

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Association  
Communications – Cissie Graham Lynch  
Fearless – Ep 124 – Mormonism vs. Christianity: Do You Know the Difference?  
Final Transcript**

**MUSIC STARTS**

**Cissie Graham Lynch:**

**00:00:02** Hi, I'm Cissie Graham Lynch. Welcome to *Fearless*, helping you have a fearless faith in a compromising culture.

**MUSIC TRANSITION**

**Cissie:**

**00:00:21** Welcome back to another episode of *Fearless*. And today we're going to discuss a topic that might seem strange for me here on *Fearless*, but it is currently on my heart, and that is the subject of Mormonism, and that's The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

And let me set the stage of why this is on my heart right now: As a millennial mom, I have noticed those who I follow on Instagram and on social media, there's a heavy influence of the Mormon families, and you might not even know that they're Mormon. One might even guess if they're Christian. There's a few of these families that I have followed—I'm like, Are they Christian? And then something will happen, and I realized they're not Christian. But it's their central family values, their conservative dress, their love for family is very inspiring and something to even strive for, for somebody looking on the outside.

But according to U.S. News and World Report, Mormonism, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is the fastest-growing faith group in American history. It also reports that if present trends continue, there could be 265 million members of The Church of Latter-day Saints worldwide by 2080. They've launched *major* expansion programs, growing temples *internationally* as well. And one reason for growth in the magazine it noted is its aggressive missionary efforts, which I think we've all probably have been knocked at our door at some time where they have come to share their faith—and we've probably been caught off guard. Honestly, that just happened to me a few weeks ago with my children sitting right there and I wasn't prepared, but we're going to talk about that here in one minute. But in recent years, the church, they have downplayed its past beliefs and polygamy and racism and instead have emphasized their commitment to conservative and family values.

But Mormons often have the same vocabulary as mainstream Christians, but those probably have very radically different definitions. We'll talk about some of that. And while we can learn from other families, it is very dangerous not to know the differences between historical truths of Christianity and what Mormons believe.

So, I've asked my dear friend, J. Warner Wallace, to join me. I call him Jim. I know him as Jim. He's a dear family friend now and a friend to the ministry to discuss this topic, which happens to be a very personal subject. So, Jim, welcome back to *Fearless*.

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**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:02:40** Well, thanks for having me. Yeah, this is actually becoming a more important issue for a lot of people who don't even know it's important because they haven't seen the difference, you know, between Christians and Mormons, and many of us actually think of Mormonism now as a denomination of Christianity. So I think we have to be at least clear about what it is Mormonism teaches, right? So we know.

**Cissie:**

**00:02:58** Well, first off, I want to say welcome back to *Fearless*. This year we will hit our fifth anniversary, five years—

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:03:04** Wow.

**Cissie:**

**00:03:05** —and you were my seventh episode when we recorded in Alaska. I had a tiny, itty-bitty microphone and—[J. Warner Wallace: chuckles]—I would put it in front of my voice and then put it in front of yours. We've come a long way here at *Fearless*—

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:03:16** We have. We definitely have. [chuckles]

**Cissie:**

**00:03:17** —and so thank you. You've been just a dear friend. So, I'm glad you're back here. We're always grateful for your insight—and for those that don't know, Jim is a former homicide detective from LA who was an atheist. He took his skills, his detective skills, and took it to the Gospel. And, *Cold-Case Christianity* is a book that I've loved for years and we'll put all those sources—but when we're talking about Mormonism, this is a personal subject for you. Why is that?

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:03:42** Well, OK. So, this was exactly my—I was raised in a family of mostly of unbelievers, right? There were no Christians growing up and my dad is not a Christian. He's not a believer, but his second wife, when he married her—pretty quickly after they got married—I was about five or six—she became a Mormon. And they ended up having six kids together, so I have six half siblings, three boys, three girls, all of whom were raised within the LDS faith.

And I was not a believer until I was about 35. And I remember when I was about 35 and was looking at the Scripture for the first time and looking at it from an investigative template—which I've always talked about. My sister was in college, and she saw that I was getting interested in Scripture. So, she right away—I don't know if she did this on purpose—but I had Mormon missionaries at my door. And I think she was interested. "Hey, if you're interested in God, well, now you can join us." And to be honest, if Mormonism was true, it would have been the perfect marriage for me because I had a bunch of siblings who were already in the faith. So, I looked at the Book of Mormon, *Doctrines and Covenants*, and Pearl of Great Price—those are the

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scriptures that Mormons use. As I was examining the Christian Scriptures for the very first time—as a matter of fact, I read through the Book of Mormon before I even finished the Old Testament. So, I was really interested to see, and I simply applied the same test that I applied toward the Christian Scriptures; I simply applied those to the Book of Mormon. And I always say that if you take an investigative template, it'll not only lead you to what's true, but it'll keep you from falling into what's false. And so that's what my story was. Hey, I always tell people, "I became a Christian at the same time that I became a not-Mormon"—[Cissie: Mm.]—Because those two processes were happening simultaneously for me, as I was examining the Scriptures of both systems to see do they hold up as eyewitness accounts?

**Cissie:**

**00:05:20** What would be some of those examples of those eyewitnesses that you saw didn't align?

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:05:24** Well, eyewitnesses have four attributes. We test eyewitnesses in court under four criteria. No. 1: Were they really there to see what they said they saw? So, I needed to know from a Scripture perspective—is the Scripture early enough to have actually been written by eyewitnesses?

Two, can they be corroborated in some way? Even though I know that no witnesses get—like, I work cold cases, those are before video. So, I don't typically have a video that, you know, repeats every claim of an eyewitness, but I should see some corroboration.

Three, do they change their story over time? And four, is there any reason, any motive, for the person to lie to me? And there's only three reasons why anyone lies. So, I can investigate that template.

I simply applied that to the author of the Mormon scriptures, who's Joseph Smith. So, I think as I applied that, I realized really quickly, this is *not* going to hold up. It doesn't hold up. I mean, it's demonstrably false to be honest with you. It's demonstrably false. And, I think part of the problem is that even as Christians, you know, this is—not many of us take a kind of evidential approach to our *Christian* beliefs—[Cissie: Mm-hmm. Affirmative]—let alone an evidential approach to Mormon beliefs. So it's really hard for us to kind of sort out and know why—and look, if nothing else, you may not convince the Mormon missionary at your door, but if you know what's true evidentially, the Mormon missionary won't convince your kids—

**Cissie:**

**00:06:35** Yeah.

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:06:36** —and that to me is worth the price of admission right there.

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**Cissie:**

**00:06:38** Yeah. We're going to discuss that, because I was kind of caught off guard, I think, just in the moment of rushing in the door with my kids, and I wish I'd set a better example to my children, but for those listening, give us a brief history of Mormonism, like Mormonism 101.

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:06:50** Yeah. So basically Mormonism starts with Joseph Smith, a young man who was born around 1805, and he's born during the kind of Second Great Awakening in the United States in the Northeast. He's in a place called Palmyra, New York. And he's there as this kind of wave of evangelists, Charles Finney, others who are very charismatic, are coming through the Northeast and proclaiming the Gospel. And he also is somebody who's—it's an interesting—I've written about this online, so just pardon me as I kind of occasionally refer to those writings because I think they're helpful. I just kind of traced my own investigative journey through this.

He's born in 1805. So, this Second Great Awakening is going to occur from about 1790 to about 1850-ish. So, he's right in the middle of it. And, lots of people are coming to faith. And the sad part of it is—and this is why I think what you guys do, what Billy Graham Association does, and have always done, is partner with local churches to make sure that those people who get saved are placed in local churches so they can grow in orthodoxy. This was not happening in the Northeast in this Second Great Awakening.

So, people were coming to faith and it turns out a bunch of sect groups like Seventh-day Adventists, Mormons, all kinds of sect groups emerge at that time in that region because no one's being disciplined. They're getting saved in these large events, but not getting plugged into local churches, which goes to illustrate why it's so important that when we do events, we are connected to local churches. Anyway, long story short. He makes a claim that around 1820 he's visited by God the Father and Jesus, and then a couple of years later, he's visited by an angel named Moroni who says that there is a set of tablets buried in the ground on the Hill Cumorah that described a history of ancient Jews from about 600 B.C. to about 430-ish A.D. who come over to the Americas from Israel by way of boat and basically start a culture here on the North American continent and ultimately then are visited by the risen Christ after He ascends in the area of Jerusalem. He visits these people who are here, a "lost tribe of Jews," on the North American continent. This is a bold claim, and the Book of Mormon has a thousand-year history of people groups, monetary systems, wars, cities, leaders, animals, agricultural products that allegedly occur on the North American continent in that thousand-year period. And so this is the claim of the Book of Mormon.

Now, if you look at the claim itself—and by the way, and it changes over time because Joseph changes over time, but that's the initial claims of the book written called the Book of Mormon. Now it's allegedly transcribed from these golden plates, not because he has the ability. And as a matter of fact, when he does this, he's not even necessarily looking at the plates as he's translating. He often is looking—he's a seer—he's looking in a stone, in a hat in which he's getting the vision of what the

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words are word for word. It's a very interesting process. But the point is he allegedly takes all those words written on the golden plates and makes 'em into the Book of Mormon, and then those golden plates are eventually taken back. So, we don't have any evidence of the golden plates—[Cissie: Mm.]—But this is the claim. And so, the Book of Mormon is allegedly this translation, transcription of the golden plates that he discovers around, probably, depending on how you date his story, 1823-ish, by 1827 or so, you have these plates. So that's, in a nutshell, the kind of claims of at least how the initial scripture of the Book of Mormon was received by Joseph Smith in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Cissie:**

**00:10:18** I know you often look at what the motive is. For Joseph Smith, what would have been his motive? The reasons of motive?

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:10:25** Well, look, just because you have a motive to do bad things does not mean you're going to necessarily do a bad thing. There's lots of people that have motive, just don't act on it. But when people do act to lie or to do anything nefarious, they only do it for one of three reasons. These are the only three motives for any misbehavior: financial greed, sexual or relational lust, and the pursuit of power. Those three are the three and they're in Scripture, but I didn't—I realized those working criminal cases; it was always in those categories. So, it's pretty easy to look for your suspect.

Now, you have to ask yourself, for example, when I was examining the gospels, I'm asking myself, "OK, so what did the apostles gain in money, sex, or power? Like, what are they getting out of this?" If there's nothing to gain and instead just the opposite occurs, then you at least have eliminated the *motive* for the lie. The problem with Joseph is that he gained from all three of those—[Cissie: Hmm.]

Eventually he makes a claim in scripture, in *Doctrines and Covenants*, that polygamy has been ordained by God. Now, he was involved in a polygamist relationship years before he writes this scripture. But, he ultimately had anywhere from 27 to 30-plus wives, many of whom were very young, many of whom were already married to somebody else, all of whom were consummated sexually. So, is there a sexual motive? Yes, there is; it's what he's written in the scripture that he's to be supported by the church.

And from a power perspective, he at one time actually led, or at least was in control of, probably the second-largest standing army on the North American continent. So, there's a power—even ran for president at one point. So, there is a power, sex, and money motive, but this alone does not mean that Joseph is lying. It just means that he would have good motivation to lie.

**Cissie:**

**00:12:03** What are some important differences in Christianity and Mormonism, especially maybe when it comes to grace? For those who are listening, what are some of those important differences?

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**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:12:13** Yeah, I want to get to that. That's a huge difference, but here's the bigger difference. If you said, "I want you to go and talk to Jim Wallace and he lives in this city. It's really important." And you say, "Well, yeah, there's a lot of Jim Wallace's there." Well, you said, "Well, I'm talking about Jim Wallace, who's a police officer." "Well, there's other Jim Wallace's that are police—" "Well, no, I'm talking to a Jim Wallace as a police officer in the city of Torrance in Los Angeles County." Well, there's actually three of us: my son, my dad, and me. We all have the same name, all work—so it turns out that you need more info—you can use my name, even my description, roughly: "a police officer at this agency," yet still not get *me* because it turns out the identity of Jim Wallace matters. And if you said, for example, "Hey, I need you to talk to Jim Wallace because you have this cancer. Well, he knows the cure for that cancer." But you got to get the right Jim Wallace. It turns out that my identity really now matters, because it's a life and death situation. This is what's happening with the Jesus that is preached by Mormonism. Yes, he's got the name Jesus, but if his identity is not the identity of the Jesus of Scripture—for example, the Quran describes Jesus, yet we would not say that that description of Jesus in the Quran is an accurate description. We wouldn't trust *that* Jesus, who was a prophet greater than Muhammad, but did not die on the cross and rise from the grave. That's a different Jesus. And so, we would not say that that's the Jesus of Christianity.

Well, something very similar is happening here. And the difference is, look, we believe that Jesus does everything that we need to be saved. We can do nothing. That is grace. It's a free gift. You cannot add to it. The equation basically is faith plus salvation equals works. Under Mormonism, it's different. It's faith plus works equals salvation. Now, I'm going to say this, but I'm going to tell you that if you were to talk to most of your friends or people you know in the social media sphere who are Mormons, they may not agree with that description. I'm telling you what *Mormonism* teaches, not what a Mormon you might meet today would say it teaches, and this is going to be frustrating for a lot of people, because it turns out, most Mormons do not know what Mormonism teaches.

**Cissie:**

**00:14:15** The same can be for Christianity.

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:14:17** Yeah.

**Cissie:**

**00:14:18** This applies to us, why we need to know our Scripture, what we believe, why we believe it, because most Christians still wouldn't even know what they believe. It's the same thing.

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:14:26** Same thing. So, if you'll say, "Well, yeah, but Mormonism teaches X," a lot of your Mormon friends will say, "No, it doesn't." Well, actually, they don't know that it does. And I think at some point, if you were to say, "Well, here's what Joseph taught about certain theological principles," they would say, "Well, we don't believe any of

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that.” They don’t believe that polygamy is ordained by God. They don’t believe in a plurality of gods. Joseph started to believe all these things and wrote about these in scripture. So, I always say, “Well, if you’re going to abandon the Jesus described by Joseph, how about just abandoning Joseph?” Like you don’t need Joseph to know Jesus.

So grace, for example, is one of these key areas, and here’s how I typically describe it to students when I’m training them in this area: Grace under Christianity is that Jesus, as a free gift, provides you with salvation you cannot earn on your own. Grace under Mormonism is the power that God gives you to obey the Law. Here’s what I mean. If you talk to your Mormon friends, and said, “OK, I’m on planet Earth and God is in Heaven. How do I get to God in Heaven?” They all say, “Well, it’s only through Jesus.” OK, well, we agree with that, but drill down on this—by the way, the word Heaven is negotiable. When we say Heaven, we’re thinking about being in the presence of Jesus the minute we close our eyes. They’re thinking about the three levels of Heaven: telestial, terrestrial, and celestial kingdom. So, you have to be very specific. I always say, “How do you get the highest level of eternity that God offers you?” That’s celestial kingdom under their system, because everyone’s going to be in telestial kingdom. It’s celestial kingdom is the highest. For us, it’s just called Heaven.

So, you have to be very clear when you say Heaven, you’re talking about celestial kingdom. How do you get there? Well, here’s what they would say. Under Mormonism, you’re on Earth. God is in celestial kingdom. If you want to be there with Him, Jesus comes to you. So it’s true; without Jesus, you can’t get there. And He gives you a ladder. Your job is to climb the ladder. So, you could rightly say that except for the grace of Jesus, you could never be with the Father because He’s the one who comes to give you the ladder. But it turns out you have to climb the ladder in your own good works.

Under Christianity, Jesus doesn’t give you a ladder. He drops down a rope. And while you’re kicking and screaming, He pulls you up anyway. *That* is the grace that’s offered under Christianity. There’s nothing you can do. As a matter of fact, on your own, you’re a rebellious mess.—[Cissie: Mm-hmm.]—Grace is very different under these two systems. And that difference is absolutely critical. I’ll tell you why. If you’re a ladder climber, I guarantee you, you’re going to start looking at other ladder climbers, and you’re going to go, “You know what, I’m climbing this ladder better than they are,” and this is why you’ll see sometimes Mormon influencers, they proclaim the virtues of their family, because there’s—I’ve seen it over and over again—there’s this comparison between how well are *you* doing.

Also, remember, under our system, you can know *right now* that you are saved. You see it in our Scripture. Paul describes us as citizens today. You’re not going to be citizens. You could be citizens if you work hard enough. No, you *are* citizens of Heaven now. Under Mormonism, you never really know. You won’t really know, and their leaders have said it, that you won’t know for years maybe, that you are truly saved, because it’s not dependent on something that Jesus did. It’s dependent on

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something you do over time. That is the difference. It's the security of knowing now that you are saved.

But, honestly, Cissie, if you were to talk about these theological differences between Mormons and Christians, I'm not sure how far you're going to get. So, here's what I always tell people because Mormons love personal testimony. And you know how I feel about personal testimony—[Cissie: Mm-hmm.]—got to have more than just personal testament because Mormons are so good at this.

But I would always say, "Look, I *did* read the Book of Mormon." Because that's what they want you to do. Read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover, and then ask God if it's true. That's it. Don't go any further than the Book of Mormon. So, when I went further, and I had the whole "quad." There are four sets of scripture, Old and New Testament, Book of Mormon, *Doctrines and Covenants*, Pearl of Great Price, and I read through all of it. I was fascinated by it. When I came to the Book of Abraham, now I have got demonstrable proof this is a lie. Because in the 1840s or so, when a salesman of antiquities came through Ohio, where Joseph was staying with his followers at the time, he sold Joseph a papyrus that Joseph translated into the Book of Mormon. The papyrus was eventually lost. So there's no way to know what was on that papyrus until it was recovered in New York state years later. And now we can see what is on that papyrus and if it matches Joseph's Book of Abraham. It doesn't. The word Abraham is not even present on the papyrus— [Cissie: Mm.]—The illustrations that Joseph puts in the Book of Abraham are still on the papyrus.

But it's a book of breathings. It's an ancient Egyptian papyrus. It has nothing to do with what Joseph—so now we have demonstrative proof that Joseph is not an accurate translator. So, for me, I was at least willing to entertain until I got to the Book of Abraham. And then I realized, no, he's not telling the truth. So that's why I said, OK, now I'm done with this. But how many people do you know, Christian or Mormon, who have examined the history of their own claims?—[Cissie: Mm.]

You know, remember, Joseph's not saying that he's been inventing something new. Joseph's claim was that he was restoring something lost. The claim was that the true essence of Christianity was lost at the death of the disciples. And if that's the case, Joseph's just coming to restore what was lost. Well, I'd already done work to see the transmission of the ideas of Jesus through the centuries, from the actual eyewitnesses who saw Jesus, to their students, to their students, to their students. Tracing that chain of custody helped me to have confidence that nothing was lost. But most Christians don't do that heavy lifting, so they get sucked into the lie.

**Cissie:**

**00:19:54** Yeah, and that's where we're thankful very much for your ministry, teaching those for Christianity. You go back to, you know, you're talking about God's grace and how thankful I am that it's not dependent on my good works because we'd fail that every day. We just did a recording that we're not enough and thank goodness we're not enough and it takes the pressure off of us—



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**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:20:11** Absolutely.

**Cissie:**

**00:20:12** —but for those living under that belief system, can they ever achieve—you're talking about the three tiers of the afterlife—can they ever achieve eternal life?

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:20:21** Well, part of it is that they have got an early tradition of perfectionism within their system, and no one's ever going to attain perfection. Now there are some Christians historically who have believed in that kind of a version of perfectionism. But if you read Paul in chapter seven of Romans, it appears that Paul, an icon, is not able to do what he knows he ought to do and often does what he knows he shouldn't do. This is the struggle of our Christian faith, OK? But here's what I would say about that. It turns out the one attribute—this is what I'm writing about in the next book—the one attribute of human flourishing that contributes to the most of flourishing life. I could say to you, “Hey, if you adopt this one attribute as a human, you will do better in almost every area of measurement from mental health, physical health, your grades, your amount of money you're going to make, whether you're going to be a good employer, employee, all of it, deeper relationships.” What is it? Humility.

Only one theistic worldview is grounded in humility, and that is Christianity. Why? Because if you're in a worldview that's about doing the pursuit of God through your good works, no one pursues anything without pride eventually seeping in because then you're always meas—“Am I doing a good job? Well, this guy seems to be doing better.” It turns out though, Christianity says, you know, you know what? I'm going to take that out. It's a free gift. Why? So that no one can boast. Scripture connects these two things. If I give you this freely, I'm going to take pride out. If I give this to you freely, I'm going to grow this attitude of humility. It starts when you bend your knee and realize you're not God. There's God. You're not Him. There's no God on human Earth. Your leaders are not gods. You're not a god. There's only one God in Heaven. You got to bend your knee there first.

The problem with Mormonism often is, if I can work my way—remember, under Mormonism—a lot of these current Mormons don't even believe this, but it is the teaching of Mormonism—every human has the potential to become a god. Jesus is not by nature divine. By nature, He's a human who *became* divine over time through His good works. Think about that for a second. Under Christianity, Jesus is by nature divine. There's a lesser version of Jesus under Mormonism because he's not by nature divine. He becomes a god—and so can you.

**Cissie:**

**00:22:36** So that's what they're striving for?

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:22:38** Yes. And so, if I can be God, this is the opposite of humility. This is why I say there is no god on planet Earth who can become God on planet Earth. And this takes the arrogance and pride out of it. So, it turns out, if you were just looking for a

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theistic system that would promote the one attribute of human nature, of human activity, that would help you flourish the most, which is humility, you should be looking at one system only. In other words, even if you don't believe Christianity is true, you ought to live as though it is. Because it turns out, it will provide you with the humility that will help you to flourish. Mormonism does not do that. But I will say this. You're watching these influencers, and you were saying it earlier, and they have big families. They take their faith far more seriously than we take ours.

**Cissie:**

**00:23:22** Yeah, that's what I'm saying. Some of it's very inspiring. I mean, I had somebody say they live their faith like we should be living. You know, they raise their families like we should raise ours.

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:23:32** Yes, they're willing to do more for a lie than we are willing to do for the truth. And that is very true. And there's the problem, right? So, we struggle with this, right? This is what I admire so much about the Mormons in my family. Look, I always relate it to, like, I'm a Californian, right? But if you ask me and push me on that, I mean, even though it's on my driver's license, I can show you my I.D. I am a Cal—I can demonstrate I'm a Californian. Don't ask me too much about California. I can't really tell you much about the history of California. I've forgotten most of it. And also, I don't know how you pass a law in California. What's the state legislature? Like how many people are in it? I don't know. There's a lot. What's the state flower? I don't—State tree? I don't know. I'm a Californian, though. Well, I think a lot of us—

**Cissie:**

**00:24:12** We can get you down here to the South if you'd like to, you know, you're part of our family anyways, we can get you to the South. Keep going.

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:24:17** So, but the point is, I'm a Californian. I don't want to be a Christian the way I'm a Californian. I don't know many Mormons that are—[Cissie: Mm.]—So, for example, if I was to move to Arizona, how much would really change? I'd be in a different state, but nothing really would change. Mormons understand where they live, and to come out of Mormonism is like not going to Arizona. It's like going to Albania. Everything would change. They are so entrenched in their worldview. And that's the thing I admire the most is that everything is running through that filter of this membership in this church. But I'll just say this: I don't think that a generation ago, when I first started working in this area, Mormons were very clear that they were not Christians, and they would say it, and their leaders would say it. That's not happening anymore. It really hasn't happened since Mitt Romney ran for president.

**Cissie:**

**00:25:04** Because they're trying blend in? You think they're trying to be accepted and blend in?

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**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:25:08** Well, I think you could argue that without the support of the evangelical church, Mitt Romney really lost the election because he did not have the support of the evangelical church. If he could have gained the support of the evangelical church, who knows what would have happened, right?

**Cissie:**

**00:25:22** Yeah, not to go down another rabbit hole, but I had friends then that said it was harder for them to vote for him because to normalize Mormonism. They had a *really* difficult time voting and it's funny you brought that up.

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:25:32** Yeah, I think people think we're crazy. Like, we're willing to vote for people who we know are not Christians if they hold conservative values. Why are we not willing to vote for someone who's a Mormon, who holds our values but is not a Christian? I think part of it is because this is a group that is actively seeking to deconvert the church. What I mean is, Mormonism is not true. Those folks are as unsaved as secular people. They are no closer to Jesus. If you believe in a lie about Jesus, you're no closer to being saved than somebody who doesn't believe in Jesus at all. Yet, this group of unsaved people goes door to door seeking to *unsave* those who are saved by drawing them out of the church. As a matter of fact, most converts to Mormonism are ex-Christians.

And I think it's because Christians recognize that there is innately we recognize this is a group that's trying to deconvert us, that this is a dangerous group—because it's really hard to get from zero to the Mormon story about Jesus. But if you're at the Christian story about Jesus, that step's not quite as far. So that's the foundation of people I think they're trying to reach, are people who already know something about Jesus, but don't know what the truth is, we can distort Jesus a little bit. It's much harder, I think, to get from atheism to Mormonism than it is to get from Christianity to Mormonism, and I think that's part of why. But look, I want my kids to know the difference so well that they can spot the lie coming. And there's really the challenge.

**Cissie:**

**00:26:53** That's a challenge for me. I was saying earlier in the episode that just recently they came knocking on our door and I had just walked in. I was kind of, you know, had the baby on the hip but Austin, my 7-year-old is standing right next to me, looking up to them. And, you know, I think most of us would try to just end the conversation really quick and shut the door, but I want to be challenged enough that we don't have to be caught off guard, but that we can stand in confidence. We can be ready, as Scripture says, ready to give an answer. And, that's the challenge. And I know it can be overwhelming to so many people. You have dove very deep into all of these scriptures and have studied them and that's a challenge, your gift. And I think for so many, it can be overwhelming that they shut it out. But I want those—because if we don't learn about it, we won't care about it. If we don't care about it, we're not prepared to give an answer and we're just caught off guard. And I didn't want my children to see that. And that's why I've wanted this episode to really be on this subject.

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One thing is, I think, in the struggle of the church, which we kind of touched on it is in the Christian church that we are facing right now is a progressive Christianity that don't hold truth to the historical claims of Christianity. Most Christians wouldn't know what they believe and why they believe it. They wouldn't be able to even have this conversation, much less about Mormonism, about their own faith. But for you and I, we know God's Word is authoritative Word of God. It is the truth. It is unchanging. It does not change with our times. It doesn't progress. Is that the same for Mormonism? Because it seems like, first off, when somebody thinks of Mormonism, they're going to think, "Oh, it's a cult, it's polygamy," you know, they think polygamy right away. Is this something that has changed over time with Mormon—? Does their scripture change?

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:28:35** Yes, so because there is a prophet who leads the church and the proclamations of the prophet are seen as divine themselves, right? They're authoritative in themselves that yes, that they believe—so, here's what they, we believe in progressive revelation also.

They believe in progressive revelation, but the way we say the word, it's like every other word that they use. It's very different. If I say Jesus and they say Jesus, two different kinds of Jesus. I say Heaven. They say Heaven. I say salvation. They say salvation. Every single term has been redefined. And it does not mean what we think it means. And when we say progressive, what we mean is that over the centuries, through prophecy in the Old Testament, the picture of Jesus was slowly revealed to us. It'd be like saying, we had maybe one slice of the pizza, but over the years there's more slices of the pizza, until finally we realized that Jesus is the pizza, OK? So it's been progressively exposed, revealed to us.

They believe that progressive is very different. They believe it in the sense that it was first revealed as a pizza, but it might tomorrow be a taco and it might the next day be a hamburger. In other words, the entire thing could change and that the will of God, what is virtuous, what is good could actually change and—

**Cissie:**

**00:29:42** Well who has the ability to change it?

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:29:44** Well, the prophet does. And so that will happen is, for example, polygamy was something that was practiced by Joseph. He wrote it in the *Doctrines and Covenants*. But by the time of statehood—well, by the time that the federal government pressured the state of Utah and pressured the Mormon church, another prophet came and said, We are no longer doing that. So, a prophet has the authority to say yes or no on something like polygamy.

Here's what I would say. You talked about this, and I want to—before I forget about—I want to go back to it. You're in Florida, right? So if somebody came to you and knocked on the door and said, "You know what—" Especially from a football family, because you're from a football family, right? If they came on the door and

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they said, “The Dallas Cowboys are the best football team in the NFL, not the Bucs, not the Jags, not the Miami Dolphins.” There’s people in your state who could have a 40-minute conversation about why that’s not true. And they would know not just something about their football team, the Jags, but they would know something about the Cowboys, and they’d go, “Dak Prescott’s never going to win it.” They could go on and on and on. We do a better job of passing on our fandom to our kids than we do passing on our faith to our kids. We are far more prepared right now to make a case for a sports team than we are for *the* team. We are. It’s just the nature of it, and we don’t have to be that intentional. In other words, it’s not like I need to say to my Christian brothers and sisters, “You need this seven-step program that you can buy over here so you can go through every—” No, how about this? You’re just overflowing with your fan-ship of the team, and you talk about it at dinner; you watch the games, you travel, you talk, you do things. It’s organic; it just happens. You don’t even know when it happened. You couldn’t even go back and say, “When did I really become a fan of this? I’ve always been a fan of this.”

OK, same way here. If we’re interested in Jesus, the real Jesus, and we talk about Him a lot, well then we can spot the lie when someone comes to your door. So when people come to my door—they’re Mormons—I always say, “Look, I wish it was true. But as I examined it, and I got to the Book of Abraham, I realized it’s not. And I don’t think anyone who’s in your system, who really understands what happened with the Book of Abraham can stay in the system for very long.” I’m willing to talk about Jesus, of course, and God the Father, but all that theology is downstream. Why do I trust what the gospels say about Jesus? Because I trust the gospel authors. Why do I *not* trust what Mormonism says about Jesus? ’Cause I don’t trust Joseph. Test Joseph. Test the gospel authors. Only one of these two is going to pass the test. And that’s the information. Yes. Is it authoritative? It’s not authoritative. Look, I think it’s up to us to spend some time because Mormons think that their scripture is authoritative.

**Cissie:**

**00:32:19** This is another subject for another day because actually when I was listening to your podcast, I was like, “I have some questions when he uses the word ‘authoritative,’” but we’re going to save that.

Hold on, because I actually have a lot more questions about that for you, but more for my own knowledge. So, for those who are listening, when they knock on your door, they have not—you listening probably have not read the Book of Abraham, but you can say, “My friend, Jim has read the Book of Abraham and he says he doesn’t trust the writer, the author.”

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:32:44** Let me say this to you about that. That’s true. Here’s what I would say. When I was a youth pastor, I noticed that I would do a series on theology, eight weeks on this theological set of claims. And my students were like, “Ah, this is so boring. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.” OK. I get it. So, here’s what I did instead. I said, “Here’s what we’re going to do. We’re going to go in eight weeks. We’re going to go to Salt Lake City and you’re going to meet a set of people who know more about the

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Bible than you do, but they're not Christians, and then we're going to train for this." And at first—now this is different now. I started studying Mormonism with my youth group because I wanted them to become more solid in their Christian orthodoxy. In other words, believe it or not, studying that heresy and defining the differences will actually make you a more committed Christian. So there's a sense in which we ought to be looking at, "Yeah, great, you haven't read the Book of Abraham? You haven't read the Book of Mormon? Why not? I'm not afraid of it. It's not true."

**Cissie:**

**00:33:39** Well, I love that even in your, some of your episodes on your podcast, you've talked about why you have taken youth groups on a mission trip to Utah—which I remember the first time I heard that, it was like surprising. But it is, I mean, I think it's easier to evangelize and share your faith with somebody that knows nothing, of course, then those who are prepared to give an answer right back to you. And I use the example of when, you know, Jesus was tempted in the desert, He used Scripture to fight back at Satan. And we've just have lost that. We don't have Scripture hidden in our heart that we're ready to give a quick answer, myself included. And so, what a testimony to take your youth group to be able to prepare to fight those who are the strongest in their faith, and prepare them for that.

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:34:23** Yeah. Here's what I would say: Everyone listening, your kids know what you're geeked out on. They already know—[Cissie: Mm-hmm.]—I said, "Hey, what's Mom and Dad geeked out about?" They can list things that you talk about, you think about. So, I want us to be so geeked out on this stuff—which is the most important information you're ever going to hold—that if you ask my kids, "What's Pop geeked out on?" They'll tell you, "This is all he ever talks about." OK. OK. I get it. But, I'm also geeked out on sports. Look, we have our own fantasy football league still. OK. We get both. You can do both. But if you saw my priorities—

**Cissie:**

**00:34:56** In in our household, they know, they say, "Daddy would like this building. It's got strong concrete. Look at that standing seam roof."

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:35:03** Yes, exactly.

**Cissie:**

**00:35:04** But what a challenge, because it is true. When I think back at my grandparents and I think back at sitting around their table, it was Jesus. I mean, my grandfather, Daddy Bill and Teta, they were constantly talking about their faith in Jesus—and it was genuine. It was intertwined with their day-to-day life and what a challenge I think for a younger generation, that we got to have those conversations around our table, in our car, all the time.

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:35:26** Yep, I'll tell you what it is. I don't know that Mormons are doing that more than we are, but here's what they are doing. They have ingrained the Mormon

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lifestyle into their life as a family so deeply that they cannot imagine—not only that, I think there’s this level of shame or rejection from others if you were to leave this system. So, there *is* a sense in which that level of commitment continues to drive Mormon families. They cannot see themselves or envision themselves outside of that community. You can say it’s kind of cultic. Well, OK. The reality of it is though, if this is true, if Christianity is true, why are we not closer to our Christian brothers and sisters? Why are we not engaged more in community? There are no lone ranger Christians in the pages of Scripture, yet there are a lot of lone ranger Christians right now in the country. And this is one of the things I think draws Mormons to Mormonism is the sense of unbelievable, dedicated community.

**Cissie:**

**00:36:18** Yeah.

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:36:19** You know, for example, you will see that wards when you have certain areas in Colorado, you’ll see communities, there’s always a ward in that community. The church is making sure that it plants communities around wards, and that sense of community is so strong and I think we want that. We are created in the image of a triune God who has been in community from all et—by the way Mormonism does not teach that. Mormonism teaches that any one of us can become god of his own planet through good work the same way that Jesus became the God of this planet through His good work. That means they are polytheists. They believe in an infinite number of gods. Now they would say, “Well, no, we only believe in one God of this world or of this,” you know, OK. But the reality of it is if anyone can be God, then you have to open the number up quite a bit, right? So, they don’t believe in the Trinity. Now, if you ask a Mormon today, though, who you just happen to be at work with—they probably have no idea what Mormonism actually teaches on this subject the same way that we don’t have any idea—

**Cissie:**

**00:37:16** Yeah.

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:37:18** —what our Christianity teaches, and we claim the Christian identity. So we have to do a better job.

**Cissie:**

**00:37:20** I think you just said it. That’s why it’s so attractive as a community. Their love for the extended family.

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:37:25** Yeah.

**Cissie:**

**00:37:26** I mean, so many Christians don’t even talk to their brothers, sisters, aunts, and uncles. And it’s just the extension that, you know, they take vacations and build homes with their extended family. And, there are things that we can learn from that,

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but we're called as Christians to take care of the community around us and to love our community, to serve our community with hospitality. But, I know today we have just scratched the surface, but I would encourage those who are listening. Jim has so many more resources, articles, and episodes regarding this—almost every question that we've asked, you have an episode on. And so, I'm just so thankful. Thank you for joining me on today's episode of *Fearless* to discuss this subject that's been very personal to me because I've just seen some of my friends struggle to see the difference.

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:38:07** Yeah, so grateful that we even have this conversation because I don't know of any extended family that has been more committed to the Gospel than you guys have been. This is why we love to partner with anything that Samaritan's Purse and BGEA does. We're in, because we know that, "Hey, we've got to take that attitude toward the world." You've done a great job of doing that.

**Cissie:**

**00:38:26** Aw, well, thank you. And it's just on my heart to say for those who are listening, I mean, our hope in Jesus, it is simple. The Scriptures say those who believe in the Name of Jesus will be saved. And how thankful, it's that simple. It's not based on our works, because we'll never be enough for that. Although the world tells us we're enough, we never will be enough. And how simple it is that those who simply believe, so those who are listening and struggling, Jim, I don't ever do this on my episodes ever, would you just pray for those who are listening, that maybe have family members in the Mormon church or those who might not even believe in Jesus?

**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:00:00** Yeah. Father, we come to You because we know that we can do a better job of representing You, especially to a world that has confused who You are and has changed who You are for their own purposes. Look, Father, we know that we could never earn this. Please help us to be better and more dedicated to realize that this is the most important gift we have—are ever going to receive, and we want others to receive it. We want them to come out from under the burden of having to work their way to Heaven. It's burdensome and it is causing such depression in this group that, Father, we want to help relieve that too, but we also want to see another unsaved people group be saved. So Father, we just pray that Your Gospel—that it's just turning from sin. It's just accepting You as Lord, that in that instant, we will be saved. Help this group to see that. It's not something they can earn over time, but it's something they could receive instantly as a free gift and we pray this in the Name of Your precious Son, Jesus Christ, amen.

**Cissie:**

**00:39:51** Amen. Thank you, Jim, for joining us on today's episode of *Fearless*.

**MUSIC STARTS**



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**J. Warner Wallace:**

**00:39:55** Thanks for having me, Cissie. I appreciate it.

**MUSIC TRANSITION**

**Cissie Graham Lynch:**

**00:39:59** Thank you for joining Jim and I on today's episode of *Fearless*. And if you have more questions about your own personal faith with Jesus, I would encourage you check out our website, [BillyGraham.org](http://BillyGraham.org), and also check out his website, [J. Warner Wallace](#). He has incredible resources, he's a wealth of information. I love going to him when I'm researching a topic. But once again, thank you for joining me on another episode of *Fearless*.

**CLOSING MUSIC**

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