

Escaping the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Search of the Church of the Firstborn

October 23, 2015

To all who read: this is my experience, and it happened very quickly. Your personal journey may be somewhere along this journey that I've described below, or if you are/were not previously a member of the LDS church it may be very different. I want you to know that you are not alone. If you read the scriptures, many stories of people who eventually see the entire plan laid out by God in the scriptures, endure certain efforts seemingly alone.

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“And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn”

—D&C 93:22

From a materialistic standpoint, for the pure in heart there's nothing to gain when one leaves the LDS church—quite the opposite.

Such was my experience in April of 2015. I was 44 years old then and had been a member of the LDS church all my life; and nearly from baptism at 8 years old I had tucked away in my mind the oft-quoted remark, “the church is true, but the people aren't.” In every way conceivable I would defend the doctrines of the church and the voice of the brethren. I would listen to LDS general authorities, and sometimes cry during their speeches. Looking back, I did not read, nor take seriously, the words of the scriptures since I considered the voice of the church and the scriptures one in the same.

As one who has sought for truth for most of my life, I would venture this truism: One must come to understand the laws which govern a Celestial kingdom before one can understand those laws which govern a Terrestrial kingdom. And one must come to understand the laws which govern a Terrestrial kingdom before one can venture to understand those laws which are Celestial.

As a proactive leader in the Independent American Party, I became increasingly aware of the laws which govern this earth—the Celestial kingdom. My last four years (2011-2015) had been spent putting in about 30 hours/week as Chairman of this political organization. I have written some 70 articles for posting on the Independent American Party's website, and a book—That Ye May Marvel—which goes into great detail about the LDS church's heritage of standing for freedom.

Yet I looked outward to my fellow Christians in the church, and marveled; for politically they were no different than the rest of the world. Yet I expected that, and it didn't shake my testimony in the least, after all—the parable of the ten virgins “applies to the membership of the church,” of which many or most would not be found waiting with their lamp oil at the time of the wedding ceremony. *The church is true, the people aren't...the church is true, the people aren't*, I'd continuously repeat to myself.

Neither was my testimony shaken in the least when the church began to take political stances I knew were wrong. These include standing up for the rights of gay individuals—which is really denying America’s founding principle of *freedom of association*, asking the poor in the church to go to government for help—which is socialism, and I had always been uncomfortable with the church’s stance on abortion—which doesn’t speak for the rights of the innocent in the womb in cases of rape and incest.

No, God has a reason! The church is true! I would find comfort in scriptures such as Luke 16:9 and D&C 82:22, “Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness...” why after all, *the Lord works in mysterious ways*.

The quote I once heard from a friend came from a general authority, “The church is changing (towards truth) but this worldwide ship cannot turn course on a dime.”

I can honestly testify in truth that NOTHING members or leaders in the church did phased my testimony in the least. From my youth I had never considered the church as being anything other than true, and its authority completely valid!

In the last 5 years I’ve poured through the Book of Mormon—reading it four times a year. In that time I recognized myself as a Gentile, and the “covenant people of the Lord” as the posterity of the people in the Book of Mormon—or primarily the ancient American Indians, for so said church leaders from the restored beginning through the prophet Joseph Smith—who was truly a chosen servant of God.

I have lived among the Navajo people for over seven years, and have come to realize that their destiny is great and marvelous. As I’d pour through the pages of the Book of Mormon I’d know—by the power of the Holy Ghost—that the people I lived among were the very “children of the prophets” as Jesus called them. Yet I would shut the Book and observe that the people I so admired, because of their destiny, were still far away from where they *would* be according to Jesus Christ himself (in 3 Nephi 16-21).

It was during this time I began to formulate in my mind the foundation of a book, which I’d later write and dedicate to all Native Americans—The Book of Mormon’s Art of War—for these were the people who would go among the Gentiles like a young lion among a flock of sheep.

My years on the Navajo Nation reservation were also filled—of course—with church and temple attendance, yet this was another perplexity that I’d experience in an ongoing basis in my years on the rez—even as a member of the bishopric, faithful to my duties and callings. In general, Navajo leaders were non-committal and lazy, who didn’t understand simple laws which govern the Telestial kingdom—let alone Celestial. They would skip important leadership meetings often, and would not take scripture study seriously. I’d notice the sacrament—an important ordinance which should be prepared and administered with the utmost care—was always a mundane chore, with youth priesthood leaders almost never showing up to put the water in the cups, and bread on the trays.

In an era of being ward clerk, I began to know of—first hand—members attending the temple who weren't paying tithing; and in an occasion or two they were drunk the week before. Navajo leaders began to approve family gatherings in the church in which coffee was served. In one particular instance, I knew of a member of the Branch Presidency keeping the Branch members' tithing in his possession for four months, with it being highly suspicious that a portion of it was personally spent! There was also an abuse of fast offering funds; and I began to hear of more serious stories from others—these were very real acts of offense towards God, some even sexual in nature, trivialized or overlooked.

Leadership on the Navajo Nation Reservation was almost strictly Navajo Indians, with an occasional Gentile person amidst them. The “rule” in my seven years on the reservation was that a Navajo was always the *top* leader. On one Sunday, the Stake President and his first counselor came to where I was attending church—at the Sawmill Branch, Arizona—and insisted that they had just come from the temple the day prior, and were fasting and praying about the identity of our next Branch President. To my shock, amazement and mild horror, their selection was a Navajo man that hadn't paid his tithing, and almost never came to church. When asked for a sustaining vote of this person, I raised my hand (reluctantly), although there were in our group those who did not. Why did I sustain him? Because the church was true, and God works in mysterious ways. (Three months later this decision was reversed, and the Stake President admitted to my Gentile leader friend, who was offended by the choice, that it was wrong, and that my Gentile friend was right).

There was almost no Spirit in church meetings I attended on the Navajo Nation reservation, with rare exceptions being times of reflection with a friend one on one, where discussions were rooted in the Word of God. Church teachers were constantly unprepared, leadership skipped meetings, or showed up suddenly and subtly expected to be revered and admired, yet weren't full tithe payers, nor...really...leaders at all, as I knew them. My Gentile friends and I grew frustrated. We began to talk about all the ways things were messed up in the church locally, in the spirit of asking, “What is the solution?” I had always made myself available for home teaching, yet our visiting of other church members seemed to be the only visiting going on, as our collective home teaching percentage was perpetually near 0%—the same percentage we judged their scripture study to be.

(It should be mentioned that during my first 6.5 years spent on the Navajo Nation reservation, my wife and 5 children were living in Idaho. In keeping a relationship with them, I would simply take off work to visit them for a week every four to six months.)

It was in 2012 that I—on a home teaching visit—came to the residence of the Indian prophet. My companion for the occasion—this man's son-in-law—had specifically warned me about him, telling me that he had some crazy notions, and... well... he was an apostate from the church—having been excommunicated—which speaks for itself. I learned later that even the missionaries were told to stay away from this man, which shocked me. I thought to myself, *this guy must be completely full of darkness, or completely full of light.*

My experience that day was spiritually mind-blowing! His insight into political principles was correct, and he shed further light into politics as he expounded stories from his own personal experience. In addition, he opened up the scriptures; I could sense he truly read and valued what the Word of God contained.

I went away from this man's house concluding that he was the most intelligent, savvy and insightful Native American I'd ever come across, with no other person—Native American or non-Native American—in the same category. I learned that he had not been excommunicated, but rather left on his own accord, and for his own reasons—having asked his name to be removed from the records of the church.

The week before, I had come into the recently released stake president's house to talk about the prophesied proper role of righteous Native Americans. This visit to the former stake president was not a home teaching visit—it was a meeting specifically set up by me in an effort to kick-start the beginning of the destiny among Native American as political leaders—after all, this land was theirs, which meant that eventually the governing of this land, under God, belonged to them also. The visit left me thoroughly empty, and continued my frustration.

But that was before meeting the Indian prophet. In a land where nearly every Navajo I encountered was uninspired and asleep, I had found one who was thoroughly inspired and awake! For my purposes, I was there to recruit a truth-bearing Navajo political leader—and being Mormon was not a prerequisite. I had thought that if I could just inspire a few Native Americans as to the proper role of government, that would set the wheels in motion to fulfill the scriptures in the Book of Mormon. Again, in hindsight I realized that I was actually mirroring the thought process of the Romans, who believed that the Christ would present himself as a political deliverer, and not a spiritual one.

From a religious standpoint, I knew that this man was ex-Mormon, and it surprised me why he hadn't continued going to church. Didn't he know *the church was true but the people weren't*? As it turned out, this man experienced in the heart of Mormon-land—Utah (Provo/Salt Lake City)—what I had experienced on the Navajo Nation, but to a more amplified level, and knew of much more serious violations among high church leadership. Notwithstanding, his (and my) reason for ultimately leaving the LDS church came down to the question of *what is the doctrine of Christ as written in holy writ, and as interpreted by the spirit of prophecy and revelation?*

He talked to me much. The Indian prophet mentioned he had, at the command of the Lord, written down dreams and revelations, and combined these in a book called *The Book of the Remnant*. He also said that he was once interviewed to be a general authority—in the time Ezra Taft Benson was President of the church. At that time listening to him speak, I “knew” Ezra Taft Benson was a prophet of God; thus with everything I was feeling positive about this man, he NOT knowing Ezra Taft Benson was a prophet was a deal-breaker for me. When asked of him if Ezra Taft Benson was a prophet by Boyd K. Packer during his General Authority interview, he answered with the scriptures (as he always does), pointing out that a seer has the Urim and Thummim as expressed in Mosiah 8 and Ether 4, and that for a Gentile, his gift was NOT to see Christ nor hear his voice as expressed in 3 Nephi 15—which was evident in a prophet.

But that didn't matter. I was so into the proper role of government and the truths of the Celestial kingdom (as I later realized) that that was all I needed to hear. I left with the intent to never return for further discussion, and this despite this man giving me *The Book of the Remnant* to read. I did not read it, and eventually gave it back. Looking back, I was lost in a mad search of lesser truth, which blinded me of the greater truth—the greater light which was right in front of me. However, I simply had not attained to the level of *recognizing* it. At the time, my stumbling block was *recognizing* scriptural truth (versus LDS church truth); for most, I've noticed, *courage* is the greater hurdle to overcome.

I didn't return to the Indian prophet's house for nearly three years—three years of continued mundaneness in the LDS church. The mundaneness didn't matter to me at the time, my testimony was too strong in LDS doctrine to see my experiences as anything other than testimony-building. I did receive a strong witness years earlier from the Holy Ghost that my experience on the Navajo Nation would lead to something very powerful—very spiritual! I knew it! I invited it! But so far it had not arrived. For the entire latter five years on the reservation I had repeatedly prayed to God, “Let me be used as an instrument in thy hands to bring this people to the doorsteps of their destiny,” and somehow, somehow I knew this would happen if I'd only just hang on a little longer. Although I didn't see my eventual path at that time, during quiet moments with LDS members I would openly speak highly of this man—for he was the most inspired man I had known—bar none. Although he had dismissed my plan for him to be a powerful political leader—explaining that his path was another way—I remembered my visit with him, and knew of his powerful and valiant spirit.

Although my two previous books went virtually unread in the LDS and political community, I still believed at the time—from the Book of Mormon prophecies—that Native Americans would awake from their slumber—abandon the Republican and Democrat parties, and fulfill their destiny as rightful heirs of the land. Thus I began to put together the foundation for a third book I'd write, entitled “*Blossoming into Leaders: Teachings and Prophecies in the Book of Mormon.*” It would again be dedicated to the destiny of Native Americans. A month later, in November of 2014, it was finished. I began envisioning the contents of the book—rather the contents of the word of God which was in the book—being spread throughout the entire Navajo Nation. I had decided, at the time, to make a second run at being elected to a state legislator position in Arizona (under the Independent American Party), and I would use this book as a tool to spread this message everywhere I went.

I began calling several of the Navajo Nation's 110 chapter houses (community political centers) asking to be put on the monthly meeting agenda. I would then take off work and drive countless hours to speak to a Navajo audience at these meetings—giving away my book to as many as wanted it, free of charge.

In late February of 2015 I had just come back into Fort Defiance from a long 3-hour Chapter House meeting in Tsailé, AZ in which I was last on the agenda. On my way home the Spirit said to me, *drop off two books at the Indian prophet's house.* I did so. The man was not there but Elmer Murray, his friend, opened the door and accepted the books; I then departed.

This was the beginning of the scales of darkness falling from my eyes. Two weeks later, Elmer called wanting to talk with me. My previous meeting with Elmer was seeing him at a home-teaching visit with an acquaintance of ours, who was the Branch President of the Sawmill Branch. Elmer lived there at the time.

At this point, I was giving up on local leaders in the LDS church—but still not the church itself! This same Branch President had recently emailed a friend of mine, an LDS Gentile leader in the Branch Presidency, wanting to have a meeting with him. When my Gentile friend did not reply to his email within 24 hours, the Branch President proceeded to have the meeting, in which he dismissed my Gentile friend as one of his counselors on account of my friend's disapproval of his newly selected second counselor—a Navajo person who didn't pay tithing, and supported the election of President Obama—oh, and frequently didn't attend meetings.

My Gentile friend was surprised, as I was, that a meeting *that* important wasn't relayed to him in a phone call. A month later this particular Gentile person—who had served the Navajo people with great diligence 20+ years, put his house up for sale, and six months later, moved away—never to return, primarily because of his collection of bad experiences in the church at the Window Rock Ward (in St. Michaels), the Sawmill Branch (Sawmill, AZ), and at the Stake level (Chinle, AZ). He didn't so much as receive a phone call from any LDS leader before he left; I took off work that day to help load the U-Haul truck.

It was at that time I left that particular Branch (I was Branch secretary, attending weekly Branch Presidency meetings) to attend a *third* church home, in Lupton, AZ—45 miles from where I lived. I had previously asked leaders to assign me to the Sawmill branch from the St. Michaels (AZ) ward, since secretly I deemed the ward in St. Michaels totally uninspired and lacking in the Spirit.

Elmer and I met at the hospital in the seating area on the second floor, late one evening. He mentioned that this man had read my book that night, and then asked simply, “So what are you presenting to the chapter houses...I find it very interesting.” Elmer seemed sincere, and so I opened up a bit. When it was Elmer's chance to talk he began speaking of lineage, and specifics of the house of Israel. He also carried with him a book—The Book of the Remnant. I became enthralled at his message, and the Book he carried with him seemed to literally glow. I was drawn to it more than anything else. Elmer mentioned that the book cost nearly \$50 to print. It was the exact amount I had in the bank until payday, a week later. As he spoke, I had mentally decided I would go in the next day, withdraw my \$50, and purchase the book from the Indian prophet (I was thrilled later to learn that for those who would read it, the Book was at no cost).

I always knew that there was something I didn't understand about the house of Israel. I wondered why the Gentiles were called *Gentiles*—why Christ referred to them as *dogs*—and why they were distinguished between “the covenant people of the Lord”—or *children* as Christ called them. I knew that lineage was important since reciting lineage is throughout the scriptures, but I didn't know why, after all aren't *all alike unto God*?

Elmer mentioned the “One Mighty and Strong,” and I asked him if he knew who this person was. He said that he had an idea... I asked, “Is it ***** (the Indian prophet)?” The question was not fishing, nor insincere. I KNEW of the man’s spiritual prowess, and strong example—I had spoken highly of him since our first meeting nearly three years earlier, an experience I often rehearsed in my mind, wondering how a non-member could be so inspired when all around me the Navajo people were asleep (as per Romans 11).

Elmer slowly nodded his head. I felt a powerful light surge through my entire body.

From that time forward, I wondered at the thought that I possibly had been in the midst of this person, who’s mentioned many many times throughout the scriptures (i.e. *deliverer, one mighty among them, and the BRANCH*) all along and didn’t know it—a man that, I learned later, had read and studied the entire scriptures over 850 times in his 60 years of life, and was still going strong; a man who had been sent to prison wrongfully—like father Joseph of old—and yet while in prison had visitations of heavenly beings, and who, while in prison, had fasted regularly, including an occasion of going without food or water for fourteen days.

That next month was the most intense I’d ever experience in my nearly 45 years of living. The scriptures say, “*by their fruits, ye shall know them.*” Since leaving the church, I’ve been shunned by friends and alienated, although subtly, by extended family—and live with threats of divorce from my wife weekly—who’s “coincidentally” part Navajo, but who grew up—for all intents and purposes—Gentile.

But my wife came to know the depth and thoroughness of my conversion. She knew I would not depart from my newfound truth, just as she knows now. My wife has spent many years raising children without me (we are 21 years married), and I can’t help but believe God will not abandon her determined efforts in righteousness—for she is of the first covenant!

Two central overwhelming *conversions* are capstones of my experience of April, 2015. First, in a land (the Reservation) where the Spirit didn’t attend church meetings, where it was a constant struggle to feel the Spirit outside of reading the scriptures, the bar—which had been set so low—was now set extraordinarily high! The Indian prophet expects perfection in all he does. He expects not only ample hours of scripture reading, he expects understanding the scriptures—he expects a total elimination of ALL distractions that would take one away from the scriptures and from what the Lord has on His agenda to accomplish. For me this meant eliminating an intense hobby and being involved in the Independent American Party. My experience understanding and promoting laws of the Telesial kingdom fades out of sight when set alongside the laws—and God’s soon-to-come agenda—of His Celestial kingdom.

The second overwhelming feeling of conversion that took place was that I had no disposition to do evil. I have expressed this to friends and family, and yet receive ridicule for the sincere change of my heart—for I know the extent of my heart’s change. It is very very real, and powerful to me. Prior to this happening, I had read King Benjamin’s discourse some 70+

times, and had always wondered how a person gets to the point of having no disposition to do evil. And now I was there! My sins had been forgiven; I knew (and know) I have taken upon me the name of Christ, as did King Benjamin's people.

In the story of Ammon converting King Lamoni and his household, the scriptures say that they all said the self-same thing, that their hearts had been changed, and that they had no more disposition for sin. This was/is the way I felt. I felt it so strong then, and I feel it now—to the point where if my family completely abandons me, if my wife decides to divorce me, if I am alienated by my children—I still leave with the experience of rejoicing! For I know the truth! The scriptures are true, and I will not anymore trust in the arm of flesh. The future of God's ministry belongs to the Remnant house of Israel, for so says the scriptures—these are the loathsome, degraded American Indians and other sons and daughters of the Children of Lehi—so said the prophet Joseph Smith, so said Orson Pratt, so says the Indian prophet—and most importantly, so says the Holy Word of God.

In April of 2015, a great spiritual opportunity had presented itself. As a human being, courage has never been my weakness, I desperately want truth and would climb Mt. Everest a thousand times to find it—for this life is the time for all of us to prepare to meet God. At the same time, iniquity abounds, deceit is rampant, and few there be that find, and then walk in, the straight and narrow path. Writing three books, spending endless hours promoting the Celestial kingdom, thousands of prayers, and a heart completely free of guile has brought me to this junction—and I will walk the road less traveled in full anticipation that at the end of my journey is my Savior, His true doctrine, and His work and glory.

Since my spiritual change, a cousin called me up on the phone and said the same thing another friend of mine told me on the phone two weeks later—that in time I would have nothing, my wife would leave, my job prospects would fall apart—in short God would abandon me, just as I have abandoned him. Since April, 2015 my family has moved down with me (to Farmington, NM) after many years of praying for this to happen, I have received a raise at my current employment, and my new work hours allow me to be home 4 days out of the week. I am in constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, sometimes to an overwhelming level. I have learned from the Book of the Remnant that the Holy Ghost is none other than the second oldest son to Christ, and that in the pre-existence He volunteered to be available for all of us on earth—paralleling John the Beloved and the Three Nephites volunteering to do God's work in mortality until Christ comes again at His second coming.

I have a special relationship, and even I would call friendship with the Holy Ghost.

I love the work I am doing. I am a witness to truth, which has ever been the intent for which God has put me on the earth. I am not perfect; however, I envision the glory—even the marvelous work and wonder—God will perform in the near future. It is the privilege of my life to have this experience. The road ahead may not be easy, but it is a road paved with gold, by the author of the path—even God the eternal Father—and I'm only looking forward evermore.

Of course, you can either believe this experience of mine, or disbelieve it, but God will hold you accountable to this story one day, and you and I will face each other in another realm, and you will know that the experience I've related is true, and that I've been commanded to write it, notwithstanding my weaknesses. For the Lord God is my witness to it.

May the work go forward, and may the truth continue to cut its own way. Amen.