

Hello Family,

Ben and I have realized there have been speculations involving us and our family concerning the church. This comes from our family and friends that are unaware of our decision and that is why we feel it is necessary to write this letter so there will be a better understanding of where we stand. We have come to the conclusion that we do not believe and support all the absolute truth claims, doctrines, and policies being taught by the church.

Despite the common misconception as to why people leave, this is not some new development that happened over night or because we are wanting to sin, lazy, or fell into the traps of reading anti-Mormon literature. The simple fact of the matter is that we have been labeled and judged by many family and friends for our choices but yet no one has taken the time to ask us what we believe and why it is we believe the way we do so here we are writing this letter in hopes to ease any tension some of you may have with talking to us, instead of about us.

The reality is that we were all born into a family that had already established its choice of belief in religion and that religion just happened to be Mormonism. We are taught that we belonged to the most correct church on earth with the proper authority and that we have a prophet which speaks to God and God speaks to the prophet. We were all baptized at age 8, not because we had had some spiritual awakening and truly converted but rather it is the tradition of our religion. There was never a need to question or doubt things we didn't understand because we had been conditioned since birth and told everything we were learning was true and how God wanted it to be and it was so comfortable to accept it as truth because we didn't know anything different. We often take for granted the reality of what it truly means and feels to have a spiritual experience verses an emotional experience. Growing up in the church gave us a sense of entitlement of thinking we were better than others and had all the answers even though we were taught not to judge.

We believe that we all are inspired and directed by a higher power that some call God, some religions may call it other names or worship in a different manor we believe that spiritual experiences are not specific to any religion and we are all inspired and have spiritual experiences no matter what form of deity one may believe in.

In the church we all have questions that we don't understand and when we ask our leaders we are told to just have faith and follow the prophet. Some are content with exercising blind faith or being told such slogans such as, "Milk before meat, or we are not ready for the answer" etc etc. We are so eager to dismiss answers to our questions and left to put them upon a shelf in the back of our minds but eventually that shelf becomes heavy and comes crashing down. Many times we have found ourselves being so proud to tell everyone that we belong to the only true church on earth that has a prophet that speaks to God and gives us answers but the reality is we have many unanswered questions that even the current prophet does not understand.

We have talked with many of Bens family and close friends here in Boise and they are all very accepting of our decision. Many of them have expressed doubts but keep them locked away because there is no structure in place or forum within the church to voice those doubts and as an LDS culture those who doubt are labeled as lazy, struggling, or have sinned. The reality of it is that we are all on our own path of spirituality and understanding.

For example, when we were asked by a family member a few weeks ago they asked, "why we were not wearing temple garments". After our response the second question was, "have you or Gina committed adultery"? I am proud to say No.

Ben was given a large library of books that belonged to his Grandpa who was a temple sealer, along with books written by church historians. Many of these books pertain to church history and he has spent the better part of the last 2 years reading and learning about the developments and the evolu-

tion of the doctrine of the church. I have been taking online classes from the University of Sedona learning metaphysics and mysticism.

The reality is much of what we consider to be divine doctrine and teachings of absolute truths in the church and temple derived from practices of Mysticism and borrowed rituals of free masonry. Teachings such as polygamy, polyandry, blood atonement, Adam God, blacks being fence sitters in the pre existence, etc. are teachings that were taught by the early prophets. Unfortunately, “ mistakes were made” – Dieter Uchtdorf. People like Ben are accused of pointing out the mistakes of the previous prophets when in reality they were not mistakes when they were being taught and implemented as divine revelation.

It is unfortunate that we build hedges around policies and teachings by guarding them so close, while on the other hand we put up walls of resistance because some truths we hear have been hidden from us and we don't want to take the time to understand them. When we first started to learn some of these historical events and facts we were both sick with anxiety and lost sleep over many issues. We have been able to reconcile our belief system with what makes sense to us, given the inconsistencies and messy history, and we feel comfortable with where we are at today with our beliefs. This experience has brought us closer together as a family and has strengthened our relationship with our children. We feel a weight has been lifted off our shoulders and has helped us connect with our children on a personal and spiritual level more than ever before.

Please do not feel intimidated to talk with us, or come visit anytime. We have been trying to make time to come visit all of you but it has been a busy hectic schedule with the Fall festivities and Hunting season. We are still family and understand this may be hard for some of you to understand but we want to have a good family relationship with each of you. We respect each of you and ask for the same respect in return. We are excited to see you all at Thanksgiving and can't wait to catch up.

Lots of Love

Gina and Ben