

Presented 7 August 1997 to a discussion group with the Humanists of Utah. All the information provided below was compiled from the materials given me during my mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1993 to 1995.

A Uniform System for Teaching the Gospel

1. Introduction: missionary life.

A missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is required to have been a member of the Church for at least one year (membership requiring baptism, and confirmation), and to have gone through a series of interviews with his Bishop, and Stake President, qualifying him as worthy. This worthiness must be what is considered ‘temple worthy,’ even though a missionary does not technically have to go through the temple, or receive a ‘Patriarchal Blessing,’ (a blessing, received only once by a church authority on the Stake level called a Patriarch, indicating status in one of the twelve tribes of Israel, and often giving other blessings, and counsel).

As stated in the Church Handbook of Instructions (1999), ‘Priesthood leaders have an important responsibility to help identify and prepare worthy, qualified members for full-time missionary service. . . . Because all worthy, able young men [19-25] should serve full-time missions, leaders give special attention to helping them prepare, particularly those who seem uncertain about serving.’ Women from age 21 are eligible to go on missions, but after age 39, it is not encouraged. Married couples also can go on missions, if they are not ‘engaged in full-time employment’ or ‘have any dependent children living at home’ if serving away from home.

At this point an application is sent to the First Presidency of the Church—The President/Prophet, and his two counselors—who then decide, in conjunction with the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, where said applicant should serve, or if he or she qualifies for said service. (Often physical handicaps can disqualify an individual for full time service and other ‘calls’ are made to these individuals. It is quite rare for an individual to be turned down for some sort of missionary service after said person has gone through his or her interviews.)

The standard time for full time missionary service is two years for Elders (the official priesthood designation of authority required to be a missionary) and one-and-a-half years for the Sisters. Once the application for missionary service is accepted, a ‘call’ is then issued to the individual from the President himself, and is considered as inspiration from the Lord. It contains a one-page form letter informing the individual of his/her call, and place of call, as well as the spiritual nature of the call. It is signed personally by the President. Other various items are included, such as medical forms (based on the country of the call), and required items to bring along (as well as items not to bring along): essentially clothes, an approved list of books (The ‘standard works,’ consisting of The Book of Mormon, The Doctrine & Covenants, The Pearl of Great Price, The King James version of The Bible, The Topical Guide, The Bible Dictionary, and assorted annotations, including most of the Joseph Smith Translation of The Bible; Jesus the Christ, Articles of Faith, A Marvelous Work & a Wonder, & Truth Restored), and items such as writing paper for sending letters. There are also grooming requirements (such as hair required to be above the ear and not touching the collar for Elders), MTC scheduling and meetings, and basic requirements of conduct.

The day before one leaves, one is ‘set apart’ to be an Elder or Sister, receiving a revelatory priesthood blessing from his or her Stake President. At that point one is bound by the missionary codes of conduct. At the Missionary Training Center (the main center being in Provo Utah, though there is a training center in London, England, and other small centers in other parts of Europe), one’s parents (not other friends, including boy or girl friends are invited: only close family) join the missionary in a meeting, and then final farewells are given to family which will never be seen for the rest of the mission. Two phone calls (home only) a year are allowed: Mother’s Day, and Christmas.

Missionary hierarchical structure begins with the missionary and his or her companion (always of the same sex) who are required to ‘be together’ at all times. No deviation of this rule is accepted (except transfers of the individual to a different city, in which case every attempt to make sure that individual has a companion is made). Groups of companions are put together in Districts, headed by a District Leader (which can only be an Elder), who is considered the spiritual leader of the district. Several districts comprise a Zone, and several Zones comprise a Mission. A Mission President, his counselors, and two missionary Assistants heads

the mission. The Mission President is the spiritual leader of the individual until the missionary is ‘released’ from the mission. All mission leaders (District Leader, Zone leader, Assistants, Counselors, etc.) are ‘called’ by the Mission President.

Each missionary is given a ‘Missionary Handbook’ (sometimes called the ‘Little White Bible’) which is a moral and ethical guidebook for the missionary. It is to be kept on one’s person at all times, and is to be read cover to cover a minimum of once a week. The missionary is to do nothing beyond the bounds of the guidebook, and is to follow the guidebook strictly. The missionary is also given a document called ‘The Fundamental Considerations for Proclaiming the Gospel,’ a Missionary Health Manual, a Missionary Gospel Study Program guide (a guide for studying the scriptures), a training guide (consisting of the exact methods and skills to be used in presenting the gospel), a package of six after baptism discussion manuals (with instruction manual), and the six discussion manuals themselves (with instruction manual and flip chart).

The missionary stays at the MTC for two or three weeks, or for 2.5 months if a language must be learned. The Training Center focuses on learning the language to be used, the six discussions, and the training guide. No free time is given on a mission, with the exception of Preparation Day, which is a day that lasts till 6 P.M. The rest of the day is used for proselyting as usual (a day begins at 6.30 A.M.—6.00 A.M. at the MTC—and ends at 10.30 P.M. All missionaries must be inside their apartments by 9.30 P.M. exactly, and must leave their apartments for proselyting at 9.30 A.M. Showers, etc. are taken at 6.30 to 7.00 A.M. Companionship study is from 7.00 to 8.00 A.M. (consisting of joint study of the training guide). Breakfast is from 8.00 to 8.30. Personal study is 8.30 to 9.30 (half for Book of Mormon study, half for other Scripture study, as outlined in the Gospel Study Program). An hour lunch period at 12.00 and an hour dinner period is taken at 5.00 P.M. (though often these are cut to shorter periods by District Leaders, or the Mission President). The period from 9.30 to 10.30 P.M. is set aside for companionship planning of the next day’s activities, and often (depending on the Mission) for phone consultation with District and Zone Leaders. Once a week the District Leader holds a district meeting for one hour in the place of companionship study, and often the Zone Leaders hold a Zone meeting. Also, the Mission President and his Assistants hold a Zone Conference (usually consisting of several zones) monthly. Depending on the Mission President, personal interviews are held 4 times a year, though often once a month. Preparation day activities are restricted to washing clothes, shopping, and mild touring of the city and surroundings. Often missionaries will get together and play basketball, or soccer (no contact sports are allowed). Other activities must be pre-approved, and going outside your proselyting area is not allowed unless approved by the appropriate leader, (for instance going outside the bounds of your proselyting area, but remaining within your district bounds, must be approved by the District Leader). Prayers are held morning and evening, over meals, and any other time deemed appropriate.

The missionary life is structured. Any activities or thoughts within the bounds of this structure is up to the interpretation of one’s leaders, and within that interpretation, to the Spirit guiding the individual. It would seem that lack of activity is not considered an option. Sleep, therefore, is considered a meaningful activity only when designated, or on Preparation days.

2. Instructions guide and overview of the basic setup of the discussions.

Below I would like to give the exact script of the Prayer Invitation Instruction as an example. An outline of the main six discussions, as well as the training guide, i.e. the teaching methods, with comments where appropriate, will be given afterwards.

The instructions begin with an explanation and goal statement:

‘The Uniform System for Teaching the Gospel is the approved set of missionary discussions for teaching investigators. Each investigator should take part in all six discussions before baptism.

‘Your goal is to help investigators become converted to the spirit and be baptized into the kingdom of God. To do this, you must help them feel and recognize the influence of the Spirit. (See D&C 50:14-22.) As they feel the spirit, you will be able to help them make and keep the commitments that lead to conversion and baptism. These discussions are based on a simple pattern for helping investigators make and keep basic commitments.

‘First, you prepare the investigators to feel and recognize the Spirit. When they feel the Spirit, invite them to make a specific commitment. Each discussion should lead to one or two commitment invitations. After the investigators have made a commitment, do all you can to help them keep it.

‘The discussions are arranged in two columns. The left column represents what you are to teach: the doctrines of the gospel. The right column includes suggestions on how to teach most effectively.’

An outline of the discussion is then given, as well as explanations of each part of the outline. An outline of the explanations is as follows:

INSTRUCTION ON PRAYER

Instructions for This Discussion, Create a Learning Atmosphere, Discussion (What you teach), Teaching Helps (How you teach): Find Out, Testify, Scripture, Visuals, Invite, & Follow Up; Scriptural Resources and Examples, Conclusion, Study Guide [an accompanying pamphlet given to the ‘investigator’ for the study of the discussion, and for preparation for the next discussion.] Summary dialogues, in the form of the discussion principles, are given for these basics, an example for a principle on prayer is listed below:

Prepare

Prayer is our basic way of communicating with our Father in Heaven. He knows each of us and wants us to stay close to him by speaking with him in prayer. Through prayer we can know his will and receive strength to obey his commandments.

A simple prayer can follow four basic steps:

First, Jesus taught us that we should pray to our Father in Heaven. We begin by addressing him, ‘Our Father in Heaven.’

Second, we need to express our gratitude for what our Father has given to us. All that we have comes from him. We should be specific in thanking him for our blessings.

Third, we can ask our Father to bless us according to our needs. [Read and discuss 3 Nephi 18:20]

Finally, Jesus taught us to pray in his name to the Father. So we close our prayer ‘in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.’

We need to pray for many things. But nothing is more important for us to know than the truth about God and the plan of salvation.

Answers to prayers may come as feelings of peace and confidence or as thoughts that enter our minds. Sometimes we may have special feelings, such as particularly warm feelings in our hearts. Or perhaps the events in our lives may occur in answer to our prayers. As our faith grows, we learn to know when and how our Heavenly Father is answering our prayers.

Invite

Will you pray and ask our Father in heaven whether the Book of Mormon is true and whether Joseph Smith was a prophet of God?

Teaching Helps

Find out:

How the investigators feel about personal and family prayer.

1. 'Our Father in Heaven...'
2. 'We thank thee...'
3. 'We ask thee...'
4. 'In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.'

Discuss:

Discuss some of the occasions when prayer is important (at meals, at the beginning of a trip, for example).

Find out:

Whether the investigators understand the four steps of prayer. 1-Addressing 'Our Father in Heaven.' 2-What things they are thankful for. 3-What blessings they need from our Father in Heaven. 4-Whether they believe they can know through prayer that what you have taught is true.

Testify:

Express your feelings about: The way your prayers have been answered. 2-Your confidence that God will answer the investigators prayers.

Find out:

Whether the investigators understand what you are asking them to do. 2-How they feel about this commitment.

Follow Up:

Discuss with the investigators how you can help them keep their commitments. For example, you could: Visit them tomorrow (or the next day) to answer any questions. 2-Read and discuss a few of your favorite passages from the Book of Mormon during a follow-up visit. 3- Have a member visit them to read the Book of Mormon with them and answer questions. 4-Visit the investigators to help them get started with daily prayer. In follow-up visits, ask them how they have felt as they have prayed about your message. Ask whether they feel they have received an answer to their prayers. 5-Encourage them to offer prayer during your visits.

Comments:

The scripture listed, 3 Nephi 18.20, reads as follows:

'And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given to you.'

Notice that this is read from The Book of Mormon, not from the corresponding scripture in the Bible (Matt. 21.22)

Examples, plus numerous scriptures to back up the principles of the discussion, are given at the end of each section. This is the example given for this principle:

'To show that in prayer the feelings of our hearts are more important than our words:

'When you are a father (mother) and your child is learning to talk, you are not critical if he makes a mistake. You find joy in his effort and growth. In the same way, our Father in Heaven does not care if your words are absolutely correct. He blesses you for your effort and sincerity.'

The following scriptures were given as additional resource: 2 Nephi 32.8-9; Alma 5.45-46; Alma 37.36-37; Jeremiah 29.12-13; Matthew 6.6-15; Matthew 7.7-11; Matthew 21.22; Matthew 26.41 (Alma 13.28); Philippians 4.6; James 1.5-6; D&C 6.22-23; D&C 9.8-9; D&C 11.13-14. References in the Topical Guide were given for: God, Access to; Prayer; & Pray.

The other topics, along with the Instruction on Prayer, that are given in the Instructions are: Invitation to Read the Book of Mormon, Invitation to Hear the Next Discussion, Referral Invitation (a prompt for people to get their friends to hear the discussions. This one was also used with members of the church), Invitation to be Baptized, Invitation to Attend Church, Invitation to Live the Law of Chastity, Invitation to Live the Word of Wisdom, Invitation to Pay Tithing, & Invitation to Take Part in the Church.

3. The training guidebook: an outline.

I noticed when it came to ‘converting’ others, that the key was focused around this basic pattern:

1. Express and show understanding and empathy of the other person’s position, and of the person as an individual.
2. State the principle you’re trying to convey & ask for commitment.
3. Emphasize the principle with scripture (Bible, Book of Mormon, D&C, and The Pearl of Great Price), and the words of different LDS Apostles and Prophets.
4. Explain to the individual that the key to knowing that the principle is true, and that the church is true, is to find out if The Book of Mormon is true through prayer, by the Spirit.
5. Explain that if The Book of Mormon is true, then Joseph was a true Prophet of equal value as Moses and other ancient prophets, because a true book of God would not come through a false prophet. This leads to the conclusion that Joseph was a Prophet, and the church he formed then must truly be the true Church of Christ.

The entire thrust of presenting the discussions was the above pattern, using the following methods (explained in detail, through tapes and a manual, in *The Missionary Guide*, the training guide mentioned above):

A. Prepare

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS OF TRUST

Become Acquainted

- Share information about self (especially feelings)
- Ask questions to learn about others (especially feelings/beliefs)

Build on Common Beliefs

- Point out beliefs held in common
- Show respect for other’s beliefs
- Relate the message to common beliefs

Show empathy

- Express understanding/desire to understand others feelings
- Share similar experiences or feelings, if appropriate

HELP OTHERS FEEL AND RECOGNIZE THE SPIRIT

Bear Testimony

- Bear testimony that is simple and direct
- Bear testimony that is spiritually convincing
- Bear testimony that relates to the subject
- Use only words that members of other faiths understand

Share Experiences

- Relates an uplifting personal experience
- Encourages others to share their differences

Identify the Influence of the Holy Ghost

- Teach how to recognize the influence of the Holy Ghost
- Ask others to describe their feelings
- Identify the influence of the Holy Ghost when present

PRESENT THE MESSAGE

Present the Message with Faith

- Present doctrines as facts
- Teach confidently. Do not hesitate, or be apologetic
- Avoid contention and arguing

Present the Message Clearly

- Explain concepts and ideas clearly
- Vary the tone and speed of the voice
- Use eye-to-eye contact

Personalize the Message

- Pace the presentation appropriately. Don't rush or ramble.
- Use examples and stories

FIND OUT

Ask appropriate questions

- Ask at appropriate times
- Ask questions that help others share their feelings
- Ask questions that are not manipulative
- Ask questions that are simple and direct.

Listen

- Focus on others' verbal and non-verbal responses
- Restate or summarize
- Pause. Allow others time to think or answer

Ask Additional Questions

- Ask questions until you understand the thoughts and/or feelings of others

B. Invite

Extend the Invitation

- Make sure others understand what is to be done, and when
- Invite others to make a commitment, using a direct 'will you' question
- Invite with respect and love

Confirm the Commitment

- Review the commitment
- Express confidence that they can keep the commitment
- Offer to help

C. Resolve Concerns

Discover the Concern

- Ask questions to discover concerns
- Restate the concern

Discuss the Concern

- Express understanding/desire to understand feelings
- Ask others how they could resolve the concern
- Encourage others to pray for help

Help Resolve Concerns

- Use scriptures, examples, testimony, experiences or explanations to help others resolve their concerns

D. Follow Up

Arrange to Follow Up

- Set a specific date and time for follow up

Follow Up on a Previous Commitment

- Find out if the commitment was kept
- Adjust the commitment and re-invite
- Provide support (reading with, praying with, etc.)

E. Attributes (of a missionary)

E1. Christlike attributes:

GOSPEL KNOWLEDGE AND TESTIMONY (SCRIPTURES)

Personal righteousness

- Obedience, repentance, prayer and fasting
- Recognizing the spirit (when the missionary feels it him/her self)

FAITH AND HARD WORK

Charity

E2. Finding (people to teach)

Use Members

- Coordinate with Ward Mission Leader
- Build confidence in members through example as a righteous, focused missionary
- Set a date with the member for when they will have someone for you to teach

Investigators

- Visit former investigators [Missionaries would always keep records of who they found, and who they worked with, so they, and future missionaries, could make 'follow up' visits with people who had discontinued having the discussions]
- Use the Referral dialogue (See Instructions for Discussions)
- Invite friends and relatives to Baptismal services

Find through your own efforts

- Find through recent converts, baptisms, Stake Missionary efforts [specifically assigned people in the local churches who assisted with new members, and with assisting the missionaries assigned to their Stake (group of local churches)], Part member families [Church members who had family not in the Church], media, church visitor's centers, and Church Headquarter referrals [referrals that came from outside the boundary of your Mission], visiting Less-active members or finding new addresses etc. of members who have moved and not contacted the church, service activities, new move ins, knocking door to door, street contacting, and speaking with everyone you meet.

E3. Teaching

Use the Scriptures

- Explain who is speaking, being spoken to, and what the situation is
- Have the investigator or member read the scripture aloud
- Share your feelings and insight
- Ask Find Out questions about the scriptures

Use the Book of Mormon

- Give background about each passage
- Take turns reading the passage with others
- Discuss the passage by asking questions
- Share personal feelings and experiences about scriptures
- Invite others to share their feelings and experiences

Retain Investigators

- Help investigators keep their commitments
- Use effective commitment pattern: Prepare, Invite, Follow Up & Resolve Concerns
- Have Christ like attributes

E4. Baptizing and Fellowshiping

- **Help investigators qualify for baptism (see Fundamental Considerations document)**
- **Prepare spiritually uplifting baptismal services**
- **Assist Stake Missionaries in fellowshiping new members**

4. An outline of the discussions themselves.

The six discussions were essentially the teaching tool that taught a person the requirements of being a member of the church. The entire purpose of the church is to bring people to Christ by 1-understanding the gospel, 2-getting baptized, 3-Going through the temple, and 4-Helping others do the same, what Mormons call 'The Gathering of Israel.' Each discussion is broken down into a set of principles, and each principle is broken down into basic statements that are explained, commitment invitations are then given, and discussion about those things using the methods listed above. The secondary, if not main purpose, of the discussions was to get the person to recognize the spirit verifying the truth of the discussions, which would then motivate the person to become a member of the church, and participate in its activities.

The discussions, ideally, were taught in the home, but often they were taught on the street, or where anyone would listen. First, the missionary approached an individual, or individuals. Once they were listening, missionaries would go straight into the discussion. Often, the discussion was started to catch people's attention, such as a traditional street meeting. Each discussion was started with a follow up of the last discussion's commitments, and major concepts, helping to resolve concerns that arose when the person had had the night, or day, to think about it. The missionary would then attempt to arrange the teaching environment to be as formal and peaceful as possible. The discussion was then introduced. With the first discussion, missionaries would introduce themselves, and attempt to become acquainted with the individual, to build a relationship of trust. Once that trust was established, the discussion would begin. Whenever possible, the discussion was opened with prayer.

The discussions were taught using the following required outline. Depending on the mission, there was also a text script to read (especially if you had learned a foreign language) that in some instances was required for memorization. In my mission only the following outline was required, using the text script as a guideline.

Discussion 1-The Plan of Our Heavenly Father

The Plan of our Heavenly Father

- We believe in God
- God is Perfect
- God is our Father in Heaven
- God has a Plan for us

The Divine Son-ship of Jesus Christ

- We need to overcome sin and death
- God sent Jesus Christ to fulfill the plan (John 3.16)
- Christ overcame sin and death
- Christ showed us how to fulfill the plan (John 14.6)
- Have faith to do what He taught

How the Plan has been revealed

- God follows a pattern
- He chooses witnesses (Amos 3.7)
- The prophets testify of Christ
- The Holy Ghost confirms Truth
- We are invited to obey

The Prophet Joseph Smith: A modern witness of Jesus Christ

- In our day, God has followed his pattern for revealing Truth
- Joseph Smith was confused about religion (The Pearl of Great Price, JS-H 1.8)
- Joseph learned how to gain wisdom (The Pearl of Great Price, JS-H 1.8; James 1.5)
- Joseph prayed for wisdom
- Joseph saw God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son (The Pearl of Great Price, JS-H 1.16-17)
- Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God
- Joseph is a Witness of Christ

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ

- Joseph brought forth the Book of Mormon
- The Book of Mormon contains the writings of Prophets
- Book of Mormon Prophets taught about Christ
- [The Book of Mormon is] Another testament of Christ (2 Corinthians 13.1)

Commitment Invitation: Read (Introduction, testimony of witnesses, brief explanation of the plates, and 3 Nephi 11 by next visit; Read all of the Book of Mormon cover to cover).

The Holy Ghost: A Witness of the Truth

- The Holy Ghost confirms the message of Joseph Smith (John 14.26)
- You can know Joseph Smith is a Prophet
- The Book of Mormon contains a promise (Moroni 10.3-5)
- We should read, ponder, and pray

Commitment Invitation: Pray [Usually, this commitment was asked to be done with the missionaries there (as well as on their own), so the missionaries could recognize with the individual that the Spirit had testified of the Truth of their statements]

- You can be baptized [In the teaching helps next to this is this statement: 'Invite: As prompted by the Spirit, you could now invite the investigators to be baptized.' It is quite common to do so at this point]

Commitment Invitation: Next discussion [A specific appointment was made for the next discussion, as well as a follow up in-between. Most discussions were scheduled for 2-3 days in advance, with at least one follow up in-between. My mission required daily contact of some type, with that contact being preferably a discussion]

At the conclusion of this discussion, a review of the commitments was made, the investigator was at least told that they would be asked to be baptized by the next discussion, a commitment extended either here, or at the next discussion, for them to attend church (depending on the day. If it was Saturday, for instance, the investigator was always asked to come to church), and referrals (people that could be taught in the next few days) were asked for. A study guide was given that reviewed the discussion, as well as provide additional scriptures to read. The discussion was always closed with a prayer, and most often the investigator was asked to say it if they felt comfortable. (By the second discussion they were simply asked.)

Discussion 2-The Gospel of Jesus Christ

Salvation from physical death

- We are physically different from Our Heavenly Father
- Our spirits and our bodies will be separated
- Jesus overcame physical death
- Resurrection is the reuniting of the body and spirit (Alma 11.42-43)
- All will be resurrected

Salvation from sin

- The Plan of our Heavenly Father allows us to choose
- Sin is acting against the will of God
- Separation from God is spiritual death
- Through Christ we can be cleansed from sin (Alma 34.8-9)
- To be forgiven, we must accept Christ
- The atonement of Jesus
- We must do certain things: Faith, repentance, baptism, gift of the Holy Ghost

Faith in Christ

- The first principle is Faith in Christ (Hebrews 11.6)
- Faith in Christ means loving and following him

Repentance

- The second principle is Repentance (Alma 34.17)
- We can repent
- Repentance brings peace
- We should repent throughout life

Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins

- The third principle is baptism (Acts 2.38)
- We make a covenant
- Baptism is a symbol
- We must be baptized by authority

The Gift of the Holy Ghost

- We must be spiritually reborn
- Receiving the Holy Ghost is the Baptism of Fire (3 Nephi 27.20)
- The Holy Ghost is given by the laying on of hands
- We can have the gift of the Holy Ghost

Obedience to the commandments of God

- We must endure to the end in obedience
- The purpose of obedience (D&C 82.8-9)

Commitment Invitation: Baptism (2 Nephi 31.4-7) [The commitment emphasizes by someone having the priesthood authority of God. Here, previous non-LDS baptism concerns are resolved, and the commitment to be baptized is extended, or reinforced. A specific date for the baptism is also set. The third discussion is often given without a baptismal commitment if the investigator has not yet committed himself, but the 4th never is until that commitment is accepted.]

After the end of the discussion, the usual commitments are again extended: the day for the next discussion is set, the investigator is committed to further reading-2 Nephi 31; Mosiah 2-5; and 3 Nephi 27, as well as their normal reading The Book of Mormon from cover to cover-the commitment to go to church is usually reinforced here, though it has been known to be postponed until the 3rd discussion. Referrals are again asked for, the study guide given out, and a prayer is given.

Discussion 3-The Restoration

Truth versus error

- We must find and accept the Truth
- The ideas of men are limited
- Christ formed his church
- The Church is led by Revelation

Apostasy

- The apostles of Jesus Christ were rejected
- Priesthood authority was lost
- Confusion and apostasy resulted (2 Thessalonians 2.1-3)

The restoration of Truth

- God revealed Truth to Joseph Smith
- Joseph was told not to join any church
- Joseph translated the Book of Mormon
- Joseph recorded other Revelations [Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, etc.]

The restoration of the Church

- Joseph Smith received the Aaronic Priesthood
- Joseph received the Melchizedek Priesthood
- Gospel ordinances can be performed
- The Church was organized
- The Church is named after Christ
- This is the only True Church (D&C 1.30)

Membership in the True Church

- God has called Apostles and Prophets in our day
- Come unto Christ by belonging to his Church (Moroni 6.2-4) [The commitment to be baptized is usually reconfirmed at this point, as well as the specific date]

Attending Church meetings and partaking of the Sacrament

- Meet together often (Moroni 6.5-6)
- The Sacrament is part of our worship services
- The Savior introduced the Sacrament
- We use bread and water
- We make a covenant
- The Lord promises us His Spirit
- In worship services, the members strengthen each other
- Attending worship services will bring you blessings
- Commitment invitation: Church attendance

At this point baptism is made a finalized commitment. No further discussions will be taught without it. Everything else concludes as usual. After the prayer, it is normal to leave the house. As a general attitude, missionaries like to leave the effect of the discussion lingering after they are gone, and don't wish to ruin the effect by staying and chatting, etc.

Discussion 4-Eternal Progression

Our Pre-mortal existence

- We lived before our mortal birth
- We are children of God
- We were unlike God
- Our Father prepared a Plan (The Pearl of Great Price, Abraham 3.22-25) Mortal life on Earth
- This life has a Purpose
- We each receive a physical body
- We are free to make choices
- Growth depends on those choices (Alma 12.24)

Life after death

Death is part of the Plan of our Father

- Our spirits go to the Spirit World (Alma 40.11)
- We will be resurrected and judged
- We can live in Celestial Glory
- There are lesser degrees of glory
- Paul talked of these degrees (1 Corinthians 15.40-42) [Notice in this scripture that Paul is talking in the old Greek sense of the Heavens vs. Earth, and how the different bodies of the Heavens rested in their different spheres: the sun, moon, and the stars. Joseph Smith felt that in talking of terrestrial and celestial (earth and heavens) that the glory of the stars had been left out, so he invented the word ‘telestial,’ meaning literally to be far from the body (tel- like from the word teleport, or telekinesis), or in this sense far from God.]

Work for the dead

- Many die without the Gospel
- The Gospel is taught in the Spirit World (1 Peter 3.18-19; 4.6)
- We can perform baptism for the dead
- Baptisms are performed in Holy Temples

The Eternal Family

- We have the power of procreation
- The creative power is sacred
- Families need not end at death

Chastity

- Procreation is sacred
- God gives laws to govern this power (Exodus 20.14)
- The Law of Chastity (D&C 42.22-25)

Commitment Invitation: Chastity in action, thought, and speech [This ‘law’ is annotated as being forgivable through baptism. It is used to help enforce the need for baptism, while at the same time expressing this helps smooth out an often sensitive subject]

The Word of Wisdom

- Our bodies and the freedom to choose are gifts
- We should avoid harmful substances [specifics mentioned are alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tea, and any other ‘harmful drugs.’ While caffeine is not necessarily against the word of wisdom in the strict sense, many have considered it ‘harmful,’ and therefore against the ‘spirit’ of the word of wisdom]
- We should use wholesome foods thankfully
- The Lord promises health (D&C 89.18-21) [This scripture is the official revelation from Joseph Smith on the subject. If you notice, coffee and tea are not mentioned; only hot drinks. The expressed forbidden use of these substances was not made clear until a later President, Joseph Fielding Smith, clarified the issue, many years after the death of Joseph Smith. The story behind the original revelation is essentially that Joseph Smith got sick of walking into a meeting with his apostles in a cloud of smoke, and having them spit on his wood floor which had to be cleaned by his wife after they were finished. He didn’t feel the behavior was appropriate for Apostles and disciples of God]
- The Lord promises us His Spirit

Commitment Invitation: Live the Word of Wisdom (including alcohol, tea, coffee and tobacco). (1 Nephi 3.7).

Discussion 5-Living a Christlike Life

The two great commandments

- We tend to seek our own self-interest
- God gave two great commandments (Matthew 22.37-39)
- We show our love for God by keeping his commandments (John 14.15)
- We show our love for others through service (Mosiah 2.17)

Sacrifice brings blessings

- We must sacrifice our own interests
- We must put the things of God first (3 Nephi 13.33)
- We should give what is required
- Sacrifice requires Faith
- Sacrifice brings blessings

Fasting and fast offerings

- Fasting helps us put God first
- We receive blessings from fasting
- Fasting should include prayer
- One Sunday each month is set aside as a fast day
- Through fasting we can help those in need
- Our fast offerings should be generous [An offering was a common biblical principle. Joseph Smith suggested that the fast was a good time to give the money that would have gone to the food, for offerings. Fast offerings go to members of the Church who are in financial need in some manner or another. Where ‘offerings’ are not a requirement in the church, and in the last few years seem to have been done away with completely on the Ward level, the ‘fast offering’ is still considered a commandment, and is required for baptism. (Do not confuse offering, with fast offering. Fast offering is a specific type of offering.)]
- Fasting helps us be selfless
- Sacrifice shows love for God

Tithing

- Tithing helps us put God first (Malachi 3.8-11)
- God is the source of all we have
- We participate in the work of the Lord [in the sense that tithing helps pay for the functions of the church, the buildings, missionary work, temples, etc.]
- Tithing develops unselfishness

Commitment Invitation: Tithing (Luke 21.1-4; 1Kings 17.8-16) [Tithe means a tenth. To pay tithing is to give a full one-tenth of all your monetary income. The church does not accept other material items, though they once used to. However, any monetary item that did not require cash (directly or indirectly, such as with a gift) that is sold for money, would be considered by most to be monetary income.]

All previous commitments are reviewed again as normal, including the Law of Chastity, the Word of Wisdom, fast offerings and tithing.

Discussion 6: Membership in the Kingdom

The roles of Jesus Christ in the Plan of Salvation

- Jesus Christ is the Creator (Mosiah 3.8) [If this seems confusing, the idea is that God the Father used his Son, Jesus, to create the World and Man, much as an architect requires the assistance of a building contractor. Thus the Son, the Christ, participates in the creation on behalf of his Father. It is understood by Latter-day Saints that many, not just Christ, were involved in the creation. The Pearl of Great Price, in the Book of Abraham, clarifies those individuals as the ‘noble and great ones’ of the mass of spirits that were to be sent to Earth. The thing to keep in mind is that Christ, and the noble and great ones, assisted in the organization (creation) of the material beings, not the spiritual. This is why Christ is referred to as the Only Begotten Son, as Mormons believe that Christ was sired directly by God the Father (though Mormons have left ‘sired’ to the imagination, and refuse to acknowledge sex being equivalent to sire. The farthest you will get is that ‘sire-ing’ in this context is a ‘Celestial’ function of God, where sex is a mortal ‘sire-ing.’ That subject is usually avoided in formal church discussions). To avoid the ‘misnomer’ that the Spirit (the third, non-embodied, not to be confused with disembodied, member of the Godhead) sired Christ, as is suggested in the New Testament, Mormons will say that the Spirit was there to give the stamp of approval, and was there to witness to Mary that she was the mother of God. Christ, and the Yahweh of the Old Testament, are considered to be the same being, and Elohim is often used to refer to God the Father in one sense, and to the noble and great ones in another sense. Why the word Elohim was used for God the Father, when Elohim was a word used to indicate the polytheistic gods of the infidel, and in the Book of Abraham, to refer to the noble and great ones, I don’t know. The only thing I could figure is that the Jews had the same problem with the contradiction, and we were just carrying on the tradition. Elohim and Yahweh, at least by suggestion (the revelation to Abraham being that there was only one God) are the same individual to most Jews and Christians, but are distinguished by Mormons. The Catholics also worked on the one-god problem by making the
- Trinity: the three part ‘One’ God. He is unified, they decry, and so do the Mormons: They are unified.]
- He is our redeemer and savior
- He is our judge

Exaltation through Christ and His church

- Exaltation is the greatest gift of God
- Immortality is given to all people
- Exaltation is through Christ (John 14.6) [Exaltation is being able to be like God, in other words a god. Do not confuse this with immortality, which is a gift to all people. In the discussions, Exaltation is only defined as ‘the privilege of dwelling with our Father in Heaven,’ where in the gospel principles manual—the official teaching manual for a church class held during the regular ‘block schedule’ of a Mormon’s Sunday meeting—Exaltation is clearly defined as god hood. Eternal life is also used, or life as God.]
- The Church helps us progress

The mission of the Church: Perfecting the Saints

- Come unto Christ by being baptized
- We work for the salvation of others (Moses 1.39) [Salvation referring to Exaltation, not the fact that we will be all be resurrected]
- The First Mission: To perfect the saints (Ephesians 4.11-12)
- We receive Truth and inspired guidance
- We receive Gospel ordinances [referring to temple ceremonies, as well as baptisms and the Sacrament]
- We receive fellowship and strength
- We serve others

The mission of the Church: proclaiming the gospel

- We share the Gospel with others (D&C 88.81)
- We should invite friends to learn

The mission of the Church: Redeeming the dead

- We can perform temple ordinances
- We can do genealogical research [Genealogy is done not just to know who we descend from, but on behalf of the dead. Mormons baptize, confirm, seal-a marriage for all eternity, as gods-and perform other ordinances for the dead (as proxy, or in their place) called ‘endowments.’]
- We must be worthy to attend the temple

The straight and narrow path

- We can follow the path to perfection (Nephi 31.17-21)
- Come unto Christ through baptism: Exercise Faith, repent of your sins, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, be baptized, keep the commandments, serve in the Church.

5. The Interview and Membership

After the discussions are given, the District Leader (and if it is the District Leader’s investigator, the Zone leader, and vice-versa) will interview the investigator. The interview essentially evaluates the commitment level of the individual based on what they’ve been taught; judges whether the person agrees with, and understands, the principles taught; and asks five questions (any one of which can disqualify the person for baptism, regardless of the judgement of the interviewer): 1) Has the person been convicted of a felony? (If so, the person must be interviewed again by the Mission President, or one of his counselors – not to be confused with his Assistants.) If so is he on parole? (If yes, he/she must have approval of the First Presidency. All the other questions, if answered yes, only require the Mission Presidency to interview). 2) Has the individual had an abortion (if a woman)? 3) Has the individual committed incest, or been in any type of illegal marriage? Has the individual practiced homosexuality or lesbianism? 4) Has the individual been on, or taking, any illegal drugs? 5) Has the individual committed murder? (This would require the First Presidency as well.) After this, the person is baptized-usually that Sunday, though not necessarily – and is now under the Bishop’s jurisdiction. One thing interesting to note, is that even a Bishop or Stake President does not have the authority to interfere with the baptism of a new convert, or baptize a new convert by their own decision (though they have authority to baptize what is called a ‘child of record:’ a child who is eight years old, and has a parent in the church.)

The new convert is then taught six new member discussions on a weekly basis. These discussions are an elaboration of each principle of the 6th discussion. A person is eligible to go to the temple after a year from baptism. (This entering of the temple is specific to baptisms for the dead only. For other temple ceremonies, marriage is an important issue for qualification. It is uncommon for a man to enter the temple unmarried, unless given a specific priesthood calling, such as being a missionary. It is not only uncommon, but unlikely for a woman to enter the temple unmarried, though it has happened under certain approved circumstances. Normally, when an individual is married, having been a member of the church for one year, they have 24 hours to be sealed in the temple. Otherwise, they must wait a year to be sealed. This does not disqualify them from any temple privileges they had before being married.)

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