

tithing. But evangelical churches don't do that. It's culture shock.

Church politics is also confusing for them. So we have to inculcate them into the evangelical environment – the priesthood of all believers. I tell them I'm the pastor [preacher], but I'm no more crucial to the body of Christ than they. We tell them we all have spiritual authority. Yes, I have a specific role in the church, but my role doesn't make my prayers more powerful or more effective. This is a new way of thinking for them.

Below is a partial table of English translations of the Bible – sorted from most to least useful for serious study. Since we sometimes talk about the various translations we use for reading and study I thought it might be interesting to see a small comparison. For further comparisons, see the website <http://mybibleversion.com/>.

Abbr	Name	Easy Reading	Serious Study
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version	3	10
NET	New English Translation	7	10
JPS	Jewish Publication Society Tanakh	8	9
NASB	New American Standard Bible	4	8
ESV	English Standard Version	5	8
NIV	New International Version	7	8
RSV	Revised Standard Version	3	7
NKJV	New King James Version	2	6
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible	5	6
NAB	New American Bible	6	6
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible	7	6
TNIV	Today's New International Version	7	5
YLT	Young's Literal Translation	1	5
NCV	New Century Version	10	4
NEB	New English Bible	5	4
KJV	King James Version	1	3
Phil	Phillip's New Testament	8	3
CEV	Contemporary English Version	8	2
NIRV	New International Reader's Version	10	2
TLB	The Living Bible	8	1

Back issues of this publication are posted at
<http://saffordchurchofchrist.org>

Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

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Sermon Topics:

AM: The Gospel from Romans

Romans 1:16

PM: Wisdom

Ecc 7:1-8:1

Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-5974

Elders

Ben Atchley: 428-2246

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Services

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

Taking the Gospel to Mormons

Steve Bennetsen is a “pastor” (i.e., preacher) at a church in northern Utah. That church has been successful reaching the local Mormon population. An interview with him was recently published in the quarterly magazine *Leadership Journal*. Some of his answers are surely interesting to our congregation – as we also have a significant local Mormon population.

What have you found does not work?

You'll always run into a dead end if you start off attacking their beliefs. Many Christians want to attack the cultural anomalies of Mormonism – polygamy, racism, the relationship of Christ and Lucifer, and so forth. But Mormons are trained to tune out those sorts of attacks. They consider that to be persecution, which they think bolsters their position. They also have set answers to

respond to attacks. Being derogatory or starting with theological distinctions isn't helpful.

You have to establish a relationship first. Most people I encounter that have come out of Mormonism have done so because they were burdened by Mormonism and realized they could never be good enough. Mormonism has a never-ending list of things you have to do to be good enough. That wears people out. When people recognize they will never be good enough, they're open to the gospel.

So when you sense Mormons are feeling that burden, ask them if you can tell them the biblical gospel. That can create an open door. And when you discuss theology, focus on the essentials. I talk about who God is, who Jesus is, and how we are made right with God. Those are the three main issues I focus on, because Mormons have radically different beliefs about those topics.

How do you avoid offending them?

We never use the word Mormon from the pulpit. We never talk about Joseph Smith. We never address the Latter Day Saints directly, but we preach clear Christian theology every week. We preach grace. We preach the Trinity and other core biblical truths.

They're usually not offended when you focus on what the Bible says. But if I were to say, from the pulpit, "Mormons think this..." and "Joseph Smith was wrong," people would be offended. Even if they've rejected Mormon beliefs, they still feel a sense of loyalty to Mormonism. This is a unique place where religion and culture are closely linked. It is similar to Judaism. "Jewish" can refer to religion, culture, or heritage. It's an identity. Mormonism is the same way.

When a Mormon converts, what kinds of challenges do they [sic] face?

We have developed a curriculum designed to help Mormon background believers. They need help with the transition. Family dynamics is a critical issue. Many times, converts are marginalized or disowned by their families. A girl in our church became a Christian several years ago. She went two years without telling her parents. When she told them she converted, they wept, and her mom said, "I thought you were going to tell me that you became a lesbian. I would have preferred that." Mormons believe in an eternal family unit. Her parents believed she disrupted the eternal family unit by converting.

Often people lose their jobs or businesses when they convert. This is illegal, but the Mormon Church owns so many businesses that a lot of people find themselves out of a job.

Another hurdle is learning how to relate to the community. The Mormon Church is incredibly organized. People are assigned which church to attend based on the neighborhood they live in. So everyone on my street goes to the same church. Because I'm an outsider, they don't expect me to go to church with them. But if a person goes to the same church for 30 years and suddenly stops attending, the community is impacted. People end up moving because they can't handle the social pressure in their neighborhoods.

Converts have to learn about Christian church structure and personal involvement. Mormonism has a clear hierarchical structure. People understand their role because they have been told what to do by an authority figure. So when evangelical churches tell them to get involved in whatever way they want, they get confused. They are used to receiving direction. Mormon churches even review people's W-2 forms, to make sure they are