

“What do I say to nonmembers who ask why some members of the Church aren’t living our standards?”

It would be wonderful if every Church member lived the gospel fully. They would not only enjoy more blessings in their lives but also be great examples to those around them.

But we’re mortal, so we all fall short to some degree. The main reason that some live the gospel more fully than others is that we are each at different points in our conversions and in the strength of our testimonies. We each have different trials and different resources and people to help us.

Nonmembers might not understand terms like “conversion” and “testimony,” but they will understand that each person can choose how to live. You can explain that Heavenly Father intended it to be that way. He gave us our agency so we could grow spiritually by choosing the right. But Heavenly Father also knew that everyone—except Jesus Christ—would make mistakes, so He provided a Savior for us. Because of the Atonement, we can repent, be forgiven, learn from our mistakes, and move forward in life.

You can also explain that we do not judge those who are not following the standards of the Church. Instead, we try to help them, understand them, and be patient with them. While we do not tolerate sin, we do not condemn the sinner (see John 8:11). Repentance is still possible, for all of us.

Search the Scriptures



The answer to the question can be found in the scriptures. When people don’t keep the commandments, we should avoid being judgmental (see Matthew 7:1). Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” However, it is true that members of the Church should try to be obedient.

Madison M., age 13, Texas, USA

Teach about the Atonement



When people say things like that, rather than finding fault with the member who isn’t following the rules, I use it as an opportunity to teach about the Atonement. I tell them that just because we are Mormons doesn’t mean we are perfect and that we have the Atonement so we can repent of our sins and fix those mistakes. This usually opens the door to many more questions.

Jayde H., age 16, Oregon, USA

Church Teaches Us to Do Good



Like everyone else, members of the Church experience challenges and temptations. All of us have weaknesses, but it does not mean that this Church is not true. This is the Church of Jesus Christ, which is helping people to know the true gospel and to

receive exaltation. It's the natural man who disobeys the commandments (see Mosiah 3:19), and it's not the fault of the Church. The Church teaches us to do good works. But all of us have a choice.

Lavinia S., age 19, Bulacan, Philippines

Standards Are for Our Happiness



This question really hits home for me because I know some individuals who have made choices that have taken them away from the gospel. The Lord gives us commandments for our happiness and to “bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). The Lord wants us to return to Him; however, He wants us to make our own choices. That is why some individuals do not live our standards. The standards help me personally because I know that Heavenly Father has given them to me so that I can return and live with Him and be happy. They are proof of His love for me.

Morgane D., age 18, Languedoc-Roussillon, France

Pray for Them and Visit Them

Members who do not live our standards might not have a testimony centered on Jesus Christ. We should pray for them, that they will seek the guidance of the Spirit and that they will be able to gain their own testimony. We should visit these people and help them to come unto Christ.

Andrea C., age 13, Lima, Peru

Be an Example



This Church is vital to help us fulfill the commandments of our Heavenly Father and to live with Him again. But just because someone belongs to the Church does not mean that he or she is always going to be a good person. Look at our world today, full of wickedness and abominations, even though the world is filled with people who decided to follow Jesus Christ in the premortal life. I think the best thing we can do is set an example for our friends.

Kaden S., age 15, Utah, USA

Live Our Standards



Just like any other organization or religion, there are some people who are more dedicated or less dedicated. We just have to live our standards the best we can and hope and pray others will too.

Maren S., age 16, Arizona, USA



SEE OTHERS AS THEY CAN BECOME

“We have the responsibility to see individuals not as they are but rather as they can become. I would plead with you to think of them in this way.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “See Others as They May Become,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 70.

UPCOMING QUESTION

“I’m trying to control my thoughts, but there are so many temptations. How can I have cleaner thoughts?”

By November 15, send your answer and, if desired, a high-resolution photograph to liahona@ldschurch.org or by mail to the address on page 3.

The following permission and information must be included in your email or letter: (1) full name, (2) birth date, (3) ward or branch, (4) stake or district, (5) your written permission, and, if you are under age 18, your parent’s written permission (email is acceptable) to publish your response and photograph.