



# Teaching the Apostasy and Restoration to 14 & 15 Year Olds: A Lesson in Keeping it Simple Stupid

by Michael Barker | Apr 17, 2013 | Featured, Revelation, Sunday School | 8 comments



## Introduction:

I am not the regular teacher of the 15 and 16 year old youth in my ward. I was called earlier in the week and asked if I would help teach about the Great Apostasy and the Restoration. My concern is that the historical data does not necessarily point to the simple narrative with which I grew up and what is presently being taught in the correlated Church curriculum. I needed a way to present the

material that would be responsible historically, build faith, and not be too complicated. My other concern is that with our exclusive claims, this can easily breed contempt for those of other faiths and a sense of arrogance within our tradition. I was given only thirty minutes. I contacted two friends that I mention in my notes and they were extremely helpful.

There are two quotes that guide me as I approach teaching within the walls of an LDS Church building:

"...And to bifurcate those, to sunder the mind and the spirit is to be apostate from major thrusts of Joseph's theology. The point is to look to our own [Mormon]culture, our own tradition, our own scriptures, and find where we are taking the name of the Lord God in vane by trivializing it and sitting in our classes as though they were little scripts waiting to be enacted instead of asking authentic questions that would magnify our callings and ours souls and our minds...We need to learn the difference between a fruitless, esoteric question that leads you into weird thickets and a good question that can enlarge our soul and our humanity...I respect the institution's desire to remain one Church as the Church goes so international. That is a tricky problem to remain an identifiable, coherent entity and be loving and tolerant and welcoming of diversity, celebrating diversity. And we also have the difficulty of one major asset of the Church being a lay Church. So that means lay teachers and lay leaders and so that is tricky to change everything. I think we can work, if we don't get arrogant in the process, to enrich and broaden the culture and make it less defensive and more open" (Phillip Barlow, professor and holder of the Leonard J. Arrington Chair of Mormon History and Culture at Utah State University, Mormon Matters podcast; episode 73, "And the survey Says...!" 1:15).

"Doctrine without the Holy Spirit leads to legalism. The Holy Spirit without doctrine leads to fanaticism. But doctrine with the Holy Spirit leads to true power in the Christian life. And this should be our goal – to have both the correct doctrine, the correct understanding of Christian truth, conjoined with a Spirit-filled Christian life. So we have both Word and the Spirit." (Dr. William Lane Craig, Defenders podcast; Defenders 2: Foundations of Christian Doctrine (Part 1); 15:00)



The Nicene Council

### Goals<sub>1</sub>:

- 1) Build faith
- 2) What in the narrative is helpful?
- 3) Stay true to the historical data.
- 4) Don't complicate – only 1/2 hour to give lesson
- 5) Use “big strokes” when teaching so as not to confuse the 14 & 15 year olds.
- 6) Speak of the Apostasy without denigrating other religions and acknowledging the good and the contributions they have given us.
- 7) Still hold to the particularism of Mormonism and that there was a need for a restoration.

### Ask:

Who here has friends that are non-Mormon? Are they dumb? Are they bad people? Why?

Come back to that question later.

### Apostasy:

What does apostasy mean?

Greek: Apos = away/apart from

stasy = stand (ie stasis)

So, Apostasy etymologically means "to stand away from"  
It does not mean that everyone was dumb and or evil.

This would/could mean that there was an historical shift where things were lost.

What was lost?

1. Correct teaching
2. Authority (Priesthood)

### **Read and give the historical context of 2 Thessalonians 2:3**

Most Bible scholars agree that the first books of the New Testament to be written down were First and Second Thessalonians. By reading these letters of Paul, we get a peek into what was concerning to some of the first members of the Christian Church. Those of Thessalonica were concerned that Jesus had not returned and some of the people they knew were dying. The expectation was that Jesus would return before death would come. Paul corrects them:

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

The King James translators rendered the Greek word *apostasia* (apostasy) as

ἡ ἀποστασία ἡ ἄνομη

### **APOSTASY DOES NOT MEAN WE AS LDS ARE SUPERIOR TO OTHERS AND THAT NON-MORMONS ARE IDIOTS**

#### **Read:**

Joseph Smith History 1:18-20

18 My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join.

19 I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their hypocrisies were an abomination in his sight...

20 He again forbade me to join with any of them; and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time.

### Doctrine and Covenants 2:1

An extract from Joseph Smith's history relating the words of the angel Moroni to Joseph Smith the Prophet, while in the house of the Prophet's father at Manchester, New York, on the evening of September 21, 1823.

1 Behold, I will reveal unto you the **Priesthood**, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

#### Ask:



What does these two scriptures say?

Does it say all other religions are wicked and stupid?

What is said in Doctrine and Covenants 2:1 say will happen? Priesthood will be revealed.

#### Ask:

What was the abomination?

Was it the people?

What is a creed? It is a statement(s) of belief that is shared by a religious community.

Examples would be the Nicene Creed written during the 4th Century AD (there are different versions of this, this one is the 325 version with a later addendum attached at the end:

"We believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father; God from God, Light from Light, Very God from Very God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made, both in heaven and in earth; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was incarnate, was made man, suffered, and rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and is coming to judge the living and the dead; And in the Holy Spirit. And those who say: "There was a time when he was not", and: "Before he was begotten he was not", and: "He came into being from nothing", or those who pretend that the Son of God is "of another substance" [than the Father] or "created" or "alterable"