

Rebuilding My Foundation



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“One Improved Unit” is an original bi-weekly column appearing every other Monday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found [here](#). OIU-only RSS feed available [here](#).

“Resistance,” to the Borg, “is futile.” It’s also human, very human. Particularly the type of resistance given to the changing of one’s beliefs. And by “beliefs” I mean everything someone either thinks is true or knows is true with absolute certainty. Often their certainty is based on a very limited amount of experience, and they don’t know what they don’t know. Faith, the way I see it, is rational belief on the basis of limited experience. What is believed may ultimately prove false, but without faith one will never do anything. Nobody has experienced everything, and everybody wants to remove their “felt uneasiness.” Like resistance, to act on the basis of faith is also human. I have performed religious ordinances and made covenants with others (seen and unseen) on the basis of faith. But I now find myself at a point in my life where I am stuck. Some things that I believed I now question. Let me explain.

What Was

For the last ten years I have claimed by word and by action to be a devout Mormon. Mormonism has and continues to be a very fascinating topic for me. When I (re)discovered the Gospel, I had a zeal to progress in “the Kingdom” and to do whatever was necessary to marry my wife in a Mormon temple. My faith was strong, and it transformed my life for the better. But my zeal was not founded on a spiritual witness of the truth of Mormonism, on any supernatural experience, that I believe other’s have had. Mine was an intellectual zeal. And that zeal carried me toward exploring other unknowns, namely economics, political philosophy, ethics, and so forth.

The last decade has been one great pursuit after another, starting with my acceptance of Mormonism. It means a lot to me and I hope when all is said and done that I will die a Mormon. But let’s not put the cart before the horse. Before now, I was prepared to live the rest of my life practicing my faith and encouraging my children and others to do likewise. In examining what that encouragement would mean, however, I began a process that took me from comfort in my faith to wondering whether or not I had a solid foundation by which

to bear my testimony of the truth. It turns out that I have not had that solid foundation. And that realization pushed me to question more and more the Church to which I claimed to be a proud member.

What May Be

One of my favorite passages from the Book of Mormon is found in what has been unofficially called the “Psalm of Nephi,” found in the Second Book of Nephi, Chapter 4, verse 34 which reads, “I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh; for I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh. Yea, cursed is he that putteth his trust in man or maketh flesh his arm.” I feel very close to what Nephi is saying here. Because my faith has been based on the arm of flesh, meaning, my [imperfect] conclusions regarding Joseph Smith, his work, and the modern LDS Church, moving forward would mean confusion, and ultimately heartache.

I have very important questions regarding the modern LDS Church, specifically its post-Joseph Smith leadership and practices, the way it handles its finances, and the many traditions and folklore that it upholds that don’t seem to be anchored in either scripture or factual history. Maybe it’s all nothing. Maybe there are solid answers to all of my questions, but I have reached a point where I no longer trust myself to have the patience required by my limited time to find them. And more, I would only be continuing what Nephi was warning against, putting my trust in the arm of flesh.

Instead, I have decided that before I can continue supporting the modern LDS Church, I must determine if it is the rightful successor to Joseph Smith. Before I do that, I must determine if Joseph Smith really translated the Book of Mormon “by the gift and power of God.” And before I do that, I must determine if God really exists, and if so, if I can have a personal relationship with him.

Final Thoughts

Many reading this have already made up their minds about these things. The extent of my faith right now is the belief that if there is a God, he must be willing to have a personal relationship with his creations. If not, then what do I care about him? If he created the universe and then disappeared, then why do I care to know about him? I hope that’s not the case. I really like the idea (based on Mormonism) of a personal God with a personal interest in seeing me become like him, ie. divine. But I will no longer stand on a shaky foundation. I will do what I can to know if God exists. If he has an interest in me, I won’t give him any excuses not to show it.