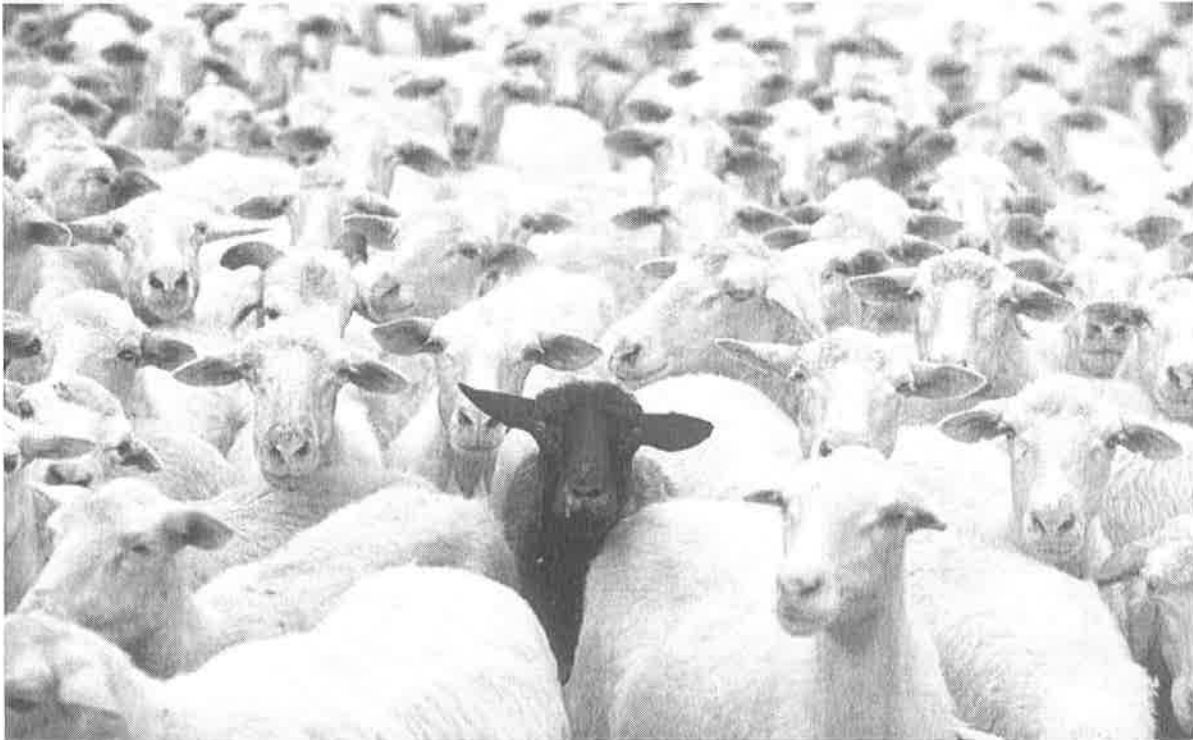


Six Reasons Why Middle-Way Mormonism Sucks

by L Thomas | Mar 11, 2015 | Faith Crisis, Featured, Honesty, Individuality, Truth | 26 comments



I was going to write about why Middle-Way Mormonism is awesome, but complaining is a lot easier. I was also going to write a sizable introduction with all of the nuance and balance that you would expect from someone trying to make a middle-way work. I took the easy route and wrote about the parts that suck instead.

1. Say goodbye to leadership callings

If word gets out that you are a “doubter” or a “questioner” you will no longer get the big callings in the church. You might make it as high as Elder’s Quorum President. You are not going to become the next President of the Church. Church leaders probably won’t consciously discriminate, but you can count on their inspiration leading them in a different direction. The guy who won’t shut up about the evils of gay marriage has a much better chance.

2. Church is boring

This affects believers as well as non-believers, of course. Everyone knows that the biggest difficulty

in missionary work is not Blacks and the Priesthood, but boring investigators to death. However, the true believers have the benefit of knowing that their eternal salvation is at stake. Once I rejected that idea, going to church suddenly feels even less enticing.

3. Lack of closure

When someone joins Mormonism they join a new faith community and start attending new meetings and are baptized a member. If a person leaves Mormonism they stop attending church or even resign completely. All of these are ritual acts that show the change you have made. What happens when you shift to being a liberal-Mormon or a non-believer who remains for community and family reasons? You go back to church the next Sunday. I sometimes feel the need to stop attending church meetings for no other reason than to feel like I've done *something*. My beliefs have been changing drastically over the past few years, but everyone at church still kind of seems the same. There is no ritual to demonstrate my change, or non-literal Sunday School class to go to during the second hour. Maybe if I just send a letter to President Monson he'll reveal the "I'm a liberal now" ordinance in the next General Conference.



So bored.



President Monson is not amused.

4. Your integrity is questioned

The believers at church think you no longer believe truth claims because you are sinning or haven't been praying and reading your scriptures hard enough. Ex-Mormons think you're just looking for excuses to add a few "sins" like drinking tea and still holding on to a few dumb beliefs because you're not ready to see the whole truth yet. If you make too many comments in church meetings or ask a few too many questions you may be accused of being a wolf in sheep's clothing, as has happened to me: <http://rationalfaiths.com/went-nephi-korihor/> You would know if I was in sheep's clothing, because I look damn good in wool. If your family becomes uncomfortable with your changing beliefs it may lead to difficult conversations or love bombing.



5. Your silence is appreciated

Church leaders don't want you to talk about "doubts" or new beliefs you have developed during a faith transition. Make no mistake, while the Church has released statements that it's okay to doubt, they've also said that you're not allowed to try and convince others of your point of view. You may think that your new belief is beautiful and based on the scriptures, but if you share any of those beliefs too broadly you could get accused of apostasy, which is an excommunicable offense. Because Mormon Doctrine is never actually defined you never know when a belief of yours is going to be on your local leaders' no-no list. I once bore my testimony in church about how I had experience with being discouraged about the church at times, and that if others had any problems they could talk to me. My bishop called me into his office and asked if I was trying to start an apostate group. I was so surprised I laughed in his face, which didn't help my case. You can't change the Church.



6. You can't go back

Sometimes it seems much more convenient to just go back to how you were before: a sometimes bored but generally engaged and believing member. There are no potential issues with family shunning or disciplinary councils. Pretending that you are the same believer you always were is not a good solution, depression is a likely result. However, once you have realized that something isn't true, no amount of wishing will make you believe it again. Having faith in something without evidence is one thing, trying to believe it with evidence to the contrary is another. Elder Andersen may think you'll change back if you try hard enough, but wishing won't make it so. Church leaders aren't very good at dealing with diversity in belief. Attempting to make Mormonism work while not believing in the historicity of the Book of Mormon or the Priesthood restoration can be difficult for them to comprehend.



Bonus: It will all be worth it (maybe).

The main key to a middle-way is taking ownership for my own beliefs. When I know something isn't true, I don't force myself to believe it anymore. I'm not dependent on what church leaders tell me I have to believe anymore. Does this cause problems? Of course. Is it more healthy for me? I definitely think so. I don't know what path I will take in the future, I've been taking this middle-way path for several years now. I could eventually leave the Church, or I could find closure in other ways to remain an active member. What I do know is that the path is mine, and that the middle-way is about my journey. No one else can dictate that. This doesn't automatically make it a selfish path. It's much easier when we can all support each other. We become a community when we can help and encourage everyone regardless of their level of faith. I reject the idea that we have to retrench and draw battle lines. We're all in this together. The community can be the greatest strength of a church: <http://rationalfaiths.com/old-ladies-taught-gospel/>

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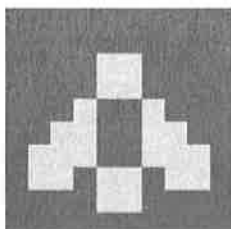
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L Thomas

Dr. Thomas is a metallurgist living in Pittsburgh with his wife and two children.

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Benjamin Shaffer · Paralegal at Drew Briney Law

Maybe it is better to simply do what every rational religion in the world has done and join a church within your faith tradition that aligns better with your beliefs. The only reasons Mormons don't usually do that is because one central corporation has been taking the lead and consolidating power in the last few decades. Maybe you should join us at Christ's Church, The Righteous Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. We are more interesting, and more liberal, and also more fundamentalist. <http://gospelfullness.wordpress.com>

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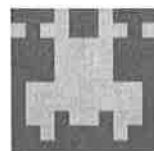


square peg on March 11, 2015 at 6:49 am

I admire you for continuing to try middle way mormonism. It was just too hard for me to do. I figure if all the people I love and respect are looking down on me for my doubts anyway, why am I staying? The only way I can win any points back with them is to say, "Oh, I see the error of my ways! I was so mislead in thinking and feeling the things I did! Sorry folks. I'm back on board 100%. No more questionable comments from me. You can feel completely comfortable around me again. I will make sure from here on out I only say things in the approved, cookie-cutter format that is allowable." I just couldn't do that to myself anymore. Good luck to you. It takes a strong person to keep one foot in and one foot out. Thanks for the post.

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hope_for_things on March 11, 2015 at 8:14 am

Thanks for this post. I'm a greenie in the middle way, and I find some days/weeks to be really hard, while others are much easier. Probably the hardest part for me right now is navigating this with my immediate family.

How do I navigate this with a spouse that doesn't want to look at all the history, and I'm not going to push her. We both feel like we're not aligned towards a common goal anymore and that is really hard on our relationship because for our entire earlier marriage we were both really closely aligned on our spiritual beliefs. How do people do this, it seems really hard right now.

How do I start teaching my kids the nuances of life, and dispel the myths of religion, while at the same time find the beauty I see in parts of our religion. When are they

old enough to understand? When do I introduce polygamy or BoM translation, or any multitude of subjects that are in conflict with the narratives they learn about at church on Sunday. I don't even know where to begin, and with my wife not willing to learn about these subjects either, I feel like I'm just treading water, hoping for a solution to come around.

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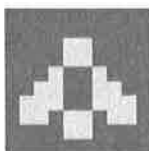
Benjamin Shaffer on March 11, 2015 at 3:52 pm

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<http://gospelfullness.wordpress.com>

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L Thomas on March 11, 2015 at 11:17 am

While I have some interest in the Community of Christ in particular, moving to another religion/church doesn't really solve any problems.

(Quote) (Reply)

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Benjamin Shaffer on March 11, 2015 at 8:56 am

I lived this way for too long. It is so painful. Since committing to be myself and say what I think, things have gotten much easier for me. The problem with trying to have one foot in and one foot out is the cognitive dissonance can be deafening. It makes you feel like you are living a double life. It raises your blood pressure. Seriously, it is a bad idea. Why not look for more likeminded Mormons?

(Quote) (Reply)

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square peg on March 11, 2015 at 9:35 am

square peg,

Hope_For_Things,

I feel for your predicament. I am the spouse who stopped believing and my husband does not approve when I try to bring up things that I think need to be addressed. I have a son who will be old enough to serve a mission next summer and I am completely at odds with him over what to do. We are not on the same page at all as how to handle this. I want to set my son down and go through every detail of the