

Mission Life Not For Everyone

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I served a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1998 to 2000. I served in the Florida Orlando Mission. Missions are hard. They aren't for the faint of heart. It's hard work going door to door day after day trying to convert people over to a religion that you may or may not believe in. I know I wasn't fully converted like I *thought* I was at the age of 19. If I had drank the kool-aid more, maybe I would have been more prepared.

But here's the thing, you can't be prepared for constant rejection. No matter how hard you try, rejection just stings however it comes to you. You have to grow a thick skin and let it roll off your back early on. Then there was the constant fear of doing or saying the wrong thing. A mission is very structured in what you can or can't do. So many rules to follow and obey. Strict obedience was key to success, or so they told me.

I wonder how I could have made things different. I'm not sure if I could have. I can say that I tried my best with what I had to work with. Some people think a mission is the best thing ever to have happened to them. Well you can't capture lightning in a bottle twice. It's okay to look fondly back on your mission and whatnot, but it's not all roses and daisy's. Mission life is hard. I didn't like

my mission, I just wanted to go home and I knew I wouldn't be allowed to do so. It took quite a mental toll on me.

You would think the mandate is a simple one:

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.¹

And it should be simple. Go forth and preach the gospel to all people. They say to preach the good news of the word of God. That's just how it's meant to be. But some people get set in their ways over religion. They don't want to change. The problem with the Mormon Church is they believe everyone else has it wrong, and they are there to correct them. Instead, they should accept people for what they believe in and add to it where they can. They claim this is the way, but I don't see it happening the way it's intended to be. But that's just *my* take on things.

You don't have to take my word for it at all. That's simply how I feel about the current state of the LDS Church and its teachings. I remember being told that people not of our faith didn't believe in the same way we did, they didn't know where they came from, why they're here, or where they're going. I thought "Oh! that means I can ask them if they want to know!" So I did. The response I got? "I know that already." So there is a lot of misconceptions in life when it comes to belief vs non belief.

¹Mark 16:15-16

There needs to be some kind of shift in teaching young missionaries about what is and isn't true when it comes to other people's belief systems. Instead of ignorantly believing people don't have a clue when they come from different religions and backgrounds, we need to be accepting and use that as a jumping off point to start a gospel discussion.

Another misconception is that people stop attending church because they want to sin. This isn't always the case. Sometimes people stop attending because their shelf has broken or they no longer believe what is taught. I'm not talking about finding fault with people, but the actual doctrine that is taught within the church doesn't feel right anymore. There could be several reasons for this to take place and every person has their own personal story to go along with it. Not everyone is an apostate that wants to destroy the church simply because they have differing thoughts than the rest of the people.

Some call this a crisis of faith which can be described as this:

A crisis of faith is a deeply personal, often painful period of intense doubt regarding previously held religious, spiritual, or foundational beliefs. It involves questioning God, life's purpose, or core convictions, often triggered by personal tragedy, betrayal, or suffering. This experience can lead to profound spiritual growth and a deeper, reconstructed belief system.²

I don't like the term "faith crisis", for I have not had a crisis of faith. I have a strong belief and faith in Jesus Christ my Savior and Redeemer and His Father,

²What Does a Faith Crisis Feel Like?, (Source: Desiring God)

God, my Heavenly Father. I wouldn't call what I'm going through a faith crisis. I have problems with organized religion. That falls under the thought process of following a man made religion. True, the LDS Church claims they are a restored religion based on Christ's original church. It is still an organized religion.

Organized religion, or institutional religion, is a structured system of beliefs, rituals, and practices with hierarchical leadership and established doctrine. It offers community, shared morality, and answers to existential questions, often operating through institutions like churches or mosques, in contrast to personal, decentralized "unorganized" spiritual beliefs.³

I would rather believe in a system where it's me, the Holy Bible, God, and the Holy Spirit. But that's just me. You could say my belief system has evolved over the years.

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.⁴

So, why can't those two people be me and God? Can't the Holy Ghost be with me at that point in time? I think he can. There was a bishop in one of my wards that stated that those two people can be you and Nephi, or you and Moses. You and whoever you're reading about at any given time.

God speaks to us through revelation the same way that He led the Children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground.⁵ It is up to us to listen for those

³Voices of Faith: Why is organized religion important? (Source: The St. Augustine Record)

⁴Matthew 18:20

⁵Doctrine and Covenants 8:2-3

promptings given through the Holy Ghost. It is through the Holy Ghost that we can learn truth as it testifies of the Father and The Son. That's its main purpose is to testify of the truth.

I remember as a missionary I wanted so much to always have the spirit in my life. To have that almost high feeling that it brings with it. We were instructed to teach people when they were feeling the spirit. Come to find out that people know what the spirit feels like. They don't need an outsider telling them what is and what isn't.

There was a time when we were reading John 17 with a gentleman. After we had finished reading the verses, he was excited for he felt the spirit of the Lord. We didn't have to tell him the spirit was present for he knew it for himself. People aren't stupid, they know when they're feeling a gift from God.

Maybe 18-20 year olds shouldn't be peddling the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people when they themselves don't know or have a complete testimony of what it is. But that's just my two cents on the matter.