

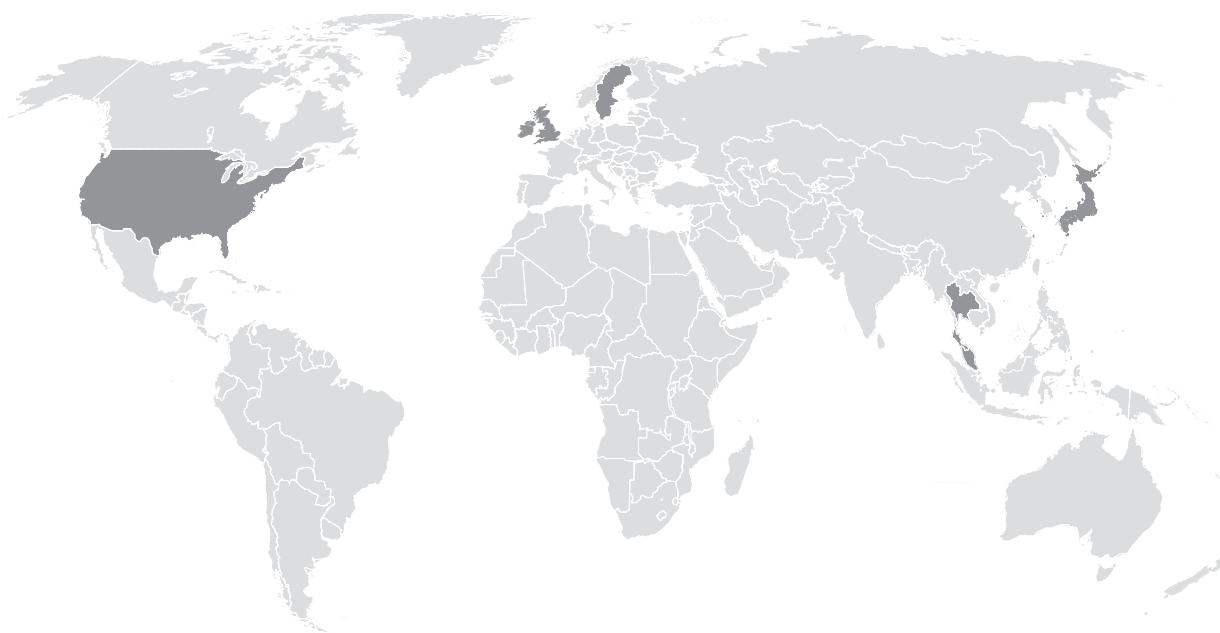
LDS PERSONAL FAITH CRISIS

Proprietary and Confidential

“Don’t find fault.
Find a remedy.”

CLAYTON M. CHRISTENSEN HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Many individuals contributed to this project and warrant appreciation.

An extended team of scholars and professionals donated countless hours to developing content, reviewing, and providing valuable feedback.

The majority of the team is based in the U.S., but several members are internationally based. Contributors hold advanced degrees in:

- American History
- Anthropology
- Brand Strategy
- Business Strategy
- Digital and Social Media
- Law
- Literature and Philosophy
- Literature and Religion
- Pathology
- Psychology
- Sociocultural Modeling
- Statistics

All team members love the Church and wish to see our members suffer less as the result of Faith Crisis.

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OVERVIEW



PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The research team's objective is to present data on LDS personal Faith Crisis that assists Church leaders in:

- 1) Better understanding Faith Crisis catalysts and processes.
- 2) Determining the best course of action for retaining those members currently in crisis, repairing damaged families, and mitigating the negative implications of those who are leaving or have already left.
- 3) Considering how to best prevent Faith Crisis from negatively affecting current and future generations.

FAITH CRISIS DEFINED

Faith Crisis is defined as a state of intense emotional and spiritual distress resulting from the discovery of Church history facts that do not align with the traditional LDS narrative. This distress results in members losing faith in some or all foundational truth claims of the LDS Church and in the Church itself.

REASONS TO FOCUS ON FAITH CRISIS

With the Church being such a sacred, integral part of our lives, openly discussing Faith Crisis can be a heartbreak task. However, a candid and expeditious analysis of the challenge is essential because:

- 1) Our data show a significant number of Church leaders (who have traditionally been stalwart, active, and highly committed) are leaving the Church or lapsing into long-term inactivity, resulting in a void of local leadership.
- 2) When long-time members go inactive as a result of Faith Crisis, a large ripple effect is created within their families, wards, and stakes. This ripple effect that causes others to lose faith may not be detected for months or even years from the point of first exposure.
- 3) Not addressing the Faith Crisis issue will compound the challenge for future leaders and future generations of members.

- 4) While it was not uncommon in our recent past for "left-leaning" individuals to struggle in their faith over doctrinal issues such as blacks and the priesthood or gays, our data suggests an increasingly number of individuals and families from "the middle" are losing faith and reducing or eliminating Church activity as a result of Faith Crisis.

A NEED FOR NEW METRICS

Traditionally, the Church has measured loss-of-faith and disaffection by tracking the number of resignation letters received at Church headquarters. Unfortunately, this traditional measurement vastly underrepresents the Faith Crisis challenge because:

- A large segment of those who have lost faith remain active or semi-active in the Church (just under half of our Faith Crisis survey respondents who had lost all faith continue to attend meetings). These active but faithless members have no reason to submit resignation letters.
- The majority of those who completely disengage from the Church do not submit resignation letters. Many view this as an unnecessary offense to believing family members and friends. Some do not wish to invest the time in the multi-step process. Some do not wish to recognize the Church's authority by submitting a resignation letter. And perhaps some wish to "hedge their bets" by remaining on the Church rolls.

Measuring the severity of Faith Crisis by simply tracking numbers of resignations creates a false impression there is no formidable challenge and causes many to deny the severity of the issue. It will not serve us well if we have "Faith Crisis deniers" in the same way we now have climate change deniers.

A NEED FOR DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION

Harvard Business School professor and active Church member, Clayton Christensen, developed a business model identifying two main forms of organizational innovation: sustainable and disruptive. Sustainable innovation is the maintaining of the status quo that moves forward existing businesses and markets (this form of innovation is embraced by the mass majority of Fortune 500 companies.) In his critically-acclaimed book *The Innovator's Dilemma*, Brother Christensen describes how well managed, well-run organizations can fail because they focus too heavily on sustainable innovation and ignore what he coined “disruptive innovation.”

Disruption is what happens when a new technology or innovation changes the environment for an entire market. Well-run organizations, with long histories of doing things “the way they’ve always been done,” can become blinded and unable to effectively deal with disruption. Thus, disruption can cause significant and even total failure of large, highly successful and well-run organizations (e.g., Kodak and IBM) and even have a deleterious impact on entire industries (e.g., print publishing). Companies that embrace disruption and remain open to innovation (e.g., Apple and Google) survive and thrive.

Although The Church is—in many defining ways—clearly differentiated from a business, it also has numerous parallels to a large, well-run corporation. While this provides the membership (and the world) many needed benefits, it also results in a Church structure that is slow to change.

For the first time in our history, the Church can no longer control its own message—and, therefore, its own narrative—to its membership. For a religion focused so heavily on its history, the uncorrelated presentation of Church history via the Internet and social media are proving to be a “disruption” for today’s Church.

Considering the parallels the institutional Church has with a highly structured and efficient business organization (which comes with inherent resistance to change) combined with the disruption caused by an uncorrelated history on the Internet and Social Media, our Faith Crisis research team believes the long-term health and vitality of the institutional Church are at risk. Immediate, bold, and innovative action is needed to address the threat posed by Faith Crisis.

PRIMARY FACTORS DRIVING FAITH CRISIS

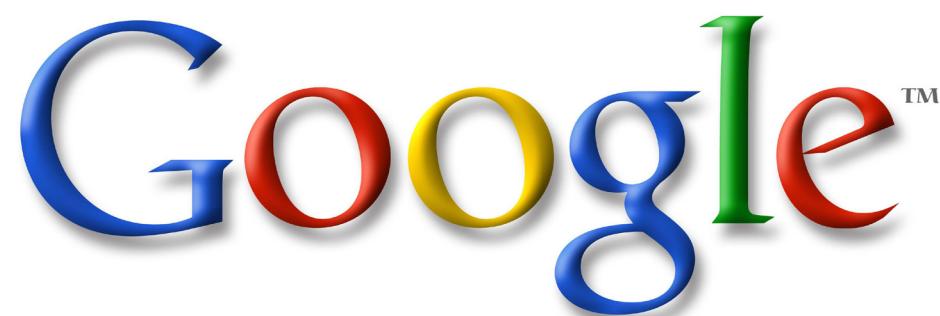
Understanding the disruptive technology that facilitates Faith Crisis is valuable prior to analyzing this document’s specific Faith Crisis data. Our research team identified four primary factors that drive Faith Crisis:

- 1) Unprecedented Access To Uncorrelated Information
- 2) Continual Access to Uncorrelated Information
- 3) Unprecedented Content Creation and Consumption
- 4) The Mormon Moment

Following a description of these factors, a Faith Crisis example is provided to illustrate the speed and ease in which many of our members are exposed to uncorrelated information that can trigger a Faith Crisis.

1

UNPRECEDENTED ACCESS TO
UNCORRELATED INFORMATION

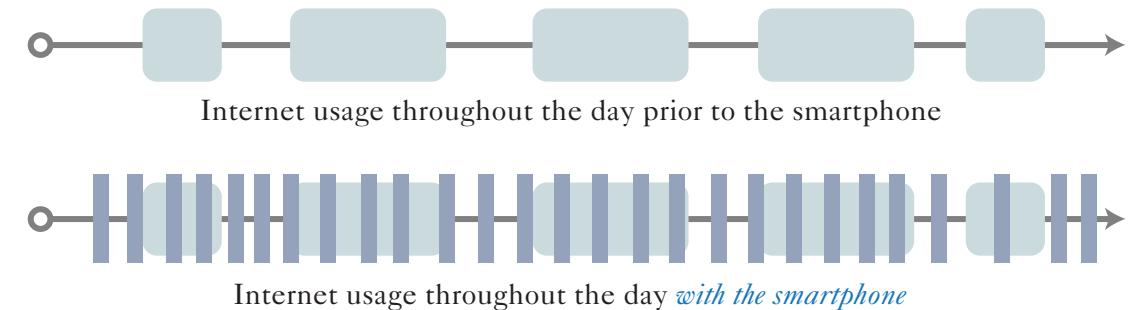


My 10 year-old son asks his older sister to tell him the typical length of an adult leopard gecko. Without hesitation, she enters the query into Google and within seconds responds with the answer: 10.9" with a weight of up to 65 grams.

The Internet democratizes information. Today, literally no question goes unanswered. Through the Internet, our members now have access to uncorrelated Church historical data, details, and doctrine that vary—and sometimes conflict—with our traditional LDS narrative. The Internet presents this “uncorrelated” information from vastly different perspectives (from apologetic to highly critical).

2

CONTINUAL ACCESS TO
UNCORRELATED INFORMATION



A 2011 consumer-research study by Motorola illustrates the impact the smartphone has had on how American consumers access information on the Internet.

The top chart represents Internet usage prior to the smartphone—which shows users accessing the Internet only periodically throughout the day (e.g., at home in the morning, periodically throughout the day while at work, and before retiring to bed in the evening).

The bottom chart illustrates how smartphone users access the Internet continually throughout the day—giving them near instantaneous access to information (e.g., checking the Internet while exercising, commuting on public transportation, while eating meals, etc.). Illustrating the magnitude of the smartphone, the Motorola research indicates 35 percent of US smartphone users now interact with “non-voice apps” such as Facebook prior to rising from bed each morning, which is a major shift in human behavior from just a few years previously.

Combined with Google and other search engines, a significant segment of our membership now has continual access to uncorrelated information.

3

UNPRECEDENTED CONTENT CREATION AND CONSUMPTION



Social Media is defined as the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue. Put more simply, social media is *the distribution of content by people to people via the Internet*.

The most recognized social media platforms include Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter; but social media also include blogs, user-generated comments, and user-generated podcasts (audio recordings).

Through Church wards and stakes, our membership naturally has strong built-in “offline” social networks. These often translate to strong online social networks that digitally stitch our membership together. Our social networks can be used for both positive and negative ends.

Online social networks have proven valuable for promoting the “I’m a Mormon” branding campaign. Given that the average US LDS Facebook user has 225 Facebook friends, with 10% of these members promoting an I’m a Mormon video on their Facebook, it is estimated that 70% of the US population eventually will be exposed to these positive messages.

Combining our LDS Social Networks with uncorrelated Faith Crisis-related information enables disaffected members to seamlessly share faith-eroding information with large portions of our unprepared membership. The powerful influence of uncorrelated information via Social Media cannot be understated—it threatens the long-term success of the Church.

4

THE MORMON MOMENT



Never has the media both celebrated and scrutinized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as it has the past six years. While much of this media attention has highlighted the very best aspects of Mormonism, it has also perpetuated negative stereotypes, given a loud voice to critical points-of-view, and frequently publicized information that conflicts with our traditional LDS narrative. This “uncorrelated” information is often arbitrarily presented to members who may be unaware of or ill-equipped to deal with such new information.

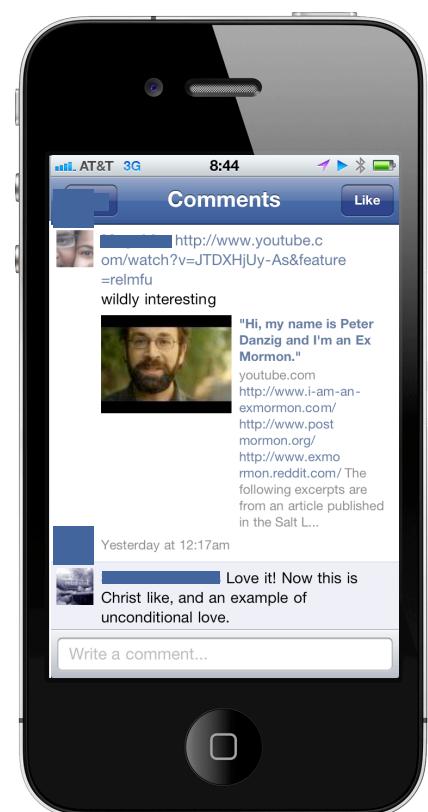
As outlined in the following pages, unprecedented access to information through Google and similar search engines, continual access to information via mobile technology, and the unprecedented ability to create and consume social content—combined with The Mormon Moment’s media attention of uncorrelated topics—has proven traumatic—and in some cases devastating—for a segment of our active membership.

FAITH CRISIS ILLUSTRATED

The following real-life anecdote illustrates the ease and speed in which Faith Crisis information can be presented to our active membership:

Background

Adam (a pseudonym) was a young man in my New York City ward when I was in the bishopric. Adam had a leader to youth ratio of 3 to 1 and was, by all accounts, a solid young man with great leadership potential within the Church. In mid 2011, Adam discovered through Facebook the anti-Mormon web site, iamanexmormon.com. This antagonistic web site mimics the “I’m a Mormon” campaign by presenting videos of members telling their disaffection stories. A few weeks after discovering this website, Adam lost all faith in the Church. Feeling betrayed from not being told “the whole truth,” and wanting to share his pain with others, he posted a link to an “I’m an Ex Mormon” video on his Facebook page (see below screen capture).



Exposure to Other Members

Within seconds, over 100 ward members—who are Facebook friends with Adam—were potentially presented this video. Disappointingly, one of the Young Women from our ward commented on Adam’s link and voiced her support for the disaffected message. Many others presumably viewed the video but did not comment.

Path to Additional Information

Each of Adam’s Facebook friends who had clicked on the video would have been taken to the “I am an Ex Mormon” web site, where they would have been presented with a wide range of disaffection stories that are reinforced by thousands of user comments. This site, in and of itself, is extremely faith eroding. But if members clicked on the “Mormon Think” tab on the right-hand sidebar of the “I’m an Ex Mormon” homepage, they would be taken to mormonthink.com, which is considered by many to be the most faith eroding website on the Internet.

Over the course of a few seconds, dozens of Adam’s active LDS Facebook friends were presumably presented with anti-Mormon messaging. As presented in the following sections, these faith-eroding messages have proven effectual in destroying the faith of many of our best, brightest, and most spiritual members.

RESEARCH SUMMARY



SURVEY OVERVIEW

IMPETUS & RESEARCH TEAM

When working with large, multi-national corporations, it is not uncommon to have \$1 million+ research budget for obtaining statistically significant data designed to inform and guide the organization's brand strategy. Without such a research budget, our team recruited a group of Ivy League volunteers trained in statistics, sociocultural modeling, and anthropology. This initial "data collection" team was later supplemented by an unpaid group of faithful LDS scholars, educators, and professionals who helped refine the group's strategic recommendations.

SURVEY SIZE

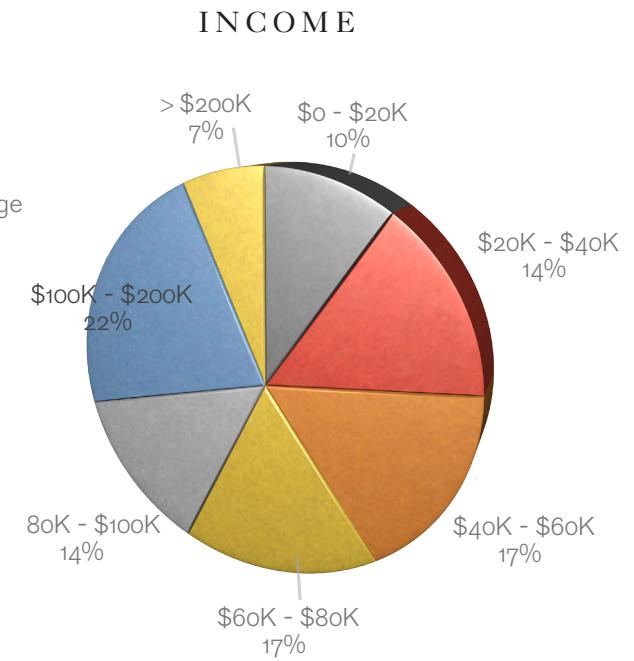
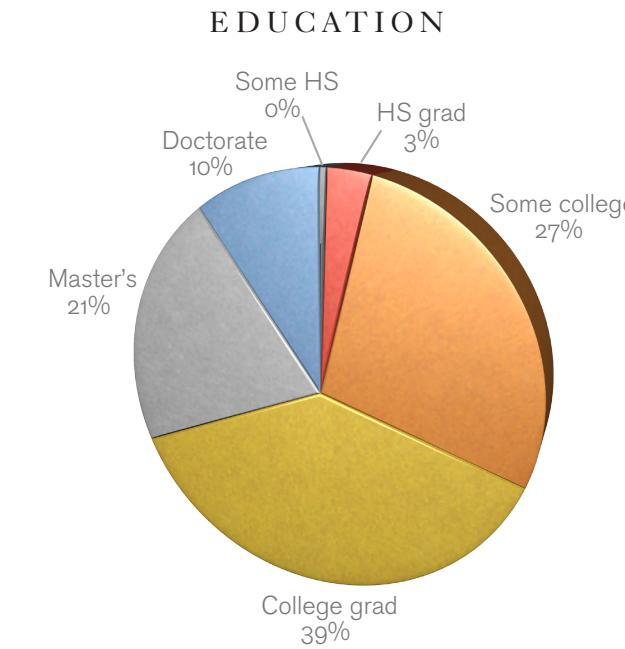
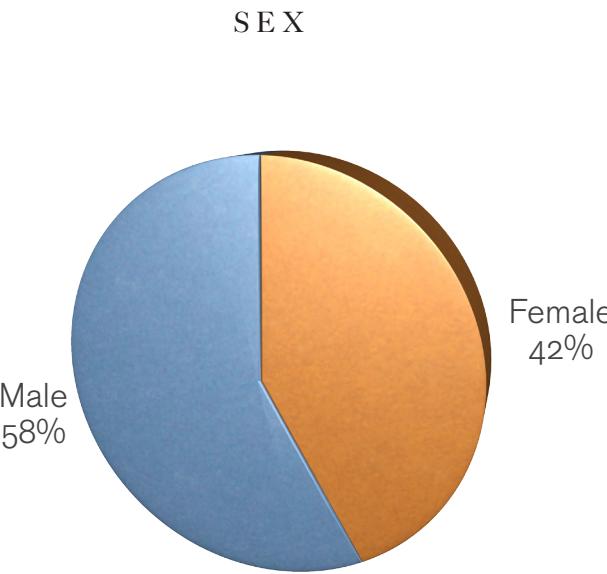
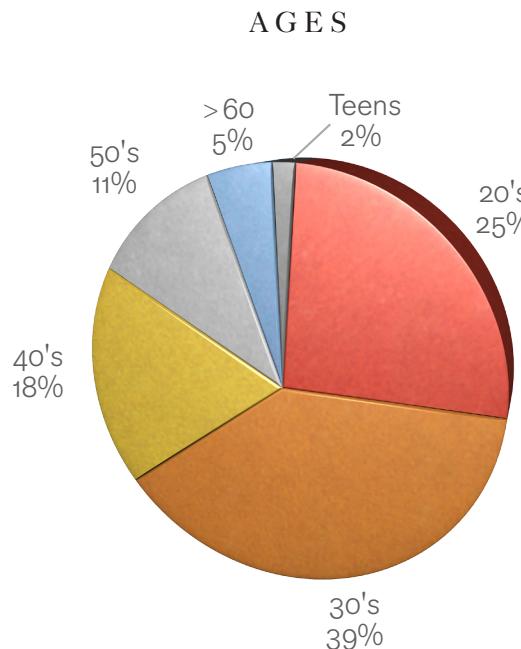
This Faith Crisis ethnographic survey consists of 3,086 responses. All respondents believed at one time the LDS Church was "true" but most no longer believe this to be the case.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

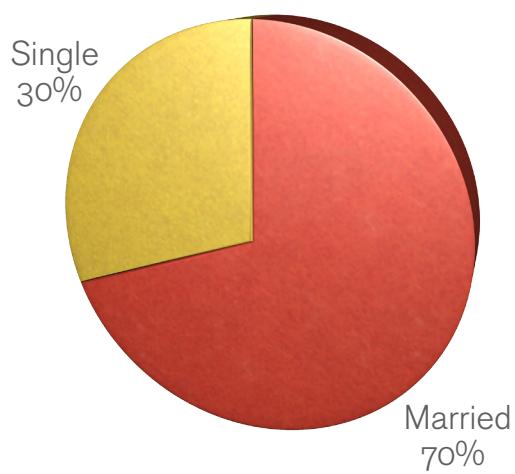
Survey respondents consisted of self-selected participants who were recruited via social media over the course of two weeks in October 2011. Total respondents = 3,388, 302 of whom were removed due to incomplete data. Given the lack of budget, the survey sample was not randomly selected. The study does not claim to be predictive in nature or of statistical significance. That said, the data collected are considered a robust ethnographic study of the Faith Crisis cohort and many points of this analysis are indicative of the experiences of many people in the Church who pass through a crisis of faith.

For a future study—to scientifically establish a correlation between Church history and disaffection—our team would like to locate a random sample of Saints and then monitor their reading habits and Church activity over a sustained period. But even without this more extensive research, we believe this ethnographic study provides an undeniable link between issues related to Church history and loss-of-belief.

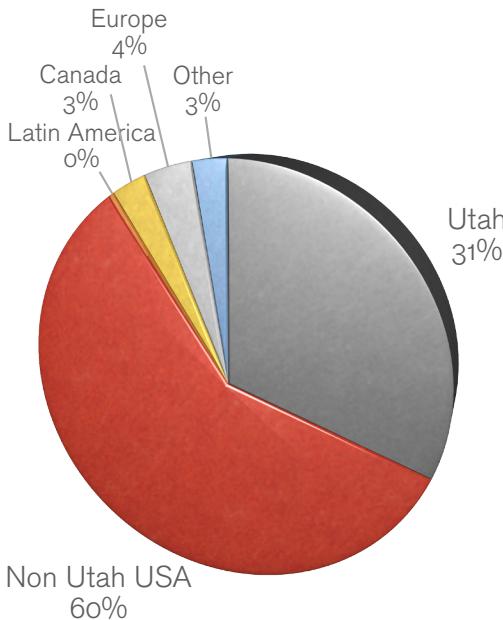
DEMOGRAPHICS



MARITAL STATUS



LOCATION



General

- Younger members from the survey over index as struggling with Faith Crisis—with Gen X and Millennials comprising 84% of respondents.
- The sample skews slightly more male than female.

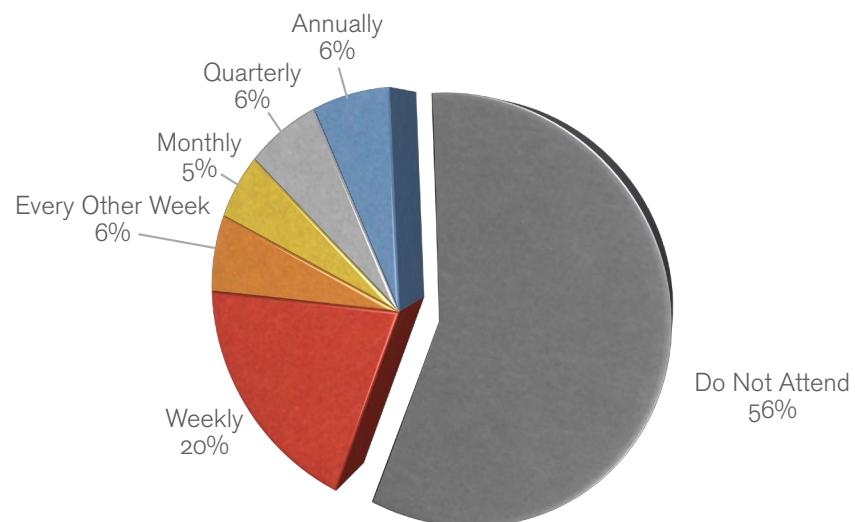
Education

- Faith Crisis respondents tend to be more educated than average.
- Despite Faith Crisis skewing to the highly educated, members with lower-levels of education are also affected by Faith Crisis.
- Based on education levels, we can assume many of the members losing faith are members of means and experience.

Income

- The income data suggest Faith Crisis is moving through all income strata (including those on the lower end of the income range).
- 43% earn more than \$80,000 per year (significantly higher than average).
- Nearly 30% earn six figures or above (significantly higher than average).
- When factoring median income for these Faith Crisis respondents, the Church incurs an estimated tithing-revenue loss of \$281 Million over ten years (at \$2.5 million per chapel, that represents a theoretical loss of 112 chapels).

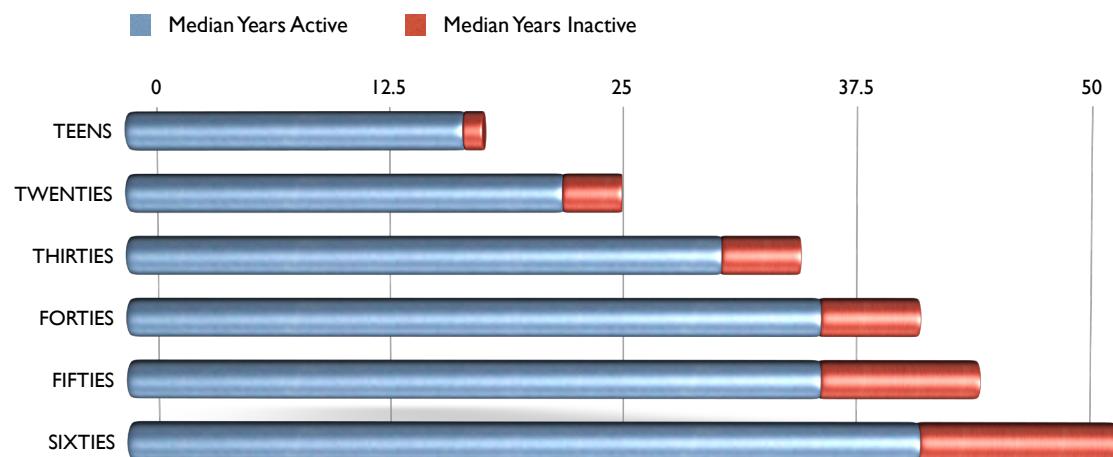
CHURCH ATTENDANCE



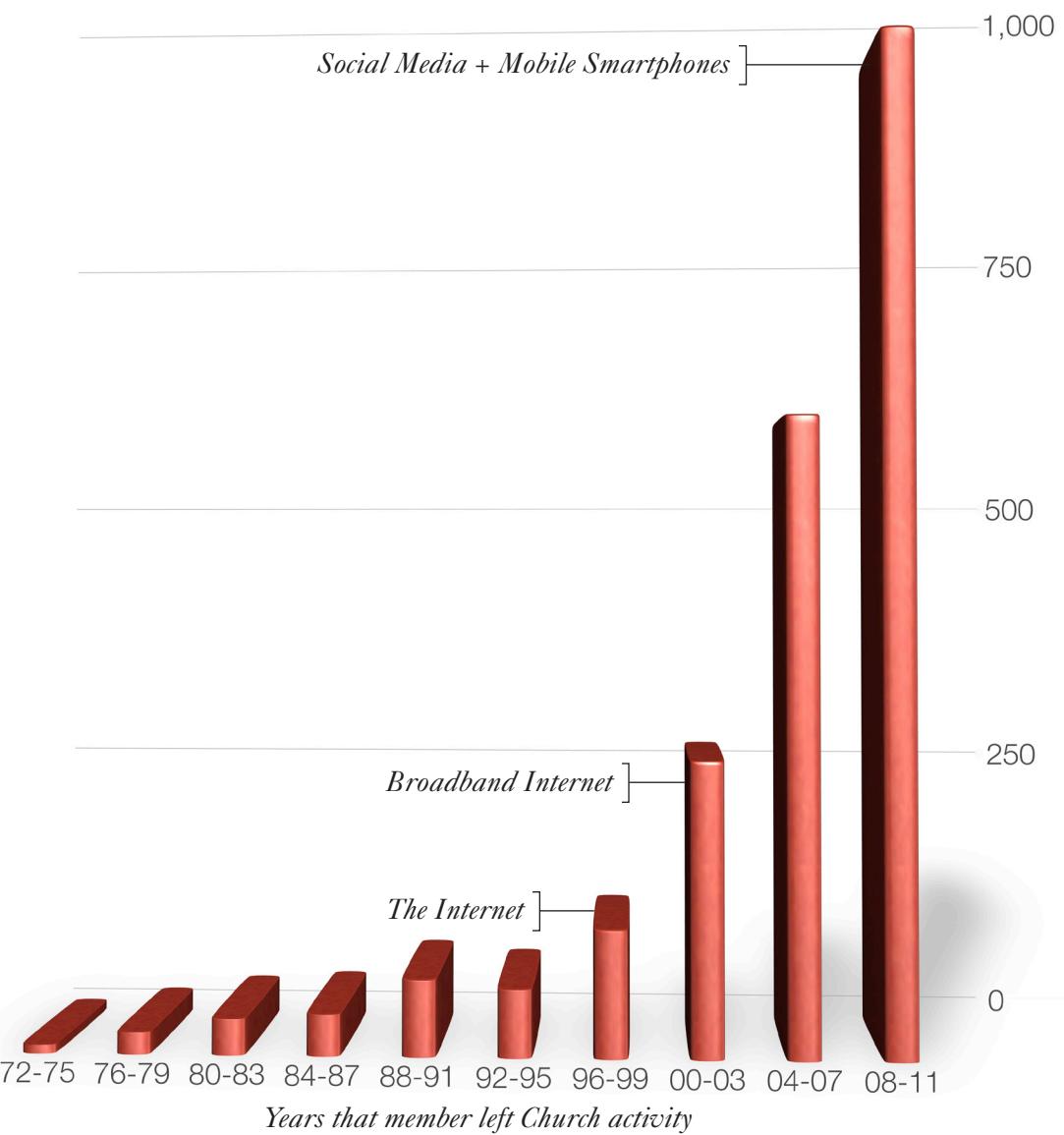
After losing faith, just under half of the disbelieving members continue to attend Church—with 20% continuing to attend weekly.

.....

MAJORITY OF INACTIVE RESPONDENTS WERE LIFELONG OR LONG-TIME MEMBERS



OF THOSE WHO LEFT THE CHURCH, MOST HAD DONE SO RECENTLY



- 71% of those who lost faith did so within the last 8 years.
- Loss-of-faith correlates with mainstream Internet access, broadband, and social media and mobile Internet adoption.
- Note: While anecdotal evidence suggests a recent dramatic rise in disaffection, this data is not necessarily evidence of that rising trend as other factors (i.e. lower desire over time to stay involved / respond to a survey) may contribute to self-selection bias.

CALLINGS HELD: MEN

%

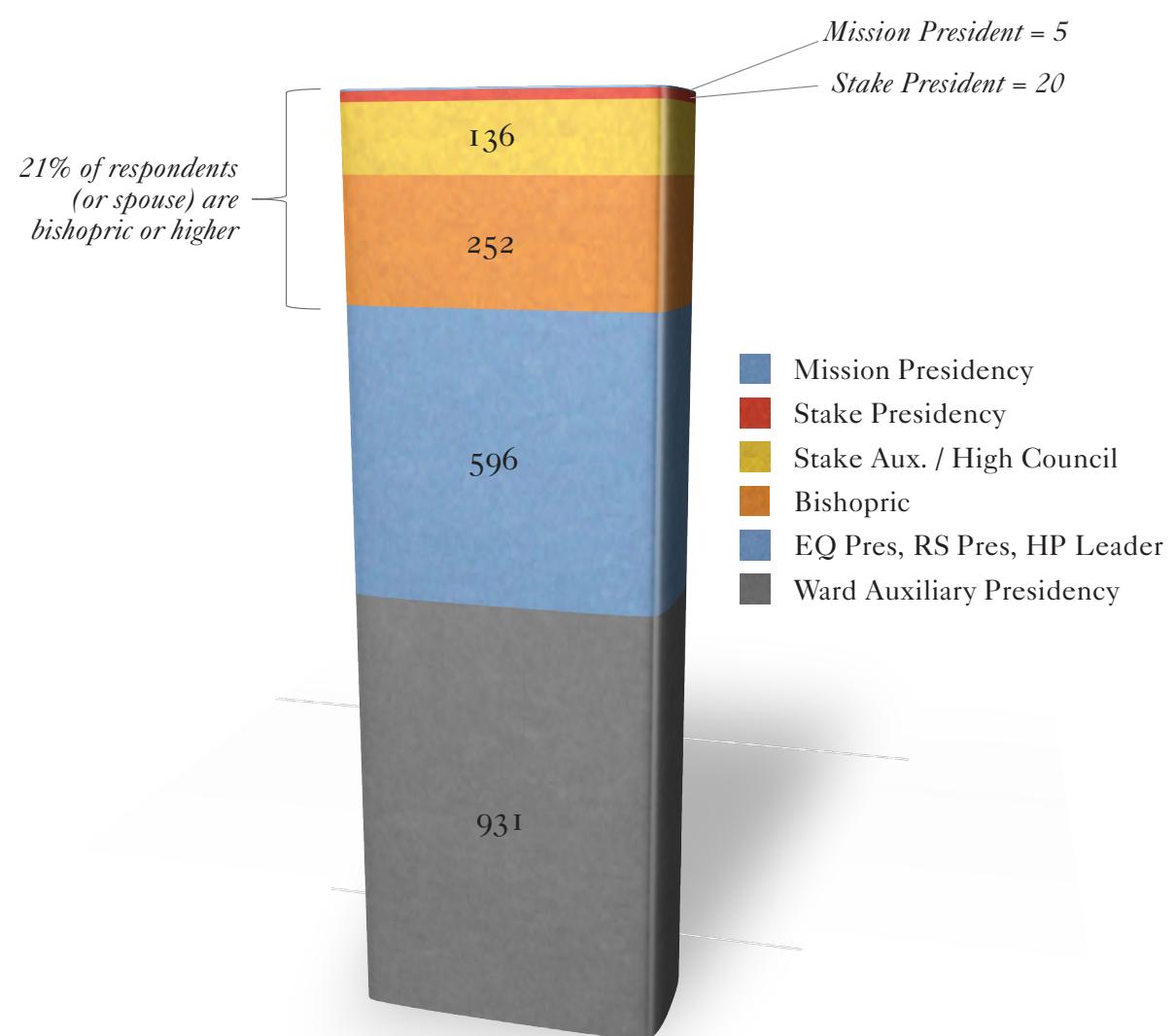
Served in at least one calling	1,563	87%
Missionary	1,306	73%
Elder's Quorum Presidency and/or High Priest Leader	928	52%
Young Men's Presidency	680	38%
Ward Mission Leader	388	22%
Bishopric	356	20%
Temple Worker	204	11%
Stake calling (Aux. Presidency, High Council, Stake Pres.)	148	8%
Mission President	5	0%

CALLINGS HELD: WOMEN

%

Served in at least one calling	996	77%
Young Women's Presidency	544	42%
Relief Society Presidency	452	35%
Primary Presidency	406	31%
Missionary	215	17%
Spouse of Bishopric	99	8%
Stake calling (Aux. Presidency, wife of Stake Presidency)	75	6%
Temple Worker	60	5%
Spouse of Mission President	4	0%

HIGHEST CALLINGS HELD BY SURVEY PARTICIPANTS



“Not since Kirtland have we seen such an exodus of the Church’s best and brightest leaders.”

TERRYL GIVENS LDS SCHOLAR

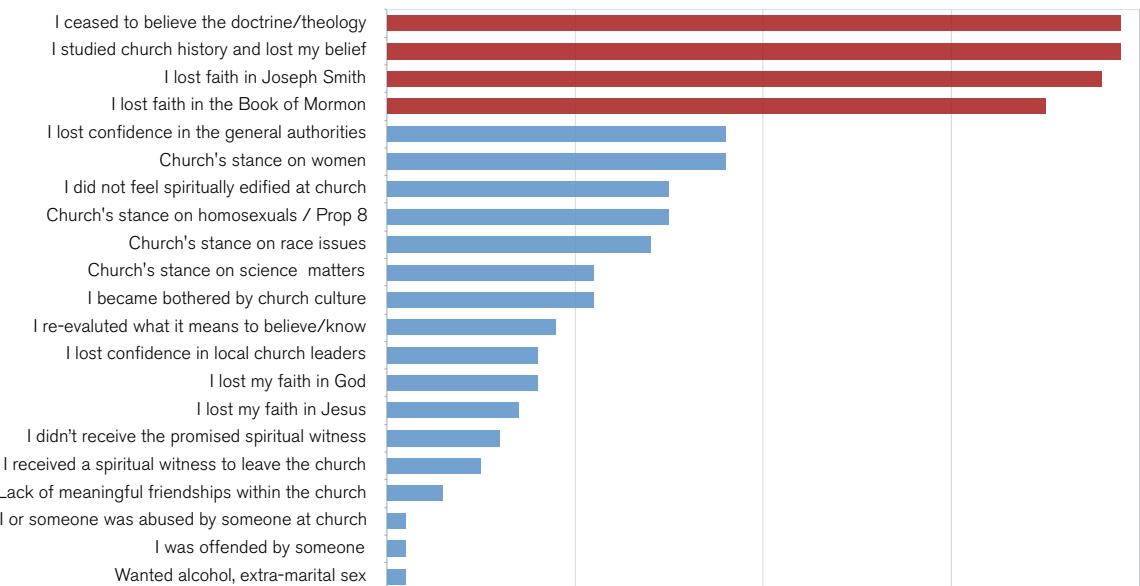
REASONS & REPERCUSSIONS

Survey respondents were asked to identify the reasons that led to their loss-of-belief (respondents were able to select multiple “primary factors.”)

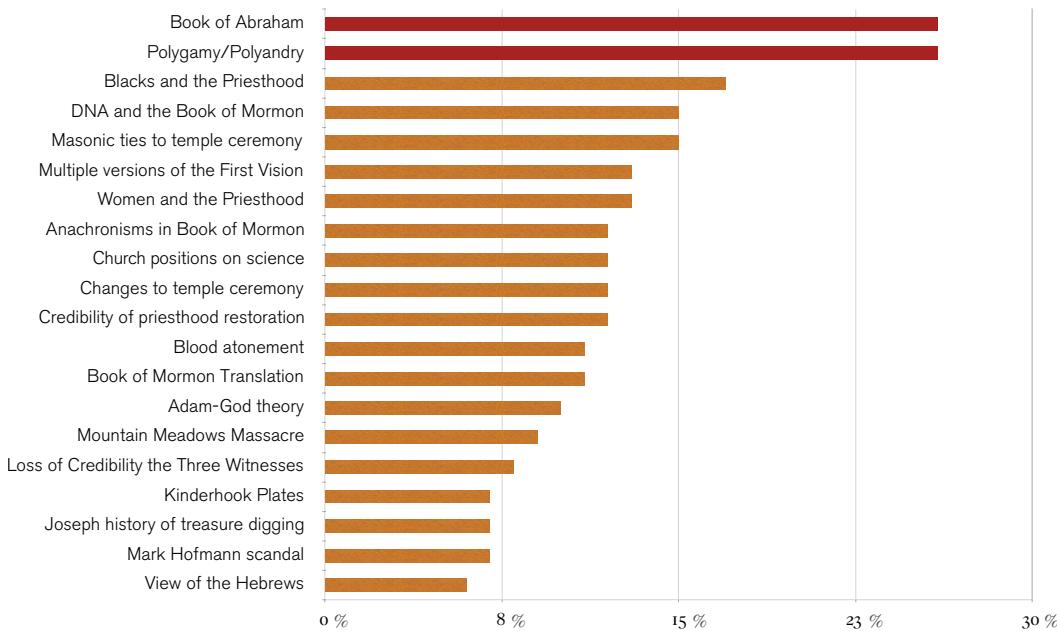
As indicated in the below chart, the top factors for loss-of-belief are highly correlated to each other and pertain specifically to the Church’s key historical truth claims: 1) Joseph Smith, 2) History, 3) Doctrine / theology, 4) Book of Mormon

Interestingly, factors traditionally cited as reasons for loss-of-faith (offense, desire to sin) rank least relevant amongst these Faith Crisis respondents.

STATED REASONS FOR LOSS-OF-BELIEF
(PRIMARY FACTORS)



RANKING OF PRIMARY FACTORS (WITHIN HISTORICAL ISSUES)



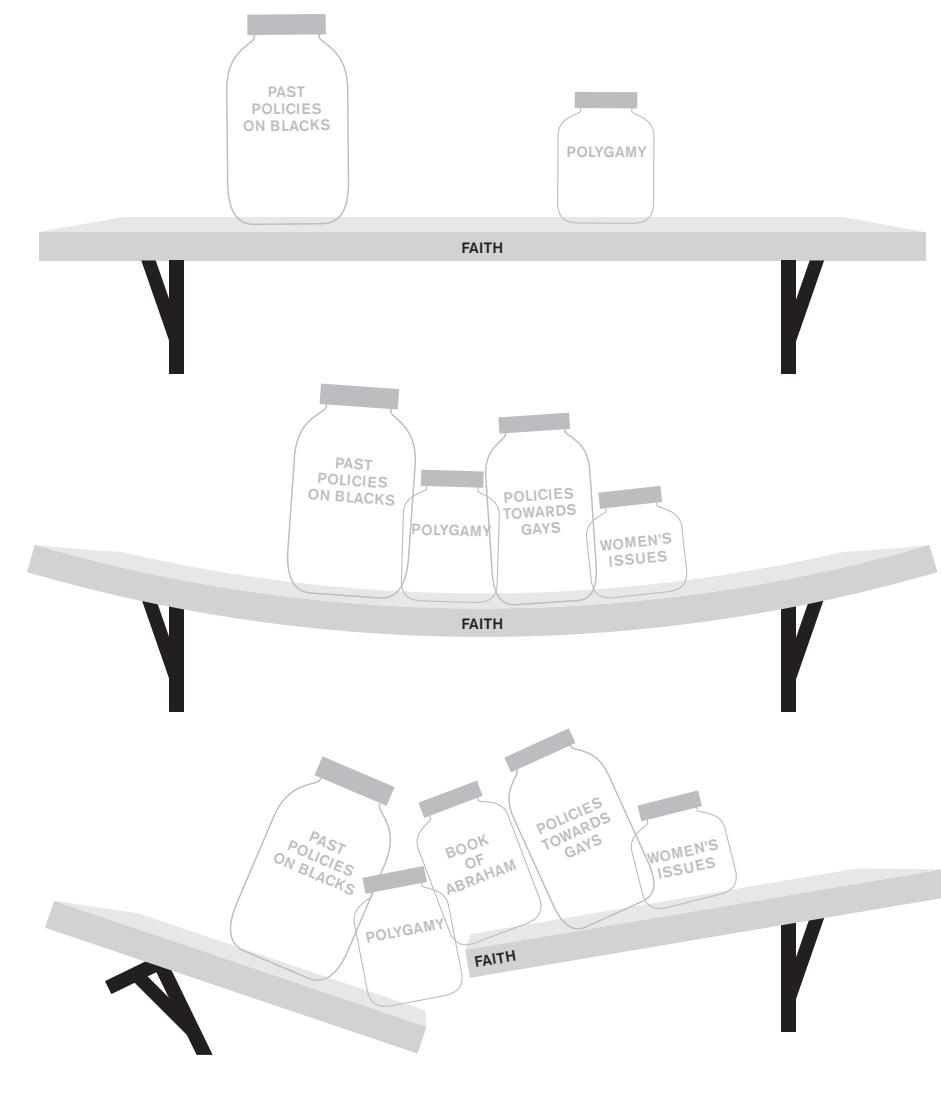
DISCLOSURE TO OTHER PARTIES

- In general, the believing spouse of a member experiencing a Faith Crisis tends to be aware of his or her struggling spouse's Faith Crisis. Church leaders and friends tend to be less aware.
- Young members are least likely to disclose their Faith Crisis to Church leaders: only 2 of 203 teen respondents (less than 1 percent) state their Church leaders know "most everything."
- Members in their 50s and 60s are least likely to disclose to their spouse (5 percent less likely than all ages).

SOCIAL REPERCUSSIONS

- For those who disclose their Faith Crisis doubts, many report feelings of "social excommunication" from LDS family and friends.
- Over fifty percent of active members in Faith Crisis report moderate to severe cost to relationships and their individual emotional health.

ACCUMULATION LEADS TO DISBELIEF



An accumulation of several historical and social issues—not just one single issue—often correlates to a loss-of-faith.

When bearing a nominal amount of "shelf issues," many members continue with strong faith and active Church participation. Accumulating additional social and historical issues can lead to the weakening—and then catastrophic failure of the member's faith.

“It’s not any one of these historical issues, but the accumulation of them combined with the Church’s lack of addressing these concerns on their own.”

RESPONDENT #105, ANONYMOUS MALE, IN HIS 30'S

FEELINGS OF BETRAYAL

For many, it's not only the historical issues themselves, but the sense of betrayal that accompanies the discovery of new information that contradicts previous beliefs. The below quotes help illustrate the deep sense of disappointment and betrayal felt by many:

“I defended the church to associates who brought up some historical issues. When I did my own research, I found they were true. My issue wasn’t that they were true but that my whole life I was never told about them... I felt betrayed by the church.”

RESPONDENT #732, ANONYMOUS FEMALE, IN HER 40'S

“I feel like I cannot trust the general leadership on any spiritual issues because they cannot even be honest and open about our past.”

RESPONDENT #597, ANONYMOUS FEMALE, IN HER 20'S

“The Church needs to be honest with its history and contradictions...instead they make us who have discovered the complicating facts look like the evil ones. I am shunned by my family. They think I am a liar and a deceiver when it is the Church and general authorities who have deceived us.”

RESPONDENT #701, ANONYMOUS MALE, IN HIS 60'S

“The church leadership doesn't match the level of honesty they preach about in Church manuals. I have no faith or trust in them anymore, and for all they have done to me and my relationship with my wife, I consider them my enemy.”

RESPONDENT #1208, ANONYMOUS MALE, IN HIS 30'S

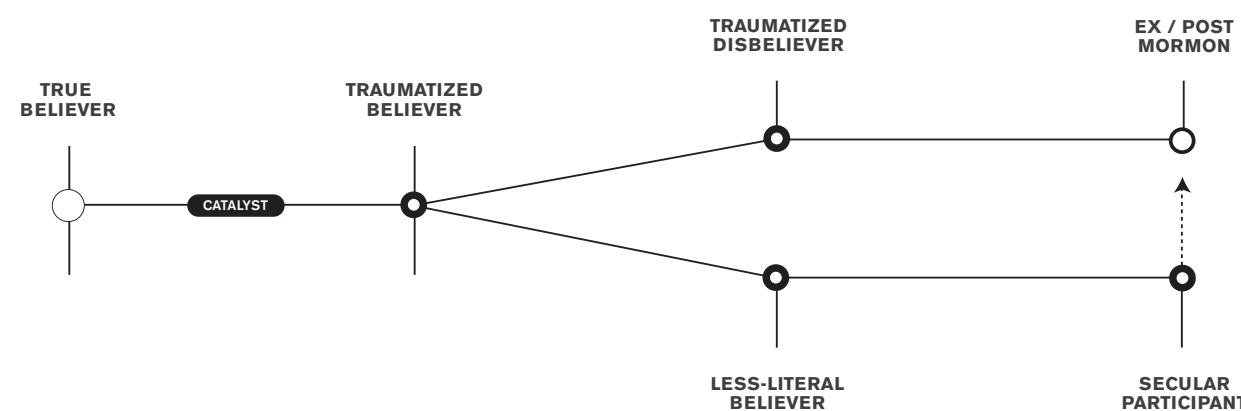
SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

1. The significant majority of survey respondents represent long-term members who were (until recently) actively engaged and holding leadership and other callings.
2. Members in faith crisis tend to be married, more educated than average, and earn higher-than-average incomes.
3. A little less than half of these disbelievers remain active in the Church, while over half no longer attend.
4. The majority of those who left did so in the past seven years.
5. Among historical issues, the Book of Abraham and Polygamy/Polyandry are the most significant factors leading to loss-of-belief.
6. Although some factors rate higher than others, respondents indicate the exposure to several factors (historical + social issues) collectively led to their disbelief.
7. Spouses tend to be aware of the Faith Crisis issue. Church leaders and friends tend to be less aware.
8. Members in Faith Crisis who attend Church regularly tend to suffer the most mental and spiritual anguish as a result of their discovering these issues.
9. For many, Faith Crisis extracts an extremely high cost in spousal and familial relationships.
10. A strong sense of betrayal often accompanies a member's loss-of-faith.

FAITH CRISIS STAGES



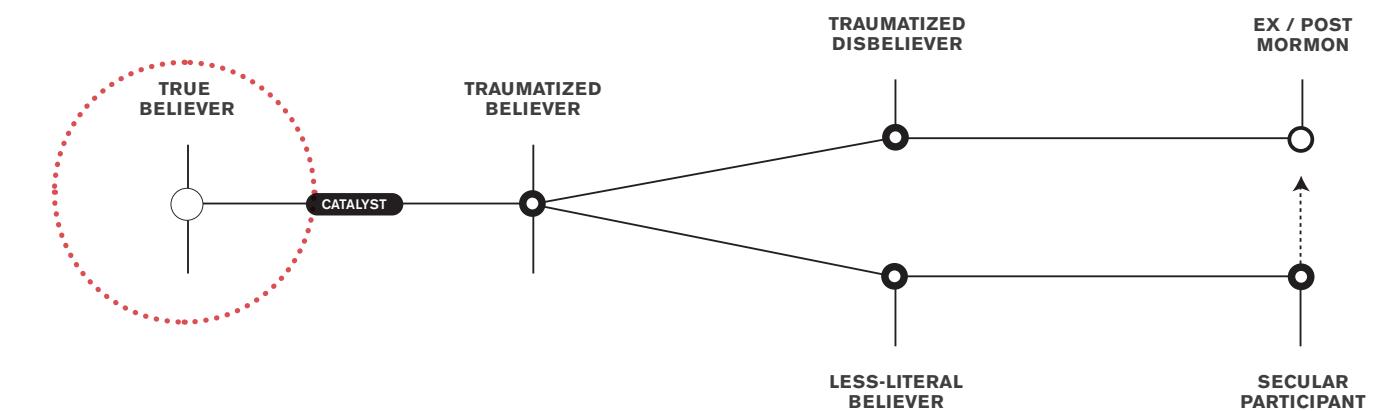
FAITH CRISIS STAGES



Overview

Faith Crisis is a deeply personal experience that varies from member to member, although there are many similarities that define the experience. The Faith Crisis Stages provide a framework to better understand and articulate the Faith Crisis experience.

THE TRUE BELIEVER

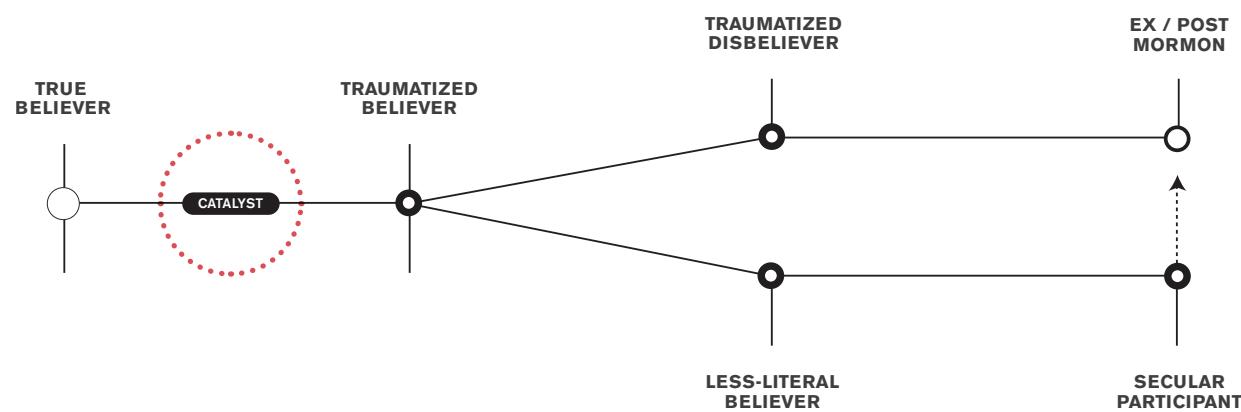


The faith of a True Believer is “beautifully simple and simply beautiful.”

For these *True Believer* members:

- God lives, and He loves us.
- The scriptures are His word.
- Church leaders (General Authorities) speak for God.
- The LDS Church is the one and only true church on Earth.

THE CATALYST STAGE



A Faith Crisis Catalyst is an event that can initiate and precipitate a loss-of-faith for a True Believer. Dozens of Faith Crisis catalysts exist. Common catalysts include:

A Teaching Calling or Assignment To Speak In Church

While attempting to fulfill a Sunday School or Seminary calling—or researching Sacrament Meeting talks—members turn to Google to research their topic. This often inadvertently exposes members to historical and doctrinal information that deviates from the standard LDS narrative taught in our curriculum.

Traditional Media

Traditional media such as CNN, PBS, Newsweek, and other news outlets have reported on controversial aspects of our history that often surprise and confuse lifelong, educated members of the Church. Entertainment media have also focused on our doctrine and history. For example, Comedy Central's South Park aired an "All About Mormons" episode in which they describe the translation method of the Book of Mormon (along with other historical oddities). While many members who watched the episode rejected it as outright fabrication, many members were disheartened to later learn that much of what was depicted by South Park was more historically accurate than what is taught in our curriculum.

Close Friend or Family Member in Faith Crisis

Many members who have passed through a Faith Crisis may choose to share their faith concerns with close friends and family, which introduces difficult topics to others.

Non-Correlated Church Books

Scholarly Church books—written by faithful LDS authors—have inadvertently acted as a catalyst to learning about Church history that does not align with our traditional narrative.

New Media

Being exposed to troubling historical information via New Media (Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc.) can act as a catalyst for Faith Crisis.

Social Media

Social Media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and blogs actively facilitate the presentation of and discussion of Faith Crisis related topics.

Re-examination of Truth Claims via Social Issues

Members who struggle with the Church's stances on some social issues (e.g., women's roles, homosexuality, LDS cultural idiosyncrasies, political conservatism) often use the social issue as a catalyst to re-examine their faith. This "social issue" catalyst is especially powerful with our under 35 members who often feel at odds with the Church's approach to issues.

Re-examination of Truth Claims via Life Tragedy

Some members who experience personal tragedy (e.g., family-member death, disability, divorce, etc.) use the tragedy as a catalyst to reevaluate the Church's truth claims.

Less Likely Catalysts

While undoubtedly some members use a desire to sin as an excuse to "find a way out" of the Church, neither "sin" nor "being offended" appears to be significant catalysts for these surveyed members.

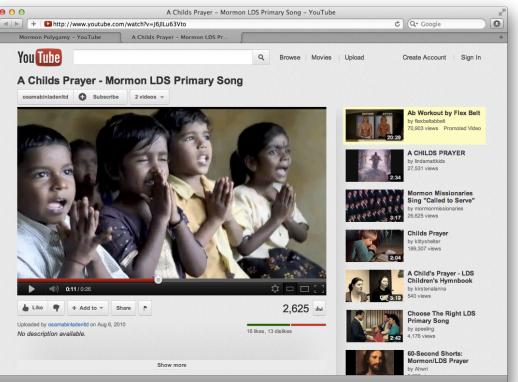
New Media Examples

A Google search for "Joseph Smith" yields approximately 22,700,000 results. The top three results include links to "Joseph Smith - Home" (www.josephsmith.net), "Joseph Smith - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia" (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Smith), and "The Wives of Joseph Smith" (www.wivesofjosephsmith.org). A red box highlights these three results, with a callout pointing to the text: "The top 3 of 4 'Joseph Smith' listings include information not included in the traditional LDS narrative."

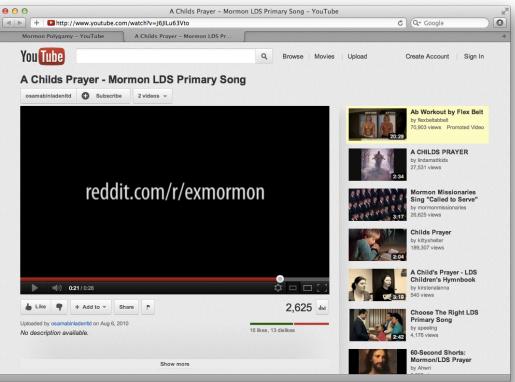
A Google search for "Mormon Polyandry" yields approximately 41,000 results. The top result is a link to "Mormon Polygamy - Polyanity - Underage Brides" (mormonthink.com/joseph-smith-polygamy.htm), which is described as "extremely critical" in a red box. A red line points from this box to the text: "Top listing extremely critical".

Unintentional (and intentional) access to troubling information is one or two clicks away from a simple Google search:

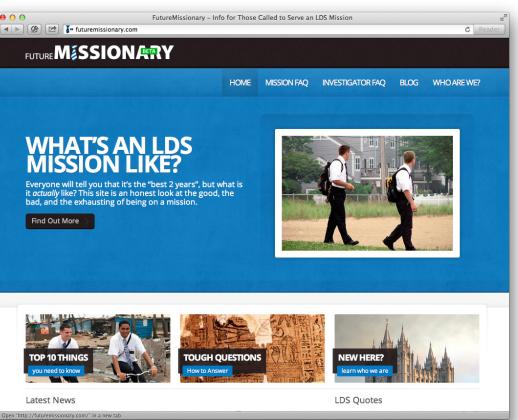
Social Media Examples



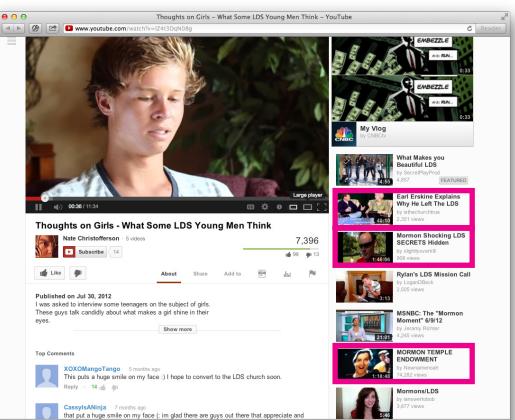
SOCIAL MEDIA EXAMPLE 1



reddit.com/r/exmormon



SOCIAL MEDIA EXAMPLE 2



SOCIAL MEDIA EXAMPLE 3

Some members unintentionally stumble upon Faith Crisis catalysts via social media (three examples are shown above).

- 1) A disaffected member uploaded a YouTube video that purports to be the Primary song, *A Child's Prayer*. A few seconds after an active member begins viewing the video, the content abruptly switches to showcase anti-Mormon messaging and links to an antagonistic website.
- 2) A team of disaffected members created the web site FutureMissionary.com, which purports to be a resource with preparatory information for future missionaries. The site, however, presents troubling historical information aimed at "telling the truth" and eroding faith.
- 3) As members view the faith-promoting video, "Thoughts on Girls — What Some LDS Young Men Think," members are presented with links to highly critical "related videos" that are designed to erode faith.

Traditional Media Examples



Traditional media often highlight the very best aspects of Mormonism, but it also presents information to our membership that conflicts with our correlated narrative. The media also advances web sites and organized groups that are antagonistic towards the Church. Examples of this include:

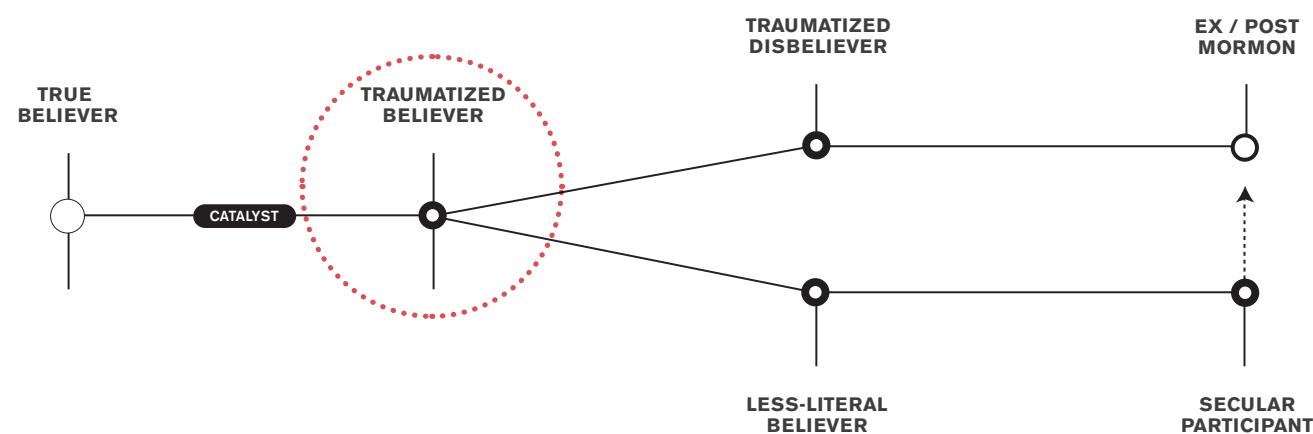
- “By the end of his life, he had accrued some 30 wives, massive debt and hundreds of enemies. ‘I never told you I was perfect,’ he told his followers.” Soukup, Elise. “The Mormon Odyssey.” Newsweek Oct. 16 2005.
- “David Twede, a fifth-generation Mormon who lives in Florida, is the managing editor of MormonThink, one of the most influential of the many Web sites on which active and former Mormons debate church teaching. Such sites have drawn increased traffic as Mormons turn to the Internet to find answers to controversial questions about Mormon history and traditions that the church does not address.” Goodstein, Laurie. “Editor of Web Site May Face Mormon Excommunication.” The New York Times, Sep. 21, 2012.

Dichotomous Statements Can Magnify Dissonance

During the Catalyst stage, many struggling members begin experiencing cognitive dissonance—or feelings of discomfort—when presented with data that contradicts their previous beliefs. This dissonance can often be magnified by well-meaning leaders who—in an effort to bolster faith—present dichotomous messages that leave little room for nuance, error, or leader fallibility. Examples of these dichotomous statements include:

- “It’s either true or false. If it’s false, we’re engaged in a great fraud. If it’s true, it’s the most important thing in the world. Now, that’s the whole picture. It is either right or wrong, true or false, fraudulent or true.” Gordon B. Hinckley, Interview “The Mormons”; PBS, April 2007
- “Mormonism, as it is called, must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned, or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground.” Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1954, vol. 1, p. 188

TRAUMATIZED BELIEVER



After exposure to a Faith Crisis catalyst, many members enter the Traumatized Believer stage, which results in exposure to many troubling facts and non-traditional points-of-view. This is *a temporary stage* that is quickly followed by either the Traumatized Disbeliever or Less-literal Believer stages.

The Traumatized Believer can be described in these terms:

Awareness of Difficult Church History

- Multiple, varying First Vision accounts
- Joseph's use of folk magic and treasure digging
- Book of Mormon translation (stone / hat)
- Masonry and endowment connection
- Joseph's credibility as a translator
- Joseph's polygamy / polyandry
- Kinderhook Plates
- Denial of priesthood to blacks / racism
- Perceived modified role of women's rights
- Mountain Meadows
- Blood atonement
- Lying for the Lord
- Adam / God teachings
- Priesthood restoration credibility issues
- Post-manifesto polygamy
- Lack of historical candor

Awareness of Challenging Scientific Issues

- Book of Mormon anachronisms (e.g., horses, steel, chariots, Book of Isaiah, King James errors, etc.)
- Native Americans having Asiatic DNA
- Book of Abraham text not matching the papyrus
- Age of the earth (6,000 years old? No death on earth before the Fall?)
- Implausible scriptural accounts (e.g., Noah's Ark, Jonah in Whale, Tower of Babel, etc.)
- Dark skin as a curse
- Past statements on evolution

Re-examination of Theology and Doctrine

- Apparent God-sanctioned genocide, sexism, racism
- One true church with exclusive authority
- Taking all scripture literally

Re-examination of Cultural Issues

- Feminist awareness and sympathies
- Historical racial inequalities
- Past and present stance on homosexuality
- Political and social conservatism
- Culture of perfectionism

Confronting Spiritual Issues

- Having had a spiritual witness but not being able to reconcile it with new learnings
- Never receiving a spiritual witness (after many sincere attempts)
- Feeling bored, unfulfilled, or spiritually unedified in Church activity
- Feeling burnt-out / not good enough
- Feeling spiritually led elsewhere

Re-examination of Institutional Issues

- Culture of unquestioning obedience
- Culture of patriarchy
- Closed finances
- Questionable spending priorities (e.g., City Creek.)

Members who pass through the Traumatized Believer stage tend to never return to the True Believer stage.

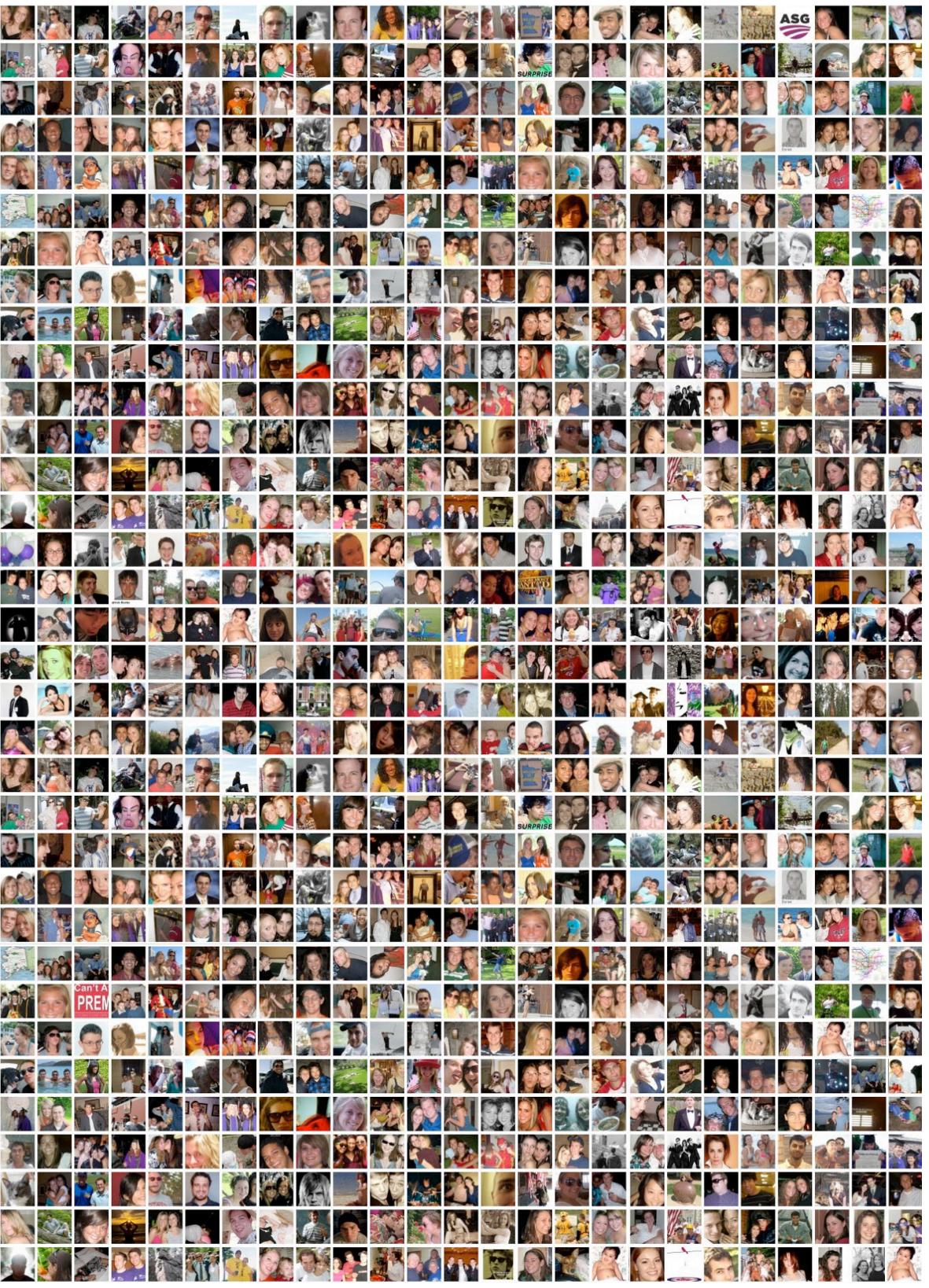
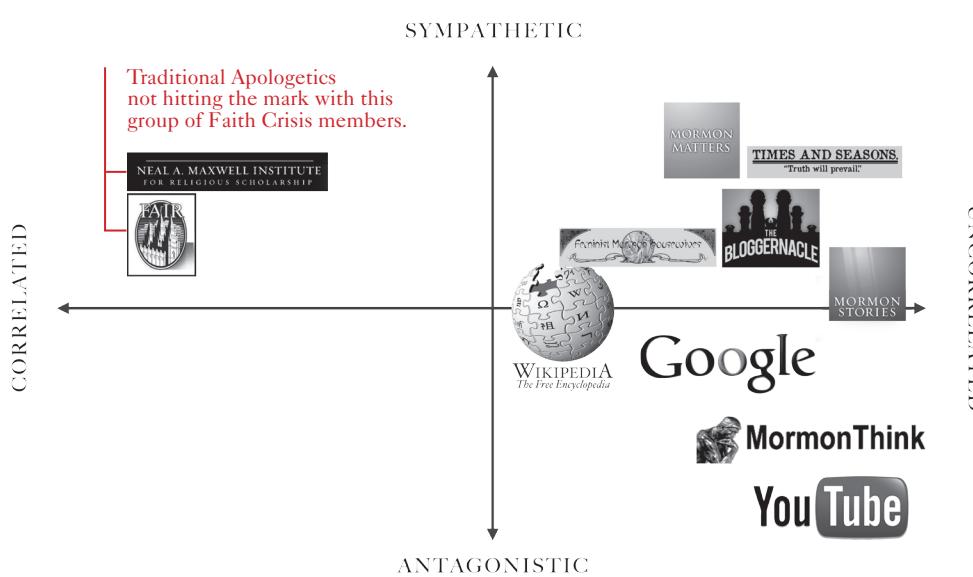
Thousands pass through the Traumatized Believer stage each year.

Cognitive Dissonance Creates a Drive for More Information

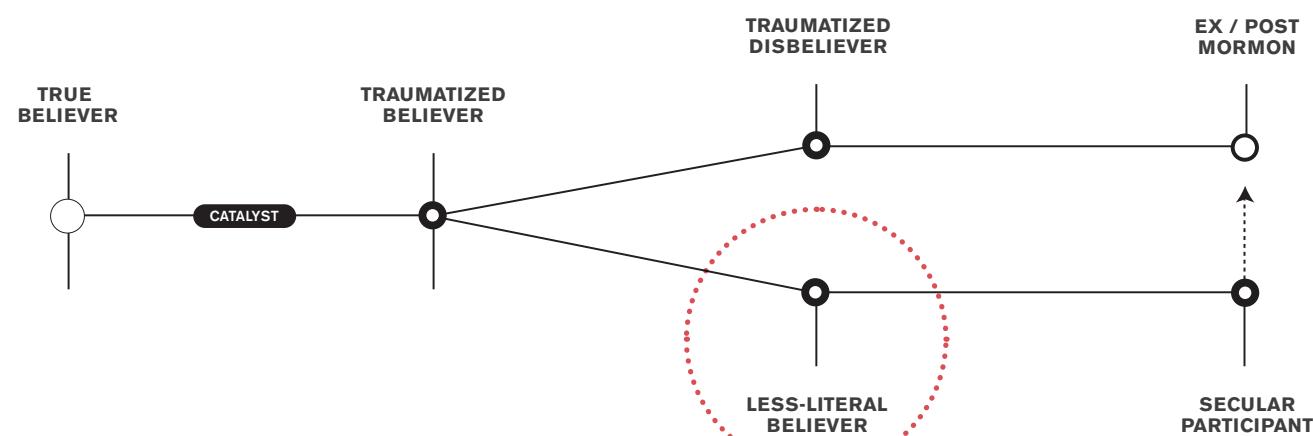
Once exposed to disturbing historical information, many Traumatized Believers experience high levels of anxiety based on viewing information that contradicts their existing beliefs. This cognitive dissonance leads many to search for additional information to alleviate the conflicting beliefs.

At the onset of a Faith Crisis, many members search LDS.org for answers to their concerns. However, many troubling historical issues are not addressed substantively on the Church's websites or in its curricula. Many struggling members are then directed to traditional apologetics such as FAIR and The Maxwell Institute. Unfortunately, these traditional apologetics often do not provide a satisfactory counter of issues that lead to Faith Crisis.

Without access to Church provided answers and analysis, members turn to uncorrelated or untrustworthy Internet sources. Some of these sources are sympathetic to Church membership. Many are unsympathetic and critical.



LESS-LITERAL BELIEVER



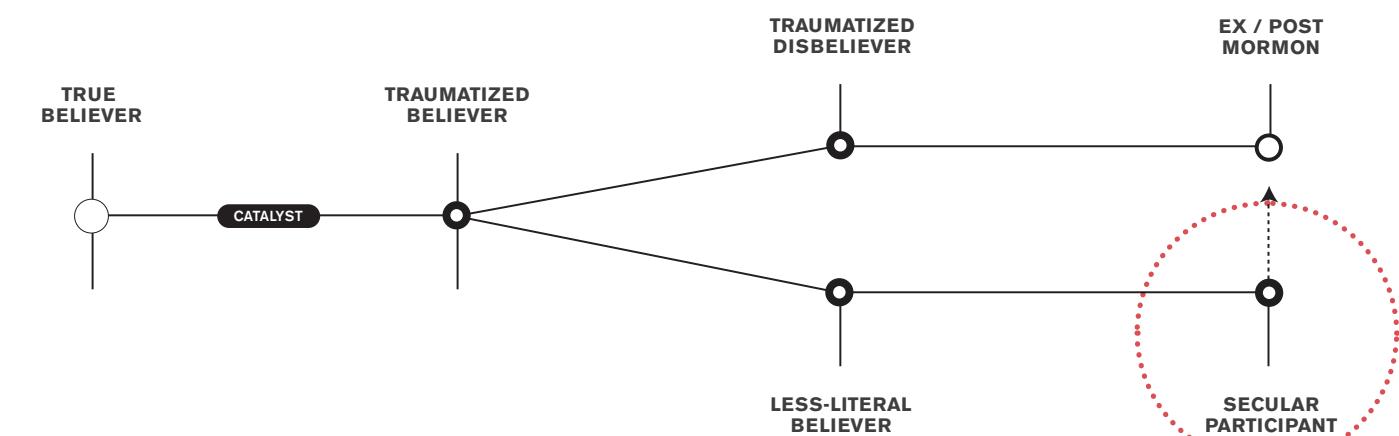
Nuanced Belief

- Following the Traumatized Believer stage, many believe the gospel is still mostly true, but the Church and its leaders have made mistakes.
- Members build (or rebuild) a “shelf” for unresolvable doubts and concerns.
- Many become “Buffet” Mormons by cleaving to doctrinal and cultural elements that spiritually work for them and ignoring those doctrinal and cultural elements that spiritually do not work for them.
- For many, belief becomes more metaphorical and less literal.
- Many remain active and participating members as they believe “this is where God wants me.”

Challenges

- While still remaining active, many members, unfortunately, experience a decrease in their level of Church commitment. (ceasing to pay tithing, decreased temple attendance, etc.).
- They are often unable to confide in anyone, which can result in desperate loneliness and increased anxiety.
- Many of these Less-literal Believers experience a difficultly feeling authentic in Church; and for many, this emotional distress and cognitive dissonance can result in the member transitioning to a less-believing Faith Crisis stage and disengage completely from the Church.

SECULAR PARTICIPANT



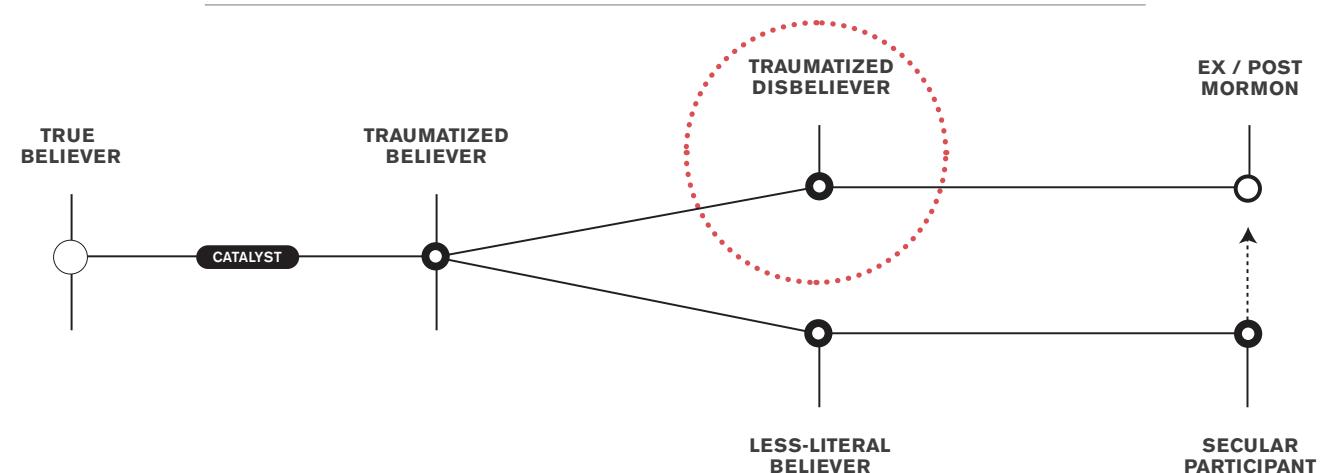
Loss-of-belief

- Members in the *Secular Participant* phase are often not able to believe the defining Church claims and doctrines.
- They enjoy the Church.
- “It works for me.”
- “I can’t find anything better.”

Challenges

- Members in the *Secular Participant* stage must often remain silent about their disbelief or risk negative social consequences.
- This inability to express their concerns often causes members to feel inauthentic at Church.
- For some members in this stage, continued participation can lead to a building of internal pressure, which can cause them to discontinue all Church activity.

TRAUMATIZED DISBELIEVER



Following the Traumatized Believer stage, members will migrate to either the Less-literal Believer stage or to the Traumatized *Disbeliever* stage. This is a temporary stage with most members quickly transitioning to the Ex- / Post-Mormon phase. The Traumatized Disbeliever can be described in these terms:

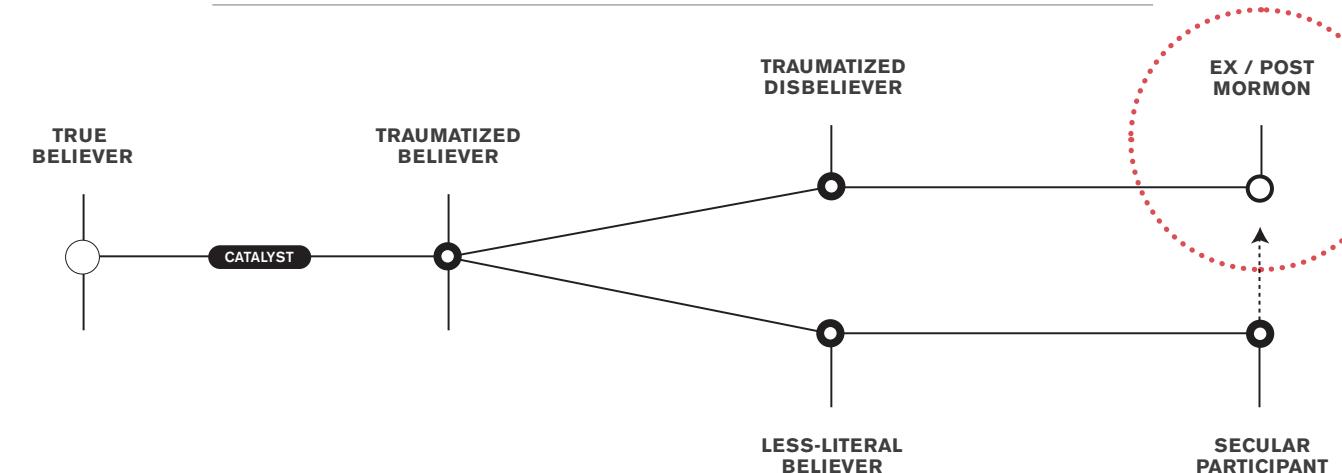
Evaporation of Belief

- For many, the loss-of-trust in the Church can translate into a loss-of-faith in God, Jesus Christ, and all religious beliefs.
- Traumatized Disbelievers often hit “rock bottom.”
- This stage can be very disturbing and unsettling for the struggling member. Many have labeled this Faith Crisis stage the “dark night of the soul.”

Challenges

- Vanishing of existential foundation (loss of purpose)
- Questioning life after death
- Loss of identity and values
- Fear of losing family, friends, social network, and job
- Often unable to confide in anyone (can result in desperate loneliness)
- Anxiety, depression, and at times, suicidal thoughts

EX- / POST-MORMON



The Ex- / Post-Mormon can be described in these terms:

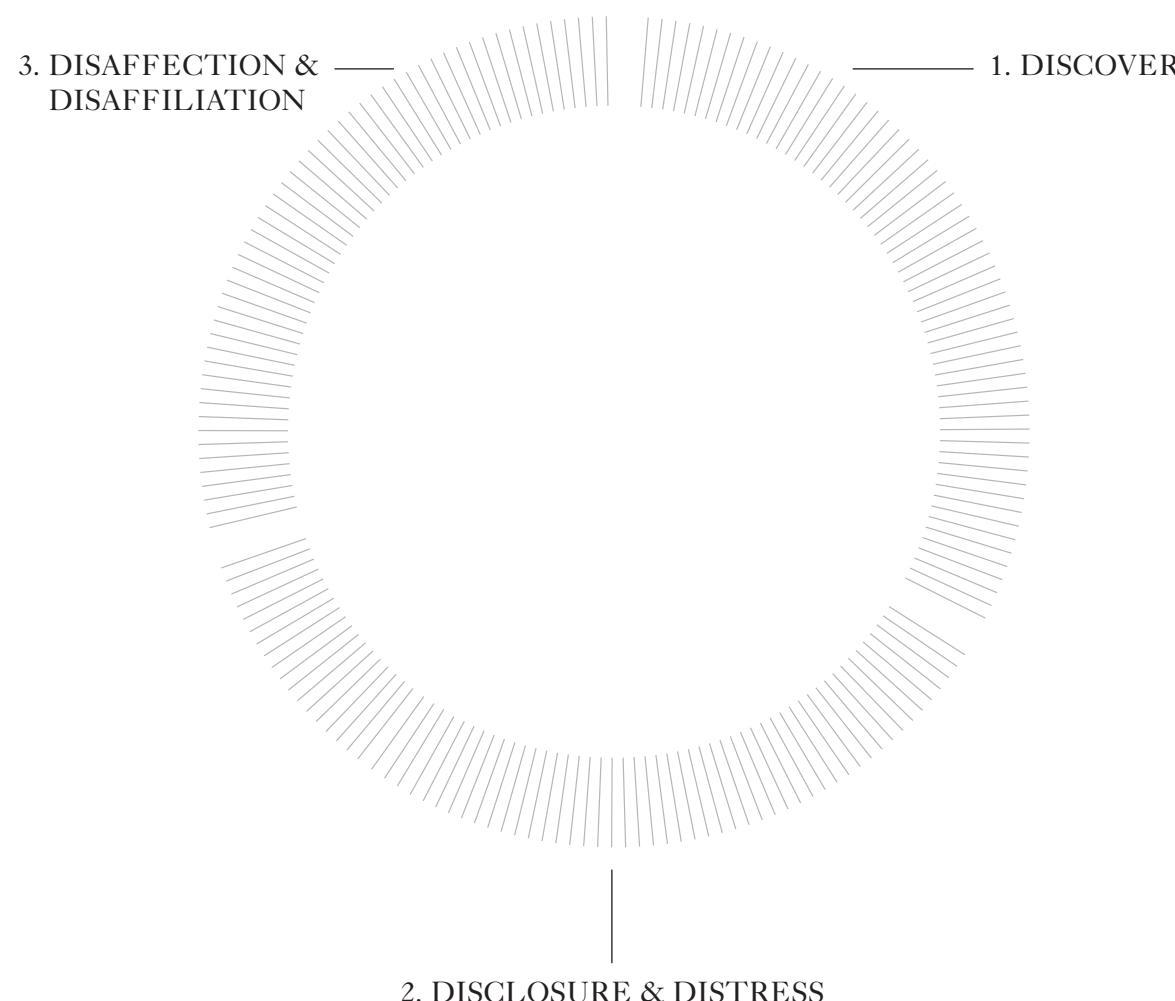
- For many, leaving the Church results in loss of family, friends, and job.
- Many feel alone and isolated from family members and friends who choose not to engage the disaffected member or attempt to resolve their concerns (this increases feelings of turmoil).
- Turmoil and animosity increase when some Ex- / Post-Mormons feel unjustly blamed for feeling victimized (e.g., active members imply they have insufficient study habits, were offended, want to sin, or sinned, etc.).
- In early stages, many engage in behaviors reactive to LDS restrictions (coffee, alcohol, chastity, etc.)
- Many spend months or years analyzing their disaffection and attempting to “tell the truth” to believing friends and family before completely disengaging from the topic of Mormonism. The longer and more devoted a person to the Church, typically the more prolonged the transition from engaged Ex Mormon to completely disengaged Ex Mormon.
- Transitioning to the Ex Mormon stage requires the creation of:
 - New identity
 - New moral framework
 - New social community
 - Coping mechanisms for death and suffering
- Many feel life is better once they’ve left the Church.
- A minority of Ex Mormons remove their name from Church records; but many do not as they do not wish to unnecessarily offend believing family or “give legitimacy” to the Church institution.

THE PERPETUAL CYCLE OF DISAFFECTION



OVERVIEW

While each Faith Crisis is unique, many commonalities exist that define the experience. The goal of The Perpetual Cycle of Disaffection graphic is to distill the Faith Crisis “vicious cycle” to its simplest core. While this represents the worst case scenario, the majority of our Faith Crisis members experience at least several aspects of this cycle. The cycle is divided into three main trisection: 1) Discover, 2) Disclosure & Distress, and 3) Disaffection & Disaffiliation.



A Need for Greater Understanding

Too often families, friends, spouses, and members label our Faith Crisis members as pariahs and avoid them like the plague—even when they’re just at the questioning stage.

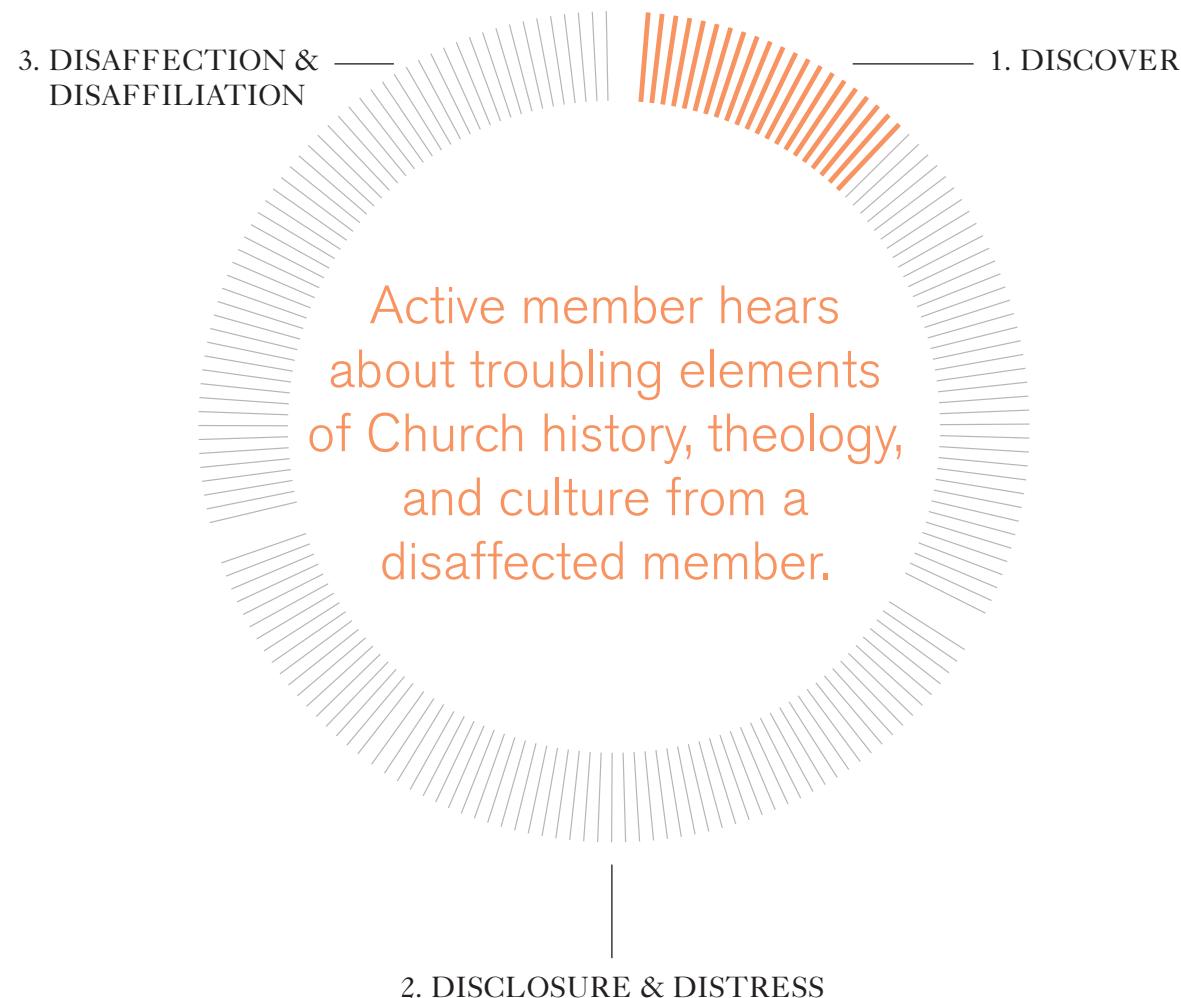
Just as important as why people leave is the question of what we do with our doubting and disaffected Faith Crisis brothers and sisters. As outlined poignantly by the Faith Crisis survey respondents: once a struggling member starts heading out the proverbial Church door, we members often make sure to slam the door firmly behind them. At the center of solving our Faith Crisis challenge is the need to break this cycle of disaffection.

“When learning more about Church history and Joseph Smith, I felt the church had knowingly deceived me in order to maintain my beliefs. I think the Church’s withholding of information is an equal crime to dishonesty and deceit, especially when they are aware of their importance it has in a member’s life choices and psyche.”

RESPONDENT # 1680, ANONYMOUS MALE, IN HIS 40'S

STEP 1: INITIATION

The mass majority of online information designed to erode the faith of others is created by disaffected members or former members of the LDS Church.

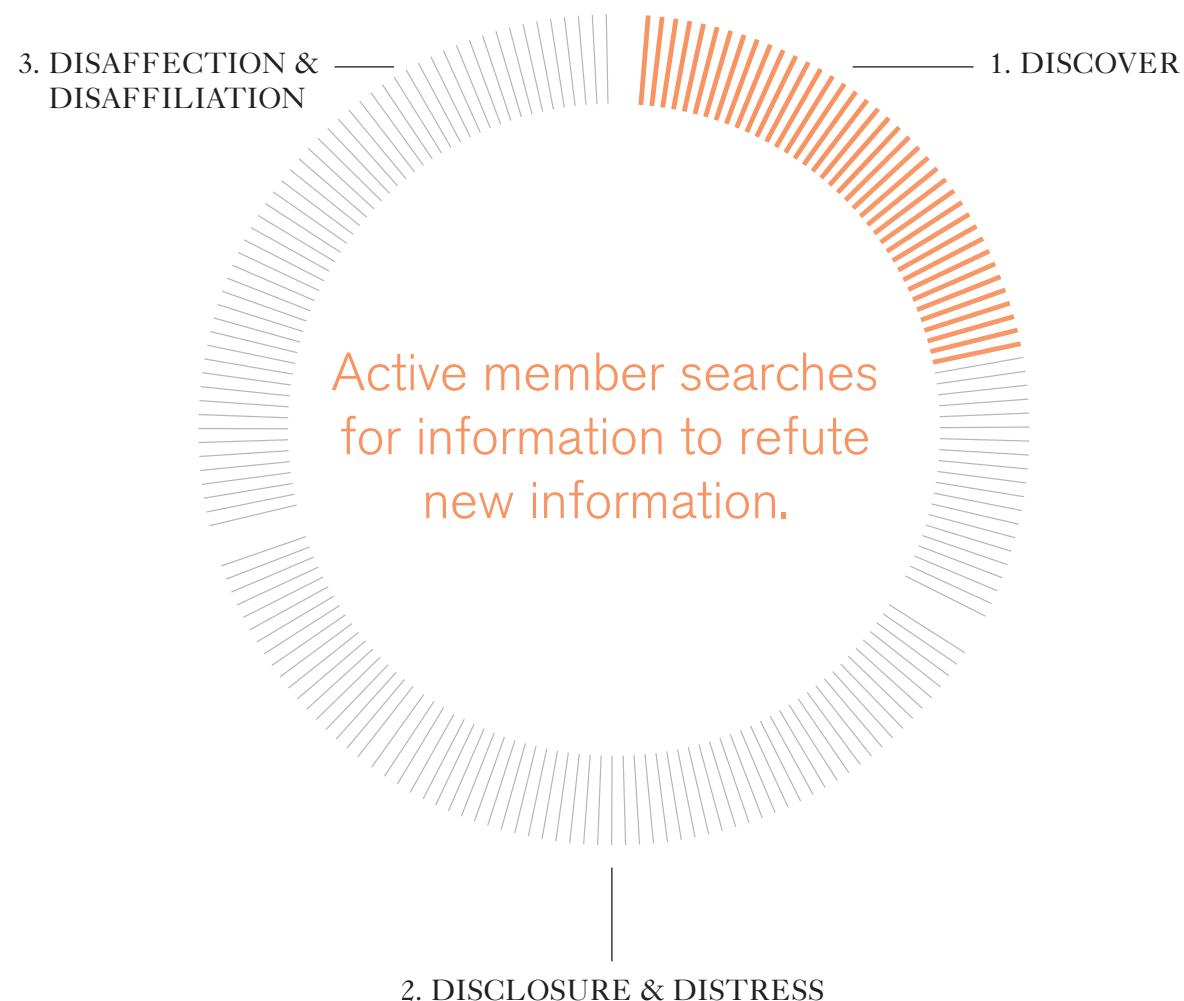


“After researching Book of Abraham issues in an attempt to resolve some concerns of a family member, I quickly realized from reviewing the topical index at fairlds.org that there was much in the history that I did not know. As a result, I decided for the first time in my life to examine the church objectively through the lens of logic and critical thinking. None of my supernatural beliefs survived that examination.”

RESPONDENT #2296, ANONYMOUS FEMALE, IN HER 30'S

STEP 2: SEARCH

When members are faced with disproving or refuting anti-Mormon claims, many first turn to LDS.org, which unfortunately has limited information on the majority of the difficult topics. Not finding satisfactory answers, members turn to Google to refute the difficult claims they have heard.

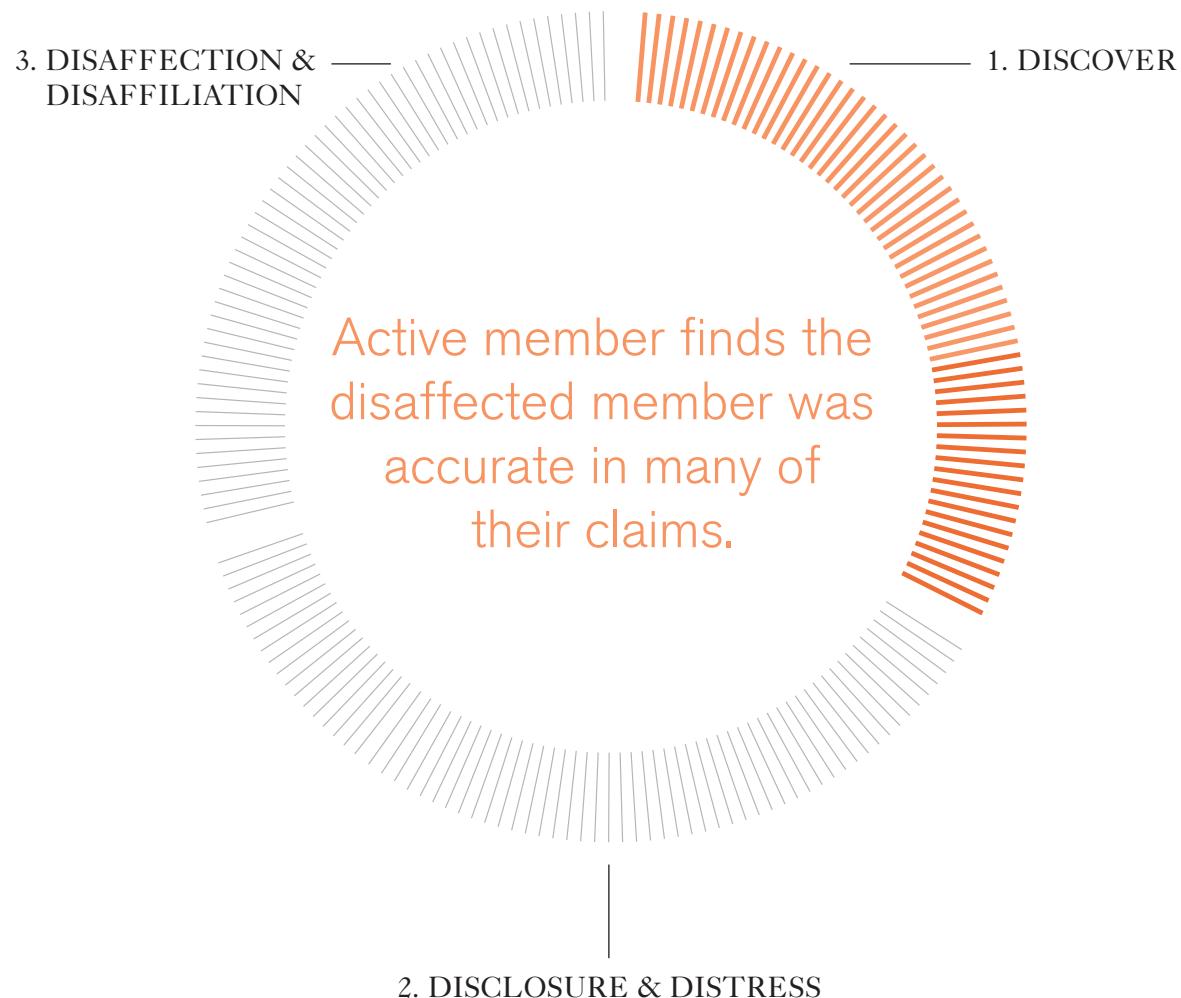


“Do you expect me to believe that my four sisters and I could go to church from primary through seminary and BYU and not know how our own Book of Mormon was produced? Please stop with the apologetics as well. FAIR and the Maxwell Institute contributed to my leaving the church. Sincere believing members want to hear [about troubling issues] from the leaders they set apart as prophets, seers and revelators.”

RESPONDENT #2122, ANONYMOUS MALE, IN HIS 40'S

STEP 3: TROUBLING DISCOVERY

Many believing members disregard disturbing historical and doctrinal claims as “anti-Mormon lies” that have no merit or are exaggerated to the point of lunacy. While there are plenty of unfounded claims against the Church, many of the most prominent anti-Mormon claims have been verified by faithful Church historians as having merit.



“My loss of belief has as much to do with how the church dealt with or is dealing with these issues as much as it is the issues themselves. Also, there is no ‘primary’ factor for my loss-of-belief. My testimony suffered a death by a thousand cuts.”

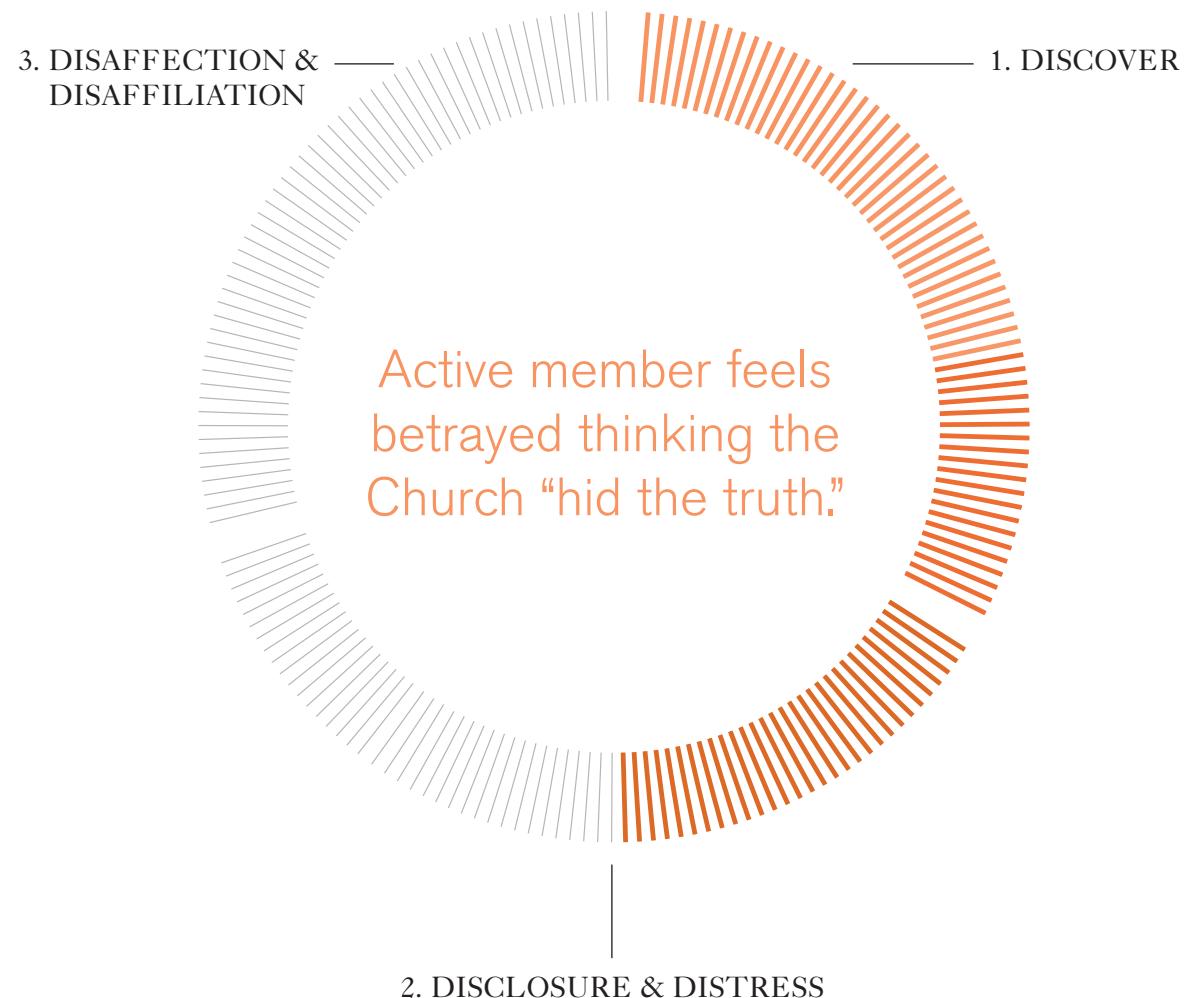
RESPONDENT #2249, ANONYMOUS MALE, IN HIS 30'S

“The problem is we have NO WHERE to go for official answers. You do a search on LDS.org for polygamy and get a talk from Elder Ballard about why people should stop asking us about it.”

ANONYMOUS FEMALE VIA FACEBOOK

STEP 4: BETRAYAL

When a member discovers facts that contradict the existing historical narrative, she feels a strong sense of betrayal. Many members in Faith Crisis attribute this high sense of betrayal to the high level of trust they placed in the Church. For many, equal to the difficult historical issues themselves is the loss-of-trust in the Church and feelings of betrayal.

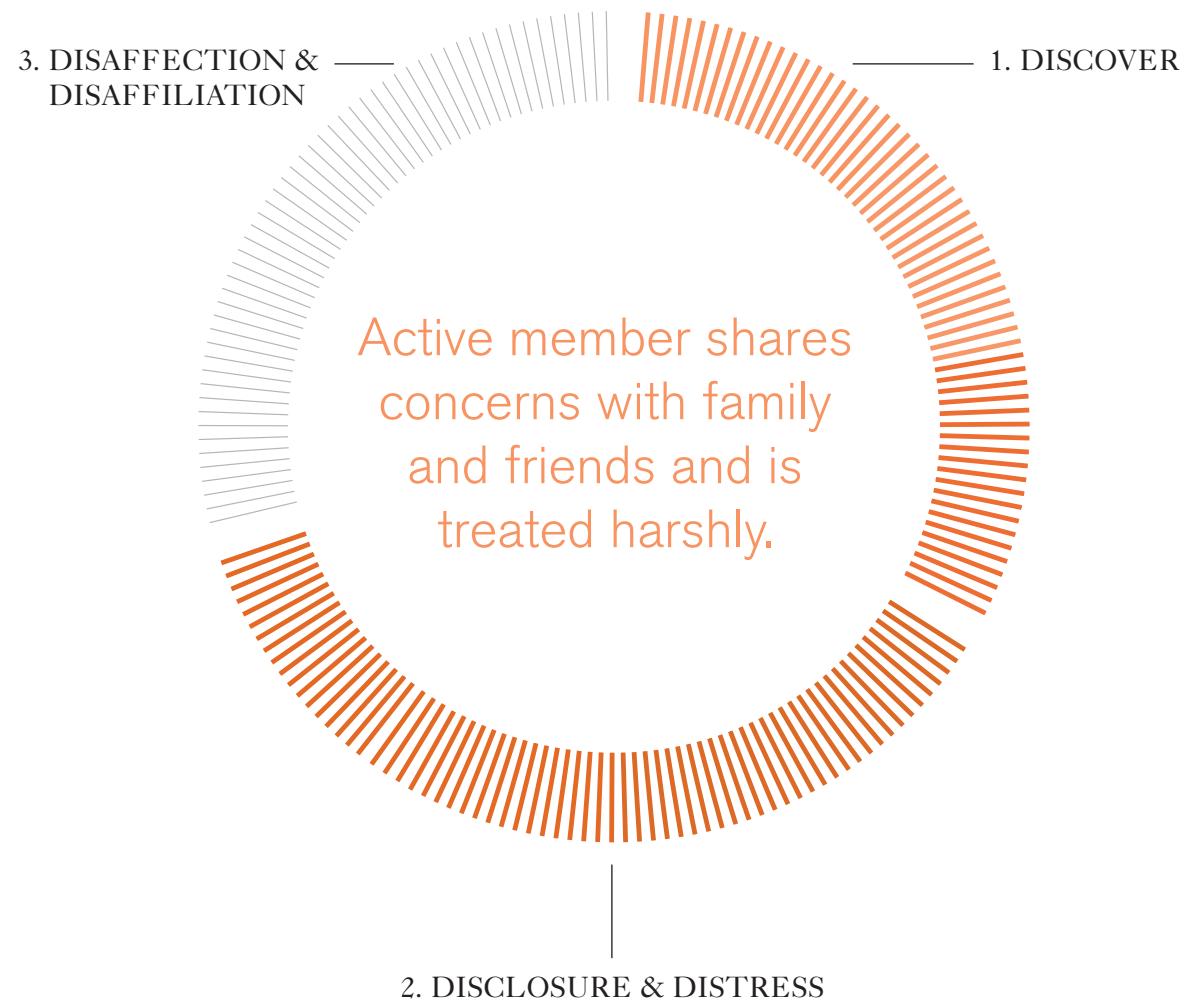


“I learned the dishonesty was systematic and institutional, euphemized as ‘correlation,’ on the part of what I had believed to be God’s church—the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth with which God was supposedly well pleased. Indeed, the very church which burned the principle of honesty into my soul as a youth, the church which required me to be ‘honest in all my dealings,’ and the church to which I had confessed my darkest indiscretions in an attempt to remain honest before God—this same church simply has not told the truth about itself.”

RESPONDENT #2241, ANONYMOUS MALE, IN HIS 30'S

STEP 5: HARSH TREATMENT

Whether it's our innate desire to defend the Church—or our desire to avoid information that contradicts our standard LDS narrative—the most common LDS response to an active member posing difficult questions is one of defense and dismissal (see listing of actual responses on the following page).



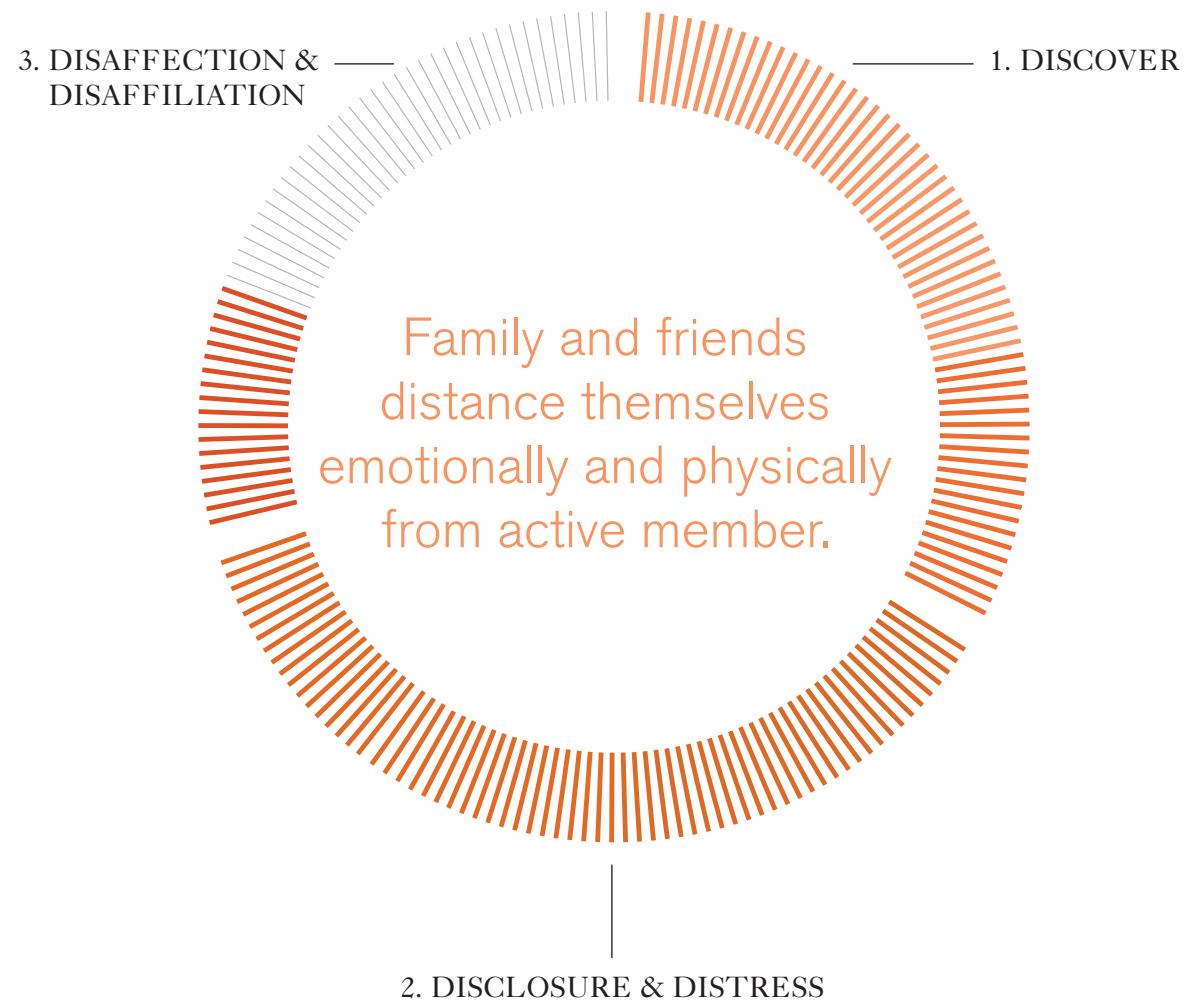
Harsh Responses by Loved Ones

When struggling members disclose their Faith Crisis, they are often met with harsh, “shame and blame” responses that further alienate them from loved ones. The following actual responses illustrate this point:

- What covenant are you breaking?
- You must want to sin.
- Who has offended you?
- Are you clinically depressed?
- You’re not worthy to be a parent if you’re questioning this.
- I must have raised you poorly.
- I would rather see you dead than see you lose your testimony.
- Stop reading and thinking about these historical issues.
- Your concerns are anti-Mormon lies and are meritless.
- It’s your own fault you’re struggling. Nothing has been misrepresented.
- Your IQ just dropped 30 points for questioning these things.
- Your discontent is part of the latter-day “inner cleansing” of the Church.

STEP 6: DISTANCING

Many struggling members and active members experience a schism in their relationship. This is often aggravated by the struggling member's over-reaction to the belief they have been treated harshly and unjustly persecuted for simply asking questions and disclosing historically accurate information.



Lack of Empathy

For many, it's less about us answering difficult historical questions than it is about how we treat their doubt. Many yearn for—but do not receive—acknowledgement of their struggles.

Lack of Official LDS Acknowledgement

The lack of official LDS acknowledgement of difficult issues—and the lack of clear position statements—often aggravates and discourages those suffering from Faith Crisis.

“I found there were times I turned to loved ones for comfort and support and instead found drama and debate. It’s already isolating to feel your faith crumble beneath you. People shouldn’t make it worse by treating you poorly.”

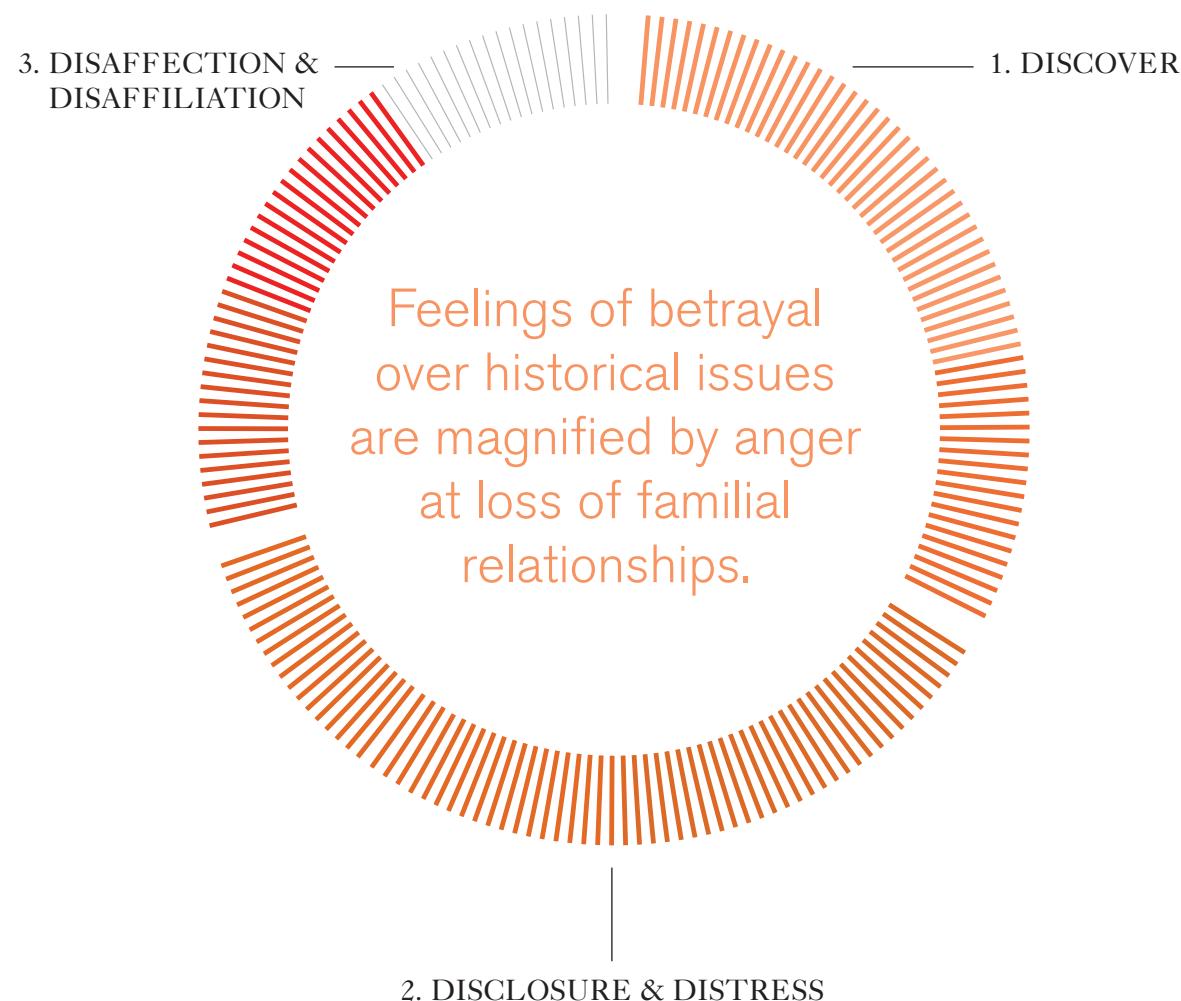
ANONYMOUS FEMALE VIA FACEBOOK

“In my experience, these are heartfelt questions from people having honest skepticism who are then met with judgement, accusations, and everything but satisfactory answers. Telling me my concerns are all lies or half truths (when they’re not) is what discourages me the most.”

ANONYMOUS MALE VIA FACEBOOK

STEP 7: ANGER MAGNIFICATION

Members in Faith Crisis who believe they are being wrongfully punished for “following the truth” become even more incensed at the Church from the resulting strain and damage to their familial relationships.



Denial of Difficult Issues

While the Internet does include false information masked as anti-Mormon facts, many troubling issues have been verified by faithful Church scholars. When members and leaders make broad statements denying the validity of Internet Faith Crisis issues, struggling members often become even more despondent as active members then use this “there is no problem” justification to discount the concerns of their struggling family and friends. These combine to further push struggling members from the Church.

The Facebook quote below is, unfortunately, a commonly felt sentiment to members and leaders who state or imply that there are no credible historical criticisms to be found on the Internet.

“Our Church leaders *should* say:

- I acknowledge your pain and concerns about this problem.
- Here’s the correct answer or way I reconcile this problem.

Instead they say:

- There is no problem.
- If you think there’s a problem, it’s your fault for making it a problem.
- Repent for making it a problem.”

ANONYMOUS MALE VIA FACEBOOK

STEP 8: COMPLETED CYCLE-OF-DISAFFECTION

Levels of disaffection and resentment vary greatly among those who experience a Faith Crisis. On the far extreme, some disaffected members literally devote their entire lives to battling the Church and “proclaiming the truth” to the active membership. Unfortunately, many of these disaffected members—through the Internet and social media—are seeing substantial success in their efforts.



“My wife divorced me because she held the church above our marriage. Being truthful about the facts of science and fairness destroyed my marriage...The first law of heaven should be love not obedience!”

RESPONDENT #2092, ANONYMOUS MALE, IN HIS 50'S

“A Facebook friend posted a derogatory comment about Joseph Smith. I started refuting her comment. She sent me links to very credible sites. Within a month, I realized I had lived a lie. My husband was Bishop, and I was Primary President at the time. It’s been a tough couple of years, but our kids are thriving outside of the church.”

RESPONDENT #2084, ANONYMOUS FEMALE, IN HER 30'S

FAITH CRISIS PROFILES

marvelous even in the likeness of him who created them
and when I consider upon these things my soul doth declar
med well hath the wise man said the poor soul doth run
his heart then is no God my heart exclaims all and
these bear testimony and bespeak an omnipotent
and omniscient power a being who maketh ~~days~~ and
creath and bindeth all things in their boundes who
liveth Eternity who was and is and will be from all
ternity to Eternity and when considered all these thing
ed that ^{that} being seeketh such to worship him as wor
ship him in spirit and in truth therefore I cried unto
the Lord for mercy for there was none else to whom I could go an
obtain mercy and the Lord heard my cry in the wilderness
and while in ^{the 16th year of my age} attitude of calling upon the Lord, a pillar of
ice light above the brightness of the sun at noon day
me down from above and rested upon me and I was fille
d with the Spirit of god and the ^{Son} opened the heavens uponi
me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying
Joseph ^{my son} thy sins are forgiven thee go thy ^{way} walk in my
statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the
Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all they
who believe on my name may have Eternal life ^{blessed} the world
lieth in sin ~~and~~ at this time and none doeth good ne
ot one they have turned aside from the Gospel and
keep not ^{my} commandments they draw near to me with their
lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger
kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit

FAITH-CRISIS-STORY SURVEY

IMPETUS & METHODOLOGY

To bring the Faith Crisis challenge to life in human terms, our research team developed an online-based anonymous survey to collect first-person Faith Crisis narratives. The survey collected demographic and Church service data and allowed participants to submit a summary of their Faith Crisis experience. The survey launched in May 2013 and was distributed via social media. The average participant spent 45.81 minutes completing the survey. Over a thousand stories were collected in the survey's first few hours from participants in North America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania.

Survey participants were encouraged to express themselves using 700 words or less and were asked to consider addressing the following points:

1. The type of faith you had prior to your loss-of-faith (e.g., fully active, semi-active, non-active)?
2. What is the reason or reasons for your loss-of-faith?
3. How you felt and what you experienced as a result of your loss-of-faith?
4. How have others (family, friends, ecclesiastical leaders) responded to your faith crisis?
5. How you would describe your current belief and relationship with the LDS Church?
6. What might have prevented your faith crisis in the first place?
7. What, if anything, might help rebuild your faith?

A sampling of the provided stories is included on the following pages.
All captured stories can be provided upon request.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE: AGE 50 - 64

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$200,000+
EDUCATION LEVEL:	College Graduate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Young Women's Presidency, Young Women's President, Relief Society Presidency, Relief Society President, Primary Presidency, Primary President, Spouse of Bishopric, Temple Worker

I was never inactive prior to learning the true church history. I was born in the covenant, faithful in my youth, attended BYU, married a returned missionary in the temple and raised my children in the church (both of my sons went on missions). I was always a full tithe payer. I never missed church and even attended when on vacations by finding the nearest church to wherever we were at the time. I held nearly every leadership position a woman can hold in the church and served faithfully.

My awakening began with hearing some things about Joseph Smith's polygamy and went online to prove these things wrong. I quickly learned that they were in fact the truth and then proceeded to learn about Joseph Smith and others' polyandry, too. That was the beginning of my journey into discovering all of the church history that had been whitewashed and kept hidden from me during all of my faithful years. After this, I simply could not support an organization that demanded complete 100% honesty from me when they had and continued to be extremely dishonest in their teachings and lessons (especially regarding church history and past doctrines).

My husband, who was also extremely active and had held numerous leadership positions, felt like I did once he discovered the truth. Two of my four children have also left the church and the other two are working their way out now, too. Out of seven of my siblings (all serving missions and marrying in the temple), only one of them is still active (and they are only semi-active due to their spouse wanting to attend). All of them have

left because of the dishonesty regarding church history, Book of Abraham issues, DNA problems, and other issues with the Book of Mormon.

If the church had been honest with their history and other details from their past, I would have loved learning about these as I was growing up and when I was older. It would have made the church leaders feel more human and full of integrity for me to know their faults and mistakes along with their good qualities. It would have given me hope when I also made mistakes and tried to repent. I would not have stopped attending if the church had simply been honest with me. I believe if they start doing this, they may be able to stop the hemorrhaging of some of their best, most valiant, most educated, and most hard working and devoted members.

They are definitely losing some of their strongest members and this will continue because the true information is so readily available to all now. Also, this is affecting new baptism rates tremendously because no one will join a church requiring the time and money demanded by the LDS church without at least doing a Google search. Who wants to join a church that is not honest?

I miss a great deal of what I had when I was an active member of the church, but the truth is very important to me. So is integrity and honesty. I will not go back unless the church leaders start implementing honest information and discussions about its past.

ANONYMOUS MALE: AGE 35 - 50

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$200,000+
EDUCATION LEVEL:	Graduate School
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Full-time Missionary, Temple Worker, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Young Men's President, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, High Priest Leader, Stake Auxiliary Calling, Bishopric Councilor

I am a born in the covenant, life long member of the church. My large family includes bishops, stake presidents, temple presidents, stake patriarchs. Up until my mid 40s, I was a fully in, believing member of the church. I served a mission and have always fulfilled any calling or responsibility given to me to the best of my ability.

I married my high school sweetheart and we have raised our children in the church. All of my siblings have gone on missions with the exception of one sister and all have been married in the temple.

I was aware that there are issues with church history and the evolution of church doctrine. At the age of 31, I made the decision to not worry about any of those issues. I chose to emphasize my spiritual experiences and live by faith. I saw miracles on a regular basis, so what more did I need?

At the age of 46, my oldest returned missionary son came to me and told me he no longer believed. In order to save his eternal soul, I decided to delve deeply into the issues of the church in order to find the "real" answers and help my son regain his testimony. But what happened is, I found out, that the "real" answers pointed away from the truthfulness of the church's truth claims. I am not saying the church is not true. But here is the key point. The church teaches a very simplified version of the truth. The purpose of this appears to be faith promoting and to simplify the message for a world wide church. But when you get into the detail of the foundation below that message, you find out that the simple picture

in many ways is not supported by facts and history. In fact, some times an opposite picture is presented.

What does it mean that a prophet won't lead us astray? I used to think something differently than I do today.

What does it mean that the Book of Mormon contains the fullness of the gospel and is the most correct book on earth? Gospel lessons in Sunday School teach a very different picture than reality.

What does it mean when we support Joseph Smith as a seer and able to translate ancient documents? The Book of Abraham paints a very different picture than what reality supports.

I still have a "testimony." But it no longer looks like anything that I was taught in church. I've had to redefine it in order to be honest with myself.

The one thing the church could do is to be honest with its members. I have too many examples where dishonesty exists in the church leaders for sake of being faith promoting. They look deceitful when they are not being open. When someone only give part of the truth and lets someone believe something that is not true, even when they were only silent in not sharing the information, it looks like they are disingenuous. It looks like they are being dishonest.

If the church would face this hard fact, it would make it much easier to be an active Mormon with an unorthodox testimony. Especially when that unorthodox testimony is two steps closer to the truth than the orthodox testimony taught every Sunday in Gospel Doctrine.

I continue to be an active member. I continue to hold a senior leadership position in my ward. I continue to pay tithing, and I continue to live to the external principles I have been taught (i.e., word of wisdom). But through the dishonesty, my heart and allegiance no longer belong to the church.

Thank you for doing this. I wish you all the best to help resolve this problem that the church is not true the way they teach that they are true. It is a difficult challenge to fess up when you have been wrong. But great things come from being honest with yourselves first and then being honest with those around you.

Do what is right and let the consequences follow.

ANONYMOUS MALE: AGE 25 - 34

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$200,000+
EDUCATION LEVEL:	Doctorate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Full-time Missionary, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President

I have always been a fully active member of the Church—I served a full-time mission, graduated from Institute, and married in the temple. Church history and doctrine (they seem very intertwined) have always been interesting to me, so I've spent a significant amount of time reading about both (Nibley, Rough Stone Rolling, FARMS, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, etc.). I always knew there were some troubling aspects of Church history and beliefs, but my impression was always that they were minor and, if not necessarily easily answered, at least easily ignored. Reading Nibley and the other FARMS works definitely gave me that impression (e.g. we may not know who the Nephites and Lamanites were, but look at all this indirect evidence of their existence!).

I recently found myself (inadvertently, actually) on the MormonThink website. It looked interesting, and I figured that any questions they might bring up would fit into either the easily answered or easily ignored group. I was surprised to find that few of the issues presented fit into those groups. I never had any problem accepting that there was no evidence in favor of the Book of Mormon—I could accept its historicity on faith. However, discovering that the physical evidence wasn't just lacking, but was directly contradictory to the Book of Mormon (no horses, no chariots, not an empty continent but no Israelites mentioned, no Middle Eastern DNA among any American Indian tribes) made me doubt its truth. I had already known that the Church was in possession of the Book of Abraham papyrus, and that it didn't match up with Joseph's translation, but I'd never spent time thinking that through. Joseph's translation is abysmal, and the facsimiles are actually embarrassing (the goddess Isis is Pharaoh?).

The idea that the book was received as a revelation and the papyrus was just a catalyst seems to be a weak rationalization, as Joseph obviously thought he was translating—did God lie to him? Also, Joseph's polyandry even though D&C 132 specifically says “virgins” just made me question Joseph even more (and let's not get started on Danites). One or two issues can be pushed aside, but there just appear to be too many to believe. Learning all of this lead to two contradictory feelings: disappointment that the Gospel isn't true, and relief, because some things in the Gospel I'd felt had always required me to shut my brain off for and I wouldn't have to do that anymore (for example, how literally Bible stories are portrayed/believed, authorship of much of the New Testament).

My wife is upset at my loss of faith. We haven't told anyone else yet. She continues to believe, and as a result, I continue to be fully active, even though I don't believe. I don't mind—I'm not angry at the Church like some people are. There are good people in the Church, and it has a strong community.

It's hard to know how my faith crisis could have been prevented, or what might help me rebuild my faith. The facts appear to be what they are, and they do not logically add up to the Church being the one and only true church. I never had a spiritual experience strong enough to ignore this logic, despite desiring to.

There are some things that could make being associated with the Church more palatable after my faith crisis. I don't expect the Church would do any of these suggestions.

1. Back off from the “one and only true church” rhetoric. Accept that only a vanishingly small number of people will ever be Mormons, and people can still be good and happy without the gospel (and conversely, some people are not happy despite having the gospel).
2. Be more honest about the Church's history. The Church tends to focus solely on the faith promoting, and seems to worry more about how the Church is perceived than about what is true. I would expect God's church to exemplify honesty.
3. People who drink are not bad people. Bare shoulders are not immodest. Focus more on how we treat each other than on outward appearance.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE: AGE 25 - 34

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$100,001 - \$150,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	College Graduate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	

Before my crisis started, I would have done anything to show my faith and follow church instruction. I agonized over whether I was reading my scriptures well enough, fasting prayerfully enough, willing to sacrifice enough.

The first little changes started after I'd been at BYU for about a year and I started to realize how superficial and judgmental people (including myself) were over things like how people dressed. I was in Anthropology, and saw that standards of modesty and beauty actually vary from culture to culture, and could not bring myself to believe that ours was the only righteous way. I saw that to reject an entire song or movie because of a swear word was simplistic, and contributed to keeping my mind simplistic. We must be presented with situations that are upsetting, ones that force us to think, in order to stretch ourselves and learn new things instead of just regurgitating what we've been handed. My education in this area continued when I switched to theater (after losing motivation when an Archaeology professor told the class it was a bad profession for mothers; an event that contributed further to my disillusionment later on. I had wanted to be an archaeologist ever since I could remember). If progression is knowledge, then how does fearing to question and stretch cause us to progress? How can just doing as we're told accomplish the things God supposedly sent us here to do? These questions were already forming when I experienced the major catalyst in my faith transition: temple marriage.

If my bishop hadn't warned me ahead of time that I would have to swear to harken to my husband, I might not have made it through the ceremony. As it was, I cried. And cried. Then and every time I went back, I felt like

I had to kill something inside of myself every time I bowed my head and said "yes." I was distraught for days afterward. I had to get a blessing from my husband to calm down. At this point it did not cross my mind to question the church, but rather God. How could a God who sees me as being as much of a human as my husband, and values my autonomy—MY AGENCY—as much as his, require this of me? Was I really just meant to be an extension of my husband for eternity? As much as people at church say men and women are equal, the temple does not reflect this.

That was the beginning. I tried so hard to make things fit. But my husband and I weren't looking to find things wrong with the church. We only wanted to do what we had been taught: study, learn, find the truth and believe in it. We dove into church history. We studied the scriptures in proper context. We studied the words of the prophets. And layer by painful, exhilarating layer, our old beliefs were stripped away. What was worse than finding out the facts was finding out how the church consistently whitewashes its history and teaches people that things are simple when they are not, that they have always been the way they are at this moment when they have not, that leaders can't make mistakes when history shows the opposite. If the church were honest and realistic about past mistakes and history, and truly willing to show it is the church of continuing revelation it makes itself out to be, I would be more comfortable attending.

Another distressing problem is the way church lessons focus on outward observances, and measure faith by inches (sometimes literally) instead of teaching love, acceptance, and charity like Christ did. It doesn't matter what the manuals actually say. This is how nearly every single lesson trends. I went through a whole lesson on "Living Your Religion" once where the teacher focused completely on wearing the right things, eating the right things, and consuming appropriate media.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE: AGE 25 - 34

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$50,001 - \$100,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	College Graduate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	

I was in my early 20s when I left the church. I was very active, attending all my meetings, fulfilling young single adult callings. I graduated from BYU. I started reading Mormon history as a way to help a friend of mine who had questions about Mormon beliefs. The more I read, the more I found that “anti-mormon” sources were historically accurate and well documented, while “faithful” sources obscured the truth or flat out lied. That was the final straw for me; there are historical or doctrinal issues that you can spin apologetically, but the fact that the church lies about it...

I couldn’t talk to friends or family about my faith crisis. I sat through all the same lessons and I knew how apostates were treated or thought of. I read a ton, both faithful and non faithful sources. I was on a ton of different online groups. I got attacked in the Mormon chat rooms, even though my questions were sincere and I hadn’t yet decided to leave the church. I was called anti-Mormon and a sinner. I was reading about Mormon history at least 8 hours a day. I wasn’t sleeping. My mom died when I was 15, and I can say unequivocally that my faith crisis was worse. When you are a faithful Mormon, it’s your whole identity. I had nothing. I was nothing. It was a very bad year or so.

I was able to keep my disaffection from my family for a long while. I lived far away from them. The church still found me. The missionaries told me I was proud and rebellious and just wanted to sin. An old young women’s leader told me my dead mother would be ashamed of me. When my family found out, my grandmother said I was too lazy to be a Mormon, and my sister wouldn’t see me for a couple of years. Luckily, by the time I was having these conversations with my family, I was (mostly) not angry anymore. This allowed me to respond, not to what they said (which was

horrible, unfeeling, inappropriate,etc.), but what they should have said, or what they meant. I’ve been on the other side. I know that they love me and fear for my immortal soul. They actually believe that I am led away by Satan and deceived, and they are trying to save me.

Since then, three of my siblings have left the church, so the evil apostates are now the majority. If the church had been more open about its unsavory history, I think that might have prevented my faith crisis, but it’s a fine line to walk: teach too much, and people leave because of the early doctrines; teach too little and when people find out about the deception, they leave.

At this point, there is nothing that could restore my faith. I am a much happier, more fulfilled person outside of the church.

ANONYMOUS MALE: AGE 35 - 50

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$100,001 - \$150,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	College Graduate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer
CALLINGS HELD:	Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Stake Auxiliary Calling, Bishopric Councilor

I became an avid student of history (early Christian, LDS and American) shortly after returning from my mission. This desire sprang forth after attending the "Know Your Religion" series, consisting of academic guest speakers over a period of several years. Yet during my LDS studies, I encountered numerous discrepancies in history or doctrine. I either researched and accepted the apologist answers or "set it on my mental shelf" to analyze later. This was easy, as I was a member of FARMS and reviewed FAIR frequently. I was confident that "someone" in those groups would soon provide the answers that my soul yearned. I proceeded to serve in a wide variety of callings (i.e. EQ presidency, YM Presidency, Gospel Doctrine teacher, Ward Mission Leader, etc.) During my tenure in a bishopric, I had the opportunity to answer (apologetically) some of the "historical" issues, mostly dealing polygamy and Masonic influences with the temple. Yet, some of those answers did not set well with me. Immediately after I was released from the bishopric, I was once called again to be the Gospel Doctrine teacher. I used the correlated materials, but fervently sought for the stories and circumstances behind the doctrines and Church history. My objective was to provide more insight and identify the circumstances of the scriptures we were studying that week, whether it was a moral story, a revelation or doctrine. This was also the time to allow myself to address all that divergent information that had been building up, "on my mental shelf." Yet, this additional study and prayer opened my eyes to so much more. Additional issues surfaced that became too many to ignore or rationalize.

I became a zealous "seeker of truth," in addition to being a "defender of the faith." By this time, I was a voracious reader which took me through numerous volumes, including History of The Church, Journal of

Discourses, Doctrines of Salvation, Lectures on Faith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, Mormon Doctrine, and so many more. I studied more to "prove" that what I had known was really the truth...that those discrepancies were really all in error. I even limited myself to just the books written by General Authorities. Yet the more I studied, the more evidence surfaced that brought me to a conclusion that I never expected and more importantly DID NOT SEEK. Fundamental confirmation was realized and the truth became painfully obvious. I eventually arrived at a point where I couldn't reconcile the disparity between what the church taught as its history, its true history, and the evolution of its doctrine.

I felt an incredible sense of betrayal. Especially when I was expected to "be honest in my dealings with my fellow man," when the very organization asking me at my temple recommend interview was not honest in its correlated doctrinal and historical teachings.

I generally find that my family and friends to be supportive. My local ward leadership are convinced that I have either "sinned, desire to sin, have problems with my marriage, or am offended." They refuse to listen and have cut off all contact with my family at all levels. Even when I see members in the community, they act like we do not exist.

It is hard to maintain a relationship with the Church when you are treated like "persona non-grata". Additionally, I no longer believe Joseph Smith's divine calling as God's prophet, once I learned the truth about him.

I am not sure that anything could have prevented my faith transition. The Church taught me to seek for truth. I did so using the Church's own materials. I can thank the Church for encouraging me to do so. Although, I regret not passionately doing so earlier in my life.

Nothing can restore my faith in the LDS Church. The evidence is clear that they are engaged in a pattern of deception and fraud to continually mislead their own members and the public. They may consider following the example of the Community of Christ by acknowledging their history, removing harmful practices, and eliminating non-Christian scripture and doctrines. I have moved onto a new understanding of faith.

ANONYMOUS MALE: AGE 35 - 50

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$200,000+
EDUCATION LEVEL:	College Graduate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Full-time Missionary

I have been a lifelong, fully active member of the church. Up until a year ago, I was an ardent defender of the church and would characterize anything negative—or what I perceived to be negative—as “anti” and would dismiss it without much thought.

More recently, as I would read stories about the church and browse the comments section, I would invariably find comments over and over that portrayed Joseph Smith or the Church in a negative light. I can’t say when exactly it happened, but slowly and surely the first seeds of doubt crept in as I, without really understanding what was taking place, began to let myself wonder why people would make these comments about the Book of Abraham, polygamy, multiple accounts of the First Vision, the Book of Mormon translation process.

Then, one day about a year ago, an old high school acquaintance (who I later learned had gone through their own faith crisis and had recently left the church) posted a link to a Mormon Stories podcast on her Facebook page. Having never heard of Mormon Stories, I went to the site and listened to the podcast. I couldn’t get enough and listened to several other episodes over the course of the next few months. During this time, I was introduced to much of the history of the church that I never knew existed, much of it which was deeply troubling and not in-line with the church that I had known throughout my life.

All of this is happening at a time when I had three young kids, with twins on the way. At this point, as I continue in the midst of my faith crisis, I am still trying to process how to proceed and what my next steps of action might be. I have yet to tell my significant other as to the road I have traveled over the past year and am fearful what that discussion might bring. At the same time, I feel like it is all coming to a boil and I feel that

I will need to discuss these issues with her soon—not only for my personal sake, but also for how we may wish to address some of these issues with our children (assuming I do decide to stay in the church.)

Stumbling upon these issues was very disconcerting, and in many ways, has left me somewhat angry. The trust I had in the church, and the leaders, is gone. I no longer look at the church with rose colored glasses and probably never will. While I feel there is some good in the church, my personal character leaves me wondering if I will be able to hang on, as I am slowly coming to the realization that the truth claims of the church, and many of the foundational events in church history, likely are not true and didn’t happen.

Going through a faith crisis is not something I ever wanted or thought would happen to me. In some ways I wish I could put the genie back in the bottle, but I’m afraid even if I can hold onto some strings of faith, my “testimony” of the gospel and of the church will never be the same.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE: AGE 25 - 34

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$50,001 - \$100,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	Some College
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	

Before my faith crisis, I was a fully active, full tithe paying, temple recommend holding member. I started questioning things when I heard from somewhere else that there was more than one version of the First Vision, and that they all had different elements. I looked it up on LDS.org and they mentioned four versions and it said that the reason for that is because of who was relating what Joseph told them. That satisfied me for a while, until I heard that Joseph Smith married wives of other men. I found evidence of that in genealogical websites myself and after that, it started crumbling pretty quickly. I had been taught growing up that I would have to take part in polygamy in order to reach the celestial kingdom, so once other things started crumbling, it became a huge relief to think that maybe it's not "the one true church."

I have very mixed feelings as I am still in the beginning stages, but I have made a few changes. I don't wear my garments as frequently and that has been a positive change. Immediately I felt more confidence and I felt more feminine. It was nice to feel like a woman rather than a shapless blob. It has been freeing to think that it's okay to not believe in the church and what it teaches. More things make sense now (why would God want to wait so long to give blacks the priesthood? Why doesn't God care about how women are affected by the doctrine/culture of the church?). I still love the members of our ward and would find it hard to leave, only because of that.

My husband is right there with me and is having a faith crisis of his own. We haven't told our families or friends yet.

I don't know if there is anything that could rebuild my faith. For now, I will go to church for the social aspect but like I said, if we were to move, I'd probably take that opportunity to be done with the church.

ANONYMOUS MALE: AGE 35 - 50

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$200,000+
EDUCATION LEVEL:	Some College
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's President, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President

Church meetings were so boring. I hated going to church and started to ask myself why. This led to asking if I really believed all of what the church teaches. I started researching church history and discovered that the real history is quite different from what I learned in church, seminary and at BYU.

My wife was wary at first, but pretty soon I convinced her, and our kids, my brothers, and their kids that the church was not true. We are all much happier now. I have an abiding love for the people in the church, but the institutional church is bereft of soul. The church's positions on gays, women, literalness of scripture, evolution, and exclusive truth claims would have to change for me to consider returning. I will never donate a nickel to a charity that doesn't disclose how the money is used and how much leaders and management are paid.

ANONYMOUS MALE: AGE 50 - 64

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$150,001 - \$200,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	College Graduate
MEMBER TYPE:	Convert of more than five years
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Full-time Missionary, Young Men's Presidency, Young Men's President, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President, High Priest Leader, Bishopric Councilor

I was a faithful member since I got baptized at age 14. Served a mission, was an Elder's Quorum President several times, councilor in two Bishoprics, and currently serve on the High Council. My loss of faith started first by events in my life as well in general that made me wonder if God really answered prayers and cared about us. I was in Iraq in 2006-7 and saw things that made me question many things about how I saw God. I served as the servicemen group leader in Fallujah and also felt a great connection to other LDS service men. I had two sons on missions while I was gone. I did come home injured and with some PTSD issues. Two years after my return, my oldest daughter took her own life. Part of the reason was because she had messed up in her younger years and the guilt she felt because of the church and many of its members was too much for her. She would call me and ask me to try to talk her out of ending it many times. We prayed very hard for her and things never got better. I was at a loss when this happened.

I love history and started studying some church history on the computer. Blacks and the priesthood was one of the first things and I saw many things wrong with what I had been taught and how things really were. The three witnesses came next and the same thing. As I read one thing, another issue would come up, Joseph Smith and all his wives and their issues, the Book of Abraham, the different First Vision accounts, and many more. None of this is taught at church nor is it talked about in General Conference. I felt like the church had lied about some things, whitewashed others, and misrepresented many things in art and in every aspect. I also felt like I had done the same on my mission and most of

my church life. I did it out of not knowing the truth. I think that is true for most ordinary members but I am sure the top leaders know the real history and that is what makes it so troubling for me.

I have shared my doubts with some people. My wife is very nervous about all this and doesn't want to talk about it and it has caused some pain for both of us. I talked to my Stake President and told him of a few of my doubts and the difficulty of doing my calling on the High Council but told him I would only continue in my calling if I could only teach the things I am comfortable with and that I would try to gear my messages to others who are struggling, and he has agreed to this, and in fact, has encouraged me to do this. Many people I talk to don't want to hear about all this and I never push it.

There are days when I think I can make all this work. I don't believe much of what the church teaches but I see a lot of good in the church and many of the doctrines I would like to believe or at least have hope in. Other days I am ready to walk away and never look back. I stay for now because of my family and because of friends from church and because I think I can help others that are struggling. I want to help others still go to church and be part of the community even if they don't believe all the church teaches.

If the church wants to keep me, they have to come clean with our past and stop pretending it is perfect. I can accept flaws but I don't want to be lied to. The top leaders need to be the one to tell about the seer stones in the hat, that the ban on the priesthood was wrong. They need to get out of the bedrooms. They need to be more transparent about tithing and stop making it all about the money. The church needs to be honest. I want to make it work.

ANONYMOUS MALE: AGE 25 - 34

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$50,001 - \$100,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	Graduate School
MEMBER TYPE:	Convert of more than five years
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Full-time Missionary, Gospel Doctrine Teacher

I was raised in an orthodox, active LDS home. I earned my Eagle Scout and Duty to God. I graduated from seminary, went to institute, and served a full time mission where I served as an assistant to the president. After coming home from my mission, I went to BYU and got married in the temple. I served in many callings and I had an orthodox testimony. I developed an interest in church history which first led to me reading the institute manual "Church History in the Fullness of Time." This interest soon blossomed into an intense academic study. I would read a lot of primary source material and what I learned starkly contrasted the narrative that I had been raised with in the Church. Most notably was the deconstruction of what is currently a major pillar in the orthodox religious narrative presented by the Church, namely that the prophet would not lead us astray. Like most members, I was raised with the caveat that a prophet is only a prophet when speaking as such. But I did not truly understand how often the prophets had been wrong, sometimes for decades at a time. I was not aware that things that were once accepted and taught by the prophets as doctrine sometime completely contradicted what is taught by the prophets of today. The fact that past prophets would teach something as revelation that turned out to be not true made it clear that the leaders of the Church could not always distinguish between what is revelation from god and what is not. This caused me to come to the conclusion that if the prophets of a prior generation could be wrong about something that they often taught as doctrine, then our current leaders could also be wrong. Not only did this new information undermine what I had thought was a core tenant to Mormonism, but it also disturbed me that this information seemed suppressed by the Church. The primary sources that supported this information would be quickly dismissed as anti Mormon if I ever brought up my questions to others. It seemed

unethical that the Church would teach us to have unflinching obedience to our leaders if the they can not reliably recognize revelation. While I could understand strict obedience to a perfect god, it was quite obvious that our human leaders were very imperfect at interpreting the will of a perfect god. Suggesting that what the prophet said was directly from god seemed like a dangerous proposition—a proposition that was not historically reputable.

Learning this information was one of the hardest events of my life. I felt betrayed by a Church that I had devoted my life to. When family members would learn about my questioning, instead of being approached with a desire to understand, I would be called to repent and to be humble. People didn't understand that I could not forget the information I learned. I see much good and truth in the church, and I still have a desire to be a part of the Church and to participate in a way that is authentic to what I discovered. However, I have found a lot of resistance. A predominate mentality that made me feel unwelcome was the emphasis on orthodoxy and the harsh rhetoric against those who cannot fully believe the standard narrative presented by the Church. For many people I encountered, following the rules was not enough. To them, I could not be a cafeteria Mormon and pick and choose what I believed. However, that is the only way that I can be a part of the Church. I am still struggling to find my place, which I am finding out is difficult in a very black or white all or nothing Church. People say that they want me at Church, but their invitation rings hollow when the same people criticize those who question while in Sunday school.

I have two suggestions for the Church. Love people for who they are and not for who you hope they become. Stop with the all or nothing mentality because a single chink in the narrative can bring it all down.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE: AGE 25 - 34

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$50,001 - \$100,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	College Graduate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Relief Society Presidency

It's been about two years since my husband and I experienced our faith transition. We are both life-long members with pioneer stock. We started to reevaluate our faith when my husband began reading Rough Stone Rolling. There were many things in the book that were either brand new to us or contrary to what we had each learned growing up in seminary and institute. We then found Mormon Stories when my husband listened to Daymon Smith's interview focusing on correlation and the corporate church. Slowly, things began to unravel the more we learned about early church history and about how things work in the church's corporate hierarchy.

As a result of my husband being the first to lose his faith, I began having anxiety and panic attacks that I had never had before. I worried we would get a divorce, was worried I was losing my eternal family, and was petrified as to how my family and church community would treat me if they found out. I knew divorce wasn't an option so I began to research things with my husband. We have been able to go through this journey together.

Neither of us would consider ourselves literal believers anymore—meaning, we don't know if Joseph Smith really saw God the Father and Jesus Christ (result of discovering there were multiple accounts of the First Vision). We don't know if the Book of Mormon is an actual historical text (we leave room that the teachings held in them may be divine revelation—just not an actual translation). We are very doubtful that polygamy was ever divinely inspired—we think it was more likely a cover up for Joseph Smith's scandals.

We follow the actual Word of Wisdom now more than we ever have (we eat more vegetarian meals, more fruits/veggies, more healthy grains, we've been exercising more and trying to get more rest, but we do drink

beer and wine on occasion which when reading the Word of Wisdom is okay). We do not pay tithing to the church anymore because the church is not transparent with its finances the way it is supposed to be (according to the D&C), and we take big issue with the church building the most expensive real estate development in history—and it's a mall (City Creek) across the street from the temple. We instead pay tithing to charities and organizations who have financial transparency and where the money goes directly to those in need. We are both Mormon Feminist and are advocates for women having an equal voice within the church. We denounce the church's current way of teaching modesty/chastity/virtue, because we feel it is done using shame and guilt and causes more damage than uplifting people. And we support equal rights for LGBTQ's (gays).

We firmly believe that the tent of Mormonism is in desperate need of expansion. We feel that the church needs to be more proactive in upholding the eleventh article of faith, which reads, "We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may."

We recognize that many of the issues we have with the Church stem from Mormon culture but that many of the issues within Mormon culture are a result of the general leadership of the church.

We love the teachings of the Savior—to have charity, which is the pure love of Christ.

In a nut shell, we call ourselves Mormon Agnostics. We love Mormon doctrine and have faith that there is a God, but we will no longer use language like "we know the (fill in the blank) is true." We say this because we haven't seen God and can't KNOW—but we can have faith.

ANONYMOUS MALE: AGE 35 - 50

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$150,001 - \$200,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	College Graduate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Full-time Missionary, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Young Men's President, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Bishopric Councilor

I have been very active in the church all my life. I served a mission, married in the temple, paid my tithing, and served in various leadership positions. My loss of faith started when I saw a video on YouTube regarding the Book of Abraham. I thought the video was a bunch of lies, but upon studying the issue, I discovered it all to be true. It was the church that had lied and been less than truthful with me all these years.

During my research of the Book of Abraham, I came across numerous other issues. I felt like I was walking in a mine field, and bombs were blowing up on me with every step I took. Some of the additional "bombs" that blew up on me include polygamy and polyandry, numerous versions of the first vision (and discovering it was never shared with anyone by Joseph Smith for at least 10 years after the event occurred), Free Masonry and its influence on the temple ceremony, Joseph Smith and his involvement in magic and the occult (looking for treasure and translating the Book of Mormon using the same method), no mention of the priesthood restoration until many years later (and back dating and retrofitting the Doctrine & Covenants to include it), the true facts surrounding Joseph Smith and his death (he was not a martyr), the Kirtland Bank scandal, Book of Mormon issues (lack of any linguistic, archeological, DNA, acronyms), blacks and the priesthood, treatment of women, and lack of transparency with regards to how my tithing dollars are being used are just a few of the issues I have.

I felt horrible when I learned the truth and when my "eyes were opened" to these facts hidden from me all these years. I felt deceived and duped. I had always just trusted church leaders, never imagining they were not being completely honest with me.

I spent months keeping all of this information to myself. I dared not tell my wife and kept researching, hoping I would find satisfactory explanations for my issues. I finally came to the painful conclusion that the church is not what it claims to be and decided to share my findings with my wife. I knew she would take the news hard, but she refused to listen to me and let me explain my findings. The idea that the church may not be all it pretends to be was too much for her and she could not process or handle it. She had me call my parents and talk to them, and had me go to my bishop. My bishop could not help with my issues. He told me I needed to read and pray about the Book of Mormon. I have tried this, but when I read it, I see all the errors and issues that were previously unknown to me. It is not that remarkable of a book after studying it knowing the influences of the Bible in it, the use of material common to Joseph Smith at the time he wrote it, and lessons and experiences common to his own life.

It has now been over a year since my crisis. I go to church every week for my family. I like the Mormon people and the church does a lot of good, but it is not "the one and only true church of God." I stopped paying tithing and have no desire to go to the temple. This has created extreme stress in my marriage as my wife still believes and is not too interested in my concerns.

I still believe in God and believe that my faith in Jesus Christ will save me at the last day. I love Him, try to serve Him, and honor Him. I try to do this while attending the Mormon church.

Some of the pain could have been prevented by the church being more honest and straightforward with regards to its history. I don't think I will ever have the same faith in the Mormon church as I had before learning the truth. It has been painful, but learning the truth has "set me free." My eyes are open, and I am no longer deceived.

ANONYMOUS MALE: AGE 35 - 50

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$100,001 - \$150,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	Doctorate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Full-time Missionary, Temple Worker, Elder's Quorum Presidency

My faith prior to my faith crisis was fully-believing, yet accommodating of some metaphorical events (i.e., Adam and Eve, global flood). I observed all of the church rules with occasional transgressions, similar to most active members.

I lost my faith because I found that the historical and scientific reality of church history differed from the narrative as taught by the church, the official church had no answers, and the apologetic groups often had unreasonable or downright crazy answers. I had the most problems with foundational claims such as Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon.

Attempts at communicating these issues to the leadership are deflected back to the local level or unofficial apologetic groups which are often ill-suited to addressing these issues.

I felt lied to and deceived. This was difficult because the church leaders require honesty and huge sacrifices of its members yet will not hold themselves to the same standard.

Most of my family and friends in the church tried to help me but were ill-informed themselves and so they could not. Also, when I tried discussing the issues in-depth, they did not want to hear about it, citing that they felt a "loss of the spirit." They had already determined that the issues were anti-Mormon.

After a major period of inactivity (6 years) I returned to church, mostly due to the helpful podcasts of John Dehlin and Dan Wotherspoon who helped me construct a framework from the broken pieces of my former black and white worldview.

My faith will never be what it once was, which is probably a good thing. It is more flexible, fluid, symbolic, and rich. I have more compassion for outsiders and people of other faiths. I attend church on a regular basis. I am not compelled to attend for family reasons since I am a single guy. I have always had a deep attraction to LDS theology, which perhaps also helped me come back.

Had the church leaders taught me the real version of church history while growing up, I would have not experienced my faith crisis. It is ridiculous that I could be born and raised in the church, attend seminary, institute, BYU, and go on a mission, yet never know about the real version of church history. The church leaders should NOT be afraid to tell the truth and let the consequence follow. It can be done in a faith-promoting manner in most instances. In instances where past church leaders were clearly in the wrong, church leaders should admit to the mistakes and apologize for them. I think that they will be surprised at how well that would be received by the general membership. We are adults here - adults tell the truth, apologize for wrongs, and take ownership. The church leaders should try it sometime. They might be amazed at the amount of healing and goodwill such actions would generate.

For me to stay engaged with the church, the leaders must embrace and own our past, admit and apologize for our wrongs, move forward into the future utilizing divine revelation to make a more inclusive church with high standards yet focusing on love, service, and egalitarianism. Let's teach a little more of the meat as well for those who want and need it. Constant milk can lead to spiritual starvation.

ANONYMOUS MALE: AGE 35 - 50

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$200,000+
EDUCATION LEVEL:	Doctorate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Full-time Missionary, Young Men's Presidency, Young Men's President, Ward Mission Leader, Elder's Quorum Presidency, High Priest Leader, Stake Auxiliary Calling, Bishopric Councilor

I was fully invested before my shelf collapsed. I discovered the correlated version of Mormonism did not meet many of my basic needs, both logical and spiritual. Over the period of three years, I spent thousands of hours reading Church history related books, web sites, and discussion forums. I eventually graduated to New Testament & near-eastern scholarship. I also research archeology, evolution, language history, Egyptology, comparative religious studies, cult research, Christian apologetic, Jewish history, US history (reformation) -- native-American research, DNA studies, Masonic & Rosicrucian ceremonies, Ancient "secret society" rituals -- I pretty much dug into anything I felt I didn't understand or no longer accepted the correlated version I was fed throughout my life.

I remain devastated. I was systematically lied to by people I trusted. I maintain a certain level of (shielded) anger during any discussion about Mormonism. I cannot fully disclose my level of skepticism with family and extended family due to my desire to remain a participating member in family ritual. If I were to be fully honest about my current agnosticism, the house of cards artificially propped up by guarded secrecy would come crashing down. I can accept that... I own my dishonesty for self-preservation.

I am often queried in church settings for historical or doctrinal accuracy, I find it easy to answer most any question with the preface of "according to x" or "referenced in y" and maintain personal integrity. At times, I

get frustrated by discussions of a literal existence of mythical figures ie.. Adam & Eve, race & gender issues, conservative politics & gun control. I overcome the desire to humiliate individuals with overtly naive beliefs by remembering the path my children took overcoming belief in beings such as the Bogey Man, the Tooth Fairy & Santa Clause... I have adopted a philosophy where everyone is on their own path to enlightenment—theirs is not mine to adjust..

My hope is that the Church openly accepts those with alternate views, embraces those with divergent ideas, and ceases the effort to slam every square peg in a round hole. I am caught in a paradox where my children are being exposed to UN-correlated church history at home, and a very correlated version at church. With my influence, my version is winning, the result being—they are developing a general distrust of any information they are being taught in a church setting.. Breaks my heart they will not have the same positive experience in youth conferences, EFY's, camp-outs, missions, etcetera.. because I refuse to enable the church in overtly dis-honest behaviors.

ANONYMOUS MALE: AGE 35 - 50

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$100,001 - \$150,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	College Graduate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Full-time Missionary, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Elder's Quorum Presidency

I remember the exact moment my testimony finally crashed. I was reading Mormon 9 where Moroni is talking about the spiritual gifts of Christ's followers. I suddenly realized that the words I was reading were word-for-word from the King James Gospel of Mark. Not only that, they were from the forged ending that was added 200 years after the fact. Suddenly, after decades of trying to hammer all of the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle together, it all made sense. The word of God is so full of flaws because it is the word of Man.

I am a fourth-generation Mormon, returned missionary, married in the temple. I was fully active and striving to be an ideal Mormon, father and priesthood holder in every way. I had encountered a number of things that tried my faith over the years but was able to push them aside. Eventually I needed better answers and immersed myself in apologetic answers from FARMS and FAIR. After 20 years of apologetic research and extreme effort to keep my faith, I finally came to the realization that apologetics is nothing more than the making of excuses for things that simply don't hold up to scrutiny and reason. It is anti-science, starting with a conclusion and fishing for evidence to support it.

I have told a few people about my faith crisis. Some get angry and basically tell me to "get in line or get out." Others deny that I have lost my testimony and tell me that I just need to bear it more frequently because "a testimony is found on your feet bearing it not on your knees praying for it." I tell them that this seems like I'm being told to bear false witness until I have said it loudly enough and in front of enough

people that I will start believing it myself. I am still fairly active in the church and my bishop has been very understanding and supportive (he even granted me a temple recommend), as has my wife. But they cannot understand what it is like to be outside the box looking back in, having seen both sides.

I have tried so hard to be open minded and keep my feet in both worlds. I have tried to find value in the symbolism, but I am told over and over again that nuanced faith is unacceptable, that I must believe it all literally. I try to stay active, but I have difficulty keeping warm feelings for a church that has intentionally covered up historical facts, keeps its finances opaque, and values obedience over truth and individual integrity. I don't make any attempt to destroy the faith of others, but I wish they would take the time to ask themselves some tough questions and do some honest research. I feel that the church creates its own problem by making people feel disloyal for doubting or looking for answers. When they do stumble across problems, they feel that the church has been disingenuous. If the church wants people like me to find their faith again they must stop treating their members like children. They must tell the whole truth, they must find the integrity to apologize for their mistakes and they must dedicate themselves to the standard of honesty they demand of their members.

I will start to listen again when the church takes its cue from the Seventh Day Adventists and other reputable religions and publishes an honest and transparent accounting of its finances.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE: AGE 35 - 50

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$50,001 - \$100,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	College Graduate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Young Women's Presidency, Young Women's President, Full-time Missionary

I was fully active (still am) prior to my “faith crisis.” A couple of years ago, I set a goal to increase my testimony of Joseph Smith and the early history of the church. So, I began studying church history. I became troubled by the incongruousness of what I was reading versus what I was taught in church (polygamy, Book of Abraham, temple history, Book of Mormon translation, etc.)

At that time, I had several close family members and friends chose to leave the church over these historical issues as well as other controversial issues such as Blacks and the priesthood, Prop 8, etc. I respect these people very much and their disaffection really affected me. For the first time, I was really honest with myself about my beliefs and let myself admit doubts I’d been shelving for many years and new doubts I’d discovered since learning more about church history.

Over the course of two years, my testimony slowly unraveled. It has been extremely sad and devastating to my sense of identity and purpose in life. I DID NOT want this to happen, I tried desperately to stop it from happening. But once you learn the truths about the foundation of our church, you can’t unlearn them. For example, I cannot look at Joseph Smith the same after learning the details of polygamy and polyandry. And once I began to doubt his character, the unraveling began.

I still live worthy of a temple recommend, and I have one. I am employed by a church affiliated institution, which has made my faith transition rather complicated. I have no desire to leave the church, I see so much good in it. It is my heritage and I am proud of that. But I suffer from

tremendous cognitive dissonance when I try to align what I still hear and learn at church with what I feel inside.

My crisis began with church-related issues, but eventually led to me questioning the bigger issues, such as how and if God really intervenes in our lives. I used to feel so much comfort believing Heavenly Father watched over every move and answered our small prayers (such as where I put the car keys). But I no longer believe that a loving supreme being would help me find my keys but let a child be abused at that same moment. I am very lost as to how I view my relationship with God anymore, and that has caused me a lot of sorrow.

I have never suffered from depression before, but I just decided to finally see a Counselor to help me through this because I am definitely struggling with depression, and I can trace it right back to the beginning of this journey for me. I am not angry nor do I feel I’ve been intentionally betrayed, I am just deeply sad and quite frankly, very confused.

I keep my faith crisis mostly to myself. I will not tell my bishop because of my church-affiliated job. I don’t want to risk my job. I don’t tell my family because I don’t want to disappoint my parents or spark a faith crisis for my siblings. I have a few good friends who I open up to and they are good listeners.

My relationship with the church is this...I go, am active, but my heart isn’t in it all the way. I feel the spirit some Sundays, others I am disappointed with the lessons and comments, and feel the church lacks authenticity.

We act as though there is a “recipe” for happiness, but I’ve learned that checking things off the obedience list doesn’t always bring the expected list of blessings or happiness. I feel most members put on an act, and hide their doubts. I feel I would get more out of church if we were honest with each other and really helped each other work through out doubts rather than putting up a beautiful display on the relief society table and leading a lecture that feels more like a guilt trip.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE: AGE 18 - 24

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	
EDUCATION LEVEL:	High School Graduate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Young Women's Presidency

I'm a true-blooded, fully active member of the LDS church who is about to graduate High School. For as long as I can remember, I have done everything I was supposed to—prayed, paid tithing, read scriptures, had high seminary and church attendance, followed all of the commandments to a T. Yet also, for as long as I can remember, I have not held a testimony of the LDS Church. For 18 long years, I've felt damaged and broken, because I couldn't get the witness that everyone else was getting—and I was expending much more effort.

I will never forget one of the most monumental days in my life: the time my mother (a life-long member as well) told me she did not believe in the LDS church and hadn't for five years. Having always been taught that everyone truly KNEW the gospel was right, but wasn't always willing to live it, this shocked me. Previously, I had never stopped to consider that the reason that I didn't get a witness was because it wasn't true. I always felt it was my fault.

This led me to research, to look into the Church's history and doctrines. I, like many others, wasn't pleased with what I found. Stories and facts that, although not denied by the church, were hidden from its members. I felt betrayed, lied to, and most of all, angry. How could a church that I had dedicated my life to, that had controlled my childhood, lie to me like this? Currently, I am still an active member, waiting either for a witness or for the day where I can be free from the direction of my local leaders.

I anticipate that when I make the decision to leave the church, the consequences will not be benign. It will likely cause a divorce for my parents; I will be shunned by my extended family and friends. I could lose everything—all because I was concerned for my own happiness.

ANONYMOUS MALE: AGE 35 - 50

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$100,001 - \$150,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	Doctorate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Full-time Missionary, Gospel Doctrine Teacher, Young Men's Presidency, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President

My faith crisis began with the best faith promoting intentions. After becoming somewhat stagnate by hearing the same lessons and stories year after year in Sunday School and Priesthood meetings, I wanted to dig deeper and find out more about the early leaders of the church. At this point, I was serving as ward financial clerk, full tithe payer, and attending the temple monthly. I began reading more and more about early church history from both LDS sources and non-LDS but nevertheless historical sources. I tried to avoid anything that had an obvious anti-Mormon agenda. But even with this goal, some of the findings I came across with surprising and confusing. As I learned of the Kinderhook Plates, Book of Mormon anachronisms and especially the Book of Abraham origins, doubt began to grow. I continued to read, even trying to counter what I was reading with the apologetic at FAIR and FARMS. Their words seemed far reaching and unconvincing, and the doubt continued to grow. At this point I decided to take it to what I thought at that time was the ultimate resource, I prayed. I prayed over and over again, even one point going into a wooded area like Joseph Smith in order to receive an answer that these doubts were silly and for me to remain faithful. After dozens of attempts the answer never came. I confided in my wife, who still to this day remains active LDS, and ultimately with my Bishop. After a few meetings with him, none of which resolved any of my concerns, I decided to ask to be released from all callings, including home teaching. As my doubt of Mormonism grew, so did the doubt of Christianity and the existence of any sort of Diety.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE: AGE 25 - 34

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$25,001 - \$50,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	College Graduate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Young Women's Presidency, Primary Presidency, Stake Auxiliary Calling

Before my crisis of faith, I was very active, though I have always been a ‘spirit of the law’ not a ‘letter of the law’ person. I am actually still ‘active,’ but that comes because I feel called to fix things from the inside out so I stay even through I am vehemently opposed to many practices and do not agree with certain widely accepted interpretations of doctrine. Ultimately, my faith loss stems from the oppression of women in the church. Our practices do not match our rhetoric or our historical practices. Our teaching of ‘eternal salvation through proper gender roles’ makes me physically ill. In our home, we teach true equality and the idea that my children are learning these outdated views makes it hard for me to let them attend church despite feeling that I need to be there to help end the problem. This is a problem I struggle with every single Sunday without exception.

The interesting thing about my faith crisis is that as I have shared my views, others have shared their own misgivings about the current state of affairs in the LDS church. Some are initially defensive about some of my issues with the church, but very few are still so defensive after fully talking through the issues. I have found mostly support from friends, family and church leaders. It seems like there are many people who want to see change they are just too afraid to speak up on their own.

I still attend church, but I practice my faith on my own terms. I am accountable to no one other than my Heavenly Parents and they are the only source I look to for confirmation of my beliefs and actions. There are some things I do that would seem very ‘wrong’ to ‘letter of the law’ members, but I know through my own study and prayer that I

am making the decisions that are best for me and my family. By making these decisions based on personal revelation, I am also able to do more to serve others because my personal needs are being better met. If women held equal status and authority in the church, I likely never would have had a faith crisis. However, my faith crisis has made me a more kind, compassionate, service oriented person, and I know these changes have brought my life into better harmony with the teachings of Christ during his ministry. I judge less and love more; I have greater faith in trials, and I engage life more fully because I no longer have the ‘safety net’ of blind belief and obedience restricting my access to inspiration. I look to God instead of ‘man,’ even when those men are well meaning church leaders. People, no matter how well intentioned, are still people and make horrible, terrible, hurtful mistakes. I did a lot of harm to myself and those around me by being blindly obedient and acting against what I knew in my heart and my mind to be true and correct principles. Since my crisis of faith this is no longer an issue. I have regained control of my life and have built a relationship with my Heavenly Parents that is stronger than I ever knew was possible because I rely on them first instead of relying on some other person to interpret Their will for me.

I do not think I will ever have the same view of the church that I did in my younger years. I have seen past the shallow and twisted histories we are taught and I cannot truly respect an organization that has so little respect for its members or deity to be so cavalier with both history and doctrine. However, I will feel like great progress has been made when women are ordained to the priesthood. All of the other issues I have with the church I feel will be eventually remedied once faithful women are allowed to serve in all levels of church leadership.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE: AGE 35 - 50

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$50,001 - \$100,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	College Graduate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Relief Society Presidency, Temple Worker, Sunday School Teacher, Primary Teacher, Primary Music, Nursery

I have been a lifelong, faithful, highly active TBM (True Believing Mormon) member. I have never gone inactive or been less than significantly faithful. I have always maintained high morals. I discovered some of the church's deceptions initially quite incidentally. I believe God is a God of truth and love. I believe in seeking truth, which I was taught in church and thought I would have nothing to fear and that a mature mind could work it out. Life is complex and people are not perfect. I was devastated to learn of the breadth and magnitude of historical problems the church hides. I was also very disillusioned over the handling of tithing, which I thought was going to serve the poor temporally and spiritually. I have trusted the church my whole life. I have been deceived in every important issue. I can deconstruct every significant aspect using truth. Many of the deceptions we use to keep rank and file in their place and acting like drones may seem like subtle discrepancies, but they amount to clear unrighteous dominion when you know the truth.

Every friend and family member I have is in the church. I love God and want my kids to know him. I would LOVE to stay. However the experience in the church has become so controlled and correlated that neither I nor my husband have been getting anything uplifting from the church in years. Just boring, boring, fear, fear, rules and domination. Furthermore, so many aspects are tragic deceptions purveyed by great innocent people who faithfully carry the given curriculum and it can be very painful to watch. Furthermore, I wish to love people like God

loves people and I feel impeded every week with our narrow minds and judgmental beliefs, which change at a glacial pace.

Leaving the people I love and invested in will be the most tragic experience of my life and will come at GREAT cost to my relationships. My extended family will suffer in utter shock and totally freak and our relationships will never be the same. All my social support is in the church. Our teachings shun and ostracize those with diversity of beliefs or doubt of any kind. They penalize those who know and embrace truth and provide NO VALID (non violent) EXIT FROM THE CHURCH. And the irony is this is all enacted by good loving people who are ignorant and deceived. I, the "sinner," will love them and accept their beliefs and life choices but they, under your deception, will not offer me the same and the familial relationships I have invested my life to build will be seriously and irrevocably injured. This IS cult behavior.

One of the reasons I have to leave is because some of my children are very logical and will not accept a church as true with these sorts of glaring problems in their claims and they will leave. In this age, discovery of these facts is unavoidable. Besides, I will not look them in the eyes and lie to them. They will find out one day and they will leave. Then, I will be faced with the same family divisions and violence in their relationships as I must suffer in my own family. I believe in family!!! I am leaving to be free to fully love my neighbor, serve my God, seek and explore genuine truth and preserve my family and create opportunities to be uplifted every Sunday. It will harm every relationship I have and cost me most of them. It will damage how I'm perceived, a reputation I have worked a lifetime to build.

That is the cost of the cover-up—I mean promoting a faith promoting history at the cost of truth. This is exactly the cost of lies. There is no good lie. There is ALWAYS a price. Open your eyes and take responsibility for the damage you are doing to people and families. Live peacefully with others, start with your beliefs and words. Be responsible. Stop blaming the voiceless. Demonstrate the character you espouse. People know. You are on a collision course with disaster. You can't keep this hidden forever. Deception is not the answer.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE: AGE 25 - 34

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$0 - \$25,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	College Graduate
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Relief Society Presidency, Relief Society President Gospel Doctrine Teacher

I grew up in an active LDS family in Ohio. I went to church happily every Sunday. I had good friends at church and my ward was like a big extended family. My parents always had high-profile callings in the ward and stake.

As a teenager, I served as the president of each of my Young Women classes.

I always wanted to go to BYU and got a scholarship—and off I went. I wanted to get a degree that was practical and that I enjoyed, so I chose Broadcast Journalism. I managed to graduate without getting married and then went to work at a news station in Salt Lake.

About six months after I graduated, I met my husband through a Mormon singles website. He was 29, divorced with three kids, and lived in North Carolina. I was 23. Marrying him was my first big deviation from the “typical” Mormon script.

Because he was divorced and had been previously married in the temple, we had to get a sealing clearance to be married in the temple. When it was denied with no explanation, we were devastated. I had spent my entire life dreaming of being married in the temple. To be told by the prophet that we could not, even though we were worthy, was almost incomprehensible.

This was the first HUGE crack in the foundation of my testimony. Before then I had never seriously questioned the gospel or the church. Having our request denied left me with two options: 1) God told the prophet that we shouldn’t get married in the temple. 2) The decision was not inspired but bureaucratic, based on some sort of criteria that we did not meet.

I refused to believe that the God I knew would deny me a temple marriage when we were worthy and willing. So that left me with option 2. However it works, I don’t think it is inspired. Why should anything else be?

The next few years of our marriage went along, and I didn’t much question my belief further. Then in 2010, a few months after having my second baby, I had a major feminist awakening prompted by my passion for birth rights.

With a new baby and a toddler, I spent most of my time at home and a lot on the computer. I started applying these feminist thoughts to the church, specifically the lack of female deity. A friend of mine sent me the play written by Carol Lynn Pearson, “Mother Wove the Morning.” It opened up my heart to realize all that had been lacking in only having a male god. For the first time I SAW the patriarchy. I saw it and felt it and hated it.

I then discovered Carol Lynn Pearson’s Mormon Stories interview and started devouring Mormon Stories podcasts. We spent the next year involved in lots of online discussion and exploring lots of the issues with the church. We found an entire community of people who were also exploring and questioning and sometimes leaving the faith.

I also pretty quickly devolved into agnosticism. We continued to attend church and fulfill our callings until we were released in the fall of 2011. That fall, I also had what one could call a spiritual experience where I felt the weight of all the pain that patriarchy has caused in the world. It was heavy and thick and painful. From that moment forward my journey became emotional instead of just intellectual. Church became painful for me to sit through. I went a few more times in the winter of 2012, but finally just gave myself permission to stop. Once I did, it was a weight lifted. I felt peace. I have been so much happier by letting it go.

I no longer pray, read scriptures, or attend church. Nor do my children. I am now in the process of rediscovering my spirituality outside the confines of Mormonism.

I’ve lost a few old friends along the way. I’ve had people un-friend me on Facebook. Luckily, my family has not treated me any differently. They have been wonderful. In fact, three of my four siblings are also out of the church now.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$100,001 - \$150,000
EDUCATION LEVEL:	Some College
MEMBER TYPE:	Life-long member
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Young Women's Presidency, Young Women's President, Gospel Doctrine Teacher

I was fully active, fully believing, raised by Cache Valley stalwart parents in a very liberal college town in Pennsylvania. Very literal, by the book. I always had questions, particularly regarding women. I believed faith and science could coexist—I believed in evolution. In my first year at BYU, I came into my own—I had a strong testimony and the gospel was the foundation of my worldview.

I read liberal Mormon blogs (and was amazed by how they strengthened my testimony) and eventually got into Mormon podcasts. Church history interested me—some things seemed a bit off. I decided to make a dedicated (literally: with some intimation that this was dangerous, I opened with a prayer that my faith be preserved) effort to learn about church history.

This did not go so well. I could not square what I'd been taught with what the best scholarship seemed to show, and I could not ignore that evidence—I'd been taught to pursue truth no matter the consequence!

All of the more current social issues then presented themselves to me, without the defense of literal belief in truth claims: women. I knew I was a feminist, but I finally let myself acknowledge the blatant inequalities in the church. LGBT rights, lingering racism, lack of financial transparency, tithing, unethical ways of teaching/persuading/baptizing—things that sounds a lot like mind control to me.

I was devastated. I swung back and forth for a few months, so so so confused and uprooted, now recommitting to stronger belief, then daring to question just a little further than I ever had. Eventually, I deconstructed back to God and religion. I neglected my schoolwork, failed classes, and fell into a deep depression. I could not think about

anything else. I was obsessed. I bawled at least once a day. I lost my life's meaning, purpose, and structure. I had no hope for humanity or the world. I didn't know how to live. I nearly transferred. I lost my Monson Scholarship. I was grief-stricken.

My friends have been fairly accepting, though I feel we are not as close. This grieves me. I've made friends with other somewhat-jaded BYU students.

My parents and brother have been loving and accepting. My mom ended up comforting me when I told her I didn't believe in God. I didn't begin to heal until I knew that my family would still love me. Still, they worry, and I resent that.

I feel comfortable claiming my Mormonism. I believe in God (most days), though differently. My beliefs align more with what you could call spiritual humanism. I am semi-active. I am unsure about my future level of activity. Going to church meetings still causes me moderate to intense anxiety, and it's super boring. So much of what we hear at church I consider extraneous or harmful. I find little spiritual nourishment. I want the Church to live out its potential. I love tea. I don't care about the truth claims, though those sparked my crisis. I'm not very into Jesus. I wish we'd stop trying to be mainstream Christians and embrace some of our earlier doctrines that have fallen out of favor—eternal progression and building Zion really resonate with me.

My crisis was spurred by historical problems. Had the church presented a more honest/nuanced/open/thoughtful view of its past, I may never have had the concrete evidence my faith required to deconstruct fully.

I would have eventually run into women's issues. If women/LGBT were treated equally and history taught honestly, I would never have had a violent break with the church. My theology might have drifted, but it might have happened gradually within the church.

My faith will never be the same, and I wouldn't want it to be. I have rebuilt a lot of my worldview, and I consider that a part of my faith. I have meaning and purpose again, after much therapy, writing, reading, and crying. I'm better for having suffered this trauma. I believe I'm a little closer to truth. I find myself less judgmental. I care more about the content of people's hearts. I am more empathetic. I am impassioned to work for a better world.

ANONYMOUS MALE: AGE 35 - 50

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:	\$200,000+
EDUCATION LEVEL:	Doctorate
MEMBER TYPE:	Convert of more than five years
PRIOR TO CRISIS:	Full Tithe Payer, Regular Attendance at Sacrament Service, Temple Recommend Holder, Adherence to the Word of Wisdom
CALLINGS HELD:	Young Men's Presidency, Elder's Quorum Presidency, Elder's Quorum President, Bishopric Councilor

I was a fully committed absolute believer dedicated to trying to do everything the church required. I justified all of my decisions based on church position and authority. "The prophet says..." was a reasonable prefix to any statement even when it seemed unreasonable.

My wife expressed concern regarding early church history surrounding Joseph Smith. I fearlessly suggested that we learn more about the man and purchased No Man Knows My History and Rough Stone Rolling. Upon reading Rough Stone Rolling, I became quite concerned and the realization of the churches dishonesty came to light. As I read the book again, I realized that not only had the church lied regarding many of the churches restoration claims but that Joseph Smith was quite literally a pedophile and a fraud.

I dug deep into historical research where I realized that the "prophet" that spoke to God and could not lead us astray throughout history often did lead the church astray often justifying all kinds of immoral, bigoted, unjust, violent, and perverted behavior by their authority and the revelations of God. I knew what these realizations meant and tried to hold those feelings in and go through the motions, but to no avail. I realized that going through the motions and not making waves meant joining the church in covering up the damning evidence against the church in order to enjoy the fantasy.

I realized that I valued truth over faith and honesty over the honor of my church peers. After a year of no church attendance, I removed my name from the records. I felt tricked and lied to. I felt used and when I came

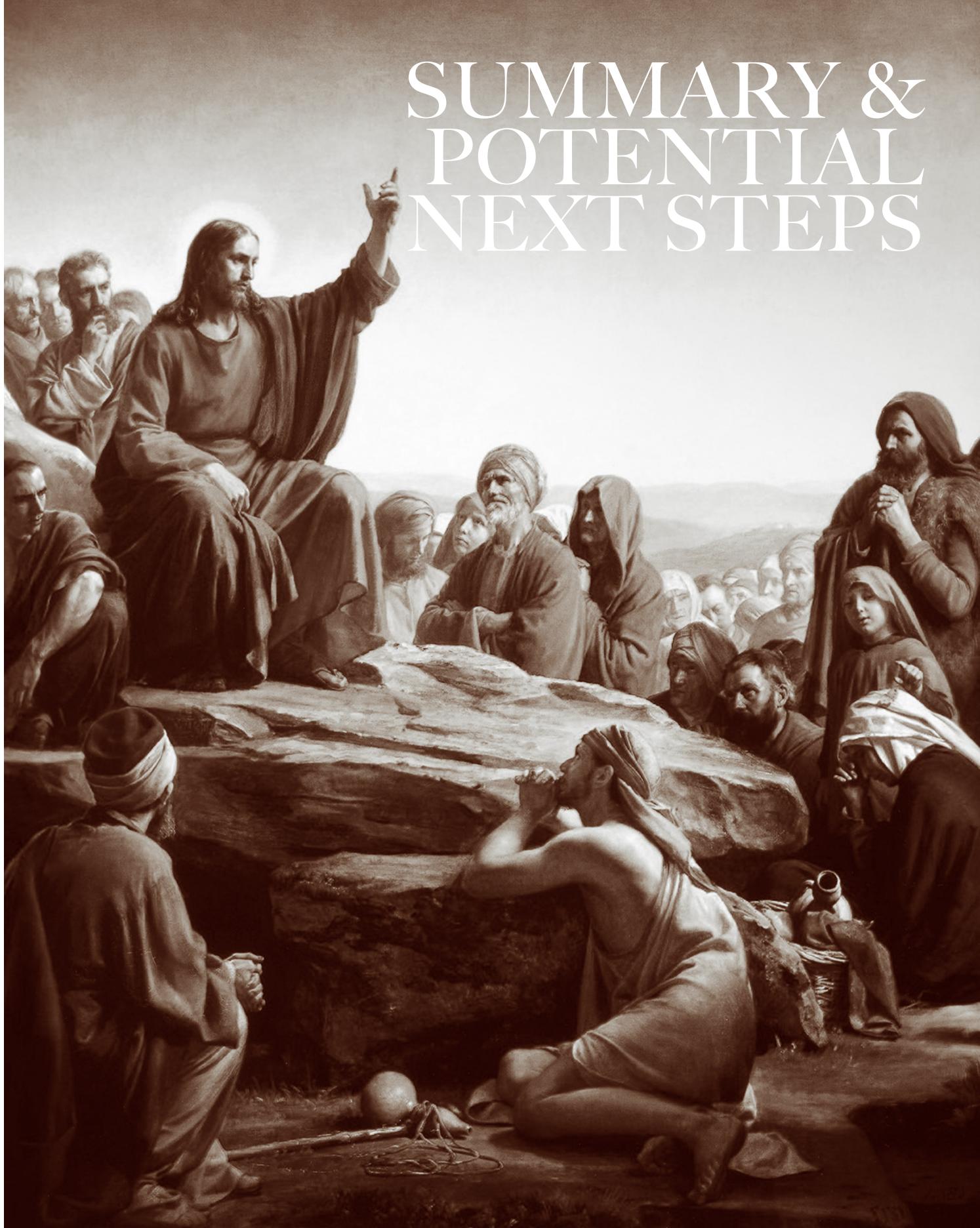
forward and was brave enough to address the evidence, I was chastised for dragging my family out of the church. The man who was the only father I knew told me that I was not sincere in this process and that I had entertained the desires of my heart in coming to my conclusions and that he never wanted to speak of it again. He was furious that I would accuse brother Joseph and bore his testimony. He would not hear my "testimony."

Then there was the conference where the church took an interesting tactical approach to the literal truth claims and the problems of the church where they blamed those who looked at the evidence and suggested that faithful beware of such actions. They suggested that I had done something wrong! I was a victim of lies and now they were justifying my family and friends to label my sincere investigation as sin. My bitterness towards the church authorities rose to their highest levels. They were so afraid of losing their power, losing the literal authority they claim that they will attack the injured to protect their interest. This was the pattern set by Joseph when confronted with his immoral behavior and I hate it.

My fury and disgust towards the church is unmeasured by any other event, organization, person, or thing in my life. The phrase, "faith crisis" is only applicable when you are in the throws of realizing the lie. I am in no way experiencing a crisis now. I have never been happier and felt more genuine love and concern for my fellow man than what I feel right now. When I left the church my boundaries for empathy were greatly expanded. I no longer justified marginalizing anyone based on what the prophet said or what God supposedly said. I now live by a very simple code. Believe or practice religion how you please but if it violates the golden rule then I not only reject your message/scripture/revelation as incorrect, but add that it is harmful to society and will fight against it. Political correctness be damned—I will not allow for anyone to defend their bigotry, hatred, marginalization, or discrimination based on their faith/belief. It is not a valid excuse.

For me to return, the church would need to openly and honestly repent of their behavior. Admit the wrong, acknowledge the evidence and truth, and admit that they are merely men and women doing their best with no greater claim to divinity than any other well intention committed human being on earth.

SUMMARY & POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS



OUR CHALLENGE

12. How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

13. And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

14. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

MATTHEW 18:12-14

1. Faith Crisis is a viral challenge affecting individuals, families and ward communities worldwide.
2. Today, Faith Crisis is being driven primarily by uncorrelated content propagated by social media.
3. The “Mormon Moment” will continue the presentation of uncorrelated information to our membership.
4. Unless bold measures are taken to treat those in Faith Crisis and to mitigate the challenge for future generations, significantly more LDS families will become impaired and the future success of the Church will be put at risk.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF DISAFFECTION

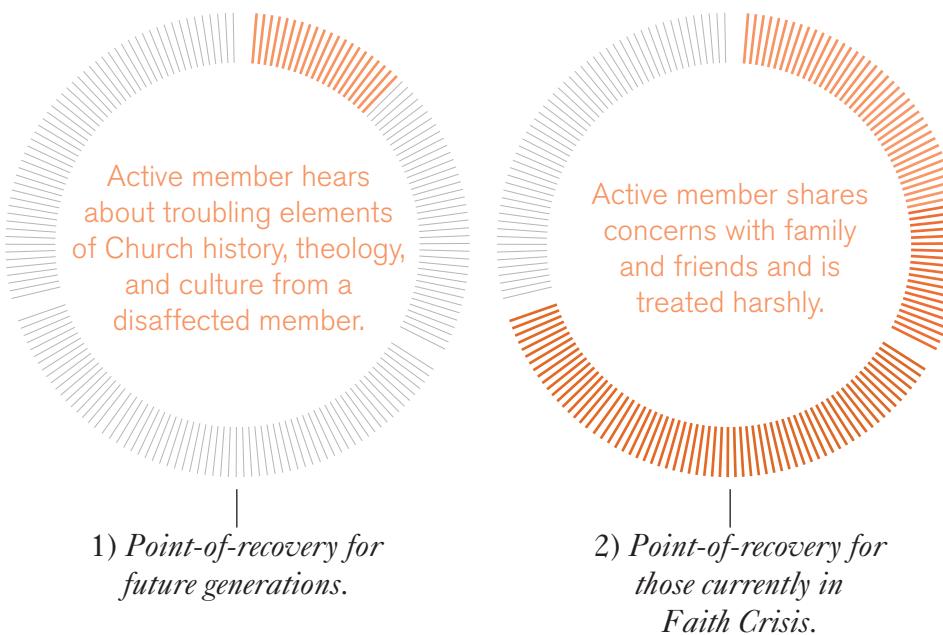
1) Mitigating Faith Crisis for Future Generations

Mitigating Faith Crisis for future generations is possible but will require bold steps. The key is to ensure future generations no longer become shocked by gaps between our official LDS narrative and our uncorrelated history.

2) Treating Those Currently in Faith Crisis

Addressing the pain and suffering of members currently in Faith Crisis—and encouraging them to remain faithful and active—is the more difficult challenge. However, many of those in Faith Crisis are looking for reasons to stay. Our challenge is to give them good reasons to stay. If we cannot, we risk losing their participation.

The first and key point-of-recovery is when the active member shares concerns with family, friends, and leaders. Instead of treating that person harshly, our membership—and our leaders—must learn to treat him or her with empathy, compassion, and unconditional love. These struggling members must be embraced to make clear they are wanted and needed (doubts and all).



INSIGHTS & POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

There is no panacea to solve the Faith Crisis challenge—but several steps can be taken to alleviate suffering and mitigate future loss-of-faith. The following insights, strategies, and tactics are presented as suggestions for how leaders may consider addressing the issue:

CLOSE THE HISTORY GAP

Insight

The gap between the history currently taught and factual history is—in certain instances—highly differentiated..

Strategy

Inoculate current membership and future generations by closing the gap between our historical narrative and factual history.

Possible Tactics

- Have a member of the First Presidency deliver a major address to all CES leadership and staff that makes clear the urgent obligation of CES to teach Church history openly and honestly (within a faith-based context).
- In an expeditious manner, update CES and other Church manuals and curricula to more accurately depict Church history. Collaborate with respected, non-Church employed historians to add credibility.
- Openly publish official position papers on difficult historical / doctrinal topics. If known answers are inconclusive, concede uncertainty and advance multiple ‘viable’ answers, including those that may be uncomfortable for the Church.
- Strategically identify difficult issues already being highlighted in the Church’s Joseph Smith Papers.
- Place Church history back into the adult curriculum (Relief Society and Priesthood) and provide members a framework for better understanding complicated Church history.

CONSOLE INDIVIDUALS IN FAITH CRISIS

Insight

Members in Faith Crisis feel condemned, betrayed, and abandoned by the Church leaders and members.

Strategy

Train general leaders, local leaders, and the general membership how to appropriately acknowledge and support our brothers and sisters in Faith Crisis.

Possible Tactics

- Via conference talks, outbound communication, and leadership training, work to change the traditional narrative (that those who doubt are “sinners and apostates”) to an approach of empathy, understanding, love, and outreach.
- Encourage leaders to not exclude members from callings when they experience a Faith Crisis.
- Develop and provide local leaders with specific reference materials that instruct leaders on what to say, what not to say, and where to send struggling members for additional support.
- Instead of encouraging Faith Crisis members to “stop thinking and stop reading about the issues,” encourage members to thoroughly research the troublesome issues. Consider providing a listing of third-party materials which have been shown to help those in Faith Crisis reconcile difficult issues (e.g. *The God Who Weeps: How Mormonism Makes Sense of Life* by Fiona and Terryl Givens).
- Publicly acknowledge leaders are *listening* to those with concerns.
- Acknowledge—and do not dismiss—the existence of challenging Faith Crisis issues.
- Consider an outreach initiative in which general authorities meet with disaffected members in compassion and love.

SUPPORT FAMILIES IN FAITH CRISIS

Insight

Currently, a spouse in Faith Crisis often results in damaged or destroyed marriages and traumatized families.

Strategy

Counsel families to stay together and support each other despite Faith Crisis issues.

Possible Tactics

- Through conference talks and outbound communication, communicate that Faith Crisis—in and of itself—is not a valid reason for divorce.
- Counsel those members in Faith Crisis to allow their believing spouse to participate fully in Church (and not undermine the believing spouse’s faith).
- Create an online-based “Faith Crisis Hotline” in which believing and Faith Crisis spouses and family members can call a professional specifically trained in dealing with Faith Crisis issues.

PROVIDE PASTORAL COUNSEL TO DOUBTERS

Insight

Some members in Faith Crisis may lose their moral compass upon evaporation of their beliefs.

Strategy

Provide pastoral counsel to help those—regardless of their beliefs—retain their LDS moral standards.

Possible Tactics

- Reinforce morality using wider traditions or using sound principles for those who have lost faith.
- Provide guidance to non-believing members that allows them to constructively interact with believing family and fellow members (e.g., what to do, what not to do).
- Provide access to trained mental health professionals to alleviate anxiety and to develop moral framework.

Insight

- A significant number of Faith Crisis members wish to stay engaged in the Church and contribute.
- Both faithful members and members with doubts are drawn to providing Christlike service to our fellow men and women inside and outside our LDS communities.
- Disaffected members indicate they are more likely to stay involved in Church activity if the Church were to focus more on Christian service to the non LDS world.

Strategy

Retain and re-activate by leveraging the Church's infrastructure and resources to put to work those Faith Crisis members willing to serve.

Possible Tactics

- Leverage Church resources to facilitate outward-facing compassionate service projects and invite Faith Crisis members to assist in organizing and participating. *Consider having The Missionary Department lead this effort on a global scale.*
- Identify regional Faith Crisis leaders who can assist and strengthen members experiencing a Faith Crisis.
- Create a “by invitation” Sunday School curriculum or ongoing Family Home Evening support group aimed at ministering to members in crisis (and their families.)

AN URGENT BUT THOUGHTFUL APPROACH

Although a daunting challenge, *the wrong approach would be to do nothing to address the Faith Crisis epidemic.* The longer we wait, the more difficult and complex the challenge will likely become.

Urgency is needed. But it should also be acknowledged that there is a risk in publicly recognizing that such Faith Crisis issues exist. Some saints who might never know these faith-eroding issues may become vulnerable when these issues are publicly examined. Some argue we should promote what is called “faithful history,” that sanitizes the past and represses or covers discrepancies between an arranged (constructed) historical narrative and historical and scientific fact. While upsetting vulnerable members is a risk, it can be ameliorated by presenting troubling issues in a careful, open, and, even faithful context—that is, by demonstrating that a mature faith can (and should) allow for error, mistakes, and the full range of human culpability that results from agency. One could argue that such a healthy approach diminishes dishonesty and hypocrisy and allows for individual saints to face their own failings and imperfections with greater honesty and candor, thereby producing greater emotional and spiritual health.

If the Brethren and the institutional Church can set the example that it is possible to face troubling issues openly and honestly, it will enable members, weak and strong, to do the same. The alternative is to continue to pretend these issues do not exist and to be defensive about them, and thus continue to lose some of the Church’s best, brightest and most spiritual members.

That this problem is challenging does not mean it is unsolvable. There are many—our team included—who are ready to help the Church design and implement an approach for addressing this issue in a way that both strengthens the Church and helps it fulfill its divine destiny.

“The position is not assumed that the men of the New Dispensation—its prophets, apostles, presidencies, and other leaders—are without faults or infallible, rather they are treated as men of like passions with their fellow men...**But while the officers and members of the church possess this spiritual “treasure,” they carried it in earthen vessels; and that earthliness, with their human limitations, was plainly manifested on many occasions and in various ways, both in personal conduct and in collective deportment.** But back of all that, and it should never be lost sight of, is the supreme fact—and it was a controlling element in all their proceedings—that they occupied such relation with God that they were, on occasion, moved upon to speak and act as God would speak and act.

And *when* they spoke and acted as prompted by the inspiration of God, *then* what they said and what they did was the word and will of God, and the power of God unto salvation...The only way such a task [teaching LDS history] can be accomplished, in the judgement of this writer, is to frankly state events as they occurred, in full consideration of all related circumstances, allowing the line of condemnation or of justification to fall where it may; being confident that in the sum of things justice will follow truth; and God will be glorified in his work, no matter what may befall individuals or groups of individuals.”

ELDER B.H. ROBERTS A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH, CENTURY I