of faith and belief. I try to embody this change I hope to see, because I’m coming to realize I’m far from alone.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Relief Society Presidency, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Nursery, Choir / Music

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I HAVE BEEN A LIFELONG, FAITHFUL, HIGHLY ACTIVE TBM (ORTHODOX) MEMBER. I HAVE NEVER GONE INACTIVE OR BEEN LESS THAN SIGNIFICANTLY FAITHFUL. I HAVE ALWAYS MAINTAINED HIGH MORALS.

I discovered some of the church's deceptions initially quite incidentally. I believe God is a God of truth and love. I believe in seeking truth which I was taught in church and thought I would have nothing to fear and that a mature mind could work it out.

Life is complex and people are not perfect, but I was devastated to learn of the breadth and magnitude of historical problems the church hides. I was also very disillusioned over the handling of tithing which I thought was going to serve the poor temporally and spiritually. I have trusted the church my whole life. I have been deceived in every important issue. I can deconstruct every significant aspect using truth. Many of the deceptions

we use to keep rank and file in their place and acting like drones may seem subtle discrepancies but amount to clear unrighteous dominion, when you know the truth.

Every friend and family member I have is in the church. I love God and want my kids to know him. I would LOVE to stay. However the experience in the church has become so controlled and correlated neither I nor my husband have been getting anything uplifting out of church for years. Just boring, boring, fear, fear, rules and domination.

Furthermore, so many aspects are tragic deceptions purveyed by great innocent people who faithfully carry the given curriculum and it can be very painful to watch. Furthermore, I wish to love people like God loves people and I feel impeded every week with our narrow minds and judgmental beliefs, which change at a glacial pace.

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Leaving the people I love and invested in, will be the most tragic experience of my life and will come at GREAT cost to my relationships. My extended family will suffer in utter shock and totally freak and our relationships will never be the same. All my social support is in the church. Our teachings shun and ostracize those with diversity of beliefs or doubt of any kind. They penalize those who know and embrace truth and provide NO VALID (non violent) EXIT FROM THE CHURCH. And the irony is this is all enacted by good loving people who are ignorant and deceived. I, the "sinner" will love them and accept their beliefs and life choices but they, the more righteous part, under your deception will not offer me the same and the familial relationships I have invested my life to build will be seriously and irrevocably injured. This IS Cult behavior.

One of the reasons I have to leave is because some of my children are very logical and will not accept a church as true with these sorts of glaring problems in their claims and they will leave. In this age, discovery of these fact is unavoidable. Besides, I will not look them in the eyes and lie to them. They will find out one day and they will leave. Then I will be faced with the same family divisions and violence in their relationships as I must suffer in my own family.

I believe in family!!! I am leaving to be free to fully love my neighbor, serve my God, seek and explore genuine truth and preserve

my family and create opportunities to be uplifted every Sunday. It will harm every relationship I have and cost me most of them. It will damage how I'm perceived, a reputation I have worked a lifetime to build.

That is the cost of the cover-up, I mean promoting a faith promoting history at the cost of truth. This is exactly the cost of lies. There is no good lie. There is ALWAYS a price.

Open your eyes and take responsibility for the damage you are doing to people and families. Live peacefully with others, start with your beliefs and words. Be responsible. Stop blaming the voiceless. Demonstrate the character you espouse. People know. You are on a collision course with disaster. You can't keep this hidden forever. Deception is not the answer.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	18-24
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Some College
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Young Women's President, Gospel Doctrine Teacher

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I WAS FULLY ACTIVE, FULLY BELIEVING, RAISED BY CACHE VALLEY STALWART PARENTS IN A VERY LIBERAL COLLEGE TOWN IN PENNSYLVANIA.

I was very literal and by the book. I always had questions, particularly regarding women. I believed faith and science could coexist—I believed in evolution. In my first year at BYU, I came into my own. I had a strong testimony and the gospel was the foundation of my world view.

I began reading liberal Mormon blogs (and was amazed by how they strengthened my testimony) and eventually got into Mormon podcasts.

Church history interested me. Some things seemed a bit off. I decided to make a dedicated (literally: with some intimation that this was dangerous, I opened with a prayer that my faith be preserved) effort to learn about church history.

This did not go so well. I could not square

what I'd been taught with what the best scholarship seemed to show, and I could not ignore that evidence—I'd been taught to pursue truth no matter the consequence!

All of the more current social issues then presented themselves to me, without the defense of literal belief in truth claims:. Women issues were big. I knew I was a feminist, but I finally let myself acknowledge the blatant inequalities in the church. Other issues were LGBT rights, lingering racism, lack of financial transparency, tithing, unethical ways of teaching / persuading / baptizing—things that sounds a lot like mind control to me.

I was devastated. I swung back and forth for a few months, so so so confused and uprooted, now recommitting to stronger belief, then daring to question just a little further than I ever had. Eventually I de-constructed back to God and religion. I neglected my schoolwork, failed classes, and fell into a deep depression.

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I could not think about anything else. I was obsessed. I bawled at least once a day. I lost my life's meaning, purpose, and structure. I had no hope for humanity or the world. I didn't know how to live. I nearly transferred. I lost my Monson Scholarship. I was grief-stricken.

My friends have been fairly accepting, though I feel we are not as close. This grieves me. I've made friends with other somewhat-jaded BYU students.

My parents and brother have been loving and accepting. My mom ended up comforting me when I told her I didn't believe in God. I didn't begin to heal until I knew that my family would still love me. Still, they worry, and I resent that.

I feel comfortable claiming my Mormonism. I believe in God (most days), though differently. My beliefs align more with what you could call spiritual humanism. I am semi-active. I am unsure about my future level of activity. Going to church meetings still causes me moderate to intense anxiety, and it's super boring. So much of what we hear at church I consider extraneous or harmful. I find little spiritual nourishment. I want the Church to live out its potential. I love tea. I don't care about the truth claims, though those sparked my crisis. I'm not very into Jesus. I wish we'd stop trying to be mainstream Christians and embrace some of our earlier doctrines that have fallen out of favor--eternal progression and building Zion really resonate with me.

My crisis was spurred by historical problems. Had the church presented a more honest / nuanced / open / thoughtful view of its past, I may never have had the concrete evidence my faith required to deconstruct fully.

I would have eventually run into women's issues. If women/LGBT were treated equally and history taught honestly, I would never have had a violent break with the church. My theology might have drifted, but it might have happened gradually within the church.

My faith will never be the same, and I wouldn't want it to be. I have rebuilt a lot of my world view, and I consider that a part of my faith. I have meaning and purpose again, after much therapy, writing, reading, and crying.

I'm better for having suffered this trauma. I believe I'm a little closer to truth. I find myself less judgmental. I care more about the content of people's hearts. I am more empathetic. I am impassioned to work for a better world.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Temple Worker, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President

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SEEDS OF DOUBT WERE PLANTED VERY YOUNG THAT TOOK A LONG TIME TO GERMINATE AND GROW.

I was never in a hurry to get out of the Church and never really wanted to do so. Mormonism was not just my faith, it was also my place in the world. It represented who I was and how I interacted with the world and was a large part of our family and cultural identity.

Following my faithful mission and my return to the University of Utah, I sought ways to make the faith work even though the gulf between the Church and reality were increasingly at odds. I learned the Book of Abraham was a fraud. I read B.H. Roberts' writings on language problems with the Book of Mormon. I objected to the church's treatment of blacks, women, and homosexuals. I put it all on my shelf.

I believe there was always with me uneasiness—a general sense that something

was just not right which grew over time to the point of being unbearable. Of course, during this phase, I usually bought into the party line taught by the Church which suggested that any problems were not with the system, but were with me.

Around 2008, I concluded that there were far too many factual and historical problems with the Church to be taken as literally, but the metaphor of my religion was sound and that it was a good influence in people's lives. Of course, to accept this position you must reject the position the Church itself holds about its own state of being.

Further research and reflection on my religion followed until in April of 2011 when I accepted the hard, bitter truth: The LDS Church is not what it claims to be, and actively works to discourage intellectual honesty among its leaders and members. I have to come to believe

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that they just decide that the opportunity cost of answering historical and theological questions honestly and completely is just too high a risk for such a risk-averse organization. I also must assume that those that are aware of these issues have decided that there is no good way to answer the question or I think that they would do it! So I am left to reason that I have just acquired a faulty product. I was now free to follow my consciences.

I haven't rejected my Mormon past, I have just grown beyond it. I don't feel like I am part of the system any longer. And while I won't go into the pain associated with leaving the church, I'll simply say it was the hardest, most painful thing I've ever done. It cost me family relationships, employment opportunities, and neighborhood friends. It may yet cost me my marriage. It was a terrible, but necessary for me to be true to myself.

In short, I left because the church wasn't what it claimed to be. I stay away because I value morality more than I value obedience.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Elder's Quorum President

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I LEFT THE CHURCH ON MAY 17, 2013.

I was a fully active, full tithing paying member of the Church serving as an Assistant Ward Clerk and Assistant Teacher's Quorum Adviser with a current Temple recommend.

I began questioning the Church in January 2013, when I was shown a presentation to the Youth about how to share the Gospel with friends. One of the sections was how to answer questions about the Church including polygamy, tithing, Word of Wisdom, and Blacks and the Priesthood.

The answer the youth were told to give about why Blacks were denied the Priesthood was, "We don't know." I was shocked and deeply disturbed by this stance as it contradicted what I had been taught when I was younger about the Mark of Cain. I resolved that I would do some research about this and was able to confirm the things I had been

taught about the Mark of Cain. I found many statements from previous Church Leaders including Members of the Quorum of the Twelve about the Mark of Cain. However, I also realized that I had only been taught the very surface of that belief and that the entirety of it (especially what was written by Bruce R. McConky) was terribly racist!

The next big blow to my testimony was when I watched an interview between President Hinckley and a German reporter where the Prophet was asked why the Blacks were denied the Priesthood until 1976. President Hinckley looked the reporter in the eyes said, "I don't know." I was floored. Surely this man who had been a peer of the likes of Bruce R. McConkie knew of the teachings of the Mark of Cain and yet here he was flatly denying them. To me, this was a bald faced lie. The idea that a Prophet of God would lie to a reporter shook me to the core.

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My mind immediately wondered if the Prophet would lie about that, what else might this Church be lying about? From there, it was like Pandora's box was opened, that a thousand cats were let out of the bag as I did research on the origins of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith's polygamy, the inconsistencies of the early Church, the systematic obscuring of the past by the modern church and on and on. Finally, the evidence against the validity of the Church was too much. I left the Church in May of 2013.

The biggest feeling I had was betrayal. I understand why the Church would not openly publish and actively discuss its sordid past. No one would. However, I would expect the Church would not try to cover it up and would provide answers to those who did discover aspects of the Church's past that may challenge their faith. I felt that the Church had committed a sin of omission by leaving out the facts of its origins.

Of course, my family is up in arms. My wife is very hurt by this and seems to equate my disbelief in the Gospel and by extension the Temple to me thinking that I disbelieve in our marriage. I keep being asked to pray about this when in fact I have never prayed more about anything in my life.

I have adopted a neutral stance with the Church. I will not actively campaign against it, but I will honestly answer any questions asked of me. I do not attend church, I no longer wear

the Temple Garment, I have been released from my callings, and I no longer pay tithing. I have told my wife I will support her no matter what in any of her callings and will respect any decision my children make regarding their desire to attend the LDS Church.

The only thing that broke my testimony is the Church; and the only thing that would restore my testimony is the Church. Until the Church acknowledges the past and takes responsibility for it in an open way, I will not return to it.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Young Men's Presidency, Young Men's President, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President

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### I WAS FULLY ACTIVE.

I served a mission, was always involved in leadership, magnified my callings, opened my house and wallet to the church members, married in the temple as a virgin, blessed my kids, paid on gross, never touched alcohol. I did "struggle" with pornography and masturbation, for which I felt intense guilt, from the age of 12 on. This guilt did, at times, lead to feelings of absolute worthlessness and thoughts of suicide, since I could obviously not control it. Nonetheless, I was the inspired choice of mission presidents, bishops, and other leaders to also serve as a leader. I was great with young men. I still am (just not in church, but other organizations that do actual good, rather than serve as indoctrination tools). I did hate all of the unnecessary meetings, though. I never hid that opinion.

I lost my faith in part due to inconsistencies

that always nagged (certain grooming codes, dress codes, doctrinal confusion, spiritual hierarchy, ect...) and then being confronted with the seemingly mountains of evidence against the correlated claims (Book of Abraham translation, issues surrounding Joseph Smith's foundational claims, false prophecies, etc.) at a point when I was sincerely researching church issues to help friends who had lost their faith.

It was during this time that I realized that the church did a significant amount of whitewashing and "marketing spin" when presenting major foundational claims to the general membership. The entirety of the evidence (not anti-stuff, but acknowledged historical fact) caused me to painfully acknowledge that the church was, in my honest opinion, not what it trumpeted itself to be. I felt betrayed and entered a dark period of feeling lost and fearful of reality. My whole world was ripped out from under me.

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During this time, I was also being labeled as deceived by Satan by my (still) believing wife and continuously blamed for marital discord on the subject of faith. I tried keeping communication open with my spouse from the very beginning, but she walled off the very first time I expressed the slightest doubt.

I am still married, but not nearly as happy in marriage, due to the remaining hostility from my wife and some hard feelings from and towards her family, who obviously considered me to be deceived by Satan as well, and fear that I will try to take my wife down with me. Though most people have moved on, there remains constant stress and tension towards me when I don't live up to church standards.

I'm a good guy. I help my neighbors. I'm a great father. I love my family. But fuck the church. Fuck it. Fuck this organization for perpetuating fantasy as reality. For trumping up imagination as knowledge. I hate this organization, and other organization for willfully perpetrating ignorance, for not trusting it's members to make wise decisions on their own and co-opting these people's goodness as a product of their teachings, convincing them that they'd be miserable without it. Oh, and fuck them for perpetuating teachings that result in my wife telling me that she'd rather one of our children die than I lose my faith in god. That, my friends, is a pretty shitty conversation.

My crisis could only have been prevented

if they could have been honest with the history and letting me, as an individual with a working brain, to make my own choice as to whether the utterly absurd claims add up to a working theory of reality. I probably would have dropped out by my 12th birthday. I wouldn't have made huge life decisions, based on demonstrably false pretenses. But I assume they know this openness will lead many to see the church for what it actually is. What all church's are: Man-made delusions.

And if you dismiss my story based on some swearing and obvious bias, with a dash of vitriol, I want to apologize. I don't mean to offend, but I'm using this as a chance to vent. While I am at the most peaceful place with regards to my world view, I am constantly suffering ongoing fallout within my family relationships. It's rough.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Elder's Quorum Presidency

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I WAS FULLY ACTIVE AND THEN TRANSITIONED TO SEMI-ACTIVE WHEN THE FIRST SEEDS WERE PLANTED ABOUT QUESTIONABLE CHURCH HISTORY FACTS.

My family thinks that I became inactive as a result of marrying a Catholic spouse. We had dated over six years while we tried to negotiate our faith differences. Ultimately, it was the seeds of doubt that helped me in making a decision to enter an inter-faith marriage. It was after our marriage that I had time to do more research to decide in which direction to influence my future children to go. My wife is very supportive of my faith and thinks that Mormons and Catholics are equally correct, but that her culture is too important to abandon. I am very confident that if my testimony had not been shaken, that she would eventually convert.

The most important questions that started me down this path were questions of Joseph Smith's character: the age of some of his

polygamist wives, Emma's lack of knowledge, polyandry, and the words that he would use to try and convince women to enter into a marriage contract with him, like "An angel put a burning sword to me and threatened my life if we don't marry." This led to further investigation of the means in which the Book of Mormon was translated, which then led to its inaccuracies and possible origins for much of its content. This is when I'd say my doubt superceded my faith.

When questioning church history, I'd always be reminded that it doesn't negate the Book of Mormon. But when I began to doubt the book's veracity, everything came tumbling down. Obviously the Book of Abraham and the Kinderhook plates had their place in my investigation also. As did the retroactive restoration of the priesthood story and the records of the First Vision.

I'm putting this down on paper for the first

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time, so some of this is off-putting to write. One of the ideas that I couldn't get out of my head when I began my study of church history was why I knew that the Church of Scientology was wrong. L Ron Hubbard was a science fiction author that then came up with a science fiction explanation of the universe. It seems pretty easy to assume it was false. When I learned about Joseph's treasure seeking, the method by which the Book of Mormon was translated and Joseph's story telling of ancient populations as a teenager, it became too much to ignore.

I wish with all of my heart that the church is true, but as of right now, I feel like its a lot more likely that its origins are completely false.

I think the only thing that could rebuild my faith right now would be for church leaders to lovingly address all of my concerns in satisfactory manners. I'm doubtful that this is possible, but I REALLY would love it to be the case. I would love to rejoin my family honestly in their faith.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Doctorate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Stake Auxiliary Calling

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AS A PROFESSIONAL AMERICAN HISTORIAN, I AM VERY AWARE OF ISSUES IN CHURCH HISTORY.

I have long reconciled these and they are not a problem for me. My crisis of faith came from a couple factors. Upon returning from my mission, I immersed myself in the "words of the prophets." I read all the classics I could get my hands on and all the conference reports. I adopted their words unquestionably and in faith, tailored my life to reflect what was taught. I became judgmental and prudish, and I also became shallow in my views.

The world was taught to be very simple and black / white, and tolerance was a "trap" as repeated by President Packer last conference. This all contradicts with truth and what I see as the sovereign law (love of neighbor).

I am not upset with the church because of its unquestioned racism, sexism, etc. in the past. That is a given and was visible in all other

churches as well. The question that bothers me is whether or not we as a church are repenting for that so that its general membership can move on and get beyond the unnecessary stigma. I just got done with an email to a family member that explained that it is possible to believe in the church and not be a racist. Sure, the church has condemned racism, but it hasn't condemned its racist teachings that were once so boldly taught. In other words, what is the church doing now to help us members overcome our racism? Not very much.

The church has great power to create faith and to better peoples lives. I found God within the Mormon church, and for that reason, I'm staying in it with my wife and children. But, that doesn't mean it is a happy experience most the time. I feel deeply frustrated that my five daughters are going to be growing up in a tradition that has institutionalized

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conservative philosophies and has created a culture that privileges, and continues to privilege white male elites. I think if the church was more open with its own struggles, then there would be less chance that we feel we must be obedient to those failings and rather we will free to be our own agents in the church without family members thinking us heretics. When the church moved hard against Gay Marriage, I found it ironic in light of polygamy and off base in light of our belief that civil law should not be predicated on theology and our own personal views of morality that is neither universal nor obvious.

I wish to belong to a more humble church that knows its own history and its open and free about it. That learns lessons from its past rather than bunkers down and ignores failings. For me, I am not upset that the church has failing, but I am deeply upset that those failing often become institutionalized and defended as timeless and revealed truth, when in fact they are little more than church leader prejudice and cultural bias.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Young Men's Presidency, Elder's Quorum President

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I HAVE BEEN A FAITHFUL, ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE LDS CHURCH MY ENTIRE LIFE.

Although I had been exposed to numerous challenging things about the Church's history and doctrine throughout my life, I was at peace with most of these issues.

A couple years ago, I read a blog post on an LDS-themed site that sympathized with traditional RLDS views on Joseph Smith's relationship with polygamy. I subsequently read the online book "Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy" and found that I disagreed with its conclusions, but was forced to consider the possibility that Church leaders were capable of a major doctrinal cover-up. However, I wanted to investigate the book's claims, specifically to find the primary evidence supporting traditional LDS views on polygamy's origins.

I spent the next year reading many books on LDS polygamy, and then books on Church

origins more generally. I read Bushman, Compton, Newell and Avery, Van Wagoner, and many of Michael Quinn's books. Joseph Smith's polygamy wasn't problematic to my faith growing up, but learning the details surrounding the institutionalization of the practice was devastating. I was also troubled to learn that events surrounding the First Vision, priesthood restoration, and church succession as accepted and taught by the Church were not supported by the available evidence. And finally, I found most difficult to explain the "Anthon Transcript." This transcription contains easily recognizable Latin letters — to me an unbelievable anachronism.

When I realized I was experiencing a faith crisis, I turned to online resources to better understand these issues and find good answers for them. I spent time on FAIR's site, Mormonthink.com, StayLDS.org, and listened to almost everything I could on Church history

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and faith from the Mormon Stories Podcast. I was terribly disappointed to discover that the "best and brightest" in the Church — from academics to general authorities — have no compelling answers to the most troubling issues.

I experienced a period of several months where I was completely devastated emotionally. I was also probably dealing with some clinical depression. I considered leaving the Church, and all that would mean for me and my family.

I hesitated sharing my struggles with my wife, and when I did she was heartbroken. She responded by accusing me of being dishonest with her and unfaithful to our marriage vows. As we talked further, I explained that although my faith had been affected, my commitment to her had not been. She has become supportive, acknowledging the difficulties in doctrine and history that I find problematic.

In general, my participation is largely unchanged: I am still active in the Church, and teach a youth Sunday school class. I pay tithing, but have shifted from gross to net. I hold a current temple recommend, but do not attend the temple frequently — and much less than previously.

My belief and faith have shifted a tremendous amount. I currently categorize my faith into things I know, things I believe, and things I hope for. Each subsequent category is bigger than the previous one. I personally reconcile my lack of belief in certain founding

doctrines by saying that although I do not believe x or y, I hope that it is true or I desire to believe it. In this way I can maintain my integrity and respect for evidence while exercising a particle of faith. (Alma 32:27)

Because my faith crisis was precipitated by an exposure to the unflattering details of polygamy's implementation and other restoration origin myths, I can't imagine that anything could have prevented it. The history is what it is, and efforts to spin it may be well-intentioned, but come across as disingenuous at best and deceptive at worst.

I have tried my best to rebuild faith in the Church, but the biggest roadblock is that there are no satisfying answers to the problems of Church history. I do not see how this can be solved. I have instead focused my faith on Christ and his doctrine. The Book of Mormon quotes the Savior as saying that anything more or less than his doctrine is built on a sandy foundation (3 Nephi 11:31-40), and that includes much of what passes for doctrine in the Church.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$25,001 - \$50,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Men's Presidency, Elder's Quorum Presidency

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BEFORE BECOMING TOTALLY INACTIVE, I WAS VERY ACTIVE IN THE CHURCH.

I had paid a full tithe all my life, never went against the word of wisdom, and held a temple recommend. I stopped all of these things, not because they were too difficult, none of them had ever felt like a burden, but because I realized that the church was not true, and its commandments were not valid.

My first experience with so called anti-Mormons was with regards to the Book of Abraham. For some reason, the Book of Abraham connected with me, like no other scripture, so I read it all the time. I was studying the facsimiles one day, and noticed in Joseph's translation of the hypocephalus, it said that if the world can figure out these numbers, so be it. Knowing that we could now read Egyptian, I went straight to my computer, excited for what I would surely learn. The results were not what I expected.

After that, I began to compartmentalize things, and had to rationalize a lot to keep my faith going. I thought there may be some problems with the church, but Joseph was only a man, mistakes were inevitable, and overall the restoration was all it was claimed to be. I held onto that through college. I studied science, and minored in philosophy, learning so much about the world, and about how we think. I managed to rationalize throughout all of that, taking out pieces of my belief that I no longer could consider true, whittling away from what still felt like a strong core.

After college, I started reading things by some of the more prominent people in the world of skepticism, and what is called the New Atheists, starting with a couple of blogs regarding the importance of science in medicine and astronomy, debunking bad theories, and moving on to the serious guys, like Sam Harris, or Michael Shermer. I blocked off many of the things that they said regarding religion, pointing

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out in my mind what I thought were clearly illogical jumps, but everything they said about skepticism in general seemed spot-on. I realized though, that they were not the ones making assumptions. They never said there was no God, just that the evidence was not compelling, and certainly didn't justify much of what is done in the world in the name of such a god.

After sharing my doubts with my wife, she went online and found a couple of communities for me, full of people who had problems with the church, but wanted to stay active. I thought at first that this was great. There was much that I did not believe anymore, but I wanted to believe that the church was at the very least, something good and inspired by God. My wife found through these groups though, about some of the inconsistencies in the church, flaws of the early church leaders, some of the untrue things that we have been told to believe all of our lives, and some of the current policy issues. I knew about most of the things she was telling me, but a few of them were new to me.

I could not get enough of the real church history. I listened to hours of the Mormon Expressions podcast, glad to have an honest view on things, even if it would be considered by active members to be anti-Mormon. I always had a problem with the idea that we shouldn't listen to the "anti" information or any other view, while promoting open-mindedness to others regarding our views, but I had never really given

myself permission to really investigate.

Eventually, we stopped paying tithing. We could not make our budget balance, by the exact amount that we were donating to the church, were on food-stamps and WIC, and the church was building a mall in Utah. We had stopped wearing the temple garment a while earlier, after I had broken down, crying to my wife about how much I hated them, they were so unattractive, and impractical. And, we quit going to church except to watch the nursery, and then quit going all together a while after that.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Young Women's President, Relief Society Presidency, Relief Society President, Primary Presidency, Spouse of Bishopric, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Stake Auxiliary Calling

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I AM 34 YEARS OLD AND MARRIED IN THE TEMPLE.

I have one child. I'm still active and still a full tithing payer, temple recommend holder, attending church and fulfilling callings. I've been faithful, grew up and graduated seminary and institute and was a fervent member missionary.

I started to doubt five years ago when I received my endowments. I was not expecting the ceremony process despite all my gospel knowledge. The endowment ceremony, for me, was not uplifting, rather it was cult like. It was about power and receiving power. I have no ambition to be a God and I don't consider myself above anyone else. Also, instead of pledging my life to Christ, I pledged my life to the institution of the church. This made me uncomfortable. I felt a bit like the child in 'The Emperor's New Clothes'. But you're

not allowed to talk about the temple, and even IN the temple, no one talks about it. So I couldn't express my questions to others. But I did feel an unknown power in the temple so I humbled myself and kept the faith.

A year ago, I was assigned informally to blog on news sites directing people to lds.org when misinformed. To my horror, I discovered that most negative things cited were true. Joseph and his very young wives and how he proposed to them. I was taught polygamy wasn't sexual and the women were old and widowed. Joseph's 'affair' was before polygamy revelation. Joseph signed affidavit with 30 odd witnesses swearing he only had one wife. This made him a documented liar, with more witnesses for his lie than witnesses for the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Then I learned the true nature of why Harris and Cowdrey left the church. I had

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been lied to again. The real reason the printing press was smashed. Another lie. The Book of Abraham is not a record of Abraham 'written by his own hand.' View of the Hebrews. Captain Kidd treasure hunting stories, Priesthood symbols used in Asia as Thi Chai signs.

At first, I was in denial and tried frantically to prove these things were wrong. I felt despair, shock and depression when I discovered these things were true. The more I looked to prove these things false, I came across more lies. The extent of masonry and its influence on the early prophets and apostles horrified me. Joseph's bank fraud. Joseph trying to sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon. His belief in magic and treasure seeking and his conviction for it. The Enoch masonry legend about someone discovering a record in a hill. The true circumstances surrounding Joseph's tarring and feathering and martyrdom.

I thought - ok, people make mistakes. The GA's and current prophets are good men. Then I read a letter from an apostle trying to suppress against civil right movement. Fallacy there. Hinkley and Mark Hoffman. More fallacy. Shopping malls and 'modest' allowances for GA's totalling hundreds of thousands of pounds annually. Horrified. Where is Christ, when the prophets are teaching false doctrine from the pulpit? I continue to learn more about the lack of integrity of the LDS church. It took me one year to voice my concern to another soul, including my spouse, for fear I was wrong and I

would lose my husband. Then, I found myself in a room with most of our ward leadership and we soon discovered that every one of us now weren't sure of the foundations of our faith.

On Sunday we sang 'How Firm A Foundation' and I cried. What foundation? The evidence against Joseph Smith far outweighs any truth claims. Where is our modern day Prophet? If Jesus Christ guides him, where is the inspiration? The revelation? All I see is frantic efforts to cover up and continue lying 'to maintain membership.'

What might have prevented my faith crisis? Having faith in truth. Not being lied to for 34 years of my life. You can't repair 34 years of unfaithfulness unfortunately. For me, I will wait it out. If the church dies, then it had no foundation to start with and it is not Jesus Christ's restored gospel. It was fraud.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Some College
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary

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I WAS A VERY BELIEVING MEMBER OF THE CHURCH. I NEVER DOUBTED ITS TRUTHFULNESS.

I was involved in everything the church offered. I went to early morning seminary, attended all my meetings, and also attended events like EFY. I also served a full-time mission in Salt Lake and upon returning home, was very active in my single adult ward.

What started my journey out of the church was first stumbling upon the fact the Joseph Smith had multiple wives. I was never taught this at all growing up in the church. So when I first found out, I was hurt that I had to find out from a source other than the church. I mean, why did they paint the picture that it was just him and Emma? I was okay with Brigham having lots of wives so why wouldn't they just be more open about Joseph's polygamy? I then learned that a lot of Joseph's wives were still married to other men and some of the girls were as young as 15 or so. This got me thinking, if the church is painting a different

picture about Joseph Smith, what else might not be as it seems? This led me to research pretty much every aspect of the church.

I soon found out that there were a whole lot of problems with the history of the church and how it was taught to me and how it really was. One of the biggest problems for me was the Book of Abraham. The fact that Joseph himself believed he was translating words that were directly written by the hand of Abraham as he said in his journal. And now that Egyptologists can actually translate the papyrus, it turns out Joseph was completely wrong. Then as I kept learning there are just so many problems: Book of Mormon DNA, archeology, conflicts with science, different versions of the First Vision, racism, all the changes in the Book of Mormon, death penalties in the temple, and many others. I kept trying to make everything fit in my Mormon paradigm. I thought I had the answers that the church was true and Joseph was a prophet so I had to make all

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this garbage fit somehow. It turns out you can't. I then realized that these problems all make sense when you know that Joseph was just a man and the church is a man-made religion. That is why it is so flawed.

For the most part I am very lucky in terms of my family. My wife started questioning shortly after I told her I had problems, and she looked into everything for herself and has determined the church is not true. My parents haven't disowned me and still love and accept me. But they fear for the "salvation" of my soul. They are always a little sad when they are around me because now we can't be together forever because I do not follow the gospel.

My current belief in the church is that is 100% man-made. I believe it does teach some good principles but it also does a lot of emotional damage to people as well. For me, it caused huge amounts of guilt for things that are very normal in human development. Overall I feel people would be better off without the church and religion. It just segregates people and tears families apart, especially when there is a faith crisis.

I think the only thing that would have kept me in the church would be honesty. The church hides behind its apologists and never explains any of the issues officially. These are supposed to be men speaking with God, surely they could provide some answers to people who are honestly trying to seek out what is true.

They couldn't do anything to rebuild my faith now. They would have to renounce all of their truth claims and just admit they actually don't know everything and aren't directed by God. They would have to turn into a group that is only interested in helping and loving humanity regardless of God existing or not. Until then, it is simply an organization seeking to profit from believers.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Some College
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Elder's Quorum Presidency

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I WAS BORN INTO AN ACTIVE LDS FAMILY WITH A FATHER AND MOTHER WHO TOOK ALL SIX KIDS TO CHURCH EVERY SUNDAY.

My parents are faithful and wonderful members of the church. I was baptized at eight, received the Aaronic Priesthood at 12 and the Melchizedek at age 19. I remained a faithful and active Elder until now.

I served as the Elders Quorum President in our ward through two Stake splits and two or three ward splits. I married worthily in the Bountiful Utah Temple. I have baptized 2 of my 3 kids into the LDS church. I had NEVER doubted the truthfulness of the church.

My wife and I are not leaving the LDS church because either of us were offended, or because we have some desire to sin. We both love Jesus Christ and only want to do what we feel is best to serve Him.

President Gordon B. Hinckley said "Each of

us has to face the matter—either the Church is true, or it is a fraud. There is no middle ground. It is the Church and kingdom of God or it is nothing." If the church is to be based on this litmus test alone, we can come to no other conclusion than to say the church is a fraud.

About ten years ago, I heard for the first time that the LDS Temple ceremony was very similar to the Masonic temples. I did some basic research into this and was startled by the near identical "signs and tokens" that both the LDS temple and Masonic temple uses. I also learned that Joseph Smith was indeed a Master Mason, having risen in his Masonic Lodge to the highest degree in only two days. I shelved this fact as unimportant and continued faithfully.

About five months ago (January 2013) I was surfing the internet and read a fairly insignificant comment about Joseph Smith possibly getting the idea for the Book of Mormon from 'The View of the Hebrews

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by Ethan Smith. As I was doing a little research on 'The View of the Hebrews', I came upon a couple quotes from B.H Roberts and was shocked when I read that Roberts himself began to doubt the origins of the Book of Mormon, because of its similarities to Ethan Smith's Book and other problems that were simply unanswerable.

This raised my curiosity, so I had a friend send me 'The View of the Hebrews'. He also sent another book 'An Insider's View of Mormon Origins' by Grant H. Palmer. I began to read this book, and to be honest my reaction was visceral disgust, I couldn't read it! I thought "NO WAY! This guy has got to be an anti-Mormon." I was angry, mad and I immediately went to websites that defend the LDS church in order to rebut the information I was reading. Imagine my complete and utter shock, when I went to the LDS defense website and all they did was confirm the stuff I was reading! Because they were defenders of the faith, they always had an answer to explain the accusation, but most the time the answer was ridiculous. I began to dig, and the deeper I dug, the bigger the hole got. (Book of Abraham, Kinderhook Plates, Fanny Alger, The First Vision, Polyandry, Anachronisms, no physical evidence. etc.)

This has been DEVASTATING! Heartbreaking, gut-wrenching; it has felt like a dream to be honest. It's the most surreal thing I've gone through. Sleepless nights, anger,

sadness, hope, and intensely sincere prayer have all been a part of this road we have travelled.

Our Bishop told us we have been deceived by Satan. When we asked to have my wife released from the primary presidency he asked us to lie to people about why if they asked. My parents have been great, but my wife's parents disowned us for a period of time. Recently we have been able to move on as long as WE do not discuss OUR religion (we are now Evangelical Christians) but they can discuss theirs.

I am going back to college to get my degree in Biblical studies and I hope to one day minister to disenchanted Mormons.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Some College
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Young Women's Presidency, Young Women's President, Relief Society Presidency, Relief Society President, Primary Presidency, Spouse of Bishopric, Temple Worker

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I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FULLY ACTIVE. MY FAITH WAS SIMPLE AND QUITE STRONG.

However, I have also always had a very logical, analytical, questioning mind, and a strong awareness of fairness, justice, and equality. So I was always very troubled by polygamy, but I put it on "the shelf." Trying to process the issue time and again, I would feel deeper and deeper pain about what this could mean about my role as a woman in the eternities, and did God really value men more than women (despite all protestations from the pulpit)?

During the last 10 years I have studied off and on to find out more about polygamy and church history and to try and either accept it or (dare I) decide not to accept it. Then about five years ago, I started really researching online and learned soooooo much more about the inconsistencies between what I had been taught and what history really showed.

There are so many examples: women used to be able to give healing blessings, the messy post-Manifesto period, the terrible things Brigham Young said about race and the way he treated his wives and bullied others, the lack of accountability and apology when Church policy has been hurtful (priesthood ban!), while still expecting Church members to be honest in all of our dealings, the fact that Joseph Smith encouraged weddings to be in public and now many family members are excluded from that special occasion because of the temple, the lack of transparency of how tithing funds are spent, the imbalance of authority between men and women that devalues women, overburdens men, and deprives the Church of the full measure of the blessing of female leadership, the unequal programs for youth (scouts vs. activity days and personal progress - not the same!), the extreme modesty rhetoric, the imbalance of covenants for men

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and women in the temple, and on and on.

I have had roller coaster emotions as a result of my 'faith crisis.' Sometimes my whole world seems upended. I don't feel like I can trust anybody or anything. I feel like I am having a breakup—I feel heartbroken. On the other hand, I feel that my thinking has been liberated. I don't feel as trapped in a cage as I used to feel.

I have broadened my thinking about God to include Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother, and to ponder on the possibilities for women in the eternities that are more than has been revealed.

I feel open to spiritual truth from other sources. I feel a greater reliance on my own internal compass.

But my husband does not understand what I'm going through and feels threatened and defensive, so it has introduced some distance and conflict in our marriage, which greatly saddens me. I try to help him see my more complex viewpoint but he often just wants to defend the Church. I understand, as I used to be where he is. I don't want to tear down his faith, so it is tricky. I swallow a lot of my feelings and thoughts to maintain peace.

My family doesn't know the full extent of my shift in perspective, but my sisters know some of it and are intrigued. My leaders can sense a bit of angst in me, I think, but I have not disclosed any of my concerns, for I do not think they will be a helpful resource for

me if they have not done the research.

I am still fully active. I feel a little more hesitant about paying tithing but I still am. I feel less enthusiastic about the temple but I will still go. I am less inclined to do missionary work.

I worry about my children going this feeling of betrayal someday too, and feel that I have to filter their church lessons after the fact.

What would have prevented my faith crisis? More honesty all around from the Church about everything past and present.

What would rebuild my faith? Again, more honesty, transparency, clarity, accountability. I have lost my trust in the Church. I have hope that eventually the improvements and change will come, but I fear how long it will take. Right now I am focusing on my faith in God.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

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<b>AGE</b>	25-34
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	

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I GREW UP IN UTAH, AND WAS ALWAYS FULLY ACTIVE- GRADUATED FROM BYU, SERVED A MISSION IN BRAZIL, MARRIED IN THE TEMPLE.

The whole time, I was 100% orthodox and obedient, but secretly I was plagued by doubts, mostly about gender. I felt persistently less-than as a woman in the church. When I went to the temple, I felt deep shame as a woman. I would read the scriptures and cry because I could not find myself there.

On my mission, I often felt patronized and condescended to, knowing I was an effective missionary but always being subordinate to men who were younger than me and had not studied the gospel as rigorously as I had. I was also deeply troubled by the manipulation tactics I was trained to use as a missionary. Both before and after my mission I also lived in multiple countries and often felt troubled by the insensitivities that tended to occur when American church collided with other cultures.

Later, when I was married and working on my

masters degree, the Prop 8 debacle occurred. I was serving as Relief Society President at the time and I was shattered by the injustice of it. My gay and lesbian friends asked how I could support an organization like that, and I couldn't answer their questions. I started to give myself permission to ask very hard questions—questions that I had been repressing for many years. I allowed myself the freedom to ask the questions without binding them to foregone conclusions. I began to allow myself to research things that I had previously been afraid of- for example, Joseph Smith's polygamy and church finances. The more I read, the more I began to realize that the church organization was incompatible with my personal values. My sense of social justice, inclusively, and feminism are stronger than my faith was. Now, as I have read more and more, I also don't believe the basic claims of the church. I haven't attended for about two years. I would probably describe myself as agnostic. It is such a profound, unutterable relief to just say "I don't know." My dad and two of my siblings have also left the

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church. It is a sad spot for my mom (divorced from my dad) and other two siblings who still attend, but they are kind about it. I have no intention of going back. The thought of even going into a church building makes me feel severe anxiety. I don't want my kids to learn the things I learned- I don't want my daughter to pass through a lifetime of deep shame over her girlhood and womanhood. I have moved on.

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## ANONYMOUS FEMALE

<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$50,001 - \$100,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Some College
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithing Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Relief Society Presidency, Primary Presidency, Stake Auxiliary Calling

BEFORE I EXPERIENCED THE SPIRITUAL AWAKENING WHICH LED ME OUT OF THE LDS CHURCH, I WAS A FULL TITHING PAYING, TEMPLE ATTENDING CHURCH MEMBER.

In fact, for many years after I began to question the history and teachings of the LDS church, I was still active in it in every way possible. I attended church, held callings, held regular scripture study and prayer, did family home evening, etc. In the end, however, I could no longer ignore all that was wrong, untruthful, and harmful in the church in order to enjoy what was positive about it. In order to be true to myself and look others in the face and say I was living an honest and authentic life, I had to leave the LDS church behind.

There were so many reasons for my awakening: lack of any valid historical evidence for the Book of Mormon; lies and distortions in church history; scientific conclusions which proved prophecies to be completely

inaccurate; subjugation of women in the name of “priesthood;” the temple ceremony; Joseph Smith’s translation of the bible; the Book of Abraham being shown to be a complete fabrication and figment of Joseph Smith’s very active imagination; polygamy and polyandry during Joseph Smith’s tenure as leader; church lies about polygamy and polyandry during Joseph Smith’s tenure as leader; Brigham Young’s virulent racism against blacks; keeping people of color from holding the priesthood for many, many years in what was supposed to be the restored and most correct church on earth; etc.

It took me 12 years from the time I first began to suspect the church was not what it professed to be to the day that I actually decided to leave. During this time, I did everything I had been instructed to do by the church’s leaders, and put my heart into these things, only to be shown time and again that reality

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was stacking the deck against the truthfulness of the LDS church. I finally awakened to the fact that I had spent 35 years of my life trying to fit all my doubts into a system which would not accommodate them, and so I broke free.

It was one of the most peaceful days of my life when I finally had the courage to say I was done with this church. It was one of the worst days of my life when I confessed these feelings to my mother, a convert of over 40 years. We owned a twin home together, and she threatened to force the sale of our home and limit contact with our family (my husband and I have 5 children) because the pain of what I was telling her was too great. She accused me of many painful and untrue things during this encounter. I was sick for weeks afterwards. I felt so happy to be free, and yet I quickly realized that the rest of my life would be filled with encounters like this one as I “came out” to other members of mine and my husband’s family.

Thankfully, my mother, herself a therapist, came to me several weeks later and apologized for her reaction and begged my forgiveness. She said that she wanted to be there for me and for us to have a good relationship. However, it took me several months before I could heal enough to really try and have that relationship with her.

My other interactions with family members haven’t been that traumatic, but there are still more to come as this process often happens one person at a time. I have

been lucky to find a wonderful online support community that has provided me a place to discuss these experiences with people who have had similar ones.

I do not anticipate anything that could have happened that would have kept me from this awakening, and even with the pain I have gone through, I do not regret my experience. Neither do I wish to go back and “rebuild” my faith. I hold no animosity towards the LDS church as an institution or any of its leaders; however, in the end I see that organized religion as a system does more harm than good to many people.

ANONYMOUS MALE

<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	College Graduate
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum President, High Priest Leader, Bishopric Councilor

I WAS A FULLY ACTIVE, FULLY BELIEVING MEMBER OF THE CHURCH, WITH MY FAMILY TIES GOING BACK TO THE ORIGINAL FOUNDING OF THE LDS CHURCH.

The primary reasons for my loss of faith are:

- The church participation in Prop 8
- Lack of financial transparency
- Misuse of funds to build Salt Lake City mall
- Payment of large sums of money to church leaders
- Using tithing money to build ornate temples instead of helping the poor/need
- Book of Abraham problems - Joseph clearly didn't translate it correctly
- Temple ceremony derived from Freemasonry
- Polygamy of Joseph Smith and current doctrine still exists
- Book of mormon changes throughout the years

- Late date of allowing Black people full blessings - racism still exists in book of mormon
- Book of Mormon translation problems - didn't even use plates to translate - used stone in hat
- Church policy of lying about church history and teaching sanitized version of events
- Second anointing ordinance is secret and still being performed
- Problems with restoration of priesthood timeline - clear that Joseph Smith made it up
- Problems with First Vision - clear that Joseph Smith made it up after crisis in church leadership
- History of Joseph Smith and his family being con artists/moneydiggers
- Lack of believability of 3 and 8 witnesses

- Culture of blind faith of church
- Culture of infallibility of prophets
- Scope of church involvement in day-to-day life being too much—it feels cultlike: Callings, socials, firesides, missionary work, outings, youth program, seminary, temple attendance - the list goes on and on
- Tithing has evolved and only was arrived at after church had assets seized by US government—is too much to expect members to give
- Temple worthiness tied to tithing payment—essentially you have to pay to get in; being a good person and having repented of sins is not enough
- Three hour meetings every Sunday are too much
- Testimony meeting being ridiculous and example of cult-like indoctrination
- Intolerance of members and church leaders toward a wide spectrum of acceptance levels of church doctrine—excommunicate those who respectfully bring up issues
- Temple weddings being inaccessible to non-members is cruel
- Baptism for the dead is scripturally indefensible (Bible passages refer to pagan rituals, non-Christian practices)
- Doctrine of no death before

- the fall is patently false
- Doctrines of the scriptures to be taken literally
- The flood didn't happen
- Non-acceptance of evolution when clearly it happened
- The church being run like a corporation

My current position is one of being trapped as I got married and had kids expecting to remain in the church and when I found out the truth, my wife and I have had a hard time.

The culture of the church demonizes anyone saying anything bad about the church, so she refuses to listen to anything I'm saying and is just terribly emotional.

I am a devoted husband and father but the church places so much emphasis on church activity that she can only concentrate on that aspect. I'd like to leave the church but my whole family would nearly disown me. I'm angry and despondent that I've been lied to and made to look like a fool for believing and defending something that is so clearly a fraud. I have no idea what could have prevented my feelings at this point. I honestly am so disillusioned that I find it hard to accept even the existence of God.

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## ANONYMOUS MALE

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<b>AGE</b>	35-50
<b>INCOME LEVEL</b>	\$100,001 - \$150,000
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	Graduate School
<b>MEMBER TYPE</b>	Life-long member
<b>PRIOR TO CRISIS</b>	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
<b>CALLINGS HELD</b>	Full-time Missionary, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Ward Mission Leader, High Priest Leader

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### I INVESTIGATED THE CHURCH WHEN I WAS 16.

After two years, I chose to be baptized. At 19, I served a mission to Latin America. Upon my return, I attended BYU for my undergraduate degree and a Masters. I majored in history.

My faith crisis began as an undergraduate and continued during my doctorate work. I had many doubts but always managed to defer to later knowledge or justify to myself that certain questions simply were not that important for answers.

For a long time, I subscribed to Richard Pohl's Liahona / Iron Rod Mormon dichotomy. As I progressed further in my study of Latin American history, I became less convinced about the Book of Mormon's historicity. Further study moved me to a place where I tried to be comfortable with Joseph simply having in essence, a spirit writing experience.

Over time, my doubts surrounding Joseph

Smith increased. That was coupled with General Authority statements that seemed to back certain peripheral members into an intellectual corner. It was an all or nothing scenario with regard to the Book of Mormon or Joseph's mantle as prophet.

Still, for a long time I remained because I wasn't certain that casting aside my world view would accomplish anything. What was I to replace it with? When my reading finally ventured to Dawkins, "Hitch," and especially Harris, I finally found an acceptable path. I quickly started to recognize the debilitating effects of religion. I was especially dismayed with the LDS position on LGBT individuals and the ever-increasing anti-science positions being voiced both from Salt Lake and the LDS public at-large.

I finally decided to have a conversation with my bishop in which I stated that I no longer had a desire to participate in Church activity. He

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is a kind man and has been very professional. I still count him as a friend. I told him that I did not need to be treated as a project. I also stated that I would not permit anyone to hold a "court of love" and that I would resign prior to being branded something by an organization that held no authority over me.

Now I am wading the new waters of finding common ground with my wife, who desires to remain active. She is a great support and we both recognize that our marriage is far more important than the Church doctrine. We are also trying to find the appropriate manner in which to deal with my disaffection as it relates to our children.

I would currently describe my world view as agnostic. I do not think that anything would have prevented my faith crisis. I was willing to join the Church because my previous belief system was inadequate and so when I found myself in the same position relative to the LDS faith, my integrity called for disaffection.

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