WHY
AM I
LDS?

BY BLAKE FAULKNER

When asked what he believes, one LDS teen wrote it out for all his friends to read.

Do you ever wonder what you would say if you were asked to explain to students at your school what it means to be a member of the Church? Here's some of what Blake Faulkner, 16, of the Del Mar Ward, Del Mar California Stake, wrote when he was asked to write an article on his LDS beliefs and lifestyle for his high school newspaper, The Falconer.

People are curious about Mormons (or Latter-day Saints) for many reasons. My personal way of piquing people's interest in my religion is by wearing a funny shirt. It reads "Mormon girls love me." (It's weird—they really do.) Another one I have seen says "I can't; I'm Mormon." The joke obviously comes from the strict guidelines of the Mormon faith, but the funny line underscores a deeper truth about the way Mormons are perceived.

When people discover my religious preference, they are usually pretty interested and even a little shocked. It's hard for people, especially in high school, to believe that somebody would willingly choose not to drink, not to do drugs, to abstain from sex, not to swear, not to go out or spend money on Sunday, to give up 10 percent of his income, to go on a two-year mission . . . do you want me to go on? These restrictions prohibit most of the things that many high school kids would find fun.

So why on earth am I a Mormon? It is something that rests deep within my heart, because in reality, being Mormon is a lifestyle. It influences everything you think, the way you see the world, and what decisions you make. My religion defines me, and while some might think that makes for a shallow, mediocre existence, my religion is actually a great source of happiness. It is through my religion that I am able to see who I really am.

I like having something to structure my life around, to draw upon for strength, and that gives me answers to life's simplest but most profound questions, such as "What is the purpose of life?" I can truly say that I know why I am here on this earth and that I know what choices I should be making.

I feel the Mormon faith, like many religions, has the ability to be personal for every follower. I feel that I can take the principles and teachings I learn from church and early-morning seminary and apply them to my life and ultimately become a better person in the process.

I guess what I am trying to say is that I choose to be Mormon because it works for me. It isn't just something that my parents do and that I am doing because I am forced to, and it's not something I do because it's easy and fun. It's something I choose to believe and live by because I know it is true. I am not condemning those who are not Mormon or who don't believe in religion; I am just trying to show why I make the decisions I do. I guess, in my opinion, "I can't; I'm Mormon" should be changed to the slogan "I can live the best life possible, because I am confident in who I am, what I am doing here on earth, and where I am going"—but I don't think that would sell as a shirt.

Mormons believe that families can live together forever, that the intelligence we gain in this life will rise with us after we die, that Jesus Christ is our Savior, that there is a living prophet who receives revelation from God, that each and every person is a child of God and has divine worth, and that what we do in this life will affect what happens to us for eternity. Having this knowledge helps me to put things in perspective and helps me brush off the fact that sometimes I just have to tell people, "I can't; I'm Mormon." **NE**