

I was raised in a very loving family in Arizona. My parents were both raised as members of the LDS Church, and they decided to raise us, their kids, as Latter Day Saints as well. I was generally a good kid who tried to do what was right. I followed the faithful path outlined for every young man: baptism, priesthood, Eagle Scout, missionary, BYU graduate, and eternal husband, sealed in the Salt Lake Temple. I was on my way to enduring to the end, faithfully practicing Latter Day Saintism for the rest of my life.

In Early 2012, I was in the Elders quorum presidency and my wife was serving in Young Women in a wonderful ward. We felt very welcome and appreciated. We were trying to do all the right things, as best as we could manage. On an otherwise typical day, an old friend of mine announced on Facebook that he no longer believed in the Mormon church. He put together a word document that outlined many of the issues that led to him losing his faith.

What initially bothered me was not the issues he mentioned, but that my friend had lost his faith based on these issues. I read through his document but did not conclude the same as he had. I had been exposed to most of the issues at various times growing up or on my mission. I was able to rely on the rest of my testimony, experiences, and understanding to reason that either the sources behind any issue was not reliable or the issue itself was not significant, and therefore I was unmoved reading through the issues again.

I was, however, moved to want to help my friend return to the light and goodness of the true gospel, and I was going to try to convince him that his issues were not as critical as he believed. I wanted to help him see that there is so much good and right that counterbalances the weaknesses that were bothering him.

So I began interacting at times with my old friend through Facebook, commenting on some of his (what seemed at the time to be) “anti-Mormon” and “anti-religion” posts, all while reading FairMormon and other sites, trying to develop my defense. I recalled that I had a book on Joseph Smith on my shelf that I hadn’t read, called *Rough Stone Rolling*. I was also recommended a podcast by a friend called *Mormon Stories*, specifically episodes [289-293](#) with Terry Givens. While digging into these sources, I continued reading scriptures and praying, asking for help and guidance.

The responses to my friend’s issues on FairMormon and other apologetic sources were not helping. While their responses seemed to provide a way to make peace with each issue individually, Fair was at the same time conceding in their responses that most of the issues my friend had were legitimate and didn’t have simple answers. Also troubling was that many of the the apologetic answers were contradictory with each other when looked at as a whole. Listening to Terry Givens’s approach provided me another explanation, that the evidence for and against the church’s truth claims was, by God’s design, equal and inconclusive. This approach reinvigorated my hope and effort, but ultimately that was not a sustainable position for me either.

Over the next few months, I consumed hundreds of hours of *Mormon Stories*, as well as other sources such as *MormonThink*, as I became convinced that most of what had always seemed as anti--Mormon lies were much closer to the actual history than the “official” church stories. FairMormon, *Rough Stone Rolling*, and Terry Givens had all confirmed as much. My prayers were not providing me any clarity — the heavens were silent, and instead of having a defense with which to approach and help “save” my friend, I was strongly doubting my own faith.

I felt the need to outline the most important information impacting my faith to make sense of it all, with the information supporting and opposing the key truth claims which were the basis of my testimony. As I put my thoughts and research into writing, I was able to more clearly sort through the chaos. That outline was further developed in late 2012 into the essay which is available [here](#). Its intent transformed over the months into providing an explanation of why my perspective changed regarding spiritual experiences in addition to describing my greatest issues with the Mormon church’s

claims to unique truth. In writing the essay, I attempted to reference non-biased information when possible, based on my evaluation at the time, the summer of 2012. The essay has limited revisions since that point, in order to preserve the rawness and intensity of my mindset during that critical period of study. Any and all feedback is welcome.

During this process, my wife had noticed a distance developing between us. She confronted me about it, and I cautiously explained why. Instead of the worst-case scenarios I had imagined, she was very understanding, and she was interested in learning about my concerns. The fear that my doubt would separate us was misplaced. Instead, we grew much closer as we discussed our doubts and discoveries. Within the next few months, we asked to be released from our ward callings, and we discussed some of the concerns with our bishop. He didn't necessarily try to convince us of our errors or sins, but instead showed love and confidence that we were being sincere in my desire to find truth.

Neither of us were able to receive heavenly guidance or reassurance, even though we were honestly requesting help and clarity from above. As our perspectives changed to not believing the truth claims of the church, we no longer felt that church was a welcoming or uplifting place to spend our Sundays. We stopped attending at the end of 2012.

We continue to welcome ward members to our home, attend social church events, and try to maintain several of the friendships, but the distance due to lack of weekly church attendance is evident and difficult to overcome. We have instead developed meaningful friendships with others who have "lost the faith."

Deciding to leave the church was one of the most difficult decisions of my life, but I am now confident it was the right one for us. This change in perspective has opened our minds to possibilities beyond the cookie-cutter life set out for us, and it has made every day much more precious. We feel much more connected to our neighbors and community, and we realize just how similar we all are — we are all just trying our best to make sense and best use of this time we have.

I hope hearing my story has been helpful in some way. Please let me know your thoughts, and please share your own story or musings on related topics in a [post of your own](#).