

FROM JOSEPH TO JESUS

BY MIKE & ANN THOMAS

ANN:

Before I was taught by the Mormons in my teens, I only knew what I had learned at Sunday school as a small child and in R.E. lessons in school. Like many people, I thought that a Christian was someone who tried hard to do good things, read the Bible, and prayed to God. I learned from my Mormon friends that Jesus had paid for the fall of Adam, so that we are all born sinless and are held accountable only for the sins we ourselves commit. Because Jesus died for my sins, I could work to be acceptable to God and hope one day to be judged worthy of heaven. It certainly sounded right, and I looked no further.

I was introduced to the Mormon Church via a card through the door offering a free copy of the Book of Mormon. I had been asking a lot of questions about God and the purpose of life, so I sent it off. The book was delivered by two Mormon missionaries when I was out, so my mother made an appointment for them to come back and speak to me. Through their teaching, and visits to the church, my whole family were eventually baptised in March 1968.

MIKE:

I was eighteen years old when I first encountered the Mormon Church. I have always maintained that the first thing that got my attention was the fact that they paid attention to me and valued my opinion. I knew nothing about religion although I had felt for some time that there must be more to life than the little I was experiencing then. This feeling had been increasingly distracting for me and by the time the Mormons came along I imagine I was ripe and ready for picking.

I took the missionary discussions, all the time feeling quite embarrassed about my ignorance of spiritual matters. I had had no religious upbringing except the usual Sunday school and certainly my family were not churchgoers. This was an adventure and the missionaries presented answers to questions I had never considered. Everything was new and everything seemed right. So I joined on 29 September 1972.

I mostly enjoyed being a Mormon. I had experienced the “burning in the bosom” promised to all true seekers and, as a shy boy with nothing out-

standing to boast of in my life, I felt special for having the inside track on truth. I was ordained an elder in the church on 25 February 1973 after over a year of study and faithful application, and had more reason to feel good as I was assured that I now had more authority than any of the so called spiritual leaders in the world.

It was through the church that I met Ann and we both had many happy times as Mormons. Our family started there and we found the church most helpful and supportive as we struggled with the usual difficulties encountered by young parents. Together we had gone to the temple and had been “sealed for time and eternity” and together we continued to enjoy the “blessings” of temple worship.

There were, of course, down times. However the church was always there for us. Looking back I feel perhaps we needed them more than most but they did not let us down and we have much to thank them for. Indeed it seems natural to ask, if it was so good why did you leave?

ANN

I didn't know that what I had found was not the real thing, but a counterfeit, a deception. It took me 18 years before I finally had the courage to admit that my faith wasn't working, and that all my efforts to please God only left me feeling inadequate.

MIKE

For all the church had going for it there was one area in which it singularly failed me. I was looking for something when I joined and with hindsight, I can see that it was the one thing the church was incapable of delivering. Peace with God. When Ann and I became dissatisfied we really did not understand why. We just knew – I knew – that something fundamental was missing from our spiritual experience. It was only as we began seeking with a determination we had never known before that we saw how radical would have to be the change in our lives if we were to go on with God. We were genuinely surprised to be faced with the choice of God or Mormonism.

ANN

A Christian friend asked us to read the book of Romans in the Bible, in a modern English version, and with no Mormon commentary. There we discovered the grace of God. I realised that the one thing I had never done in my life was to submit in obedience to Christ and ask Him to be my

Saviour, I had believed in Him for 18 years, but I had been taught that the way to salvation was by obedience to the Mormon Church. They had effectively put themselves between me and God.

When I set out to read the book of Romans I was looking for a solution to the problems of my faith in the Mormon Church. I wanted to get right with God so that I could be a better Mormon. I certainly got more than I bargained for! Now I was faced with a dilemma. Could I give up some things that had been very precious to me, had been my whole life for 18 years, and leave all my Mormon friends? Or could I compromise and stay when I knew their teaching was false?

You know Jesus promised us abundant life, but He never promised us it would be easy.

So many people think obedience is about the Ten Commandments and that sort of thing. Really it is about attitude. What really IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN YOUR LIFE? When I thought about it like that, there was no other choice I could make. I chose Jesus and the true gospel, and left the Mormon church, and I can honestly say that I have never regretted it. My life since really coming to know Jesus bears no comparison to all those previous years when I only thought I knew Him.

MIKE

We made the right choice I believe and discovered a God who truly proves His faithfulness. So many scriptures promises came true for us when we sought Him and discovered that 'If you seek Him, He will be found by you' [1 Chron.28:9]. Coming from a system that saw obedience to law as the way to God we were brought to rejoice in the fact that 'righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify' [Rom.3:21]. The assurances of God's word were, and are, a blessing to us beyond anything we could hope for or ask for. We know that through faith in Jesus we have eternal life as a present possession and a guaranteed inheritance [John 5:24].

I suppose the biggest surprise was that Christianity, far from being the hopelessly confused and frightening confusing religion painted by the Mormons, actually makes sense. In all its expressions and in every aspect it is a beautifully harmonious faith. If it is seen by the power of the Spirit, seen for what it really is, it is irresistible, and for honest seekers a love affair is inevitable.

MIKE & ANN AND REACHOUT TRUST

Reachout Trust is a Christian Ministry dedicated to the upholding of evangelical Biblical truth and to building a bridge of reason to people in the Cults, Occult and New Age. It's primary aim is reaching out to the people involved in these groups.

Mike and Ann are former Directors for Reachout Trust who are developing a full- time ministry in this crucial work. Experienced public speakers, they work through seminars, workshops and personal counselling settings.

As you have read Mike and Ann were Mormons, Mike for 14 years and Ann for 18 years, before coming to the Lord in 1986. Their experience has helped them in counselling situations and they have had much success in bringing Mormons to know Christ. This has led them to write a book about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the U.K. Entitled *Mormonism - A Gold Plated Religion*, this was published in 1996.

Backed by the substantial resources of Reachout Trust, Mike and Ann seek to help Christians successfully witness to their friends in the cults. Do you know what to say next time a Mormon or Jehovah's Witness knocks on your door? Is your church adequately equipped and prepared to deal with these people's special needs when they come to know the Lord? Could you benefit from a seminar or workshop? Would you consider supporting the work, perhaps being part of a team in your area? Whether we can help you or you can help us or you just want more details of the work please contact the address below.

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