

Gaining Wisdom Avoiding Bear Traps

Following Jesus After Mormonism

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Faith After Mormonism Conference 2020

<http://beggarsbread.org/2020/09/26/gaining-wisdom-avoiding-bear-traps/>

My Mormon Story

- Raised in the First Church of the Nazarene, Anaheim, CA
- A lifetime of Mormon Family and Friends
- Went Atheist
- Saved in 1976
- First entered Mormon Studies in 1978
- Spent 13-years in a Mind Control Cult
- Former Christian Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
- Former Group Facilitator of Recovery Groups at Saddleback Community Church, Lake Forest and Mariners Church, Irvine, CA
- Member of Saddleback Covenant Church, Mission Viejo, CA
- Administrator on several Mormon Studies websites including two for Ex-Mormon Christians

First, a quick review from last year...

<https://beggarsbread.org/2019/10/12/from-human-doing-to-human-being/>



Your life on Mormonism.
(It produces Human *Doings*)

God Creates Human *Beings*

Jesus Christ's To Do List (For You and For Him)

From the Bible

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love."

(John 15:1-9 NKJV)

Your life on Jesus, but...



... abiding leads to fruit bearing.

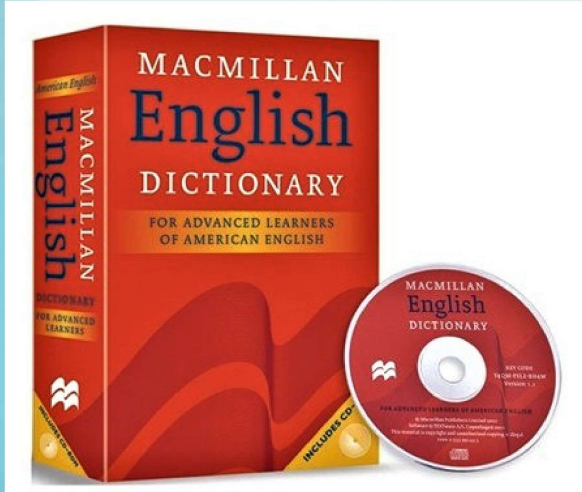
Jesus Christ's To Do List (For You and For Him)
From the Bible

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another."

(John 15:10-17 NKJV)

Gaining Wisdom



“Wisdom: The ability to make good decisions based on knowledge and experience.”

(MacMillan Dictionary, American Edition)

Gaining Wisdom



Photo by Aaron Burden on Unsplash

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

(Hosea 4:6 NKJV)

“Apply your heart to instruction,
And your ears to words of knowledge.”

(Proverbs 23:12 NKJV)

“By knowledge the rooms are filled
With all precious and pleasant riches.”

(Proverbs 24:4 NKJV)

“A wise man *is* strong,
Yes, a man of knowledge increases
strength.”

(Proverbs 24:5 NKJV)

Gaining Wisdom

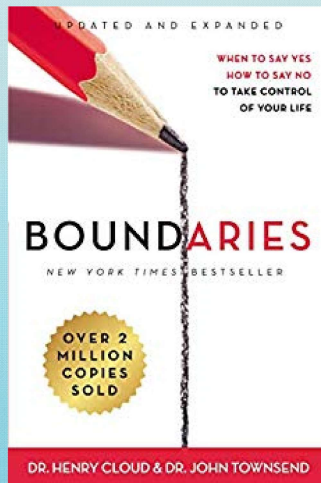


“Always learn from
experience,
preferably
someone else’s.”

— Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Lessons from Someone Else’s Experience

This book is essential reading!

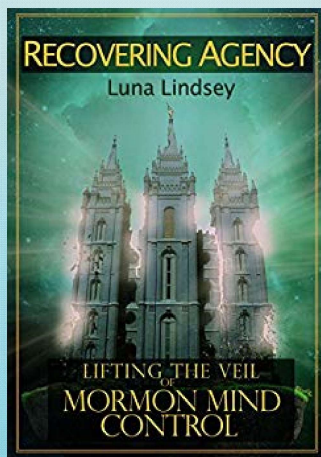


“Boundaries define us. They define what is me and what is not me. A boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership. Knowing what I am to own and take responsibility for, gives me freedom. If I know where my yard begins and ends, I am free to do with it what I like. Taking responsibility for my life opens up many different options. However, if I do not ‘own’ my life, my choices and options become very limited.”

— Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *“Boundaries: When To Say Yes, How to Say No”*, p.29

Lessons from Someone Else's Experience

Why that book is essential reading!



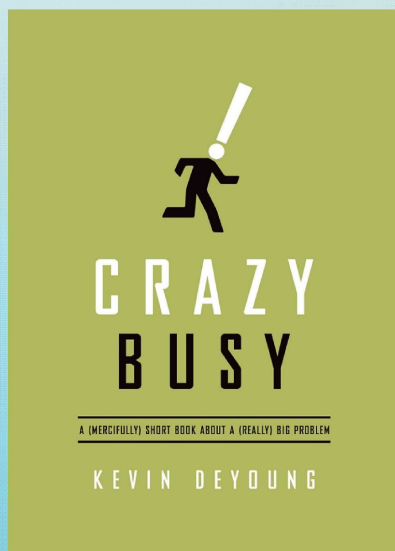
“Many Mormons lack an understanding about setting healthy boundaries. It is difficult for most Saints to say “No” to new callings, charitable requests, and demands for more time. Mormons are often meddling in each other’s business, judging one another and, for the sake of someone else’s spiritual welfare, offer unsolicited advice, drop in unannounced for visits, or simply don’t take no for an answer. Often members are pecked to death with good intentions.”

– Luna Lindsey, *“Recovering Agency: Lifting the Veil of Mormon Mind Control”*, p.34

Lessons from Someone Else's Experience

1. Learn how to set healthy boundaries.
2. Learn how to say, “No!”
3. Be teachable (not a know it all).
4. Be slow to speak and quick to listen.
5. Find and participate in a good Christian Ex-Mormon Recovery Group.
6. Find and engage a good Christian Therapist.
7. Get your questions about the reliability of the Bible answered to your satisfaction.
8. Find a Bible translation that speaks to and “reads” you.
9. Learn proper hermeneutics (the methodological principles of interpretation).
10. Learn the Essential and non-Essential Doctrines of the Christian Faith.
11. Learn Christian Church History.
12. Find your new Church home and get grafted in.
13. Pray organically (not ritualistically).
14. Develop a daily Bible reading and prayer habit.

Lessons from Someone Else's Experience



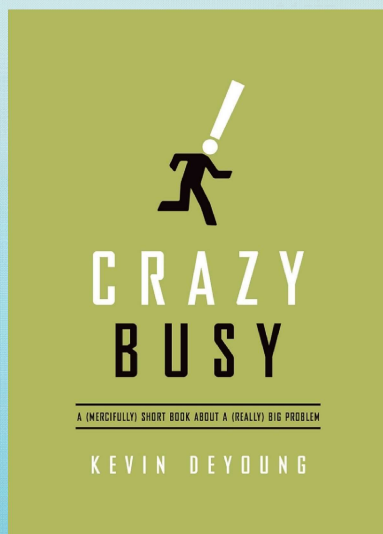
"If you are sick and tired of feeling so dreadfully busy and are looking for a one-point plan to help restore order to your life, this is the best advice I know: devote yourself to the Word of God and prayer. This means public worship and private worship. I'm not telling you how much time to spend. You may start with five minutes a day or fifteen or fifty. A few unhurried minutes are better than a distracted hour, and a consistent habit is better than a sporadic burst of fits and starts. As someone who has had a devotional time since high school—and has also struggled to have a devotional time since high school—I can tell you that no single practice brings more peace and discipline to life than sitting at the feet of Jesus."

-- Kevin DeYoung, "[Crazy Busy](#)", Kindle locations 1274-1275

Lessons from Someone Else's Experience

15. Get to know your Pastor.
16. Join a Small Group in your Church.
17. Initiate Socially in your Church.
18. Learn and apply "The Rule of Principle, not Personality".
19. Always Be 100% Authentic, 100% of the Time.
20. Discover your "wiring".
21. Known your limitations and don't exceed them.
22. Remember that your Mormon Story has given you unique skills an experiences that God *can and will* use to help others.
23. When *you're* ready – and only then – start volunteering.
24. Do few things but do them well.
25. Be gentle with yourself and others.
26. Be patient with yourself and others.
27. Develop the habit of reading good Christians books: A reading Christian is a growing Christian.
28. Do (or don't do) all the above slowly, deliberately, and at the pace that *you* set for *yourself*.

Lessons from Someone Else's Experience



"Making consistent time for the Word of God and prayer is the place to start because being with Jesus is the only thing strong enough to pull us away from busyness. Luke 10:38–42 is nothing but a story version of Deuteronomy 8:3: 'Man does not live by bread alone, but . . . by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.' We won't say no to more craziness until we can say yes to more Jesus. We will keep choosing dinner rolls over the bread of life. We will choose the fanfare of the world over the feet of Jesus. We will choose busyness over blessing."

-- Kevin DeYoung, "[Crazy Busy](#)", Kindle locations 1321-1322

Avoiding Bear Traps



Photo by Alex Grodkiewicz on Unsplash

"He who trusts in his own heart
is a fool,
But whoever walks wisely will be
delivered.

(Proverbs 28:26 NKJV)

"Wise *people* store up knowledge,
But the mouth of the foolish is near
destruction."

(Proverbs 10:14 NKJV)

"Scorners delight in their scorning,
And fools hate knowledge."

(Proverbs 1:22 NKJV)

Avoiding Bear Traps



“But there's bear traps
lying in those woods
Most of 'em
already been used”

-- Steve Taylor, "I Just Wanna Know"

Bear Traps lying in those woods

1. Taking up the sword against Mormonism prior to full recovery from Mormonism.
2. Assuming that you have to *have* a “ministry”.
3. Assuming that Mormonism taught you the Bible.
4. Assuming that Mormonism taught you Christianity – especially true Christian Church History.
5. Being unteachable. That is, being too darn smart.
6. Confusing Anti-Mormonism with Christianity.
7. Letting well meaning but misguided Christians turn you into a weapon against Mormonism.
8. Trying to Proselytize or Rescue your Mormon family – let God use strangers.
9. Falling into the deceit that Ex-Mormon Atheism is more rational than theism.
10. Ignoring lingering doubts about the reliability of the Bible.
11. Pendulum swinging.

The Biggest Bear Traps

Not questioning false biases, perceptions, and feelings

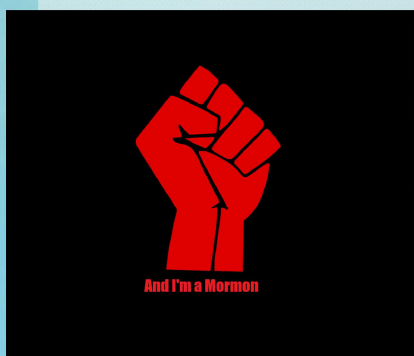


"The very teachings of Mormonism and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints may set up its members to turn away from faith and even provide the content of an atheistic worldview. If these teachings are not re-evaluated, then the ex-member may embrace atheism not solely based on rational and accurate arguments and evidence, but also from false biases, skewed perceptions, and feelings trained into them by the LDS Church. The man or woman who leaves must be resolute and steadfast in rooting out and reconsidering all that they have received from Mormonism; not just doctrines and history, but all of the assumptions and implications of the teachings that they were not even aware of, but that are still determining the way they think about and see the world."

— Joshua Valentine, ["How the LDS Church Prepares Its Members for Atheism \(Part 4\)"](#)

The Biggest Bear Traps

The False Dichotomy of Orthopraxy v. Orthodoxy



Methodists have creeds which a man must believe or be asked out of their church. I want the liberty of thinking and believing as I please. It feels so good not to be trammled. It does not prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine

— Joseph Smith, ["History of the Church"](#), 5:340

"It's clear that orthopraxy (the practice of one's faith) is far more important in Mormonism than orthodoxy (adherence to an established set of beliefs). In other words, Mormons will tolerate wrong belief as long the errant believer is doing all the right stuff. It sounds something like this, 'I mean the dude may be an atheist but, hey, isn't he a great Elders Quorum teacher – I always get so much out of his lessons!'

Stated plainly, Mormonism has no theological boundaries.

So why is this a problem for Ex-Mormons transitioning out of the LdS Church and into mainstream Christianity? Simple: Because they're not aware of this dynamic they often view attempts to conform their beliefs to established Christian orthodoxy as 'legalism' or 'oppression'. As soon as they bump into the wall of Christian orthodoxy their 'inner Joseph Smith' manifests itself."

— Fred W. Anson, ["The Spirit of Mormonism is the Spirit of Rebellion"](#)

Bear Traps lying in those woods

12. Letting others Bible translation shame you.
13. Being as fanatically Christian as you were Mormon.
14. Fearing or getting intimidated by your Pastor.
15. Becoming a "Lone Ranger Christian".
16. Waiting for your Pastor to give you a calling.
17. Saying yes to a calling that you're not qualified, equipped, or ready for.
18. Transitioning from speaking Mormonese to Christianese – just speak English like a real person.
19. Assuming spiritual giftings and callings that you don't have.
20. Failing to think, question, ponder, and (respectfully) challenge authority.
21. Fixating on what you want and need.
22. Being harsh with yourself and others.
23. Getting impatient with yourself and others.
24. Not finding the sweet spot between legalism and liberty.
25. Relapsing into being a Human Doing again.
26. Deceiving yourself into thinking that you and your situation are the exception.

Lessons from Someone Else's Experience And The Biggest Bear Trap of Them All



"The four most expensive words
in the English Language are
'this time it's different'".

*-- Sir John Templeton,
creator of the Templeton Growth Fund*

In summary, don't be this...



Mormon Responses to Critics

I don't have to listen to you, because I know what's true.

If what you're saying is true, you wouldn't have to criticize my position; you'd simply focus on the positives of your own position.

If you're criticizing me, you must be ignorant or evil.

You should really stop criticizing people, because it isn't working.

Ex-Mormon Responses to Critics

See above.

