

# Q & A

*“One of my friends, who is active in the Church, has some anti-Mormon literature and thinks we should read it so we know how to respond to it. But I find that literature disturbing. What should I tell my friend?”*

## NEW ERA

If the misrepresentations in anti-Mormon literature really disturb you, then tell your friend how you feel so that he'll leave you alone about it. Tell him you'd rather read something you trust, like the scriptures or Church publications.

Here are a couple of things to remember about anti-Mormon material.

First, it would be a waste to spend a lot of time and energy reading it. For one thing, it's incredibly repetitive. Most of its questions and claims have been brought up—and answered—time and time again for over 100 years. But because anti-Mormon authors want to discredit the Church, they keep writing the same stuff over and over in the hope that they can reach a new audience. For another thing, you may not have the knowledge and experience to successfully investigate and counter all of the arguments they make. If you do end up reading something that criticizes the Church, discuss it with someone you trust who is knowledgeable in the gospel, like your parents, bishop, or seminary teacher. They can help you find answers and, more importantly, put things in proper perspective.

■ **Say you would rather read something you trust, like the scriptures.**

■ **Spending a lot of time and energy reading anti-Mormon literature would be a waste.**

■ **If you run across it, discuss it with someone who is knowledgeable about the gospel.**

■ **Never take anti-Mormon literature at face value.**

■ **Honest inquiry is good, but everything needs a proper perspective and context.**

Second, you should never take the claims of anti-Mormon literature at face value. Although some critics of the Church may be doing what they sincerely believe to be right, too many of them are either misinformed about the Church or downright antagonistic toward it. This latter group is often all too willing to rely on deception and dishonesty to achieve their goals. The literature they produce often uses lies or half-truths; it distorts, sensationalizes, or misinterprets Church teachings and history; its intent is to tear down the Church and scare people away from it.

Think of how you feel when you read the Book of Mormon, pray, or bear your testimony. How do those feelings compare with the feelings that come from reading anti-Mormon literature? Which is guiding you to the truth?

We're not against honest inquiry in the Church. We welcome it. The Apostle Paul said, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "One of the grand fundamental principles of 'Mormonism' is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may" (*History of the Church*, 5:499). As we search for truth



in Church teachings and history, we should remember that it is faith in Christ that helps us to “lay hold upon every good thing” (see Moroni 7:15–25). And we should keep everything in its proper perspective and context. President Gordon B. Hinckley has said:

“We seem to have a host of critics. Some appear intent on trying to destroy us. They mock that which is sacred. They belittle that which we call divine. Some have said that we are trapped by our history, others have worked with great diligence seeking flaws in our early leaders. . . .

“My plea is that as we continue our search for truth, particularly we of the Church, that we look for strength and goodness rather than weakness and foibles in those who did so great a work in their time. . . .

“ . . . I hope that we will cultivate an attitude of looking for positive elements which lead to growth and enthusiasm. We are not trapped by our history. That history contains the foundation of this work. . . .

“I do not fear truth. I welcome it. But I wish all of my facts to be in their proper context” (“The Continuing Pursuit of Truth,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1986, 4–6). **NE**

## READERS



***Reading anti-Mormon literature could deceive your friend, even if he or she has a strong testimony. The best way to know how to respond to opposing***

***views is to study the Book of Mormon. I know it is the word of God, and after all, it was written for our day! With the Holy Ghost to guide us as we read the Book of Mormon and other scriptures, we can learn to recognize deception and can have the Spirit to guide us when we may need to respond.***

*Alicia M., 18, Utah*

**Just tell your friend the truth, that you find that literature disturbing. If he or she is a true friend, he or she will have no problem with it. Stick with your feeling of not wanting to read it. If you do read it, it could open up a window of doubt. There are plenty of books (like True to the Faith) that have been written through inspiration. Pick up one of those so that you may know how to respond to questions.**

Brian P., 16, Arizona



**On my mission I have come across a lot of anti-Mormon literature. It is disturbing. I have seen honest seekers of truth fall away because of it. If you want to learn how to answer people's concerns, do two things: gain a strong testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, and know the doctrine by studying the scriptures. Then, when others come to you with concerns, you will have the power of the Holy Ghost to testify to you and to them of the truth.**

Sister Holly Erikson, 23, Tennessee Nashville Mission

**Anti-Mormon literature will be filled with scriptures or quotes that are taken out of context and twisted to serve the author's purpose of filling people's minds with doubt about the Church. The fact that you get an uneasy feeling when you read anti-Mormon literature should be proof enough. The best thing you can do to be prepared for questions is to be faithful and read the Book of Mormon daily. Also, most people who will ask you questions that come from the anti-Mormon literature are not interested in finding the gospel. They want you to argue with them so they can twist your words (see Alma 11).**

Jenika W., 19, Washington



**One day I was talking to a friend, who is not a member of our church, and we almost got to the point where we started putting each other's churches down, but I didn't want it to get to that point, so I just bore my**



**"The present effort of trying to find some other explanation for the organization of the Church, for the origin of the Book of Mormon, and for the priesthood with its keys and powers will be similar to other anti-Mormon fads which have come and blossomed and faded. Truth will prevail. A knowledge of that truth comes by effort and study, yes. But it comes primarily as a gift from God to those who seek in faith."**

President Gordon B. Hinckley, "Lord, Increase Our Faith," *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 52-53.

**testimony and stopped. A few weeks later I got some pamphlets and magazines in the mail from her. I could have kept them so that I would know what some writers think about our church, but I didn't. This experience made me want to be more prepared when things like this happen.**

Alexandria M., 15, Oregon

**What you read or watch has an effect on you. Part of the 13th article of faith says that "if there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things." I do not think reading anti-Mormon literature fits in the above statement. Plus you find the literature disturbing. That may be the Spirit sending you a message to stay away from this literature.**

Martyn T., 22, Wakiso, Uganda



**There is far greater benefit from searching the inspired words of prophets and apostles of the Lord, in the scriptures and Church magazines. That is when we receive the Spirit's direction, not when we are immersed in the adversary's filth.**

Elder Calvin Oberly Jr., 24, New York New York South Mission

*Responses are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.*

## NEXT QUESTION

**"I know it's important to study the scriptures, but I don't have the time to do it. How do I find the time?"**

**SEND YOUR ANSWER, along with your full name, birth date, ward and stake (or branch and district), and photograph (including your parent's written permission to print the photo, if you are under 18) to:**

**New Era, Q&A, 8/07**

**50 E. North Temple St. Rm. 2420**

**Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA**

**Or e-mail: [newera@ldschurch.org](mailto:newera@ldschurch.org)**

**Please respond by August 15, 2007.**