

Dear **CHURCH LEADER**.

Our last meeting prompted several thoughts and I pray you will take the time to hear us out. We felt in the last meeting that you deeply misunderstood us and we felt you have not understood our position. We know you are a man of God and we know how much you care about those under your stewardship.

Can we set up the conversation with a few quotes from our Church leaders

Elder Marlin Jensen, former 1st Quorum of the Seventy and Church Historian) stated the following

*"Often in the church, when someone comes with a bit of a prickly question, he'll be met with a bishop who number one, doesn't know the answer. Number two, he snaps and says, 'Get in line and don't question the prophet, and get back and do your home teaching.' And that isn't helpful in most cases. So, we need to educate our leaders better, I think, to be sympathetic and empathetic and to draw out of these people where they are coming from and what's brought them to the point they are at. What they have read, what they are thinking is, and try to understand them. Sometimes that alone is enough to help someone through a hard time. But beyond that, I think we really need to figure out a way to live a little bit with people who may never get completely settled."*

As you can see while a leader may feel inclined to handle these issues with a call to get in line, Elder Jensen suggest a more empathetic response where you sit with us and try to understand where we are coming from. We pray you might move forward doing as much.

The first presidency has stated recently

*"We understand from time to time church members will have questions about church doctrine, history or practice. Members are always free to ask such questions and earnestly seek greater understanding. We feel special concern, however, for members who distance themselves from church doctrine or practice and, by advocacy, encourage others to follow them. Simply asking questions has never constituted apostasy. Apostasy is repeatedly acting in clear, open and deliberate public opposition to the church or its faithful leaders, or persisting, after receiving counsel, in teaching false doctrine. ([June 28, 2014, First Presidency Statement](#))"*

We have never advocated a non-doctrinal position nor have we encouraged anyone to follow after us... heck we don't even know where that would be as we have not decided to head anywhere. Having serious concerns and questions and asking them and exploring them openly is not apostasy as defined by the Church. We also have never taught false Doctrine.

Elder Ballard recently stated

*"Gone are the days when a student asked an honest question and a teacher responded, "Don't worry about it!" Gone are the days when a student raised a sincere concern and a teacher bore his or her testimony as a response intended to avoid the issue."*

The Church is acknowledging that its history is problematic and that we have to all learn to get more comfortable with this messiness.

He also stated

*"It is important that you know the content in these essays (The essays on LDS.ORG) like you know the back of your hand. If you have questions about them, then please ask someone who has studied them and understands them. In other words, "seek learning, even by study and also by faith" as you master the content of these essays."*

Have you read them? do you know them well? have you read the footnoted material? these honestly acknowledge that we have told an incorrect narrative and that we now have to adjust and in some respects adjust dramatically.

Your insistence that Joseph was only sealed to plural wives posthumously after his death shows you are on relying on the old inaccurate narrative. Would you please consider reading the following essays

<https://www.lds.org/topics/plural-marriage-in-kirtland-and-nauvoo?lang=eng&old=true>

<https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng&old=true>

<https://www.lds.org/topics/translation-and-historicity-of-the-book-of-abraham?lang=eng&old=true>

These and the other essays validate our concerns are serious enough to need a safe space for a conversation

- That Joseph was sealed to a 18 year old girl (Fanny Alger) serving as a maid in his home before the sealing keys were restored
- That Joseph was sealed to a 14 year old girl (Helen Mar Kimball) and other teenage girls and often these were the young girls working in his home as maids prior to his ensuing relationships.
- That Joseph was sealed to sisters and a mother and daughter unbeknownst to each other.
- That Emma was often uninvolved about these relationships and that she was against some to many of them.
- That things we taught in the past as eternal doctrine are now disavowed by the church as racist theories.
- That the scriptures we have today were told to have come to us a certain way and the Church today recognizes these narratives it told are problematic and that we lack good answers to certain issues.

These are only a few of the hundreds and hundreds of honest and valid concerns and questions being raised at present and Top Church leaders validate that we as a people must come to grips with these issues and not shame or marginalize those bringing them up.

Steven Snow, current Church historian stated

*"My view is that being open about our history solves a whole lot more problems than it creates. We might not have all the answers, but if we are open (and we now have pretty remarkable transparency), then I think in the long run that will serve us well. I think in the past there was a tendency to keep a lot of the records closed or at least not give access to information. But the world has changed in the last generation—with the access to information on the Internet, we can't continue that pattern; I think we need to continue to be more open."*

For instance you likely are aware that the Church has added the [LDS.ORG](https://www.lds.org) essays and a bunch of articles titled "Revelations in Context" that seem to indicate the Church is wanting us to be more vulnerable to having difficult conversations about these issues and the valid concerns and questions that are arising from them.

It also might interest you as we spoke about the Adam/God teaching of Brigham Young that Elder McConkie has stated

*"I do not know all of the providences of the Lord, but I do know that he permits false doctrine to be taught in and out of the Church and that such teaching is part of the sifting process of mortality.... I repeat: Brigham Young erred in some of his statements on the nature and kind of being that God is and as to the position of Adam in the plan of salvation"*

President, please hear us. We are Mormon. We want to be Mormon. But we need vulnerability and we need a safe space to raise questions and concerns. We have no desire to advocate for any False Doctrine though as you can see making the over simplified statement that what leaders teach is true doctrine from God and what is different from that is false gets a whole lot messier. We pray for your willingness to provide a safe space to raise honest questions and concerns.

Lastly Elder Ballard has stated

*"We have heard stories where someone asking honest questions about our history, doctrine, or practice were treated as though they were faithless. This is not the Lord's way. As Peter said, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man [or woman] that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you. We need to do better in responding to honest questions. Although we may not be able to answer every question about the cosmos or about our history, practices, or doctrine, we can provide many answers to those who are sincere."*

We pray your understanding and also extend our forgiveness for where you may fall short.

Your Brother and Sister in Christ

**Joe & Emma Saint**