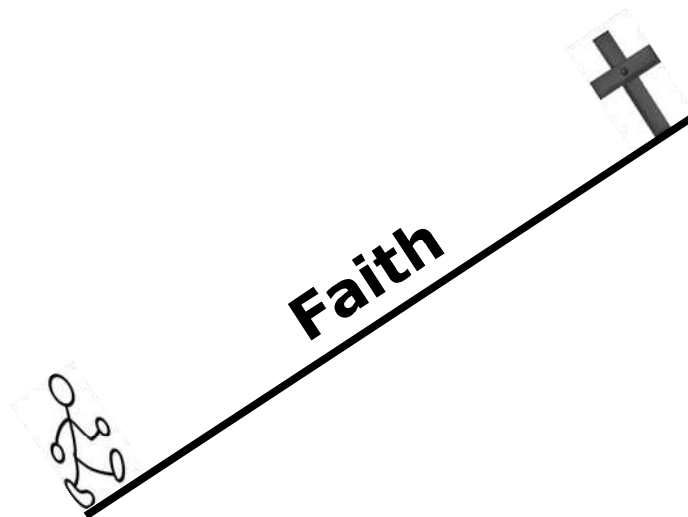


The above diagram represents ten of the most common obstacles both biblical Christians and Latter-day Saints encounter when attempting to understand, share and defend their respective faiths. Any number of these "Rocks" may come into play during the course of dialog or debate.

Note that the path to the cross for Latter-day Saints is on an incline. This is because many LDS will suffer incredible loss (e.g. family, friends, social acceptance/status, financial security, etc.) for exchanging the LDS gospel of *works* for the biblical gospel of *grace*.

The below diagram represents the ideal sharing scenario—all potential Rocks have been cleared from the road to redemption. In other words, the only thing standing between Latter-day Saints and being forgiven of ALL their sins (besides the potential losses mentioned above) is pure and simple faith in the FINISHED work of Christ on the cross and acceptance of His absolutely free gift of salvation.



Rock #1 Power Point

Christians



...become rocks on the road to redemption when we don't ask questions, don't give answers, and don't control our emotions!

In many instances biblical Christians are our own worst enemies when it comes to sharing our faith with Latter-day Saints. To the extent we DO NOT demonstrate a genuine interest in and concern for LDS beliefs and people, respectively, is the extent to which this "Rock" becomes an even greater obstacle for LDS on their road to redemption.

Biblical Christians would do well to brand the apostle Peter's imperative on our brains. Peter commands:

¹⁵ But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. **But do this with gentleness and respect,** (1 Peter 3:15 NIV)

Before sending out the Twelve, Jesus warned them to "be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Mt. 10:16 NIV). The suggestions offered below flow from this divine admonition so that our motives degenerate neither into cheap cunning nor naiveté.

Correcting 15 Common Mistakes Christians Make When Sharing with Latter-day Saints

1. **DON'T** assume or tell a Latter-day Saint what he believes, unless he specifically tells you first. Making assumptions about someone's most sacred beliefs, especially when they are wrong, risks insult.

DO ask a Latter-day Saint what he believes. Contrary to popular LDS thinking, beliefs among members of the LDS church on *some* doctrines are anything but monolithic. Gain an accurate understanding of his beliefs and perhaps even reiterate them for verification. If his beliefs differ from the teachings of LDS General Authorities, gently point them out and ask for an explanation. Eventually you will want to talk about any essential doctrinal deviations from biblical Scripture.

2. **DON'T** make a Latter-day Saint feel as if HE or his understanding of LDS doctrine is on trial. The issue at hand is NOT between you and him.

DO use language that puts *the doctrines of LDS General Authorities* (i.e. prophets and apostles) on trial. The issue at hand is between biblical Scripture and the doctrines of LDS leaders.

3. **DON'T** tell a Latter-day Saint what your church, denomination, pastor, or a theologian believes to validate your own doctrinal beliefs. In the minds of many LDS *none* of these sources are reliable authorities for knowing God's truths.

DO explain that your doctrinal beliefs are rooted in the authority of biblical Scripture. You might say something like this: "According to my understanding of the Bible ... " or "The Bible teaches" Although many LDS will question or object to your interpretation of the Bible their skepticism will pale in comparison to the aforementioned doctrinal sources.

4. **DON'T** decline an invitation to pray with a Latter-day Saint. At best it appears closed-minded; at worst it is rude, and rudeness is a death knell to witnessing. Some Christians have been taught that it is wrong or even a sin to pray with LDS because it could possibly affirm their beliefs. Quite frankly, Evangelicals share many of the same beliefs as LDS (e.g. any of Christ's moral teachings and prayer to whomever we believe God to be as a sincere expression of our faith). Besides, effective proselytizing by nature brings out our most essential doctrinal differences.

DO pray if invited or better yet suggest it yourself. This is a wonderful way to demonstrate respect, establish common ground, and, most importantly, usher in the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

5. **DON'T** tell a Latter-day Saint that he is NOT a Christian. Faithful LDS revere and obey whom they believe to be the Jesus Christ of the Bible and Latter-day revelation—invalidating this risks immediate insult.

DO explain that identifying ourselves as “Christian” is not nearly as important as *who* we say Jesus is and understanding *what* He did for us. You might respond by saying, “Many people of different faiths refer to themselves as ‘Christian.’ What really matters is whether or not ALL of our sins have been forgiven.” This is a terrific segue not only to the Gospel of salvation, but to the actual *mechanism* by which we are made instantaneously and permanently clean so that we might dwell with God for an eternity.

6. **DON'T** monopolize the conversation with a Latter-day Saint. Unless invited to speak at length, monopolizing a conversation may be viewed as inconsiderate and rude. Once again, rudeness is a witness-killer and “when words are many sin is not absent” (Pr. 10:19 NIV)!

DO remember the 50/50 rule. By speaking only half of the time you help to ensure that a Latter-day Saint is speaking the other half. This conversational technique is a powerful way to demonstrate that you respect his thoughts and feelings. Remember also that if a Latter-day Saint is not speaking this does not give you the right to “pick up the slack.” It does, however, present the opportunity for you to ask more questions.

You may also create “conversational debt” by inviting a Latter-day Saint to share all of his thoughts on a particular subject without interruption and asking him to return the favor. The alternative is a “verbal Ping-Pong” that generates much more heat than it does light.

7. **DON'T** attempt to refute every erroneous statement or address every subject brought up by a Latter-day Saint (a.k.a. “rabbit trails”). The window to witness shrinks with each minute spent discussing or debating doctrine because of the tendency of both parties to offend when defending.

DO make a conscious effort to spend as much time as possible talking about God, Jesus *and especially the Gospel* (a.k.a. “the Big Three”). All other talk is irrelevant in the grand scheme of salvation. If a Latter-day Saint considers a peripheral subject to be of paramount importance then find a way to use it as a springboard to the Big Three. Evangelical apologist to Latter-day Saints, Dr. Walter Martin, used to say, “We can be wrong about a lot of things, but if we’re wrong on the nature of God and the Person and work of Jesus Christ we can be wrong enough to lose our souls for an eternity.”

8. **DON'T** attempt to answer questions when you're not sure of the answers. If a Latter-day Saint finds out you are wrong or if your witnessing partner(s) must correct you, you risk losing credibility.

DO humbly admit that you don't know or are not sure of the answer and assure the Latter-day Saint that you will get back to him with one. Better to admit ignorance than risk losing credibility.

9. **DON'T** assume that you and a Latter-day Saint believe the same things just because you are using the same biblical terminology. Incredibly important biblical terms such as "saved," "grace," "faith" and "resurrection"—just to name a few—are understood to mean one thing to many LDS and entirely another to informed biblical Christians.

DO make sure that all terms are defined and, if need be, that the terms used to define these terms are defined. Remember, the best way to avoid making tragic assumptions is by doing your homework BEFORE actually meeting with Latter-day Saints.

10. **DON'T** allow a Latter-day Saint to end your discussion because it got too argumentative. "The Spirit is no longer present" is a common response in this situation and LDS are well within their rights to *call it quits* when things get overheated (see 2 Ti. 2:23; Acts 18:6).

DO agree beforehand to hold each other accountable to prevent this from happening. When either of you sense that tensions are rising you may ask to take a break or even stop and pray before continuing. This will help to guard against operating in the flesh and ensure that God's life-saving truths are more thoroughly shared. Remember 1 Peter 3:15—"an answer to everyone ... with gentleness and respect" (NIV)!

11. **DON'T** *insist* on using your modern translation of the Bible or discredit the King James Version. The KJV Bible is the only translation that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recognizes as authoritative.

DO *ask* if you can use your modern translation in concert with a Latter-day Saint's KJV and compare translations as you study together. There is a good chance that the modern translation will be more comprehensible to him, especially if you study passages with which he is relatively unfamiliar.

12. **DON'T** make it a habit of haphazardly entering the conversation with a Latter-day Saint when other biblical Christians are involved. You may unwittingly derail the discussion by creating a "rabbit trail" of your own.

DO strategically appoint one person to lead the discussion and, unless otherwise strongly prompted by the Spirit to comment or take the lead, redirect any questions asked of you back to the lead person when it is appropriate to do so.

13. **DON'T** relegate your discussions with LDS missionaries to your doorstep only. Some biblical Christians misinterpret 2 John 10 ("If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him."—NIV) and thereby misapply it.

DO invite LDS missionaries into your home without reservation when it is appropriate to do so. Second John 10 was written in an historical context where Christians gathered for church in Christian homes. Inviting false teachers into the homes of Christians in the first century was tantamount to allowing them to preach from the pulpit in Christian churches today.

14. **DON'T** think of meeting with LDS as a one or two-time, must-win-the-battle obligation.

DO make it your goal to keep LDS interested and willing to meet with you again and again and again. This is a sure sign of success simply because you will have mastered one of the most difficult aspects of witnessing—letting LDS know *how much you care* and not only *how much you know*.

15. **DON'T** gauge the success of your witnessing efforts by a Latter-day Saint's willingness to *agree* with you. It is NOT your job to convict and/or convert Latter-day Saints—this is the work of the Holy Spirit or "the Counselor" (John 16:8 NIV).

DO gauge the success of your witnessing efforts by a Latter-day Saint's ability to *acknowledge why* you believe what you believe according to biblical Scripture. This will accomplish two things: First, it will solve the problem of the LDS mindset that you both believe essentially the same things; second, it will help you to "correctly handle the word of truth" (2 Ti. 2:15 NIV).