

A Letter to My Latter-day Saint Friends

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Dear Friend

Dear friend,

You don't know me, and I want to be honest about that before I ask you for anything. My name is Brock. I'm a Christian, and I'm not a Latter-day Saint. I've never worn your name badge or sat in your sacrament meetings as one of you. So you have every right to wonder why a stranger would write you a letter this long.

Here is the plain answer. I've come to love Latter-day Saints. I've spent real time in your scriptures — not skimming for ammunition, but reading them the way you read them, slowly and with respect. I've sat with the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. I've read what your prophets and apostles have taught in General Conference and printed in your own manuals. I did that because the people I've met who carry those books are some of the most sincere, family-loving, hard-working people I know, and I wanted to understand what you believe from the inside instead of from a caricature.

I'm not an ex-Mormon with an old wound to reopen. I have no story of being hurt by the Church, no list of grievances, nothing to get even for. I'm just someone who thinks you deserve to be taken seriously — seriously enough to be written to as a friend rather than argued with as an opponent.

So let me tell you exactly what this letter is, and what it isn't.

I'm not asking you to abandon faith in God. I'm asking you to trust the scriptures you already hold.

That's the whole thing. I'm not going to hand you a book of my own and tell you to believe me. Everywhere I can, I'm going to build only on ground you already stand on: your own King James Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and

Covenants, and the official teachings your Church has published. If a claim in this letter can't be shown from sources you already accept as true, then it doesn't belong here and you should ignore it. My goal is not to move you off your foundation. It's to walk with you across it and see where it actually leads.

Which brings me to something I want to promise you up front.

Check me. Please, check me. Every time I quote your scriptures or your leaders, I want you to look it up and make sure I've told you the truth. I've tried to be careful with every word, but you shouldn't take my word for it — that would be the opposite of what this letter is about. If I've twisted a verse, or pulled a quote out of shape, or put words in someone's mouth they never said, then I've failed, and you have my blessing to throw the whole letter away. All of it. I've gathered every citation in one place near the end so you can hold my feet to the fire without having to trust a single sentence on faith. A letter that asks you to verify your own scriptures has to be willing to be verified too.

I know there may be a part of you that feels uneasy even reading this far. Maybe a quiet voice is telling you that opening a letter like this is dangerous, that a faithful person shouldn't let a stranger's questions in the door. I understand that feeling, and I don't take it lightly. But I'd gently ask you to consider where it comes from. An honest question is not a sin. Wanting to know whether something is true is not disloyalty to God — it's one of the most reverent things a person can do.

There's a moment in the New Testament I keep coming back to. When Paul preached in Berea, the people there didn't just nod along, and they didn't shut their ears either. They “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” — and Scripture calls them noble for it ([Acts 17:11](#)). They tested the message against the word of God, and God was pleased with them for testing it. That's all I'm asking of you. Read with your scriptures open. Weigh everything. If it doesn't hold up, you'll have lost nothing but an afternoon.

I'm grateful you've read this far. Let's walk through it together.

Your friend, Brock

What We Both Believe

Before I raise a single hard question, I want to spend a little while on the ground we already share. Not as a tactic — I mean that. If the only reason a person names your good qualities is to soften you up for the blow that comes next, you can usually feel it, and you'd be right to close the letter. So let me be plain: what follows is true, and I'd write it whether or not there were a next chapter.

You love Jesus. I've watched it. I've heard the way His name changes in your mouth when you say it in prayer versus when you say it in conversation — a small drop in the voice, a kind of reverence that can't be faked. You believe He is the Christ, the Son of God, that He suffered for the sins of the world and rose again on the third day. I believe that too. When you kneel with your children at night, or bow your head over a plate of food, or pull the car over because a friend is in crisis and needs someone to pray them through it, you and I are doing the same thing, to the same Lord, and He hears us both.

You take scripture seriously. That's rarer than you might think. Plenty of people who call themselves religious never actually open the book — they carry a vague warmth toward it and let it sit on a shelf. You don't. You read. You mark passages. You bring verses to bear on ordinary decisions, and you raise children who can find their way around a page of text before they can drive. The reverence you have for the written word of God is one of the things I admire most about your people, and it's the very reason I think this letter has any hope of being useful to you. A person who won't read can't be reached by reading. You can.

You are morally serious in a way the world is quietly starving for. You keep your promises. You show up with a casserole and a truck and a Saturday when someone in your ward is moving or grieving or sick. You believe that how a man treats his wife, and how a woman raises her children, and how both of them

handle money and time and their own appetites, are matters that God actually cares about. You believe there is such a thing as right and wrong and that it isn't up for a vote. I am not going to pretend that's a small thing or a common thing. It isn't. It's a great deal of what's good in this country, and it walks around wearing your name badge.

So please hear me: none of that is on trial in this letter. I'm not here to tell you your love of Christ is counterfeit or your family is a performance. It isn't. When we read [John 3:16](#), we are reading the same words and meaning the same thing by them. That common ground is real, and I'm standing on it with you right now, on purpose, before I take a single step further.

Now let me show you why that common ground is enough to build the entire letter on.

Among your Articles of Faith — the thirteen statements Joseph Smith wrote to summarize what Latter-day Saints believe, and which your Church canonizes in the Pearl of Great Price — there is one that quietly hands me everything I need. Here it is, word for word:

We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

— Articles of Faith 1:8, [The Pearl of Great Price, churchofjesuschrist.org](#)

Read that first clause again slowly, because it is the hinge the whole letter turns on. *We believe the Bible to be the word of God.* Not a good book. Not a useful book. Not a book that was true once and isn't anymore. The word of God. That is your Church's official position, printed in your own scripture, and it means that when I open a Bible in front of you, I am not opening a stranger's book — I am opening yours.

And it's more specific than that. The Bible your Church uses in English is not some rival translation you'd be right to distrust. It is the King James Version.

Your Church published its own edition of it in 1979, with its own footnotes and cross-references and study helps woven right into the pages, and its own official guidance is that “in English, that is the King James Version” members are to use in classes and meetings. So the exact Bible I’m going to quote to you — King James English, the same wording you’d hear read from a pulpit in your own ward on Sunday — is scripture your Church has already handed you and told you to trust.

That changes what kind of conversation you and I can have. I don’t have to persuade you that the Bible is God’s word; you already confess it. I don’t have to sell you on a translation; you already carry the one I’ll be using. Every Bible verse in every chapter that follows is a verse you already accept as the word of God, in the very edition your own Church authorizes. There is no daylight between us on the source. None.

Which leaves exactly one live question — and, to your Church’s credit, Article 8 names it right out loud. *As far as it is translated correctly.* That clause is the single door left open. It doesn’t say the Bible is unreliable; it says the Bible is the word of God, with a caution attached about places where the translation might have gone wrong along the way. Fair enough. That is a real question, and it deserves a real answer instead of a shrug. So the very next chapter takes it head-on: which parts, exactly, are supposed to be mistranslated — how do we know — and what happens to the verses in this letter when we put that claim under the light? I’m not going to dodge it. I’m going to walk straight into it with you.

But notice what has quietly happened here. To read the rest of this letter, you do not have to trust me, or my church, or any book I might carry. You only have to trust the book you already believe is the word of God.

So here is my method: I will never ask you to trust my church’s books. I’ll only ask you to read yours.

Your friend, Brock

Can We Trust the Bible?

Last chapter ended on the one door Article 8 leaves open: the Bible is the word of God, *as far as it is translated correctly*. I promised not to dodge that clause, so let me start by making it as sharp as I can — because I think it hides two very different worries inside one sentence, and only one of them is the real question.

The first worry is about *translation* — whether the King James men turned Hebrew and Greek into English accurately. That's fair to ask, but it's a small thing, and it's checkable: we have the Hebrew and the Greek, scholars compare them to the English regularly, and where a rendering is debatable your own Church's footnotes usually tell you so. Translation is not where the danger lives.

The second worry is the one that actually keeps people up at night, and it's about *transmission* — whether the text got corrupted along the way. The fear is that somewhere between the prophet's pen and the printing press, monks and scribes lost verses, changed doctrines, and slowly rewrote the Bible into something its authors would not recognize. If that happened, no honest translation could save it, because you'd be faithfully translating a book that had already drifted from the original.

So that's the real question. Not “did they translate it well?” but “did the underlying text survive?” And here's why I'm glad Article 8 phrased it as it did: that is an *empirical* claim. It can be tested. We don't have to guess whether the Bible was corrupted in transmission — we can go look at the copies and see. Let me show you what happens when you do.

A thousand years, and the same book

For most of history you couldn't run this test, because the oldest Hebrew copies were medieval — around AD 1000. If scribes had been reshaping the text, a

thousand years of medieval copies couldn't reveal it, because there was nothing older to check them against.

Then, in 1947, a shepherd threw a rock into a cave near the Dead Sea and the picture changed. Among the scrolls was a nearly complete Isaiah — the Great Isaiah Scroll — dating from about 125 BCE, roughly a thousand years older than the oldest Hebrew copy before. Here was the test no one thought they'd get to run: take a text, jump back a thousand years of copying, and compare.

The result is why I'm writing this chapter. Scholars who lined the scroll against the medieval text counted more than 2,600 differences — and I want to be honest with you about that number. But when you look at what those differences *are*, nearly every one is a variant spelling, a swapped word order, a plural where the later copy has a singular. The kind of thing you'd produce yourself hand-copying a page. Not one of them changes the message of Isaiah. A thousand years of copying, and the book you'd read is the same book.

Take the verse your own missionaries love, the one about the suffering servant: Isaiah 53:5. That passage sat in a jar by the Dead Sea for two thousand years, and when it came out it said what your King James Bible says. The text was not corrupted in transmission. We can see that it wasn't, because we can hold both ends of the thousand years in our hands.

More copies than any book from the ancient world

The New Testament lets us run the same test from the other direction — not with age, but with sheer number of witnesses. The more independent copies of a text you have, the more easily you can spot and correct any error, because a slip in one copy shows up against all the others.

By that measure the New Testament is in a class of its own. The official catalog of Greek manuscripts now stands at nearly 6,000 — the textual scholar Daniel Wallace puts the last count at 5,999, and estimates the real figure near 5,800 — with thousands more in Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and other languages on top of that. Set that beside almost any other work from antiquity, which typically survives in a few dozen copies, and the contrast is not close.

Now, all those copies do disagree in thousands of small places — and critics will tell you so. But they'll also confirm: the overwhelming mass of differences are spelling and word order, and no cardinal doctrine hangs on any disputed reading. The abundance of copies lets us reconstruct the text with confidence. We have too much evidence, not too little.

So on transmission — the real worry inside Article 8 — the Bible passes. The text you hold was not rewritten on its way to you.

Named in the dirt

There's a second way to test a book: not just whether it was copied faithfully, but whether the world it describes was real. And here the Bible keeps turning up in the ground.

For a long time skeptics doubted King David had ever existed — a legend, they said, like King Arthur. Then in 1993 archaeologists at Tel Dan pulled out a ninth-century-BC stone inscription bearing the phrase “House of David” — an enemy king boasting of his war against David's dynasty, carved within living memory of the kingdom itself. Pontius Pilate, the governor who condemned Jesus, was likewise dismissed as barely documented — until a limestone block was dug up at Caesarea in 1961 naming “Pontius Pilatus, prefect of Judaea,” now sitting in the Israel Museum. And the tunnel King Hezekiah cut through solid rock to bring water inside Jerusalem's walls, described in 2 Kings 20:20? You can walk through it today, and near its mouth was found the Siloam

inscription, carved around 700 BC, the workmen's own record of digging from both ends until they met in the middle.

Named people, named places, confirmed in dirt and stone. This is not proof that the Bible is inspired — a book can be historically accurate and still be an ordinary book. But it means the Bible is not writing about a world that never was. It keeps its feet on real ground.

And now I have to say the harder thing, and I want to say it gently, because it gives me no pleasure. When I look for the same kind of confirmation for the Book of Mormon — a city, a coin, an inscription, a battlefield that scholars can positively tie to the Nephites or Lamanites — I can't find one that the wider field of archaeology accepts. That's not my accusation to make; it's the Smithsonian's own longstanding position, and I'll quote it from an LDS apologist's own site so you know I'm not inventing it. Jeff Lindsay, a faithful LDS scholar, reproduces it on his LDSFAQ site in order to engage with it:

The Smithsonian Institution has never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide. Smithsonian archeologists see no direct connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the book.

— Smithsonian Institution (1996 statement), as reproduced by LDS apologist Jeff Lindsay, jefflindsay.com — LDSFAQ

I'm not putting that in front of you to wound you. But notice the difference: for the Bible, the argument is over *which* discoveries confirm it; for the Book of Mormon, after nearly two centuries, the leading LDS geographers still can't agree on which continent, let alone which site. I raise it because you deserve to see both books held to the very same test, and told the truth about how each one does.

The evidence that invites your scrutiny

Let me close where the whole thing finally lands. The Christian faith doesn't rest on a warm feeling; it rests on a claim about something that happened in history — that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified and rose again — and it has always invited you to investigate it.

Historians who study this, believers and skeptics alike, tend to grant a small core of facts: that Jesus died by crucifixion, that soon after his followers were utterly convinced they had seen him alive, and that a man named Saul who had been hunting Christians was so undone by what he believed was an encounter with the risen Jesus that he switched sides and died for it. Gary Habermas has spent a career [cataloging how broadly scholars accept these](#), and the striking thing is how early the testimony is. Paul hands his readers a report he says he *received* — that Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose, and appeared to Peter, to the Twelve, and to more than five hundred people at once, most of whom were still alive to be questioned ([1 Corinthians 15:3-6](#)). That's not a legend that grew over centuries. That's a witness list, offered to people who could check it.

You don't have to settle every question about the resurrection tonight. I only want you to see that Christianity asks to be *examined*, and hands you the evidence to do it — which is the same posture this whole letter is trying to keep with you.

The Bible passes the test Article 8 sets for it. Hold that — the next two chapters depend on it.

Your friend, Brock

The Book of Mormon vs. the Bible

Last chapter I asked you to do a hard thing: to put the Bible on the table and test it, and to trust the result. It passed. The text wasn't rewritten on its way to you, and the world it describes keeps turning up in the ground. So now we have a measuring stick both of us accept — a book your own Article of Faith calls the word of God, in the very King James edition your Church hands you.

There's only one honest thing to do with a measuring stick, and that's to measure something. So let me measure the book your Church places at the very center of everything.

I don't say "center" for effect. Your prophets do. President Ezra Taft Benson built a whole General Conference address around one image:

Just as the arch crumbles if the keystone is removed, so does all the Church stand or fall with the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

— President Ezra Taft Benson, October 1986 General Conference, [The Book of Mormon — Keystone of Our Religion, churchofjesuschrist.org](#)

I want you to hear how much that concedes to a test like this one. The keystone is the stone you *can't* afford to have be wrong. If the Bible is the standard — and your Church says it is — then the fair question is simply this: does the keystone agree with the standard it claims to uphold? Let's hold them up side by side and look.

Where was Jesus born?

Start with something small and checkable, because small things are where a book's carefulness shows. The Old Testament names the town where the Messiah would be born, centuries in advance:

Micah 5:2 (KJV)

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah,
though thou be little among the
thousands of Judah, yet out of thee
shall he come forth unto me that is
to be ruler in Israel; whose goings
forth have been from of old, from
everlasting.

Alma 7:10 (Book of Mormon)

And behold, he shall be born of
Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land
of our forefathers, she being a virgin,
a precious and chosen vessel, who
shall be overshadowed and conceive
by the power of the Holy Ghost, and
bring forth a son, yea, even the Son
of God.

The Bible says Bethlehem. It says it in Micah's prophecy and it says it again the day it came true — [Matthew 2:1](#) opens with Jesus "born in Bethlehem of Judaea." The Book of Mormon, giving the very same prophecy, says he would be born "at Jerusalem."

Now, I promised to be fair, and here I have to be. Faithful Latter-day Saint scholars have an answer, and it deserves to be on the table beside the problem.

They point out that Alma doesn't say Jesus would be born *in the city of* Jerusalem; he says "at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers."

Bethlehem sits only about five miles from Jerusalem, and it's true that ancient writers sometimes named a region by its principal city. [Amarna-era letters, they note, refer to a broader "land of Jerusalem."](#) So the defense is: Alma was speaking of a district, and Bethlehem lay inside it.

I'll let you weigh that yourself — that's the whole point of this letter. I'd only ask you to notice two things. First, the defense works by making the prophecy *less* precise than the Bible's, which named the town outright. And second, ask yourself which reading you'd have reached on your own, before anyone needed to reconcile it. I'm not going to hang the keystone on this verse. I raise it because it's the kind of seam that made me start looking harder — and because what I found when I looked harder is not what I expected. Hold that thought.

Saved by grace — after all we can do?

Here's a heavier one, and I want to handle it carefully, because this is a place where it would be easy to overclaim, and I won't. Paul writes:

Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJV)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

2 Nephi 25:23 (Book of Mormon)

For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

Paul says grace, *not* of works, lest anyone boast — the same note he strikes in [Romans 4:5](#), where God “justifieth the ungodly” and counts a man’s faith, not his labor, for righteousness. The Book of Mormon says grace too — but adds three words: “after all we can do.” [Moroni 10:32](#) has a similar shape, promising that “if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness... then is his grace sufficient for you.”

I’m not going to tell you those verses can’t be reconciled. Careful readers argue over what “after all we can do” modifies, and I’d be cheating you if I pretended the case was closed in one paragraph. So I’m not closing it here. I only want you to feel the tension honestly — Paul putting grace *before* works to rule boasting out, your keystone putting grace *after* “all we can do” — and to carry the question with you. This is the hinge of the whole gospel, and it deserves a whole chapter. Chapter 8 is that chapter. Let me keep my promise and wait.

The part that surprised me most

I expected to find the Book of Mormon disagreeing with the Bible. What I did not expect — and I mean this plainly — is how often, on the very biggest question, your own book quietly sides with the Bible *against* the doctrine you were later taught.

The doctrine I mean is the one that says God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are three separate Gods, and that God himself was once a man who progressed to become God. Hold that beside what the Book of Mormon actually says about God.

Abinadi, on trial for his life, insists the Father and the Son are “one God.” [Mosiah 15:1–5](#) is worth reading slowly, but the phrase is unmistakable: “they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.” When the lawyer Zeezrom presses Amulek — “Is there more than one God?” — the answer in [Alma 11:26–29](#) is a single word: “No.” Nephi ends his account of the doctrine of Christ by naming Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as “one God, without end. Amen” ([2 Nephi 31:21](#)). And Mormon, writing to his son, describes a God who could not be more unlike a man who climbed to godhood:

For I know that God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being; but he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity.

— Moroni 8:18, churchofjesuschrist.org

Read those four passages as if you’d never been handed a conclusion about them. One God. Not more than one. Unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity. That is not the language of a God who was once a man and became divine, and it is not three separate Gods. It is much closer to what the Bible has said all along — and it is coming out of your keystone.

I want to be careful not to overplay this. The Book of Mormon isn’t a systematic theology, and you can find phrases people press in other directions. But the plain weight of it, on the nature of God, leans toward the Bible.

The question that leaves us with

So here's where the measuring leaves us, and I'll say it as gently as I can, because I don't think it's a small thing for you. Your Church calls the Book of Mormon the keystone — the stone that can't be wrong without the arch coming down. And on the deepest question there is, the keystone teaches one unchangeable God.

Which raises a question I couldn't put down once I saw it: *if the keystone teaches one unchangeable God, where did the other doctrine come from?* Not from the Bible. Not from the Book of Mormon. It came from somewhere later. That "somewhere" is the whole subject of the next chapter — and it's where this letter turns from your scriptures to their history.

Your friend, Brock

The Doctrine & Covenants vs. the Bible

I ended the last chapter on a question I couldn't put down. The keystone — the Book of Mormon — teaches one unchangeable God. So where did the other doctrine come from? The God who was once a man, the plurality of Gods, the promise that you might become one yourself: none of that is in the keystone, and none of it is in the Bible. It came from somewhere. This chapter is about where.

And I want to do it the fair way — with dates. Because this isn't a matter of interpretation you and I could argue in circles. It's a matter of record, and the record is your own.

A shift you can put on a calendar

The Book of Mormon was published in **1830**. Everything we read from it last chapter — one God, “unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity” — was in print and settled by then.

The new teaching arrives later, and you can date it almost to the day:

- **April 2, 1843** — at Ramus, Illinois, Joseph Smith gives the instruction now printed as [Doctrine and Covenants section 130](#). Verse 22 says the Father has a body of flesh and bones.
- **July 12, 1843** — the revelation now printed as [section 132](#) is recorded at Nauvoo. It speaks of men becoming gods.
- **April 7, 1844** — at the April general conference in Nauvoo, in memory of a member named King Follett who had died, Joseph Smith preaches the sermon in which he says God himself was once a man.

Thirteen or fourteen years separate the keystone from this teaching. I'm not making an accusation by pointing that out — I'm just asking you to hold the timeline in view while we look at each piece. A doctrine that appears in the 1840s and contradicts a book from 1830 is not “the same gospel it always was.” It's a change, and a change has to be examined on its own terms.

God with a body

Start with the most concrete claim. Jesus, talking to a woman at a well, tells her what God is:

John 4:24 (KJV)

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

D&C 130:22 (Doctrine & Covenants)

The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit.

Now let me be fair, because there's a real Latter-day Saint answer here and you deserve to see it stated at full strength. The response goes: “spirit” in John 4:24 describes *how* God is worshiped, not that He is bodiless — and the risen Christ himself proved a glorified being can have flesh, saying “a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” ([Luke 24:39](#)). So, the harmonization runs, God is spirit *and* has a body.

I'd only ask you to notice what that costs. It requires reading “God is a Spirit” as *not* meaning God is a spirit. And it puts you crosswise with your own keystone, which called God “unchangeable” and “the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth” — language that fits a God who is spirit far better than a God with a

tangible body of bone. The Bible and the Book of Mormon lean the same way here. Section 130 leans the other.

God who was once a man

Here is the sentence that changes everything downstream:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!

— Joseph Smith, King Follett discourse, April 7, 1844, [The King Follett Sermon, Ensign, April 1971, churchofjesuschrist.org](#)

I want to be scrupulously honest about what this quotation is, because if I'm not, you'll rightly distrust me. The King Follett discourse is not canonized scripture. It's a funeral sermon, taken down in longhand by four scribes — Willard Richards, Wilford Woodruff, Thomas Bullock, and William Clayton — and reconstructed afterward from their notes. You know this, and I'd lose you if I dressed it up as a revelation in your standard works. It isn't one.

But notice: I'm quoting it from your Church's own *Ensign*, which reprinted it in 1971 and called it "one of the classics of Church literature." It is not a stray remark the Church has disowned. It is taught, printed, and honored. So it's fair to lay it beside your Bible.

And your Bible could not answer it more directly:

[Psalm 90:2](#) — "even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." Not from manhood to godhood. From everlasting. And [Isaiah 43:10](#) — God says, "before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me." If God was once a man who became God, then there *was* a God formed, and the sentence God speaks about Himself in Isaiah is false. You can't hold both.

Men who become Gods

The same logic runs forward as well as back. If God climbed to godhood, the path is open behind Him — and section 132 opens it:

Isaiah 44:6-8 (KJV)

I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.... Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.

D&C 132:20, 37 (Doctrine & Covenants)

Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.... they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods.

The revelation is explicit a few verses earlier, too: the sealed “shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things” ([D&C 132:19](#)).

Let me steel-man this the way an honest neighbor should. Your Church doesn’t frame this as arrogance — it frames it as the doctrine of *exaltation*, God’s loving purpose that His children grow up to be like Him. The official Gospel Topics essay “[Becoming Like God](#)” grounds it in the New Testament language of being “joint-heirs with Christ,” children who inherit what the Father has. I don’t doubt the tenderness in that hope. A parent wanting children to grow up is a beautiful picture.

But hold it against Isaiah. God says He knows of no other God — not one before, not one to come, not one being formed in some celestial nursery. “I know not any.” A doctrine that ends in the child becoming a God with all power, angels subject to him, is what Isaiah’s God rules out in the plainest words He ever uses

about Himself. And once again — this is the part I most want you to feel — your own Book of Mormon rules it out too. “Unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity” leaves no room for a God still climbing, or a man on his way up.

The priesthood question the Bible calls closed

There’s one more place the seam shows, and it’s quieter, so I’ll be brief and careful. Sections [84](#) and [107](#) build the restored priesthood into ranked offices — Aaronic and Melchizedek, deacon to high priest — an authority conferred by ordination and passed from man to man by the laying on of hands. I’ll represent that fairly: the whole system rests on the idea that priesthood must be transferred to living successors to continue. I know the teaching is that this is Christ’s own authority, delegated — not a replacement for him.

The book of Hebrews takes up that exact idea — and argues it was *settled in Christ*. The old priests, it says, were many “because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood” ([Hebrews 7:23-25](#)). The word behind “unchangeable” is *aparabatos* — [lexicons gloss it as unchangeable, not passing away, untransferable](#); the sense the writer presses is a priesthood that never passes to a successor. The very thing that forced the old priesthood to be handed down — death — is abolished in a priest who never dies. So there’s no line of successors to ordain, because the office never falls vacant.

And what does the Bible give ordinary believers instead? Not a ladder of offices, but this: “ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people” ([1 Peter 2:9](#)). Peter hands *every* believer the priesthood that section 84 restricts to ordained men. I’m not asking you to throw anything out on one paragraph. I’m asking you to see that on priesthood, as on God Himself, the later revelation moves in a direction the Bible had already closed.

Where this leaves us

Step back and look at what we've actually done these last two chapters. We put three books your Church calls the word of God on the same table — the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants — and asked them the deepest question there is: *what is God?* Two of them answered the same way. One God. Unchangeable. From everlasting. The third, arriving in the 1840s, answered differently.

Two of your three canons agree with each other. The question is what to do with the third.

I don't say that to corner you. I say it because every date and quotation above is one you can verify tonight in your own scriptures. The next chapter follows this seam into the history: how the teaching changed, who changed it, and what the Church itself has said about it since.

Your friend, Brock

A God Who Doesn't Change

I promised at the end of the last chapter to follow the seam into the history — how a teaching your keystone doesn't contain came to be taught anyway, who taught it, and what your own Church has said about it since. This is that chapter, and it's the one I've rewritten the most — because it would be so easy to turn what follows into a list of accusations. I don't want that, and if it reads that way, I've failed you.

So let me say what I'm *not* doing. I'm not going to call your prophets liars or frauds, and I'm not going to mock anyone. Every quotation below comes from your own scriptures, your own General Conference, or your own Church's official website — nothing else. And I'll hand you the framing your Church itself uses for each one, in its own words, so you can weigh it fairly. All I'm asking is that we notice something together and sit with the question it raises.

The test the Bible sets for itself

Before we look at anything that changed, look at what the Bible says about change in God.

Malachi 3:6 — God says of Himself, “For I am the LORD, I change not.”

Hebrews 13:8 says the same of the Son: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” This is the same note your own Book of Mormon struck — “unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity.” On this, all three books you trust agree without a seam. God does not change, and neither does the truth about Him.

That matters because the Bible also gives a plain test for anyone who claims to speak for God. Moses laid it down:

“When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously”
([Deuteronomy 18:20-22](#)).

The test is simple and a little frightening: a true word from God holds. It doesn’t get denounced a generation later by the same office that first taught it. So here is the only question this chapter asks. When a teaching is given by one prophet as doctrine, and reversed by a later prophet as error, which one was speaking for the God who does not change? Here are three times it comes up, in your own record.

First: Adam is God

In April 1852, in a sermon later printed in the *Journal of Discourses*, Brigham Young — the prophet who led your people to Utah — taught this about who God is:

When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is Michael, the Archangel, the Ancient of Days! about whom holy men have written and spoken—He is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do.

— Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses 1:50, April 9, 1852, journalofdiscourses.com

I want to be scrupulously fair about what this is. Brigham didn’t mumble it in private; he preached it from the stand as doctrine, and it was published with the sanction of the First Presidency.

Now here is what a later prophet — Spencer W. Kimball, in the priesthood session of your October 1976 General Conference — said about that exact teaching:

We warn you against the dissemination of doctrines which are not according to the scriptures and which are alleged to have been taught by some of the General Authorities of past generations. Such, for instance, is the Adam-God theory. We denounce that theory and hope that everyone will be cautioned against this and other kinds of false doctrine.

— President Spencer W. Kimball, October 1976 General Conference, [Our Own Liahona](http://OurOwnLiahona.churchofjesuschrist.org), churchofjesuschrist.org

Read those two quotations back to back. One prophet teaches, from the pulpit, that Adam is our Father and our God. Another prophet, from the same pulpit, calls that teaching “false doctrine” by name and warns you against spreading it. I’m not adding a word of my own. Both men held the office you’re taught to follow, and they cannot both have been speaking for the God who does not change.

Second: a commandment, then a manifesto

You already know part of this one; plural marriage is no secret in your history. What’s worth doing carefully is looking at *how* it was framed — as a commandment — and then at how it ended.

The revelation now printed as section 132 doesn’t offer plural marriage as an option. It frames it as covenant, with the weightiest possible warning attached:

For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.

— Doctrine & Covenants 132:4, churchofjesuschrist.org

Then, in 1890, President Wilford Woodruff issued what your scriptures now print as Official Declaration 1 — the Manifesto — ending the practice:

And I now publicly declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land.

— President Wilford Woodruff, Official Declaration 1, September 24, 1890,
churchofjesuschrist.org

I have to be fair here. Your Church does not present the Manifesto as an admission that section 132 was wrong. It presents it as revelation too — God directing His prophet to end a practice for a season, much as He commands and later releases elsewhere in scripture. That’s a real answer, and you’re entitled to weigh it. I’d only lay Moses’ test gently beside it: a covenant whose rejection was said to bring damnation is set aside within one lifetime. Whether you call the change revelation or reversal, the teaching about what God requires of you did not hold still.

Third: the priesthood ban

The third I’ll handle most carefully of all, letting your Church do almost all the talking — it has spoken about this more honestly than people expect.

For over a century, Black members of your Church could not hold the priesthood or enter the temple. Your Church’s own Gospel Topics essay, “Race and the Priesthood,” dates the start of that policy plainly:

In two speeches delivered before the Utah territorial legislature in January and February 1852, Brigham Young announced a policy restricting men of black African descent from priesthood ordination.

— Gospel Topics essay, Race and the Priesthood, churchofjesuschrist.org

The restriction ended in 1978, in what your scriptures now print as [Official Declaration 2](#): “all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color.” And here I want you to hear the

Church's own verdict on the reasons that had been taught for the ban all those years — not my verdict, the Church's:

Today, the Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects unrighteous actions in a premortal life; that mixed-race marriages are a sin; or that blacks or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else.

— Gospel Topics essay, Race and the Priesthood, churchofjesuschrist.org

I take no pleasure in that quotation, and I'd ask you not to either. Those "theories advanced in the past" were taught by prophets and apostles as the reasons God Himself had withheld the priesthood. Today your Church says, in writing, that it disavows them. That's an honest thing to do. But notice what it also means: for more than a hundred years, faithful members were taught as doctrine something the Church now formally rejects.

What I am — and am not — saying

Here's the part I most need you to hear, because everything above can be misread.

I am not saying Brigham Young was a wicked man, or that Wilford Woodruff or Spencer W. Kimball were. Nothing I've written requires it. Men can be sincere, brave, devoted to God, and still be wrong — I am, about plenty of things, and so are the pastors I trust most. This was never about whether these men were good.

It's about one quiet, unavoidable point: "follow the prophet" cannot be the final authority when prophets reverse each other. If one prophet teaches a thing as doctrine and a later prophet calls that same thing false doctrine, then "the living prophet is always right" has already broken — not by my argument, but by their

own words. Something has to stand *above* the prophet to tell you which one was right, and your own tradition offers only one candidate for that job: the scriptures. That's why God gave Moses a test — so the word could judge the man, and not only the man the word.

I asked you this back in the first chapter, and I'm asking it again on purpose. The Bereans, when an apostle himself preached to them, “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” — and Scripture calls them *noble* for weighing even an apostle against the written word ([Acts 17:11](#)). That's not rebellion. It's the most faithful thing a person can do.

Where this points

If the living prophet can be reversed — if he can be wrong even about who God is, as the Adam-God reversal shows he was — then the question “*what is God actually like?*” cannot be answered by asking who currently holds the office. It has to be answered from the word that stands above the office. From scripture.

That's the question this whole letter has been circling, and it's time to answer it directly. Not from my church. Not from a creed you don't hold. From yours — your Bible and your Book of Mormon, the two books that already agree that God does not change.

Let's do that next — using only yours.

Your friend, Brock

What Is God Actually Like?

I ended the last chapter with a promise: that “*what is God actually like?*” would be answered not from my church or a creed you don’t hold, but from the word that stands above every prophet — from scripture, and specifically from yours. This is where I keep it.

So here’s what I’m *not* going to do. I’m not going to argue the Trinity at you, or hand you a diagram, or a fourth-century council, or a word you can’t find in your scriptures. I’m going to ask you five questions and let your own Bible — the one your Church canonized, the King James your Church prints — answer each one. You draw the conclusion. If it isn’t there in the verses, throw it out.

Every question has the same shape. The Bible names an action only God can do — indwelling a believer, raising the dead, creating the world. Then it credits that one action to the Father, *and* to the Son, *and* to the Spirit, as if any of the three had done it. And then, every time, it insists there is only one of whoever did it. Hold all three facts at once and see where you end up.

Question one: whose Spirit lives in you?

Paul is writing to believers about the Spirit that dwells inside them. Read who he says that Spirit belongs to — and watch the name change while the Spirit doesn’t.

Whose Spirit dwells in every believer?

The Spirit of God — Romans 8:9

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

The Spirit of Christ — Romans 8:9-10

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

The Spirit of the Father — Romans 8:11

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

The Holy Ghost — 1 Corinthians 6:19

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

One Spirit — 1 Corinthians 12:13

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Same indwelling Spirit, four names: the Spirit *of God*, the Spirit *of Christ*, the Spirit *of the Father*, and the *Holy Ghost*. So how many Spirits actually live in a believer? Paul answers flatly — "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." One. Sit with that a moment, because the pattern you just saw is the whole letter in miniature.

Question two: who raised Jesus from the dead?

This is the hinge of the whole faith, yours and mine. So it matters who gets the credit for it. Ask the New Testament, and it answers three different ways.

Who raised Jesus from the dead?

The Father raised him — Galatians 1:1

"Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)"

Jesus raised himself — John 2:19-21

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body."

The Spirit raised him — 1 Peter 3:18

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:"

One God raised him — Acts 2:32

"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."

Paul says the Father raised him. John records Jesus saying he would raise *himself* — “destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” — then tells you plainly he “spake of the temple of his body.” Peter says he was quickened, made alive, *by the Spirit*. Three answers. So did one God raise Jesus, or three? Peter, at Pentecost, gives the count: “this Jesus hath God raised up.” One God did it — and yet the Father, the Son, and the Spirit each did it.

Question three: who made the world?

Now go all the way back to the first act there is. If any work belongs to God alone, it's this one. Watch the Bible hand it around.

Who created the world?

God — Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

The Spirit of God — Genesis 1:2

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

The LORD — Jehovah — Genesis 2:4

"These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,"

The Word, who is Jesus — John 1:1-3

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

...and the Word was made flesh — John 1:14

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Let us make man in our image — Genesis 1:26

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

One God — alone, by himself — Isaiah 44:24

"Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;"

God creates. The Spirit of God moves over the waters and creates. Jehovah makes the earth and the heavens. The Word — who John says “was God,” and who “was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” which is to say Jesus — makes *all* things, “and without him was not any thing made that was made.” And then, at the making of man, God says something strange for one lone person to say: “let *us* make man in *our* image.”

So did one God create, or several? Here the Bible slams a door on the very question. Read this slowly:

So — one God, or many?

One God, who did it alone — [Isaiah 44:24](#)

"Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;"

“I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens *alone*; that spreadeth abroad the earth *by myself*.” Not with help. Not with a council of Gods dividing the labor. Alone. By myself. Whoever the Father, the Spirit, and the Word each were in Genesis, the God who says he did it says he did it with no one beside him. You cannot fit a second God into “by myself.” That’s not my sentence to defend; it’s Isaiah’s.

Question four: who is Jesus’ Father?

Here’s one more, and it’s the gentlest and the sharpest at once.

Who is the Father of Jesus Christ?

God the Father — John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The Holy Ghost — Matthew 1:18

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost."

...of the Holy Ghost — Matthew 1:20

"But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."

The LORD — Jehovah — Psalm 2:7

"I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

God gives "his only begotten Son" — that's the Father. But Matthew, twice, says the child in Mary was conceived "of the Holy Ghost." And in the Psalm it is *the LORD*, Jehovah, who says to the Son, "thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." I won't resolve this one for you, because it's fairer as a question: if the Father and the Holy Ghost were two separate beings, two different Gods, then whose Son is Jesus? The Bible seems perfectly untroubled calling him the Son of the Father and the Son conceived of the Holy Ghost — as though Father and Spirit were not two Gods at all.

Question five: how many Gods are there?

That's the whole thing riding on this last one, so I'll let Isaiah answer it three times and add nothing. This is Isaiah closing it himself.

How many true Gods exist?

I am the first, I am the last, and beside me there is no God — Isaiah 44:6

"Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."

Is there a God beside me? There is no God; I know not any — Isaiah 44:8

"Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any."

**Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me —
Isaiah 43:10**

"Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me."

Now, I want to be fair to how you read these, because you do have a reading. You believe in the Godhead — three distinct beings, "one in purpose." When Isaiah says "beside me there is no God," you can hear him ruling out the idols of the nations, not the perfect unity of Father, Son, and Spirit. That's a real answer, and I won't pretend it has nothing to say to Isaiah 44:8.

But lay it beside 44:24 and 43:10 and feel where it strains. "By myself" is hard to share among three who each created. And 43:10 doesn't just say *there are no idols*; it forecloses something else: "before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be *after* me." No God came to be before him, and none ever will after him. That is precisely the door the other doctrine tries to enter through — a God who was once a man and progressed to godhood, and faithful men who may yet become Gods themselves. Isaiah shuts that door from the inside. If no God was formed before Jehovah and none will be formed after him, then there isn't one

God *for this world* among many — there is one God, full stop, and no assembly line making more.

Your own keystone already agreed

And here's the thing I most want you to notice: you didn't need my Bible to get here. Three chapters back, we measured the Book of Mormon on this exact question, and it said the same. Nephi, closing the doctrine of Christ, named the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost as "one God, without end. Amen" (2 Nephi 31:21). One God, without end. Your keystone was already there — the same one God Isaiah names — long before I opened a Bible to you.

What you're holding now

So look at what you're holding. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit each do what only God can do — indwell the believer, raise the dead, create the world. And one God insists he does all of it alone, with no God formed before him and none after.

Three who each do what only God does. One God who does it alone. The Trinity isn't a philosopher's puzzle — it's just what happens when you refuse to throw away any of these verses. You weren't argued into that. You opened your own Bible and found it already sitting there.

I didn't build that room. Isaiah did, and Paul, and John, and Genesis, and — quietly, in its own words — your own Book of Mormon. All I did was ask five questions and hand you the answers your scriptures already gave.

Your friend, Brock

The Gospel

Four chapters back, I made you a promise and then walked away from it on purpose. We were standing over two verses about grace — Paul’s, and your keystone’s — and I told you I could feel the tension but wouldn’t resolve it in a paragraph, because it deserved a whole chapter. I wrote, “Chapter 8 is that chapter.” This is it.

I saved it for last on purpose. Everything before now was clearing ground. This is the thing I wrote the whole letter to reach — if you skim everything else, don’t skim this.

The weight

Let me start not with a verse but with something I’ve watched.

I’ve sat across from Latter-day Saint friends who are, by any honest measure, faithful — recommend current, calling magnified, tithing paid, Word of Wisdom kept — and heard them say, quietly, that they don’t know if they’re doing enough. Not as false modesty. As a low, steady hum underneath everything. There’s a worthiness interview coming, and a set of questions, and a bishop across the desk, and so much rests on answering them well. There’s a calling that could always be magnified more. There’s ministering left undone, a temple you meant to attend more often than you did, a family to be sealed and then kept. And running under all of it, the sentence that never quite lets go: *after all we can do*. How much is *all*? When have you done it? If you’re paying attention, the honest answer is *never* — because there is always more you could have done, and the standard you’re measured against is a Being who is perfect.

I don’t say any of that to mock it. This is holy ground for you, and I know it. A great deal of what I love about your people grows in exactly this soil. You are

serious about obedience because you are serious about God, and that instinct is *right* — God does call us to obey Him, and He means it. I would never ask you to want less holiness than you want. The thing I want to put my finger on isn't that you try hard. It's what you've been told your trying is *for*.

And let me grant you something else, plainly, before I go on. Many Latter-day Saints today lean on grace far harder than that one famous verse, read flatly, would suggest — your own teachers preach it, and you may already believe in your bones that you could never earn your way and that Christ makes up the rest. If so, some of what follows will feel less like a correction than like a friend saying out loud what you already half-know. Good. But I still owe you the question the texts themselves put on the table, because the words matter, and the *order* of the words matters most of all.

What the words actually say

Here are the two sentences again, side by side, the way we left them.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJV)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

2 Nephi 25:23 (Book of Mormon)

For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

Read Paul slowly, because he is ruling something out. Grace — through faith — and then he pushes back against the very thing you feel in that interview hum: *not of yourselves... it is the gift of God... not of works... lest any man should boast*. Four times in two verses he shoves your own effort out of the frame, and

tells you exactly why: so that no one, standing before God, could ever clear his throat and say, *I did my part*. For Paul, grace is not what covers the gap once you've done your best. Grace is the whole floor.

Your keystone says grace too — notice that it *does* say grace. But it sets grace *after* three words: *after all we can do*. And your own Bible Dictionary, bound into the back of the very scriptures your Church prints, does the same thing:

This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts.

— Bible Dictionary, "Grace", churchofjesuschrist.org

After they have expended their own best efforts. Feel the distance between that and Paul. Not a shade of meaning — a whole different direction. In Paul, grace comes first and the works follow out of it. In that sentence, effort comes first and grace arrives to finish it. One makes the cross the foundation you build *on*; the other makes it the capstone you set *on top of* a wall you had to raise yourself. I'm not asking you to be angry about it. I'm asking the plain question the two texts force on us: which one comes first — His finished work, or your best effort? Because how you sleep at night depends entirely on the answer.

So let me show you the order the Bible keeps — not in one verse, but everywhere. In [Romans 4:5](#), Paul says God “justifieth the *ungodly*,” and that a man's faith is counted for righteousness precisely when he “worketh *not*, but believeth.” Not the worker. The believer. In [Titus 3:5](#) he shuts the door on our résumé about as hard as language can: “*not* by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” And the verse your children know by heart — [John 3:16](#) — God so loved that He *gave*; whoever believes *has* everlasting life. The condition is belief, and the gift is already in the room.

Now here is the part I don't want you to miss, because it's where the weight you carry finally has somewhere to go. Read what Paul says in the *very next breath*

after “not of works.” He doesn’t stop at grace. One verse later he adds [Ephesians 2:10](#) — “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Do you see what he did? The good works don’t vanish. They *move*. Paul takes everything you’ve been straining to produce — the obedience, the service, the diligence — and sets it on the *far* side of grace instead of the near side. You are not working in order to be saved. You are His workmanship, already saved, now walking in good works He prepared ahead of time for you. Same works. Opposite engine. One is a debt you can never finish paying; the other is fruit on a tree that is already alive. A tree doesn’t grow apples in order to become a tree. It grows them because it already is one.

The good news

So here it is, as plainly as I know how to say it.

The good news is not that you can do it. It’s that He did.

That’s the relief I’ve been trying to hand you this entire letter. The last thing Jesus said from the cross was “It is finished” — not *begun*, not *made possible*, not *now it’s your turn*. Finished. The debt you’ve been trying to settle *after all you can do* was paid in full, by the only one who could afford it, while you were nowhere near your best. That is what grace is. It isn’t God spotting you the distance you can’t quite cover. It’s God reaching down to someone who couldn’t cover any of it, and lifting.

I know how that can land: *if it’s really free, doesn’t that make obedience pointless — a license to coast?* Paul heard the same objection and gave an answer I’ve come to love. A person who has actually been loved like that doesn’t obey *less*. He obeys *more* — and for the first time out of gratitude instead of fear. You stop performing for a verdict and start living from one. Nothing good in your life gets smaller. It all just stops being the thing your soul is hanging by.

I've asked you to check me at every step, so I won't end by asking you to take my word for anything. I'll only tell you what I'd do if I were standing where you are. I would stop, and talk to God plainly — not in the words of a ritual, just the way you'd talk to someone you trust. Words don't save anyone; the One you're speaking to does. But there's something honest about saying it out loud. If it helps, here is roughly what I'd say:

God, I've spent a long time trying to be enough, and I'm tired, and I'm not sure I ever could be. I believe Jesus is Your Son, and that what He did on the cross was finished — that He paid for my sin completely, and there is nothing left for me to add. I'm trusting that, and not my own record. Would You show me who You really are — the God of the Bible — and let me know You? I want the real thing. Thank You for loving me before I ever got it right.

If you pray something like that and mean it, you have not walked away from God. You've walked straight up to Him — the one unchangeable God your Bible and your keystone both describe — with empty hands, which is the only way anyone has ever come to Him.

That's the whole letter. Everything before it was just me trying to get you here.

Your friend, Brock

What Now?

If you prayed something like the prayer I left at the end of the last chapter — or even if you didn't, but something in it wouldn't let go of you — you may be sitting with a very practical question. *All right. Now what?*

I want to answer it plainly, the way a friend would, without turning your whole life upside down before breakfast. There's no program here, no checklist to be worthy of. Just the next few honest steps, and one hard thing I owe you before I close.

Start with John

Don't start with me, and don't start by reading against your old faith. Start with Jesus, in his own story.

Read the Gospel of John — one chapter a day. There are twenty-one of them; give it three weeks. Any Bible will do. The King James in the back of your Quad is fine — it's the same John. If you'd like a companion alongside it, pick up a modern translation, the ESV or the NIV, and read each chapter twice, once in each. Back in chapter 3 we walked through why you can trust that the text has come down to us intact, so you can open a modern translation without any fear that someone has smuggled something in along the way. It's the same Gospel in plainer English, and some mornings the plainer English is the whole gift.

Read it slowly. You're not studying for a test or hunting for proof. You're getting to know a person. Ask him, before you begin, to show you who he is. John tells you near the end that he wrote the whole book for exactly that reason — [John 20:31](#) — so read it as the invitation it is.

Finding a church

At some point — not tomorrow, but at some point — you'll want to be among people who worship this way. Here's what to look for, and I'll keep it simple.

Look for a church that teaches you are saved by grace through faith, and *means* it — that the cross is the floor you stand on, not the capstone you set on top of a wall you had to build yourself. That was the whole of chapter 8. Look for a church that worships the one unchangeable God we found together in chapter 7 — Father, Son, and Spirit, one God, not a man who became one and not a council of many. And look for a church that simply opens the Bible and teaches it, verse after verse, so you can see for yourself where every claim comes from — the same do-it-with-the-text-open posture this whole letter has tried to keep with you.

And one thing to be wary of. Be careful of any group that tells you it *alone* holds the exclusive authority — the one true priesthood, the one true keys, the single organization God will speak through. The pattern should be familiar by now; it's the very claim we spent this letter examining. The gospel of grace doesn't come with a franchise. A biblical church knows it is a hospital for sinners, not a headquarters.

The thing I've been dreading to write

Now I have to be honest with you, because a letter that has asked you to be honest at every step can't go soft at the end.

This could cost you.

I won't pretend otherwise, and I'd be betraying you if I did. For many Latter-day Saints the faith isn't one compartment of life — it *is* life. It's your marriage, sealed for eternity. It's Sunday and Monday night and half the friendships you have. It's your parents' hope for your family and the ward that brought dinner when your kids were born. To step toward the Jesus of the Bible can mean a spouse who feels the ground move under a marriage you both believed was

forever. It can mean parents who grieve as if they're losing you. It can mean an entire social world — the one that has held you your whole life — cooling toward you at the exact moment you most need it. I'm not going to wave any of that away with a verse. It is real, and it is heavy, and if you feel the weight of it right now, you're seeing clearly.

So hear me carefully. You don't have to announce anything today. Nothing here asks you to burn down your life this week, or make a speech at Sunday dinner, or hand back your recommend by Friday. Faith isn't a press release. It's between you and God first, and it can stay there a good long while as it grows. Keep reading. Keep praying — to the God of the Bible, in Jesus' name. Let what's true settle into you before you ever say a word out loud. Patience here isn't cowardice; it's love, for the people you'd never want to hurt carelessly.

What Jesus said it would cost

I'm not the first to tell you this could be hard. Jesus told his own followers the same thing, and he was blunter about it than I would dare to be. He said, [Matthew 10:37](#) — that whoever loves father or mother, son or daughter, more than him is not worthy of him.

I've read that verse sitting across from people it applied to, and I won't soften it. He really does ask to come first — ahead of the people you love most. That is a staggering thing to ask, and he knew it. But read it beside what he said in nearly the same breath about what it buys, because he did not leave the cost hanging in the air alone. [Mark 10:29-30](#)

Look at what he promises the one who loses family for his sake: not a smaller family — a hundredfold one, “now in this time,” brothers and sisters and mothers and children, and eternal life besides. He is not blind to what you'd be risking. He is telling you he has already counted it, and that the God who asks you to open your hands is the same God who fills them again — often, in my

experience, through people you haven't met yet. Which is the last practical thing I want to hand you.

People who have already walked this

You are not the first to make this walk, and you do not have to make it alone. There are people — many of them former Latter-day Saints themselves — who know this exact road, the doctrine and the heartache both, and who spend their lives coming alongside people right where you are standing. If you want that kind of company, here are two places to start:

- **Faith After Mormonism** (faithaftermormonism.org) — a community built for precisely this transition, gentle about the emotional and family cost, and clear that your Latter-day Saint loved ones are not the enemy.
- **Mormonism Research Ministry** (mrm.org) — a long-running resource for thinking carefully through the doctrine, if you want to keep studying with the texts open.

And you don't need a website at all for the best of it. Somewhere near you there is very likely a small, ordinary, Bible-teaching church with a few people in it who would be honored to sit with you, answer your questions, and simply be your friends while you sort this out. Ask God to lead you to them. He is good at that.

That's everything I know to give you. I've handed you your own scriptures, my best honesty, and now the next few steps. The rest is between you and the God who has been drawing you the whole time — the real one, unchanging, full of grace, and nearer than you think.

Keep reading. Keep praying. He is not hard to find.

Your friend, Brock

Sources

I promised in chapter 1 that you should throw this letter away if I misquoted anything. Here is everything, so you can check.

Every entry below points back to a specific claim in a specific chapter. Where a source speaks for your Church itself, I've said so. Where it's a Latter-day Saint scholar or apologist defending a position rather than the Church's own words, I've labeled that too — you should know the difference. Follow any link, and if what's there doesn't match what I told you, close this letter and don't look back.

Official LDS Sources

- [Holy Bible: Translations and Editions](#) — official guidance to use the King James Version (ch. 2)
- [History of the Scriptures](#) — confirms the Church published its own KJV edition in 1979 (ch. 2)
- [The Book of Mormon: Keystone of Our Religion](#) — President Benson's "keystone" address (ch. 4)
- [The King Follett Sermon, *Ensign*, April 1971](#) — "God himself was once as we are now" (ch. 5)
- [Becoming Like God](#) — Gospel Topics essay on exaltation (ch. 5)
- [Our Own Liahona](#) — President Kimball denouncing the Adam-God theory (ch. 6)
- [Race and the Priesthood](#) — Gospel Topics essay on the priesthood ban's origin and disavowal (ch. 6)
- [Bible Dictionary, "Grace"](#) — "after they have expended their own best efforts" (ch. 8)
- Brigham Young, [Journal of Discourses 1:50](#), April 1852 — the Adam-God sermon (ch. 6). Also scanned in full on [archive.org, volume 1](#), in case that

first link ever goes down.

- [Scripture Central](#) — an LDS scholarly apologetics organization, on the “land of Jerusalem” defense (ch. 4). Apologetics, not the Church speaking officially.
- [Jeff Lindsay’s LDSFAQ](#) — a faithful LDS apologist’s own site, reproducing the Smithsonian’s statement (ch. 3). Also apologetics, not an official Church page.

Scripture Editions

Every King James Bible verse in this letter is pulled straight from the public-domain KJV text bundled into this site’s own dataset — no publisher, no link needed. Check any reference against your own Bible. Every Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price verse is quoted from your Church’s own site:

- [Articles of Faith 1:8](#) — “we believe the Bible... to be the word of God” (ch. 2)
- [Mosiah 15:1–5](#) — Abinadi: Father and Son “one God” (ch. 4)
- [Alma 11:26–29](#) — Amulek: “No,” more than one God (ch. 4)
- [2 Nephi 31:21](#) — “one God, without end. Amen” (ch. 4, ch. 7)
- [Moroni 8:18](#) — “not a partial God... unchangeable” (ch. 4)
- [Moroni 10:32](#) — grace “after all we can do,” companion verse (ch. 4)
- [D&C 84](#) — restored priesthood offices (ch. 5)
- [D&C 107](#) — priesthood offices (ch. 5)
- [D&C 130](#) — “the Father has a body of flesh and bones” (ch. 5)
- [D&C 132](#) — the plural marriage covenant, and men becoming gods (ch. 5, ch. 6)
- [Official Declaration 1](#) — the 1890 Manifesto ending plural marriage (ch. 6)
- [Official Declaration 2](#) — the 1978 revelation ending the priesthood ban (ch. 6)

Archaeology & Manuscripts

- [Great Isaiah Scroll, Israel Museum](#) — dated to around 125 BCE (ch. 3)
- [Isaiah Scroll — Wikipedia](#) — the roughly 2,600-difference count (ch. 3)
- [Tel Dan Stele — Wikipedia](#) — the “House of David” inscription (ch. 3)
- [Pilate Stone — Wikipedia](#) — the Pontius Pilate inscription (ch. 3)
- [Siloam Inscription — Wikipedia](#) — Hezekiah’s tunnel (ch. 3)
- [Daniel Wallace on New Testament manuscript counts](#) — nearly 6,000 Greek manuscripts (ch. 3)
- [Blue Letter Bible, Strong’s G531](#) — *aparabatos*, the “unchangeable” priesthood (ch. 5)
- [Gary Habermas, “Minimal Facts”](#) — the scholarly consensus on the resurrection’s core facts (ch. 3)

Ministries

- [Faith After Mormonism](#) — community for those transitioning out of Latter-day Saint belief (ch. 9)
- [Mormonism Research Ministry](#) — a long-running resource for studying the doctrine with the texts open (ch. 9)

Further Reading

- Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Zondervan, 1998) — a journalist’s own investigation into the evidence for the resurrection.
- James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity* (Bethany House, 1998) — a fuller treatment of the doctrine chapter 7 only had room to sketch.
- *The Back Door to the Trinity* — the little tract whose five-question method chapter 7 adapts, rebuilt entirely around your own Bible. I didn’t invent that method; I just handed you the questions with your own verses

attached. As it's printed, the tract credits itself to

GospelTruth4U@hotmail.com.

That's the whole letter, and now the whole paper trail behind it. Nothing above asks you to trust me — only to click, read, and see for yourself whether I told you the truth. If I did, I hope it was worth your time. If I didn't anywhere, you know what to do with it.

Thank you for reading this far. It was an honor to write to you.

Your friend, Brock