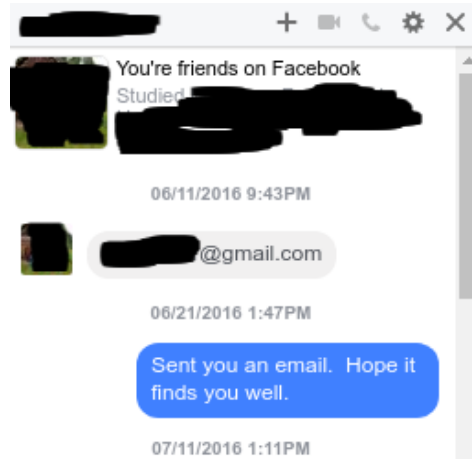
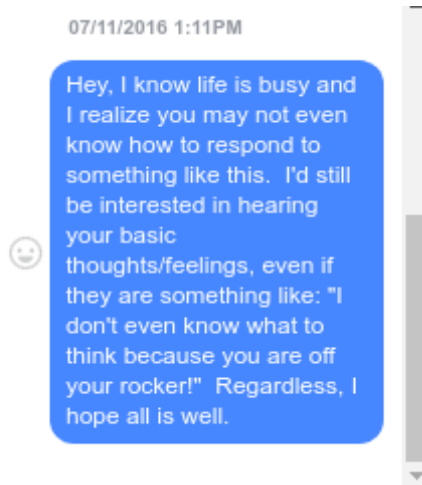


## Documentation of exchange with a somewhat close family relative

My wife and I had a very good discussion following a family event about work at BYU. I mentioned that I was working on a document that addressed some of the issues we'd been discussing, and I would love her feedback on it. I also asked a little if she had heard anything about us. We agreed to exchange email via facebook messenger. This is the exchange that followed:



I sent her an email (document follows this page). After some time with no response, I sent one more facebook message:



It has been nearly a year since that communication and I have received no response, either by email or messenger. My wife has since bumped into and seen this individual, so it is difficult to imagine that the person merely forgot about the communication. My present conclusion is that the radio silence is intentional.

The links did not survive information redaction in the following document. These are the links from the original document:

- [Mormon's Codex, the data on the Hopewell Indians, all the parallelisms in the Book of Mormon, the ancient festival interpretations for King Benjamin's Speech](#)
- resignation documents [here](#) (I've since redacted identifying information)
- [The document] I think you might find interesting is [here](#)



XXXXXXX <XXXXXXX@gmail.com>

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## this is what you hadn't heard about

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**Me (former member)** <XXXXXXX@gmail.com>

Tue, Jun 21, 2016 at 1:46 PM

To: XXXXXXXXXX@gmail.com

Hi XXXX,

I'm sorry for the delay. It was really great talking with you at XXXXXXXXXX. You make tons of fantastic points, and I'm glad you are helping XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX a better place where you are able. I really enjoyed my time there—there are so many wonderful people there (both administrative workers and the pros).

For the past 20 years I had taken it upon myself to study the apologetic case for the Church in order to defend our belief system and way of life from those who had left to “anti-mormon” literature (particularly [relative]). As a result, I sought to fortify my worldview both spiritually and academically. I've read or am familiar with the essential arguments of virtually every academic (or near academic) work on the topic. For instance, I've read “[Mormon's Codex](#)”, I've examined [the data on the Hopewell Indians](#), I've studied [all the parallelisms in the Book of Mormon](#), [the ancient festival interpretations for King Benjamin's Speech](#), every issue of the Journal of Book of Mormon Studies and FARMS review of books, and virtually everything John Welch, Dan Peterson, Hugh Nibley, and other prominent apologists have written. I'm also very familiar with every official statement or perspective on these topics (i.e., published in the Ensign or official Church materials). In addition, I have also focused on my spiritual development and have consistently tried to live the most important aspects of the gospel (love, service, and humility) while not neglecting all the other facets that seem important (scripture study, prayer, fasting, Sabbath observance, magnify callings, do Home Teaching consistently and for the right reasons, etc.). Nobody can perfectly observe all the minutia expected of them in the LDS Church, but I feel like I have always tried my best to do the right things for the right reasons (and in tandem with the power/grace of the atonement).

I left BYU because I sensed that it wasn't going to be the kind of future I wanted, even though I loved my department and all facets of the job (just not necessarily in the quantities that were expected of me). I left on great terms with everyone there (for instance, individuals from my department and other departments have invited me to run startup companies with them, as I mentioned) and was told by the chair that I would have received tenure (CFS) had I not left (I had great teaching scores [very high on spiritually strengthening in particular—even for science classes] and a great publication record).

Over the years, multiple data points that I had come across did not square well with the LDS narratives (or apologetic arguments), and these had piled on one after the other over time. As a faculty member whose paycheck depended on having a temple recommend (and hence testimony) it was easy to downplay these concerns in my mind while I was at BYU. But, shortly after leaving I felt like I was at a point of maturity where I could examine alternative models for the Church and its truth-claims. I felt confident with my scientific training that I could do so in an unbiased and rigorous fashion, and I felt confident in my spiritual foundation and behavior to know that I was not seeking to justify sinful behavior—the feelings of the Spirit were (and are) abundant in my life.

After carefully examining alternative models for the Church's foundational truth claims, I have decided that alternative models fit the data much better than the LDS narratives (either official or apologetic). In my opinion, this fit is remarkable even using only the data that is generally accepted / acknowledged by LDS apologists. I freely acknowledge that a person, given different presuppositions based on their experience and values, may examine the same evidence and arrive at somewhat different conclusions from me. However, I do not believe that a person can carefully examine alternative models and come away thinking that those who decide these alternative models fit the data better are merely lazy, wanting to sin, etc.—the alternative models fit the data extremely well from any perspective (faithful or not).

My wife and I worked through this analysis and its consequences together (we read a lot and took many long walks together talking through the data and arguments). Spiritually, this change in perspective feels to us more like a natural outgrowth of a positive spiritual and life trajectory, hence terms like “faith-crisis” and “faith-transition” don't do a good job of capturing the contours of this experience for us (but for brevity I'll refer to this as a “faith-transition”).

After over a year of having decided alternative models fit better (i.e., “faith transition”) I finished out tithing season as ward finance clerk, trained a replacement, and then formally resigned from the Church in January 2016 (you can read the associated documents [here](#)). I had spent several months prior carefully considering my motivation for and the consequences of such a decision and feel like it is the right thing to do given my current understanding. <MyWife> feels similar to me, but has not resigned yet due to family concerns on her side of the family.

I don't have good ways of gauging how fast word spreads, but I had assumed that word would spread fast since most of my family knew and a few of the more talkative members of the greater XXXXX family knew. From what you were sharing with us and how you were sharing it, I couldn't accurately gauge whether you had heard or not. <mywife> was also worried that you would feel a sense of betrayal after sharing your feelings about BYU and the Church but not knowing our status (which is why she tried to gently broach the topic as we were talking).

It was not our intent to put on a false front (in fact, we always try to be sincere, honest, and up-front), it's just difficult to preface public conversations with "oh, yeah, did you know we left the Church?". Also, we enjoy talking about and analyzing the Church and we are respectful of the Church, it's traditions, and Church members (for instance, my wife still holds and performs her calling in Enrichment even though we don't typically attend Sunday services). We readily acknowledge that there are many advantages to life in the Church and the Church and its members do much good. The Church/Gospel can facilitate great growth in many people during various stages of their life.

<mywife> and I are happy to discuss this in more depth, to discuss how it might have made you feel (betrayed, depressed, annoyed, etc.), and discuss all the common ground we still share: <Wife> and I have a positive, growth-mindset orientation, we still have spiritual thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, and we're still moderate politically (I'm a registered libertarian [a la Ron Paul], for instance) and can appreciate the merit in various perspectives.

You also may not feel like talking more about it now (or ever), and that's perfectly fine, too.

The document I was referring to in our conversation that I have been working on and that I think you might find interesting is [here](#). I'm interested in your feedback generally, but also because I value the believing LDS perspective, and I always want to be able to represent that position fairly and generously. One of my goals is to build real understanding and love between former and current members.

Anyway, feel free to let us know what you think! (<wifes>'s email is XXXXXXXX@gmail.com if you want to email her directly)

best regards,

<Me>