

FROM JOSEPH TO JESUS

The Testimony of John Divito

by John Divito

Centers For Apologetics Research
P.O. Box 1196
San Juan Capistrano
CA 92693 USA
info@thecenters.org
www.TheCenters.org

Tel: 949.496.2000
Fax: 949.496.2244

Since my birth I was raised in the atmosphere of the Mormon faith. My parents were dedicated to the Mormon Church, and I was in church every Sunday. I was also involved in many of the other activities the church offered. When I turned eight years old, I was baptized at the youngest age the church allowed, and I continued as a member of the church for a long time. I received the Aaronic priesthood at 12, had a temple recommend, and was baptized for the dead when I went to the temple. I also looked forward to the time when I could serve my two-year mission. But as I grew older, things began to change...

Eventually I reached an age where I could work. The church had begun to change in my eyes, and I didn't really have any problem neglecting it by working on Sundays. When it came down to it, I'd grown unhappy with Mormonism. I came to the point where I was more of an agnostic. I never really denied God's existence — I just didn't care. I had my own life to live. So I worked through the rest of high school.

When I turned eighteen I had a decision to make. Of course, this is the time when I was supposed to go on my two-year mission. I had been raised expecting to go on a mission, and I had even wanted to go through most of my youth. But I didn't care much about religious matters anymore. I wanted to go to college so that I could get a good education and live a decent life. Therefore, I began attending college. After all, I thought it was going to determine how much money I was going to make. While attending college, something amazing happened: I met a woman named Jennifer. I certainly wasn't looking for anyone. But through a mutual friend, we had begun talking on the Internet. At first I just thought of her as a friend, but as we continued to talk, I started to really like her. After about three months, we decided to meet. And after meeting, we began to date. I was on cloud nine.

There was only one problem — Jennifer was a Christian. Not that I really minded. I didn't necessarily think that there wasn't a God; I just hadn't cared for so long. She was very active in a campus ministry, and I began attending some ministry activities to spend more time with her. In time, I decided to prove to her that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was the true church. After all, if she was going to be devoted in her beliefs, it should be with the true church. I realized that in order to accomplish this, I would need to study and understand the materials out there written against Mormonism. Then I could refute their arguments and demonstrate to her why Mormonism was true.

This led to a huge problem. The things I was reading could not easily be disproved. As a matter of fact, they could not be disproved — they were telling the truth. The evidence they gave was well documented and easily verifiable. I started to understand more about the history of Joseph Smith and of the Book of Mormon. There were also doctrinal problems that made the theology of the church illogical and irrational. I began having

a crisis of faith: Was everything I had ever been taught through the Mormon Church wrong? After my research, I found out what I had believed was wrong. For me, learning the truth about Joseph Smith and the dubiousness of the Book of Mormon were the two primary reasons that caused me to leave the church.

As more time passed, the minister from the campus ministry began making sense. I decided to go with the group to a mission trip in Mexico over spring break. When we finally got down there, I took some time to talk to the associate minister. We spent a long time talking about spiritual things. I realized that I was a sinner — that I had disobeyed God by trying to run my own life and do things my own way. I also knew Mormonism didn't have the answer, and I knew I could never be good enough to make things right with God (even by keeping the ordinances of the church and the law of the gospel).

Worst of all, I knew I deserved God's punishment for my sins. So I confessed this to the associate minister, and he told me that Christ died on the cross to take all of this punishment upon Him. Christ also rose from the dead three days later and He has been alive ever since. The associate minister continued by saying that if I came to faith in Christ and what He had done for me, my sins would be forgiven and God would judge me based on Christ's perfection and righteousness instead of my sinfulness. This was the key. Nothing I could do would help or make me better off. It was not about me anyway. It is about God, whose creation rebelled against Him, and about what He did to restore His relationship with this creation. I realized that what He did through Christ was glorious, and I wanted nothing more than to trust in Him. As a result, I told the associate minister that I wanted to become a Christian. He celebrated with me, and we told God together of my decision by prayer. He then recommended I should get baptized. Later in the week the entire campus ministry went down with me to a lake where he baptized me. This was the best decision I ever made.

I realized that my separation from God no longer existed! Through Christ, the barrier my sin had made was removed. And as a result, I was in a wonderful relationship with my Creator. I now had purpose in my life. I existed to serve God and to glorify Him. Learning the truth and about Christianity had totally changed my life. I began to see a real need for Christians to be better trained biblically and to be able to discern truth from error. I gained a passion to use my talents and gifts to serve God in this matter. Because of this, I began gaining education for this purpose at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I also continue to have a heart for the Mormon people and a desire to show them the truth. I hope that through my involvement with CFAR I will be able to help others in the pursuit of this truth. And I will never forget that for the rest of my life, I will live first and foremost to serve the Lord and to do His will. 🌐



John Divito is the director of The Africa Center for Apologetics Research.

John was raised an active Mormon but surrendered his life to Christ during his college years. He became active in campus ministry at Missouri State University and, resolving to serve Christ more fully, enrolled at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In May of 2007, John received his Master of Divinity degree upon completing the applied apologetics track in the seminary's school of missions, evangelism, and church growth.

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