

Summary of my beliefs relative to core LDS doctrine

My beliefs relative to core LDS doctrine is best understood in the context of my beliefs in general, which I've outlined here:

[summary_of_my_beliefs.pdf](#)

Here is a brief summary of my beliefs relative to core LDS doctrine:

1. I hope that a benevolent, all-knowing, all-powerful God exists and that we will continue to exist forever. The marvel of the known universe and the complexity and beauty of earth and human life provide an indirect basis for this hope.
2. I believe we are biologically related to all living organisms on this earth.
3. I believe that what LDS culture considers 'spirit' or 'a Spirit' is likely a person's mind or consciousness.
4. I believe that my nearly 40 years of consistent, sincere prayer represent an internal dialog and was not likely communication with a being other than myself. As far as I am able to distinguish, there is no difference between the insight and communication I have when I am thinking aloud or thinking deeply to myself than when I was praying intently, and this internal dialog has not changed since I resigned from the Church or experienced a faith transition. I believe that admitting to myself that I am likely just talking to myself when I pray is morally sound and acting in humility.
5. I believe that the feelings of peace and joy in my heart should be cultivated. The feelings of peace and joy that I experience on a daily basis have not changed significantly since before and after my resignation or faith transition. Hence, at least for myself, I believe that my access to feelings of peace and joy are not modulated by ordinances administered by the Church but rather by my actions and mindfulness. I believe it is morally sound and acting in humility to admit that my feelings of peace and joy are likely self-generated (but generally when my actions and thoughts are aligned with moral principles).
6. I believe that most of those who express their spiritual feelings do so in sincerity. Hence, given the [contradictory beliefs of those who believe in spiritual truth](#), I am left believing that spiritual feelings are inadequate tools to illuminate spiritual truth with any precision. I believe that skepticism in the ability of spiritual feelings to accurately communicate objective reality is morally sound and acting in humility.
7. I believe that honestly admitting the bounds of my knowledge and experience is morally sound and acting in humility. I believe it is morally questionable for a person to lead others to believe that they have more knowledge than they possess and that we have a duty to try to distinguish between our feelings and objective reality.
8. I do not have enough information to state with any confidence whether or not God exists nor exactly what kinds of attributes he/she/it possesses (and that extends to all the thousands of deities that have been worshipped across time [Poseidon, Bhagavathi, Aganju, etc]). I believe that through my feelings alone I have no way to distinguish between a God who loves us deeply and, say, an evil

God who finds entertainment in building up our hopes only to make us suffer for all eternity. I believe it is morally sound to admit that I don't have any first-hand knowledge of God or his attributes and to be skeptical of contradictory reports of his being by those claiming first-hand experience. If God is all-knowing, then God also knows that I am a moral person of love, honesty, truth, and integrity. I have asked in sincerity for God to visit with me many times—God is free to visit or communicate with me at any time. Until that time, my sense of morality does not allow me to express knowledge of God beyond my experience.

9. I believe that if there is a God that God [does not likely intervene in a detectable or measurable way](#) in human affairs. I believe that freely expressing the belief that God does not appear to intervene (upon unbiased investigation) is morally sound and acting in humility.
10. I believe that I do not have enough information to make any certain claims about Jesus Christ, his atonement, or his resurrection. Again, I believe that refraining from making statements of knowledge that go beyond my experience is morally sound and acting in humility.
11. I believe there are many teachings and examples from Jesus's life that have value in explaining or demonstrating moral principles (I'm aware of [C.S. Lewis's trilemma](#) but reject it). I also believe there is much to learn from other individuals of great moral character (e.g., Socrates, Jorge Bergoglio [Pope Francis], many past and present leaders of the LDS Church, John Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Laozi [author of the Tao Te Ching], [Ip Man](#), Florence Nightingale, Rosa Parks, Emmeline Pankhurst, and, of course, my wife, parents, siblings, in-laws, and ancestors, just to name a few).

Beliefs expressed parallel to the Articles of Faith

My beliefs (again, see [summary_of_my_beliefs.pdf](#)) can also be expressed in similar form to the Articles of Faith:

1. I believe in love, wisdom, and hope.
2. I believe that rational beings are responsible for their own behavior.
3. I believe that by following true principles we can find peace and joy.
4. I believe that the first principles a person should follow are:
 - Love others
 - Strive to be better than you were yesterday
 - Be humble
 - Be wise
5. I believe that authority and leadership is a duty that should be shared equally and discharged honorably and humbly.
6. I believe that the structure of our organizations strongly influences their effectiveness.
7. I believe that each individual has many gifts and these should be used to help others and experience joy in life. Our innate abilities should not prevent us from developing new skills where we might lack proficiency at first.

8. I believe we can ascertain truth through careful experimentation and rational reflection.
9. I believe there is much we have already learned that we do not take advantage of, and there is yet much that we have to learn.
10. I believe mankind should work to establish peace between nations and individuals.
11. I claim the privilege of being reasonably skeptical of God's existence according to the dictates of my conscience, and of being reasonably skeptical of all those who claim to speak in God's behalf.
12. I believe in following the law to the extent that it is good and ethical.
13. I believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; I cautiously believe all that has been demonstrated, and I hope in many things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, I seek after these things.