

Core Doctrines



THE NATURE OF GOD God is often referred to in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as our Heavenly Father because He is the Father of all human spirits and they are created in His image (see Genesis 1:27). For Latter-day Saints, God the Father, His Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost constitute the Godhead, or Trinity. Latter-day Saints believe God is embodied, though His body is perfect and glorified.

CHRISTIAN The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a Christian church but is neither Catholic nor Protestant. Rather, it is a restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ as originally established by the Savior in the New Testament of the Bible. Latter-day Saints believe God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to save all mankind from death and their individual sins. Jesus Christ is central to the lives of Church members. They seek to follow His example by being baptized (see Matthew 3:13–17), praying in His holy name (see Matthew 6:9–13), partaking of the sacrament (see Luke 22:19–20), doing good to others (see Acts 10:38) and bearing witness of Him through both word and deed (see James 2:26). The only way to salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ.

DIVINE PRIESTHOOD AUTHORITY Latter-day Saints believe that divine authority was lost in the ancient church after the death of the apostles and required a restoration by divine intervention. They affirm the priesthood authority was restored to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the first half of the

19th century — a literal act through angelic visitations from the resurrected John the Baptist in 1829 and later through the appearance of the resurrected ancient apostles Peter, James and John. Today, all Latter-day Saints who hold the priesthood trace their authority directly to these visitations and bestowal of the priesthood of God on Joseph Smith and early leaders of the Church. The “apostolic keys” of priesthood authority today — by which is meant the right to direct the Church — are believed to be vested in the modern apostles in the same way that the ancient apostles had the authority to direct the early church.

BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION Baptism into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints requires full immersion in water by a person who holds the priesthood authority to baptize. It is the means by which people join the Church. Those who are baptized into the Church are cleansed of their previous sins and promise to live the principles of the gospel. A person becomes a member of the Church only after he or she is both baptized and confirmed. A person is confirmed a member of the Church after baptism by a priesthood holder who puts his hands on the head of the person and blesses him or her to “receive the Holy Ghost.”

MODERN PROPHETS AND CONTINUING

REVELATION Modern apostles and prophets are a distinctive characteristic of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Church members view senior Church leaders — Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and the presidents of the Church that followed — as prophets of God in the same way they view Abraham, Moses, Isaiah and the apostles in the day of Jesus Christ. Russell M. Nelson is the current president and prophet of the Church. Members believe The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a restoration of the Church originally established by Jesus Christ during His mortal lifetime. Part of that restoration includes living prophets and apostles. Along with modern prophets comes continuing revelation and additional scripture. Joseph Smith is perhaps best known for his translation of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ and for laying the foundation of the Church in the 19th century. Successive presidents of the Church since then have made their own distinctive contributions.

PLAN OF SALVATION To describe the trajectory of human existence, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints uses the term “plan of salvation.” This “plan” refers to the design God has employed to help us grow, learn and experience joy. It addresses the fundamental questions “Where did we come from?” “Why are we here?” and “Where are we going?” Latter-day Saint scripture teaches that all human beings are children of God and lived with Him before this earth life. God presented a plan by which we could obtain physical bodies and a period of earthly experience. Central to this “plan of salvation” was the role of Jesus Christ, who, as the Savior, would help mankind overcome the costs of our mortal learning. During mortality, we exercise our God-given right to make choices and live in ways that draw us closer to God or away from God. At death, our spirit leaves our deceased body. While our bodies remain on the earth, our spirits will reside in a state of rest or in a state of learning until the day of resurrection and judgment, when all will be judged by a perfectly merciful and just God. We will inherit a place in a realm of glory corresponding to our faithfulness. While all human beings will receive the gift of immortality, or an eternal union of the body and spirit, God desires for us to live in such a way that we also receive the gift of exaltation — eternal life with our families in God’s presence.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints affirms that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity.

HEALTH PRACTICES Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are known for their healthy lifestyles. A health plan for the Church was first written down in 1833 by President Joseph Smith, and he presented it to early members specifically as a revelation from God. Today, Latter-day Saints refer to these health guidelines as “the Word of Wisdom.”

Among the provisions of the health code: no alcoholic drinks, no smoking or chewing of tobacco, and no “hot drinks” — believed to refer specifically to tea and coffee. “Wholesome herbs,” along with fruits and grains, are specifically recommended. Meat is to be used “sparingly.” The Church also interprets the misuse of drugs — illegal, legal, prescription or controlled — as a violation of the health code.

TITHING AND CHARITABLE DONATIONS For Latter-day Saints, tithing is a natural and integrated aspect of their religious belief and practice. By the biblical definition, tithing is one-tenth, and Church members interpret this as a tenth of their “increase,” or income, annually. It is paid on the honor system. No one asks to see income statements or pay slips. Tithes and other charitable donations help the Church carry out its mission of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, caring for the poor and strengthening members’ faith and commitment to Jesus Christ.

MISSIONARY PROGRAM The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ missionary program is one of its most recognized characteristics. Latter-day Saint missionaries can be seen on the streets of hundreds of major cities in the world as well as in thousands of smaller communities. The missionary effort is based on the New Testament pattern of missionaries serving in pairs, teaching the gospel and baptizing believers in the name of Jesus Christ. Currently, more than 65,000 missionaries serve worldwide.

VOLUNTEER MINISTRY The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints functions in large measure because of the unpaid volunteer ministry of its members. In thousands of local congregations or “wards” around the world, members voluntarily participate in “callings” or assignments that provide meaningful opportunities to serve one another. It is common for Church members to spend 5–10 hours a week serving in their callings. Some callings, such as a bishop, women’s Relief Society president, or stake president may require 15–30 hours per week.

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS