

Escape From the Cult – My Personal Story[©]

The cult leader burst through the door of the small room where I was being held prisoner.

"Are you ready to repent!" he shouted, his face red with anger. "Are you ready to come into our meeting and admit you were worshipping at the altar of Baal!"

I fell back on my bed, emotionally cringing at the thought of another encounter. After nine months of his tirades and charges of being a traitor to God, plus disillusionment over beloved doctrines and believing I'd never see my family again, I didn't care if I lived or died.

Sick, and fighting waves of nausea, I had no strength to reason with this man . . . a man whom I once thought held special favor with God . . . a man I thought held the Priesthood.

"All I want to do now, is die," I said weakly.

"No way!" He moved closer, his body towering over me. "Wouldn't you just love to have something happen to you so the police would come in! There's no way you're going to bring a murder charge down on me!" he shouted. "You're going to stay alive so you can repent! You're a traitor, not only to us, but God! Denounce the Jesus you found in that Christian church!"

He stormed out of the room yelling, his footsteps echoing through the empty building. I heard the front door slam shut and I was left alone in the silence.

I lay on the bed, staring up at the bare light bulb dangling from the hole in the ceiling. Looking continuously at bleak, unfinished walls day after day in a small, 8x10 room, was almost more than I could bear.

Captive in that small room for nine months, I suffered through crushing disappointments, unanswered questions, mental and emotional agonies, depression, and failing health. At times it became so bad, I thought I was losing my mind. All I wanted to do was die. Little did I know that a week later my death would nearly become a reality.

I lay there wondering. How did such a noble venture on my part turn into such a nightmare? I prayed to be led to more truth! I hoped to serve God more fully by joining the Order!

My mind retraced the steps of how I had landed in such a frightful situation. I was restless and bored in the mainline Mormon Church to which I had belonged to for thirty-five years. Having served in practically every church capacity, I was spurred on by their teaching to strive for perfection—hungry for some additional opportunity to draw closer to God and have a deeper relationship with Christ.

My persistence led to discovering the secret underground movement—Mormon Fundamentalism—an apostate offshoot of the mainline LDS Church. It prides itself on practicing and teaching doctrines from the early church that the mainline LDS Church no longer teaches. I began attending their secret meetings, and studied their literature. I became

convinced that they were living everything that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young promulgated.

But more than that, I also knew that in earlier times the mainline LDS church under Brigham Young had practiced a United Order—living communally and having all things in common. Today, in the mainline church, it is not practiced. Surely, I thought, if I could live this kind of life, it would be a good test to see if I could unselfishly share everything I had with others. It would perfect me and I would draw closer to God.

The Fundamentalist Orders did practice communal living. Spread throughout Mexico, Utah, Idaho, Colorado, Wyoming, Arizona, New Mexico, Canada, California, Oregon and Nevada, their membership of about 50-60 thousand consisted mostly of excommunicated members from the mainline LDS church; also a good number who were still in good standing in the mainline church and kept their fundamentalist affiliation and beliefs secret. Any member, however, discovered having interests or sympathies with this organization, is excommunicated because of the strong antagonism between the two groups. Why the antagonism?

Fundamentalists accuse the mainline church of succumbing to federal pressure in 1890, and not standing up for God by maintaining the original doctrines and practices that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young taught. These practices and doctrines included United Order, polygamy (*not all Fundamentalists practice the latter*) the Adam-God doctrine, and other beliefs. Fundamentalists insist that they have been true and faithful to God by embracing the older priesthood structure and by wearing the long style of temple garments used in the nineteenth century, whereas the mainline church abandoned them.

A United Order seemed like an answer to my prayer, and I began attending their secret meetings in Salt Lake City.

I was warned not to drive my own car, but to ride with someone else. "The Investigation Committee of the LDS (Mormon) Church," members explained, "somehow always finds out when and where meetings are to be held and take down the license plates of all cars within a two block radius. If any attendee is identified as a member of the mainline church, they are called in by their bishop and asked to sign a Test Oath." At that time, this consisted of a lengthy document vowing full allegiance to church leaders in Salt Lake City. To my knowledge, the signing of this kind of document is no longer required.

At Fundamentalist meetings I learned about "United Effort" groups that shared goods and finances that operated on a smaller scale than that of a United Order.

Since the New Testament saints had tried it in the Book of Acts, I believed it was a heavenly principle and that God had restored it through Joseph Smith. By participating in a system where everything was held in common, it would be a good method to purge out any hidden selfishness I might have, perfect myself and grow closer to God—it was the opportunity of a lifetime! I envisioned everyone loving each other in Christ—a virtual paradise! My husband passed away a year earlier, my children were grown and living in other states, so I was free to go. Before leaving, I made a special commitment to God that I would share everything I had.

I put my home up for sale, more than willing to give the proceeds to the Order. Since the house didn't sell by the time I was ready to leave, I left it in the hands of a realtor. With stars

in my eyes I took off with a heavily loaded U-Haul containing every stick of furniture I owned, for one of the Orders in Montana.

Here, I will insert a brief commentary that is essential to my story. I have not written this story to entertain you with an exciting narrative because the story is not about “me.” It is about *God*—especially how he used scriptural promises contained in His Word to not only lead me out of Mormonism but also to preserve my life when I was at the point of death (*an RN later told me that I actually did die*). Why do I say that God uses and applies scripture in our lives? Because contained within the scriptures are the principles that God “operates” by. He said so in Jeremiah 1:12 (Amp): “*I am alert and active, watching over my word to perform it.*” That means He is watching over His word to perform it in His children’s lives for their benefit and to draw them to Him—especially those who are seekers. He promised these individuals in Jer. 29:13 “*You will find me when you search for me with all your heart.*”

One of His scriptural principles that He especially applied to me and my situation was to perform a “*marvelous work and a wonder*” in my life. (Isa. 29:14) And do you know what that marvelous work and wonder is? Making the blind to see!

Now, back to my story . . .

The Order was located on a remote farm in the boondocks near Flathead Lake. The old wood-framed farmhouse at the end of a long, dirt driveway served as the headquarters where meetings were held. There was a corral for cows, and a huge cornfield. A large, two-story, unfinished building sat at the back of the property. Finished outside, its interior consisted only of studs to indicate where future rooms would be with the exception of one small sheet-rocked, 8 x 10 room. The contents of my U-Haul were placed upstairs in this building.

At first, I was treated royally and showered with love and attention. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven! I learned later that when one first enters a cult, this is called the "honeymoon period." But as I was soon to find out, it wouldn't last.

It was a tough adjustment. Drinking water had to be hauled in due to too much iron in the well water. The brownish-red water we bathed in was like taking a bath in root beer—a novelty at first—requiring us to drive to a Laundromat in a nearby town to do laundry. There was only one bathroom for fourteen people, and the toilet was clogged most of the time. There were other shocking conditions that I prefer not to mention. However, I didn't mind—I was living a principle I believed was right.

Gradually, things began to change. Loving attitudes soon reverted to strife, jealousy, and contention. It was a shock when I realized everyone didn't love each other.

The months dragged on, and life in the Order grew progressively worse. Stricter rules were added, and robot obedience to the leader's priesthood authority was demanded. If I had to drive into town to the Laundromat, I was obliged to say, "Please, may I"—and then only if I said it just right and in a humble enough tone. The joy I experienced at the beginning of my venture was gone—I felt desolate. I never heard anything about Jesus Christ.

In addition, the violent temper and sharp tongue of the leader's wife continually left me in tears. Devastated over her jealous hatred toward me and shocked at the Order's unexpected demands and control, plus not allowed any individual interests and expressing opinions as a woman was not tolerated, I began to withdraw. I put up with the adults when I was forced into their company during chores, but I mostly kept to myself, associating with the children who genuinely enjoyed my company.

Although most of my activities were strictly curtailed, I still had one freedom—that is, if I asked nicely enough. Since the Order's church services on Sundays were held in the afternoons, I was given permission to drive up to Flathead Lake in the mornings. When asked why I wanted to go, I told the leader I wanted to pray and meditate on the wonderful principles of the Order. (*Sort of a lie, although I did pray*) The real reason? I needed to get away from what seemed like a dark cloud over the farm. There were times when I happened to walk out to the road to the mailbox and when I looked at the house as I walked back, I actually saw a dark cloud. It hovered over the main farmhouse and spread out over the cornfield. It had nothing to do with the sky; it was summertime and it could be a beautiful sunny day. The Lord has always blessed me in the past with insight about spiritual things, often visual, including that which is evil. So, I understood and sensed what the cloud meant but I was confused, because I truly believed God meant for me to share with each other and to go into this Order. How could that be evil? (*We'll see later that he really did want me to go into it, and the reason.*)

At the lake, I always prayed. I poured my heart out to God asking him to lift my depression. I prayed for humility so I would be more submissive to the leader. I prayed for charity, so I could become immune to his wife's verbal abuse. Her tongue was like a two-edged sword. It never entered my mind to flee. I had my car and certainly could have taken off. But I had covenanted before God to enter the Order and share everything I had, and felt a sacred obligation to keep that covenant.

Winter soon set in and the snow became too deep to drive to the lake. However, determined not to give up my Sunday mornings I pretended to go to the lake, but instead, drove aimlessly over the barren plains.

One morning, out in the middle of nowhere, I came to the intersection of two lone highways. On one corner was a gas station. On the other was a small Christian church named, The Little Brown Church. Nothing else for miles. I decided to go in, realizing that I would have to keep it a secret from the Order. I quietly slipped into the back row.

The singing and atmosphere of peace and love were in such sharp contrast to life on the farm, that my spirits immediately lifted. The song leader and pastor spoke so many kind and loving things that I began to gain a clearer perspective of how wrong things were in the Order. (*That didn't mean I thought of leaving the Order. I had to keep my covenant with God.*)

Strangely, in that little church, rather than the pastor it was the song leader who influenced me the most. Before every hymn, he took the time to explain what each verse meant (*all four verses!*) Perhaps he did it for my sake. Certainly, I had to be conspicuous in my ankle length skirt, and my up-to-the-neck, long-sleeved-down-to-the-wrist blouse. Nevertheless, for the first time I learned what grace meant—something never expounded on in the LDS Church in

my day. I also learned that works would never get me into heaven. Since both the Mormon Church and the Order taught and demanded that, this really sent my confused thinking into a whirl!

He also explained what Calvary and reconciliation really meant. Contrary to Mormon teaching, Adam's sin did apply to me. Inherently, I was a sinner—not a basically good person who was a literal, divine, spiritual offspring of God! That was a tough pill to swallow!

But in the face of it all, I began to gain a new understanding of what Jesus did for me on the cross. This, of course, did not mean I thought of leaving the Order, nor giving up my belief in other Mormon doctrines. I simply incorporated the new concepts into my Mormon thinking.

Returning to the farm I was able to cope with the abuse for another week. The leader's wife could lash out at me with her sharp tongue and it was like water rolling off a duck's back. My church experience somehow miraculously lifted all my depression as I focused on the strange new beliefs about Jesus and eagerly looked forward to the next Sunday.

My change did not go unnoticed by the others. The children came to me and said that their parents were making remarks such as, "I wonder what's come over Janis?" Then another adult would respond, "I don't know, but whatever it is, it's sure good!"

However, after attending for four Sundays, my worst fears were realized—I was followed!

When I returned to the farm, the leader confronted me.

"Have you been attending that Little Brown Church!" he shouted.

"Yes," I replied timidly. "But let me tell you about Jesus . . . I got no further. In times past I had seen individuals lose their temper, but I had never seen *rage* before. I was shocked, as all hell literally broke loose!

"Didn't you know you were worshipping at the Altar of Baal!" he screamed. "Attending that Christian church now makes you guilty of spiritual adultery!"

"Why are you treating me this way?" I cried. "Don't we believe in Jesus?"

"Of course," came his caustic retort, "but you found him in a Christian church instead of through me! I'm your spiritual head! You learn through me!"

Demanding the keys to my car, I dutifully handed them over. I no longer had my freedom. I was confined to the unfinished building at the back of the farm in the 8x10 room that was sheet rocked. There was a bed, a dresser and a small window. A bare light bulb hung from a hole in the ceiling. There was no running water or toilet facilities—only a thunder bucket.

There, I was to remain in isolation. Everyone was forbidden to speak with me or be in my presence, including the children. The only way I could be reinstated in fellowship was to come into their Sunday Sacrament meeting and publicly repent of my sin for attending the church—also to denounce the Christian Jesus. I refused. And my refusal wasn't something I had to

wrestle with, like whether I should do it or not. It just came automatic and naturally from my heart and spirit.

Nevertheless, as I sat in that room, Bible verses my Christian grandmother repeated to me when I was young went through my mind—special verses about God's love. (*I was raised a Protestant until the age of 14*) I thought of my unselfish reason for entering the Order, my love for Jesus and desire to grow closer to God. Why was He letting all this happen to me? And *why* did the leader react the way he did? The answer to that is in John 15:21:

“But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, BECAUSE they know not him that sent me.”

Alone in that small room, I was miserable. To keep from going crazy during my solitary confinement I began reading books and unpublished manuscripts the leader kept giving me—books carefully handed down from early Mormon times and which were supposed to contain the "higher truths" of God. Instead, I discovered shocking doctrines about Joseph Smith. Also, strange temple rituals that I had never heard of or witnessed when I had gone through the temple years earlier. I read of men being sealed (*married*) in the temple to men, instead of men to women, and suggestive innuendoes of how these sealings were to be consummated!

In addition, while I was already familiar with the doctrine of plural wives in Brigham Young’s day, I was not prepared to read about women having plural *husbands*. How could I belong to something that believed like that! Even though these practices were not presently practiced by the mainline church, surely this couldn't be what the Mormon Church was *founded* upon! I was shattered, suspecting that other doctrines I had believed in for so long might also be wrong. Unbeknown to me at the time, this was one of the reasons God “allowed” me to go into Fundamentalism so I could see with my own eyes what the church was actually founded upon. He knew I was an information-gearer and that I would need to be somewhere where I could see the truth about Mormonism in black and white in order for my eyes to be opened. This information was unavailable in bookstores, and the internet hadn't come into being yet.

Throughout the difficult months, the leader periodically came into my room to rail upon and revile me, trying to force me to recant my stand. Over and over he demanded that I renounce the Christian Jesus. "*Repent!*" he yelled. Again, I refused. There was no way I would renounce the Christian Jesus even if I ended up dying. He screamed on his way out, "*If you ever get into the Celestial Kingdom, it will only be because I, a priesthood holder, decide to reach down and pull you up!*" But God was watching over me, even though at the time I wasn't familiar with I Pet. 3:13:

And who is he that will harm you if you be followers of that which is good? And if you suffer for righteousness sake, happy are you; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.

My health deteriorated. I grew thinner—actually, skinny (*I definitely beat the anorexic look*). My thinking processes became sluggish; no doubt a combination of poor food and living conditions. At times it was difficult to even make my mind work. Other times, I found myself going through mental gymnastics in an attempt to rationalize my circumstances and soon actually had myself believing my situation was what I deserved.

I slipped in and out of deep depression—sometimes so deep that I was on the verge of suicide. I had so wanted to live the principle that Joseph Smith had advocated and what the New Testament Christians tried. I was willing to share everything I had with others—even giving the leader practically all of my life's savings—in the belief I was giving to God.

Surprisingly, I never entertained the idea of trying to escape even though I had concluded that the rules and the leader's principles he lived by were wrong. Why not? Because I was concerned about the commitment I made when I went into the Order. I had promised God that I would share everything I had and I didn't want to break my promise, even if it meant dying. Plus, the leader's words resounded in my mind over and over again: "*God doesn't like a covenant breaker—God doesn't like a covenant—breaker*"—a kind of brainwashing that he drilled into members.

Not wanting God to ever think I was a covenant-breaker I resigned myself to my fate. Come what may, I would not try to escape and become that! I would be faithful to whatever promise I made to God. To me, a promise was a promise and binding even if done in error. More especially, come what may, I was determined not to renounce the Christian Jesus.

Seven months passed . . . eight . . . nine. I was at the lowest ebb of my life. My health grew worse. I lost all incentive to live. (*Picture yourself in the smallest room in your house, for example the bathroom, for 9 months, spending 24 hours a day doing nothing but staring at four walls, feeling the effects of being charged with spiritual adultery, and considered anathema to your peers. But even during all my low moments I still loved Jesus.*)

However, I look at it this way. In child birth there is a gestation period of nine months before the baby is birthed. I consider the nine months I spent in that room my gestation period before being birthed into Christianity. There would, however, be labor pains.

"Why don't you let me die?" I said one day to the leader on one of his abusive visits. His response was always the same.

"You're staying alive—you're not going to bring law down on me!" (*He felt that if I died and the police came in, he'd face a murder charge.*)

In my weakened condition I wondered how long it would take to actually die—my answer came sooner than I anticipated. And even though I didn't know about Jer. 1:12 at the time, God's word was in operation and He was actively watching over his word to perform it in my life.

One afternoon the eleven-year-old son of the leader managed to sneak into the building in an attempt to visit me and found me unconscious on the floor.

As was told to me later by the leader's oldest son, the child ran out and told the adults. The leader and his so-called, priesthood-holding cronies rushed into my room. They lifted me back upon my bed and immediately began praying and anointing me with oil. At the same time they called upon the authority of their Holy Melchizedek Mormon priesthood to raise the dead.

They feverishly worked over me—not because they were concerned about *me*, but because their worse fears might be realized—I might die and their revered leader could face a murder charge! But two of the scriptures the Lord had in operation were the following even though I didn't know these scriptures at the time:

“Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him . . . to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.” (Ps. 33:18)

Regarding his sheep, Jesus said: *“They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”*

I have no idea how long I was unconscious, but when I finally came to my body felt so horrible that I weakly raised one arm to look at it.

I had never before seen anything so grotesque! There was no pink color at all. Every bit of my flesh was a solid fusion of black, gray and purple. My other arm was the same. I assumed that my whole body had to be that way.

Seeing that I had rallied, they left. To my relief the leader quit coming to my room when he finally realized that I was not going to repent of my so-called sin nor renounce Jesus. However, the leader made sure his wife brought better food in to me. She reluctantly complied, along with throwing me hostile looks of anger. She was mad because by my nearly dying I had nearly jeopardized the legal safety of her husband. How dare I!

During the next two months I slowly regained a degree of strength, but not without health problems progressively becoming worse. The worst to deal with were the crippling pain spasms that shot like electric shocks through my neck and back, striking without warning. By the time I escaped I was in bad shape:

I had a severe hemorrhage that required 6 blood transfusions
Still had crippling back spasms and had to wear a neck brace for a long time
Had a completely paralyzed colon and was facing a colostomy
Had surgery for other related matters

But, Jer. 30:17 was also in operation: *“I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds.”* But, I'm getting ahead of my story.

How did I eventually escape? And, considering I was determined to stay, why?

One day something strange but marvelous happened. Kneeling by my bed and praying aloud, entertaining no thoughts about asking for help to escape, I was right in the middle of a sentence when my voice was stopped and I was totally interrupted with these words:

"I shall deliver you."

At the time I didn't know Jer. 39:17:

“I will deliver you in that day, and you shall not be given into the hands of the men whom you are afraid. For I will surely deliver you.”

Stunned when I heard those words, I sat back on my haunches with full recognition that it was from God. A surprising peace filled me, then elation.

Wow! I thought. God evidently approves of my leaving! That means if I leave, he won't consider me a covenant-breaker! It was all I needed. Although extremely thin and still suffering from serious physical problems, I became excited about leaving. Then I wondered how? When?

My thoughts turned to my furniture and personal belongings stored on the floor above me. I didn't want to leave without them since my house in California had not sold—I would need them. (*God saved my house for me. I learned later that He also protected my house from four fires started in the basement by children breaking in.*) My plan of escape began to form.

I watched out the small window of my room on the day that I knew the leader and members went into town. After they piled into their cars, including mine, I waited about twenty minutes. Leaving my room, I walked through the vacant building and towards the front door. Miraculously, it was unlocked.

I crossed the yard and headed toward the main farmhouse when my heart stopped. Two men came out of the house, heading towards the corral. I thought everyone had left. They were about 150 feet across the yard and appeared to glance in my direction, yet it was as if they didn't even see me. They continued on to the corrals and I hurried to the rear of the farmhouse, my heart in my throat.

Quickly slipping through the back door, I reached for the kitchen telephone and fumbled through the telephone directory. I dialed a Mayflower moving company and made arrangements for them to come the following week. I then hurried back to my room, all of which was not easy because of my neck and back pain.

The night before the van was due to arrive, I waited until dark when everyone was in bed, then crept out of my room. I knew the leader kept the keys to my car on a nail inside the back door of the main farmhouse. I was glad for one thing—he had been using my car the last nine months so the battery wasn't dead. Quickly, I grabbed the keys and hurried back to my room.

The pre-arranged morning arrived and I heard the Mayflower pull into the long dirt driveway. Hurrying out of the building, grateful for what strength I had, I waved my arms and motioned to the driver.

At the sound of the huge truck the leader and others came rushing out of the main house. They can't stop me now, I thought, not with strangers on the property! (*The Order had a rule: when strangers were present on the farm, keep a low profile so as not to raise suspicions.*)

I spoke with the drivers, a husband and wife team. Signing the papers, I wondered why a large white dove was painted on the door of their cab. I learned later that they were Christians. I didn't know that's what a dove stood for. Now, can you call that a coincidence?

I directed them to where everything was stored, then stuck to them like glue. The leader and other members stood their distance silently fuming, daring not to prevent me with outsiders there.

When nearly finished, the driver and his wife asked, "Is everything all right?"

"Yes," I said, sensing that although they were puzzled, they knew I was in some kind of tense situation.

"I'll meet you in three days at my California address," I said. "But, just before you drive out, do me a favor? Let me pull out in front of you." They seemed to understand.

Nervously, I walked to my car and climbed in. Suddenly, in the side-view mirror I saw the leader start towards me. I panicked.

Turning the key, I jammed my foot down on the accelerator and took off. Momentarily losing control of the car, I sideswiped a pile of railroad ties that were stacked alongside the driveway and bashed a huge dent in the passenger side. I gunned the car down the long driveway and onto the open highway. Free at last!

I headed towards Kalispell to wire my California bank for money. I had just enough left to finance my trip home. Other than that, I had nothing. However, for now my dominant thought was, *I'm free!*

As I drove, I began to cry. First, I cried out of relief because I had escaped. I cried because God approved of my leaving and didn't consider me a covenant-breaker. I cried because my body felt so sick and terrible. I cried because my Mormon beliefs had been destroyed. Lastly, I cried because my dream of finding a community sanctioned by God with everyone wanting to live, love, and share had been a delusion.

Considering all my health problems, how did I have the physical strength to get out of there, let alone drive from Montana to California? How? Because God was still "alert and active, watching over His word to perform it," in this instance, the following:

"He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increases strength."
(Isa 40:29)

When I arrived home, it was over—or so I thought. I was unaware of the length of time it would take to overcome all the physical and emotional aftereffects.

I was facing three to eight years of flashbacks, conflicting emotions and nightmares. Plus, after nine months of severe isolation, I grappled with disorientation and an inability to speak and relate to people. It was like learning how to talk all over again. Everything was a strange adjustment. In stores, even clothes hanging on racks had an eerie feeling to them, like I had entered a different planet.

In addition I had anxiety attacks, fearing that the cult leader would find me and either force me back to the cult, or carry out the doctrine of "Blood Atonement" on me. I was afraid to walk by any window at night, for fear of being shot. In the cult's eyes I had apostatized from God, and Jesus' blood couldn't cover something that terrible. The only way I would inherit some degree of salvation in heaven and be saved, were if my own blood were spilt—and it was their responsibility to see that this was done.

I was also left with prolonged health problems mentioned earlier, but God eventually relieved me from them. As far as the colostomy the doctor said I was facing, I was spared that because of the focused efforts of Christians in the small church I came into, praying for my condition, plus an outstanding, outright instantaneous miracle at a Christian conference). I later described my condition to an RN in my church—about the purple and black skin after I regained consciousness—and she said I had actually died. I, of course, have no proof of that; but I do have proof within my spirit that God was with me and protected me.

One might ask, considering everything that happened to me, why did God allow me to go into the Fundamentalist Order? He allowed it because he knew that would be my route out. Only there would I learn things about Mormonism that I could not gain elsewhere—no internet yet. And what was the scriptural principle in operation as He led me into Fundamentalism that I didn't know about at the time?

“And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known. These things will I do unto them, AND NOT FORSAKE THEM.” (Isa 42:16)

Although in a Christian church with no desire to return to the Montana group or the mainline church, I was, nevertheless, plagued with what-if questions despite my love for Jesus. *What if* the Book of Mormon is really true! *What if* Joseph Smith was really a prophet! *What if* I become a daughter of perdition by leaving! These what-if questions, I learned later, are typical concerns not only of ex-Mormons but all those exiting cults. Dealing with the emotional aftermath would prove to be the most soul-wrenching, excruciating, experience of my life as I underwent one psychological crisis after another.

Nevertheless, I knew that God had watched over me through the whole ordeal. If He had not spoken to me in that moment of prayer, I never would have left the Order and there is no question in my mind that if I had stayed I would have died for sure. Further, he has healed me totally from all the physical ailments I had.

I have never felt sorry for myself because look where I am today! I can say with the Psalmist, in Ps. 119:71:

“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.”

As I drove that long, difficult journey to California, all I knew was that I had escaped from the cult alive and was headed home to my new life as a Christian!

EPILOGUE

Here are nine scriptural principles that I learned God operates by and performed in my life—and will for you, too:

1. God's word contains principles he operates by; therefore, he is alert and active watching over them to perform them. He said so in Jer. 1:12
2. God will use them in your behalf, even if you are unaware of them at the time.
3. God will lead one to the truth in his own timing and via his own route.
4. Jesus delivers from the most difficult bondage and is with all those who put their trust in him. (Jer. 39:17)
5. He will not allow any man to pluck his children out of his hand. (Jn 10:28)
6. Jesus will protect those who are at the hands of ungodly men. (Jer. 39:17)
7. When God begins a work in an individual, he will see it through to its completion. (Phil. 1:6)
8. Jesus hears the genuine prayers of individuals regardless of the denomination they might be in at the time. (Ps. 102:17)
9. Romans 8:28-29 is positively true:

”Nothing can EVER separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.”

Further, God can free you . . . He can heal you . . . He is able to do anything your life requires! And all he asks in return is one thing: (Ps. 50:15)

“Call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you – and you shall glorify me.

When he blesses us—glorifying him is our responsibility.

AFTERWORD

Adjusting to a traditional Christian church, and dealing with the bewildering aftermath of problems, proved extremely difficult. The Christian pastor and his wife, while very loving people, could not understand what I was going through. Most pastors, with all their seminary training in counseling, are unprepared to address the unique problems that former Mormons, or ex-cultists from other religious organizations, bring with them.

Therefore, an ex-Mormon friend and I drove six hours to Salt Lake City, to search Christian bookstores. We hoped to find a book that would explain the stressful problems we were having. Finding no such book, I decided it needed to be written.

Therefore, in 1994, after earning my B.th and M.A. degrees in Theology, Kregel Publications published my first book, *"Out of the Cults and Into the Church: Understanding and encouraging ex-cultists"*—the only book on the Christian market to describe in extensive detail the traumatic difficulties ex-cultists go through. The book is an excellent resource for lay Christians and pastors, enabling them to understand these unique problems. The book is designed two ways:

1. It offers insight and guidelines to Christians who are trying to help former cultists, and at the end of each chapter is a section entitled, "How Christians Can Help."

Christians indeed need to be educated since ex-cultists usually will not share their problems with those working with them. They will deceptively portray a positive and joyful façade due to:

- (a) they sense that Christians expect them to overcome their problems faster, which they are unable to do, and
- (b) they know Christians can't possibly understand what they're going through even if they try to explain it to them. The stress of covering up problems can prove traumatic. With no understanding help, many return to their cult.

2. The book is also designed for new converts to Christ who will see, probably for the first time, *why* they are having such severe problems because in the midst of their emotional upheaval they are incapable of assessing this.

In 1995, Kregel Publications published my second book, "*The Mormon Missionaries: An inside look at their real message and methods*," and a Spanish version: "*Misioneros Mormones*" for distribution in Latin America. This book is appropriate even to hand to Mormons (*because it is not a bashing book*). It also serves to confirm to ex-Mormons that they made the right decision to leave.

"*The Mormon Missionaries*" is set against the backdrop of a Bible College where I taught for a short time. At that time, two Mormon missionaries bravely ventured onto campus and the book spring-boarded from there. I wrote it with a story line like a novel for easy reading.

The story centers around Susan, a student who falls for one of the handsome Mormon missionaries. Believing she can convert him to Christianity she agrees to take their lessons but soon finds herself in over her head, torn between her emotions and her Christian faith. A concerned teacher on campus, a former Mormon, accompanies her to the lessons, counsels Susan about their false claims, and discusses the Mormon material in her cults class. The book exposes Mormon evangelizing strategies, unveils doctrines purposely concealed from potential converts, reveals sources that Joseph Smith used for his doctrines, and much more.

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