

How those who leave the LDS Church are viewed

Introduction

LDS Church leaders, lesson manuals, and other material published by the Church speak extensively about those who leave the Church and apostasize (leaving the Church is synonymous with apostasy). Collectively, these writings emphasize that those who leave the Church are one or more of the following:

1. Morally weak (i.e., are sinning)
2. Followers of Satan (explicitly or unawares)
3. Prone to taking offense
4. Too lazy to maintain their spirituality
5. Ignorant and/or misinformed about the teachings of the Church.

Given this characterization of those who leave, it is not surprising that many feel a need to “defend their actions”, “disprove” the Church, or end up becoming hostile enemies: a person who determines that the Church is not true—regardless of how pure or noble their motives, the strength of their character, the level of their spirituality, or how comprehensively they understand the Gospel—cannot leave with their reputation and character intact. If they leave without explanation, then it is assumed that they are deficient in character or understanding—if they attempt to exonerate themselves, then they have a “need to defend their actions” or “disprove the Church” and are considered “bitter”.

While a member might be inclined to believe that the “bitter fruits of apostasy” are the natural consequence of turning from the one true faith, virtually *all* totalistic groups [characterize those who leave in a similar negative light](#) (see additional examples from [Jehovah’s Witnesses](#) and [Scientology](#). In addition, see “[The three-fold nature of the LDS Church: corporate, totalistic, and individual-growth](#)” for a longer discussion of the totalistic mindset and how it is manifest in the LDS Church.)

Positive or neutral statements about those who leave

I am only aware of one positive or neutral statement about members who leave the Church.

One might ask, “If the gospel is so wonderful, why would anyone leave?”

Sometimes we assume it is because they have been offended or lazy or sinful. Actually, it is not that simple. In fact, there is not just one reason that applies to the variety of situations.

Some of our dear members struggle for years with the question whether they should separate themselves from the Church.

In this Church that honors personal agency so strongly, that was restored by a young man who asked questions and sought answers, we respect

those who honestly search for truth. It may break our hearts when their journey takes them away from the Church we love and the truth we have found, but we honor their right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience, just as we claim that privilege for ourselves.

Note: This statement has not been reproduced in any LDS teaching material, or echoed by any other leader, to date.

Dieter Uchtdorf. General Conference, Oct, 2013. [Come, Join with Us](#)

Negative statements about those who leave

Individuals who leave the LDS Church...

have been listening to the promptings of Satan

One loses his testimony only by listening to the promptings of the evil one, and Satan's goal is not complete when a person leaves the Church, but when he comes out in open rebellion against it.

Glenn L. Pace, [April General Conference 1989](#)

become servants of Satan

Daniel Tyler recalled: "Soon after the Prophet's arrival in Commerce (afterwards Nauvoo) from Missouri prison, Brother Isaac Behunin and myself made him a visit at his residence. His persecutions were the topic of conversation. He repeated many false, inconsistent and contradictory statements made by apostates, frightened members of the Church and outsiders. He also told how most of the officials who would fain have taken his life, when he was arrested, turned in his favor on forming his acquaintance. He laid the burden of the blame on false brethren. ...

"When the Prophet had ended telling how he had been treated, Brother Behunin remarked: 'If I should leave this Church I would not do as those men have done: I would go to some remote place where Mormonism had never been heard of, settle down, and no one would ever learn that I knew anything about it.'

"The great Seer immediately replied: 'Brother Behunin, you don't know what you would do. No doubt these men once thought as you do. Before you joined this Church you stood on neutral ground. When the gospel was preached, good and evil were set before you. You could choose either or neither. There were two opposite masters inviting you to serve them. When you joined this Church you enlisted to serve God. When you did

that you left the neutral ground, and you never can get back on to it. Should you forsake the Master you enlisted to serve, it will be by the instigation of the evil one, and you will follow his dictation and be his servant.’ ”

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, [Chapter 27: Beware the Bitter Fruits of Apostasy](#)

become darkened and will be burned

There is a superior intelligence bestowed upon such as obey the Gospel with full purpose of heart, which, if sinned against, the apostate is left naked and destitute of the Spirit of God, and he is, in truth, nigh unto cursing, and his end is to be burned. When once that light which was in them is taken from them they become as much darkened as they were previously enlightened, and then, no marvel, if all their power should be enlisted against the truth, and they, Judas-like, seek the destruction of those who were their greatest benefactors.

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, [Chapter 27: Beware the Bitter Fruits of Apostasy](#)

did not know the truth or live in tune with the Spirit

Above all, the Church affirms that its members should seek personal revelation to know the truth and live in tune with the spirit of God. Those who have not done this may drop by the wayside when their faith is challenged or when difficulties arise.

Encyclopedia of Mormonism - [Apostate](#)

will feel guilt and bitterness

Apostates sometimes become enemies of the Church. Leaving the Church, which claims to be God’s official church, containing the fulness of the gospel, often results in feelings of guilt. While many return, others develop a need to defend their actions, “disprove” the Church, or become hostile enemies. The fruits of apostasy are generally bitter.

Encyclopedia of Mormonism - [Apostate](#)

left because they transgressed

It was said here this morning that no person ever apostatized, without actual transgression. Omission of duty leads to commission.

Teachings of Presidents of the Church, Brigham Young Chapter 12: [Preventing Personal Apostasy](#)

left because they get into darkness

People do, however, leave this Church, but they leave it because they get into darkness. . .

Teachings of Presidents of the Church, Brigham Young Chapter 12: [Preventing Personal Apostasy](#)

left because they listen to the enemy, listen to wisdom of man, and become confused

Men begin to apostatize by taking to themselves strength, by hearkening to the whisperings of the enemy who leads them astray little by little, until they gather to themselves that which they call the wisdom of man; then they begin to depart from God, and their minds become confused.

Teachings of Presidents of the Church, Brigham Young Chapter 12: [Preventing Personal Apostasy](#)

will experience darkness and unhappiness

They experience darkness, ignorance, doubt, pain, sorrow, grief, mourning, unhappiness; no person to condole [lament] within the hour of trouble, no arm to lean upon in the day of calamity, no eye to pity when they are forlorn and cast down; and I comprehend it by saying death, hell and the grave. This is what they will get in exchange for their apostasy. . . "

Teachings of Presidents of the Church, Brigham Young Chapter 12: [Preventing Personal Apostasy](#)

become darkened in their minds like a drunk

“You have known men who, while in the Church, were active, quick and full of intelligence; but after they have left the Church, they have become contracted in their understandings, they have become darkened in their minds and everything has become a mystery to them, and in regard to the things of God. . . This is precisely the position of those who leave this Church; they go into the dark, they are not able to judge, conceive or comprehend things as they are. They are like the drunken man. . . ”

Teachings of Presidents of the Church, Brigham Young Chapter 12: [Preventing Personal Apostasy](#)

go into darkness like a blind person

Let a man or woman who has received much of the power of God, visions and revelations, turn away from the holy commandments of the Lord, and it seems that their senses are taken from them, their understanding and judgment in righteousness are taken away, they go into darkness, and become like a blind person who gropes by the wall.

Teachings of Presidents of the Church, Brigham Young Chapter 12: [Preventing Personal Apostasy](#)

will go to final destruction

Whenever there is a disposition manifested in any of the members of this Church to question the right of the President of the whole Church to direct in all things, you see manifested evidences of apostasy—of a spirit which, if encouraged, will lead to a separation from the Church and to final destruction. . .

Teachings of Presidents of the Church, Brigham Young Chapter 12: [Preventing Personal Apostasy](#)

may have been deceived by false prophets

Some members are deceived by false prophets. [tells account of Hiram Page]

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History: Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual, Lesson 24: [“Be Not Deceived, but Continue in Steadfastness”](#)

may have questioned whether the Lord really dictated it

When a man begins to find fault, inquiring in regard to this, that, and the other, saying, “Does this or that look as though the Lord dictated it?” you may know that that person has more or less of the spirit of apostasy.

Teachings of Presidents of the Church, Brigham Young Chapter 12: [Preventing Personal Apostasy](#)

are deceived because of their pride

Some members are deceived because of their pride. The following story illustrates how pride led Thomas B. Marsh, who was President of the Quorum of the Twelve, and his wife, Elizabeth, into apostasy. . . . What

can we learn from this story? How have you seen pride lead people into deception and apostasy?

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History: Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual, [Lesson 24: "Be Not Deceived, but Continue in Steadfastness"](#)

Thomas B. Marsh did not actual leave for such trivial reasons (see [here](#) and [here](#))

are deceived because they are critical of leaders' imperfections

Some members are deceived because they become critical of Church leaders' imperfections. The following story illustrates how Simonds Ryder was deceived in this way. . . . What can we learn from this story? How does being critical of our Church leaders make us more susceptible to deception?"

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History: Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual, [Lesson 24: "Be Not Deceived, but Continue in Steadfastness"](#)

One of the first steps to apostasy is to find fault with your Bishop; and when that is done, unless repented of a second step is soon taken, and by and by the person is cut off from the Church, and that is the end of it. Will you allow yourselves to find fault with your Bishop?

Teachings of Presidents of the Church, Brigham Young Chapter 12: [Preventing Personal Apostasy](#)

were offended

Being offended Some Church members become offended by the actions of other members and allow an offense to fester until they are led into apostasy. . . . How do we today allow ourselves to be offended by others? How can being offended lead to apostasy? How can we overcome feelings of being offended?

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History: Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual, [Lesson 24: "Be Not Deceived, but Continue in Steadfastness"](#)

rationalize disobedience

Rationalizing is excusing or defending unacceptable behavior. It is looking for a way to ease our consciences for doing something we know is wrong. How is rationalization a form of deception? How do we sometimes try to rationalize our behavior? Why is this dangerous?

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History: Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual, [Lesson 24: "Be Not Deceived, but Continue in Steadfastness"](#)

are deceived by the false teachings of the world

What are some of the false teachings of the world that can deceive members and lead them into apostasy? (Examples could include the false ideas that the commandments of God are too restrictive, that immorality is acceptable, and that material possessions are more important than spiritual things.)

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History: Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual,
[Lesson 24: "Be Not Deceived, but Continue in Steadfastness"](#)

may have left because they had unrepented sin

Apostasy frequently results when a person commits serious sin but does not repent. To silence his conscience or justify his sinful actions, the individual moves away from the truth, looking for imperfections in others or questioning Church doctrine with which he no longer agrees.

[Avoiding Personal Apostasy](#) Ensign, June 2009, By Elder Claudio D. Zivic

may have left because a leader did not treat them well and they become offended

Some individuals begin to think the Church is not true when they feel that a leader did not treat them well. They become offended and, without considering what they are losing, they stray from the Church.

[Avoiding Personal Apostasy](#) Ensign, June 2009, By Elder Claudio D. Zivic

may have left because of faultfinding

Conflicts between Church members can also lead to apostasy. Faultfinding can be another source of personal apostasy. When we look for faults in others or begin to think we could make better decisions than our leaders, we should remember the experience of Oliver Cowdery, the second elder of the Church. . .

[Avoiding Personal Apostasy](#) Ensign, June 2009, By Elder Claudio D. Zivic

have become entangled in the mists of darkness

I testify that we can avoid the mists of darkness that lead to personal apostasy by repenting of our sins, overcoming offense, eliminating faultfinding, and following our Church leaders."

[Avoiding Personal Apostasy](#) Ensign, June 2009, By Elder Claudio D. Zivic

were better off not ever having known God or Jesus

But, behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying: After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by the baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me. (2Ne 31:12)

will be viewed worse than the Lamanites

And now behold I say unto you, that if this people, who have received so many blessings from the hand of the Lord, should transgress contrary to the light and knowledge which they do have, I say unto you that if this be the case, that if they should fall into transgression, it would be far more tolerable for the Lamanites than for them. (Alma 9:23)

may have taken on Satanic premises which are poisonous

Enticing us to adopt the premises of Babylon is a subtle strategy Satan uses to sow tares. Individuals who take the premises of Babylon as their fundamental basis for solving the divergent problems of life, of business, or of everyday activity are tares. Their logic may be consistent, but at the root, the solutions are based on premises that Satan has provided. Though they may resemble wheat in the early years, their genetic code—their core premises for growth—yields a poisonous outcome.

[Dennis Tolley, BYU Devotional](#)

had an immature testimony and shallow commitment to Jesus Christ (implied)

More than at any time in our history, your students also need to be blessed by learning doctrinal or historical context and context by study and faith accompanied by pure testimony so they can experience a mature and lasting conversion to the gospel and a lifelong commitment to Jesus Christ. Mature and lasting conversion means they will ‘stay in the boat and hold on’ throughout their entire lives.

M. Russell Ballard. [The Opportunities and Responsibilities of CES Teachers in the 21st Century](#)

engage in the highest form of larceny if they cause others to lose testimony

And I pray for those who deal in the highest form of larceny—that of stripping people of their precious testimonies. Such action, if continued, will lead only to the futility and emptiness of the dream of a night vision. (See 2 Ne. 27:3; Acts 5:33–39.)

[Carlos Asay, October General Conference, 1981](#)

should be shunned if they tear down faith

Avoid those who would tear down your faith. Faith-killers are to be shunned. The seeds which they plant in the minds and hearts of men grow like cancer and eat away the Spirit.

[Carlos Asay, October General Conference, 1981](#)

should not be listened to if they attempt to proselytize

A few of you may have run into some who have ceased to hold fast to the iron rod, wandered off the straight and narrow path, and have become lost. They started sometimes with online tours of the territory of the faithless. This indiscretion is often accompanied by failing to earnestly study the Book of Mormon every day and by the companion problem of gradually becoming lax in keeping other commandments. This sometimes leads to listening to and then hearkening to those who mock the church, its leaders or its history. The faithless often promote themselves as the wise who can rescue the rest of us from our naiveté. One does not need to listen to assertive apostates for long to see the parallels between them and the ‘Korihors’ ‘Nehors’ and ‘Sherems’ of the book of Mormon. We should disconnect immediately and completely from listening to the proselytizing efforts of those who have lost their faith and instead reconnect promptly with the holy spirit. The adversary sees spiritual apathy and halfhearted obedience as opportunities to encircle us with his chains and bind us—and he hopes to destroy us. We escape his chains as we voluntarily choose to bind ourselves instead to God. . .

From [L. Whitney Clayton’s commencement speech at BYU](#), quote from here

generally left for one of five reasons

The most frequent causes of apostasy are failure to maintain strict standards of morality, taking personal offense (real or perceived), marrying someone who is of another faith or who is irreligious, neglecting to pray

and maintain spirituality, or misunderstanding of the teachings of the Church.

Encyclopedia of Mormonism - [Apostate](#)

may be put out of existence (implied)

With all my heart I implore those who are walking on the fringes of our faith to seek the safety of the center. This can be done best by counseling with your leaders and remaining within the fellowshiping circle of the Saints, and receiving nourishment from the good word of God. Do not permit faithless people to turn you out of the right way or to put you out of existence. (See Moro. 6.)

[Carlos Asay, October General Conference, 1981](#)

should fear for their safety (implied)

Keep your covenants and you will be safe. Break them and you will not.

Boyd K. Packer, [October General Conference 1990](#)

are spiritually dead (implied)

Like the dead sequoia, these Church members once received their spiritual nourishment from the well of living water offered by Jesus Christ, but having been disconnected for one reason or another from that source, their spirit was dulled, and they eventually died spiritually.

[M. Russell Ballard](#)

are not honest or sincere (implied)

For those who are honest and sincere in their search, it is not difficult to find out whether there has been a universal apostasy, and if so, where the truth is today.

[Mormon Doctrine](#) (Apostasy)

As a prophet reveals the truth it divides the people. The honest in heart heed his words but the unrighteous either ignore the prophet or fight him.

Teachings of Presidents of the Church, Ezra T. Benson, [ch. 11](#)

may not have learned to listen to the Holy Ghost

“I know that when we pray for Erik, Heavenly Father does answer our prayers—every time. The problem is that Erik may not be listening right now. Erik gets to choose whether he listens to the Holy Ghost, just like you choose whether to listen to Mama about your backpack. . .”

They all bowed their heads while Liv said the prayer. She prayed that Erik would learn to listen to the Holy Ghost. While Liv was praying, Kari felt peaceful and warm. She knew that Heavenly Father was hearing their prayers.

[Don't Forget to Pray for Erik](#). Jan 2017 Friend.

Examples of how people are treated who leave the Church

Directly or implied, these indicate how members view leaving the Church or those who have left the Church.

According to some believing members, individuals who leave the LDS Church. . .

were better off dying than losing their faith

To say, as a parent, “I won’t force my kids to go to church. I’ll let them decide on their own.” sounds so enlightened. But its the most dangerous thing a parent could say. It would be safer for you to let your children play on the highway in rush hour traffic than to let them decide whether or not they wanted to go to church. One of those options carries temporary consequences (if you let your child play on the highway in rush hour traffic they will die); and the other carries potential eternal consequences.

[I won't force my kids to go to church](#)

RS Pres was giving a lesson about trials a few weeks ago and I was zoning out until I heard: “. . .or losing a loved one to disease, a fatal accident, or disbelief.”

I had a seminary teacher whose son left the church and I clearly remember her saying, “It would be better if he had died on his mission back when he was still faithful.” And she wonders why she’s not allowed to visit her grandchildren.

15 years ago my husband was in a terrible atv accident suffered a traumatic brain injury wasn’t supposed to survive. Three years later we left the church his dad told him he would have rather have had him die in the accident then leave the church. . .Sick still makes me cringe.

From [this discussion](#)

I wrote an email to my parents last week letting them know I no longer believed in the church. A couple email exchanges later, my dad calls me, and I can tell he's very distraught. He tells me if someone gave him the choice that in 2 weeks his son could either die faithful in the church or go apostate, he's not sure what he would choose.

Me: Dad, you would rather me be dead right now? Dad: Well, I didn't really say it that way. Me: Dad seriously? I'm still alive and you can talk to me! But you would rather me be dead? Dad: That's not what I said.

Well THANK YOU LDS CHURCH for convincing my parents that it would be better if I had died. Sounds like the true church of Jesus Christ to me.

[From here](#)

Family friend died at age 19 in a car accident... His parents said it was "for the best" because he was making "bad choices" and wouldn't have gone on a mission. The whole family of 14 kids and two parents are giving that line.

[From here](#)

... We were discussing Job, and his whole story about how God gave Satan permission to take away everything he has. Our teacher told us how his wife lost faith in God, and then she said "I don't know what would be worse: having a spouse die faithful or live and lose their faith." This basically is telling all members with exmo spouses that their spouses would be better off dead. ...

[From here](#)

are mourned as if they had died

When I told her I no longer believe in the truth offered by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, my mother reacted by telling me she mourned me as if I had died.

Paul Walker. [Ex-Actly as I Thought: Failure and the Unbecoming Mormon Man](#)

My parents had me and my 88 year old grandfather over for dinner. My parents are still TBM's but don't force it on me at all. After we ate my grandfather had this really sad look on his face when he was looked at me. I finally asked him what was wrong and he started to cry almost hysterically. He said that he worries about me every day because I won't be able to join the rest of the family in the celestial kingdom. This went on for almost 10 minutes before he finally calmed down. I wanted to tell him why I don't believe in the church but that would just upset him even

more. For the most part, I've just been passive about my beliefs with my family but this really bothered me for some reason. I'm not really sure what to do here because he wasn't trying to get me to become a believer, nor have my parents over the years. They just have genuine concern about my well-being. I'm not sure how to respond to this really.

[From here](#)

should not receive any inheritance

A video created by [LDS Philanthropies](#) suggested that it is appropriate to deny inheritance to children who leave the Church:

For them to inherit my estate they will have to become what I'm trying to become. . . If they exercise their agency contrary to my beliefs then the option is that entire inheritance can go to the church.

Also discussed [here](#).

will never find true happiness

When i finally told my parents they had never been more dissapointed. my father told me i broke my mothers heart. in the morning before school we would read scriptures and my parents (my own father!!) would just burst out crying and attempt to keep reading. the amount of guilt and shame i had to go through. my parents made me see the bishop and the stake president! when i spoke to the stake president he talked to me about what i hoped to accomplish and basically told me i would never be truly content and would incredibly regret it later if i did not go. I was forced to go to church every sunday and if i didnt my parents would kick me out of the house. and every single sunday at some point in the 3 hours someone will tell me the bishop wanted to see me. then i would be constantly berated by the bishop on what i should do to meet a goal to go on a mission. I was an incredibly quiet and frail person then and would simply say things like "maybe" or "i dont know ill see" this went on for probably 8 months before i got a job that required me to work on sundays so i had an excuse not to go. even after i stopped going the missionaries would make an effort to see me 1-3 times a week! one sister missionary went so far as to point to an old picture of me and say that she saw true happiness in that picture but no longer sees that in my eyes. she said that she knows that i will never achieve true happiness. after this i just about lost it, i didnt really say much, i dont remember the specifics but im sure i was very passive aggressive. after they said the closing prayer i said "thanks" and went straight to my room without dismissing or shaking hands.

[From here](#)

may be shunned to some degree

We were ultra TBM-All of us were presidents (primary, ym etc..) Then our family of 4 left. My best friend was our bishops wife. Our son is besties with one of their sons, our daughter is besties with one of the older sons. Our whole family left the church less than a year ago.

I haven't heard from my best friend in months (bishops wife). She stopped calling. Her kids no longer call our kids. The other day our son and daughter stopped by to say hi, something they used to do ALL THE TIME. They wouldn't even turn to say hi. A family room full of people and these jerks wouldn't even turn to say hi. My sweet 17 year old daughter who has this sweet tender heart was SHUNNED. I know I will be angry when I get past being hurt. I hate that my kids are going through this. It just kills me. Here is the irony, we have never removed our names, been out for a few months and haven't said a negative word to anyone.

[From here](#)

Being never-mo in "Happy" Valley, I try to get along with a live-and-let live policy. It's just not possible with the level of indoc among TBM's. My kid came home from school a little distraught yesterday. I asked "hey kiddo, what's the problem?" "Oh, the kids at school are teasing me." "About what? What'd they say?" "This girl in my class said"Everybody who goes to church, raise your hand!" Lots of people did, except me and X and X. They laughed at us and then at recess they were running away from us and said "We're Mormon and you're NOT!" and "Don't play with them, they don't go to church!" I asked if the teacher was in the room when this happened and was told no, the girl did it after the teacher left for a minute.

[From here](#)

are thought to be worse to work with than adulterers

I have heard some very experienced and capable church leaders say that they would rather work with ten adulterers than one angry apostate.

[From here](#)

are told terrible things will happen to them

Year 2002, somewhere in Canada. My LDS high school buddies and I had all received our mission calls around the same time. My friend went to the temple and came back scared. He showed me his temple clothes. I went home and googled info on the church. Down the rabbit hole. Testimony lost in a matter of days. I told my parents I had to put my mission call on

hold because I had lost my faith. I talked to the bishop, the SP, and even the mission president in the mission I was assigned to soon join. None of it helped, obviously. There are no answers for these questions. And back in 2002 everyone thought I had succumbed to anti-mormon lies (there were no LDS essays yet). I was riding in the car with my dad (former bishop) when he told me he had a revelation that I would be taken from the earth shortly, if I went the route of apostasy. I didn't know what to say, so I just said, "Ok..."

[From here](#)

When I finally had enough of endless preaching and being told I was not good enough, I told my father that I did not believe anymore. His response was to write me a letter (something I rarely did) and told me that god was going to strike me dumb like he did Korihor. Shit like that from your dad hurts.

[From here](#)

[Read other stories here.](#)

may be called out for writing about their new understanding

[Experience shared here](#)

may be avoided during their faith crisis

[Example 1.](#)

[Example 2](#)

may have family members' temple recommends threatened

Do you support, affiliate with, or agree with any group or individual whose teachings or practices are contrary to or oppose those accepted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

Spent a few hours talking with my 65 yr old mother today and discovered that her Bishop and Stake president had agreed that she should be denied a temple recommend after she told them that even though I (her 44 year old son) had left the church, she still wanted to have a close relationship with me.

At the time I announced to my family that I no longer believed, my parents were serving as temple ordinance workers with my mother acting as a shift leader. They have been faithful members their entire lives, and continue to believe, but neither one was willing to commit to the Bishop's demands

of breaking off contact with “their apostate son”. After consulting with the Stake president, he pulled both of their recommends.

[From here](#)

Attitude towards those who stay but do not believe

Church leaders have spoken openly and strongly about those who stay in the Church but do not believe in it.¹ These people are referred to as “wolves in sheep’s clothing”.

Individuals who stay in the Church, doubt foundational truth-claims or current policies, and share these views with others...

lack moral courage, intellectual integrity, and honor

No man or woman is a true member of the Church who does not fully accept the First Vision, just as no man is a Christian who does not accept, first, the Fall of Adam, and second, the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Any titular Church member who does not accept the First Vision but who continues to pose as a Church member, lacks not only moral courage but intellectual integrity and honor if he does not avow himself an apostate and discontinue going about the Church, and among the youth particularly, as a Churchman, teaching not only lack-faith but faith-destroying doctrines. He is a true wolf in sheep’s clothing.

[“When Are the Writings or Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture?”](#) part of an address delivered 7 July 1954 at Brigham Young University

wrest the scriptures

Several publications are now being circulated about the Church which defend and promote gay or lesbian conduct. They wrest the scriptures, attempting to prove that these impulses are inborn, cannot be overcome, and should not be resisted, and that therefore such conduct has a morality of its own. They quote scriptures to justify perverted acts between consenting adults. That same logic would justify incest or the molesting of little children of either gender. Neither the letter nor the spirit of moral law condones any such conduct.

I hope none of our young people will be foolish enough to accept those sources as authority for what the scriptures mean. ...

¹Most (or all) of the statements about those who stay in the Church but do not believe are from the blog post [“Wolves In Sheep’s Clothing”](#) from the blog “Truth Will Prevail”.

Some choose to reject the scriptures out of hand and forsake their covenants.
But they cannot choose to avoid the consequences. That choice is not
theirs or ours or anybody's.

Boyd K. Packer. General Conference, October 1990. [Covenants](#)

are the worst enemies of the Church and poison minds

The greatest and worst enemies we have of the Church are those within
our ranks whom we haven't caught up with yet.

I sat in with one of our teachers who was rebelling. He'd written a text
to be used in the institutes and when it was turned down and was not
acceptable because it was not correct, he just campaigned. He now has
such a rank apostate attitude that he declares that he doesn't believe the
Church was organized as section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants says it
was. He doesn't believe that Joseph Smith had the Vision as he testified
he had. He thinks the Book of Mormon was written by somebody, but he
doesn't know who. He is irritated by things that go on in the temple and
the temple endowments and so on. Now all the spleen and the ugliness of
his soul come out when he's no longer retained as a teacher, but while he
was there, how many minds he poisoned.

"Viewpoint of a Giant," Summer School Devotional Address, Department of Seminaries
and Institutes of Religion, Brigham Young University, July 18, 1968, 5.

are worse than a den of serpents

May I speak boldly of a few of the dangers of today. There have been
some institute teachers in the past who have sometimes been allowed to
go too long unchallenged in their unorthodox teachings. We should have
retired them long before they were released from service. We have today
in the Church, some students who were under some of these teachers of
that particular time who have lost the faith; and parents in tears have
lamented the day they ever allowed their child to be under the influence
of a teacher who had no testimony. It reminded me of what President
Karl G. Maeser used to say. "I would rather a child of mine be in a den of
serpents than under the influence of a teacher who has no faith in God."
And we have had some.

"Viewpoint of a Giant," Summer School Devotional Address, Department of Seminaries
and Institutes of Religion, Brigham Young University, July 18, 1968, 5.

are acting as a Satanic trap for the faithful

One more item and I shall conclude. There is a worldly threat to our theological teaching and to the faith of youth. Sporadically it has always been so, but in recent years it is more pronounced. This is not a frontal attack by the foe. We have never had too much difficulty in meeting open charges or criticisms. The foe is striking from ambush, with snipers and fifth columnists, with traps for the unwary.

A part of the propaganda is that there is no warrant for official interpretation of the doctrines and standards of the Church, that everyone may read and interpret for himself, and adopt only so much of the doctrine as he chooses, and that he may classify the revelations as essential or non-essential. These propagandists are either ignorant of or ignore the Lord's declaration that "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." (2 Peter 1:20.) They disparage orthodoxy as such and pride themselves on liberal thinking. Many of them maintain their loyalty to the Church, and some may honestly believe they are doing the Church a favor and a service in advocating their so-called broad-minded concepts.

Unfortunately, some people within the Church subscribing to these views do not realize that they are falling into a trap themselves. They are giving aid and comfort to the foe; they are undermining their own testimonies and those of others, I warn the Church against them, and I warn them against themselves; and I plead with them to desist, to abandon their agnostic discussions, and to join with the faithful in promoting the cause which in their hearts they once loved, and I think they still love.

Conference Report, October 1951, 116. [Awake, Ye Defenders of Zion](#)

Other resources

- [25 Things NOT to Say to a Loved One Leaving the Church \(& what to say instead\)](#)