

The Doorstep Cheat Sheet

Quick counterpoints for conversations with LDS (Mormon) missionaries — two levels deep: their pitch, your response, the comeback they're trained to give, and your reply to that. Missionaries are usually 18–19 years old, far from home, and sincere. Be kind, be firm, be brief.

■ 1 — THEIR PITCH

“God restored His original church through the prophet Joseph Smith.”

YOUR RESPONSE

The Restoration only makes sense if Christianity totally apostatized — and there's no historical evidence it did. Churches with unbroken lineages still exist. And Joseph's own First Vision story changed: his earliest account (1832, in his own handwriting) mentions only Jesus — no God the Father, no revival, details that appear years later.

THEY'RE TRAINED TO COME BACK WITH

“Different accounts naturally emphasize different details — like the four Gospels.”

YOUR REPLY

The Gospels are four different authors. This is one man whose story gained its most important detail — two separate personages — a decade later, after his doctrine of God had changed. The church's own Gospel Topics essay acknowledges the differing accounts.

■ 2 — THEIR PITCH

“The Book of Mormon is another testament of Christ — read it and pray about it.”

YOUR RESPONSE

No archaeology, linguistics, or genetics supports Israelites in ancient America. The text describes steel, horses, and chariots — none attested in the pre-Columbian record. DNA studies show Native American ancestry tracing to East Asia and Siberia, not the Middle East.

THEY'RE TRAINED TO COME BACK WITH

“Absence of evidence isn't evidence of absence — and the events may have covered a small, limited region.”

YOUR REPLY

The church itself adjusted to the evidence: in 2006 it changed the book's introduction from Lamanites being the ‘principal ancestors’ of Native Americans to merely ‘among the ancestors.’ If the evidence didn't matter, the wording wouldn't have needed to change.

■ 3 — THEIR PITCH

“Pray and ask God — the Holy Ghost will confirm to you that it's true.”

YOUR RESPONSE

Sincere believers in every faith report the same confirming feelings — Muslims, Pentecostals, Hindus. A warm feeling that confirms mutually contradictory religions can't be a reliable test for which one is true. Feelings confirm sincerity, not history.

THEY'RE TRAINED TO COME BACK WITH

“Those are just emotions — the witness of the Spirit is different. You'll know it when you feel it.”

YOUR REPLY

Then describe the difference in a way another faith's testimony wouldn't also satisfy. If sincere prayer plus a powerful feeling proves truth, every religion is proven at once — including the ones that contradict yours.

■ 4 — THEIR PITCH

“We have a living prophet who speaks for God today.”

YOUR RESPONSE

Past prophets taught, as doctrine, things the church now disavows: the racial priesthood-ban justifications (repudiated in the church's own 2013 essay), Brigham Young's Adam–God teaching, and polygamy as a requirement for exaltation.

THEY'RE TRAINED TO COME BACK WITH

“Prophets are imperfect men — sometimes they spoke as men, not as prophets.”

YOUR REPLY

If prophetic statements can only be sorted into ‘as a man’ versus ‘as a prophet’ after the church abandons them, then the living prophet offers nothing hindsight doesn't. What is he for, if you can't tell which words are God's until decades later?

■ 5 — THEIR PITCH

“We believe the Bible too — the Book of Mormon stands alongside it.”

YOUR RESPONSE

The Book of Mormon reproduces the King James translation word-for-word in long stretches — including the KJV's italicized filler words (added by 1611 translators) and Isaiah chapters scholars date to after Lehi supposedly left Jerusalem with the brass plates.

THEY'RE TRAINED TO COME BACK WITH

“God revealed it in the scriptural language Joseph knew, so it would feel familiar.”

YOUR REPLY

Familiar style is one thing. Copying a 17th-century translation's specific choices — and its errors — into a record claimed to be a thousand years older is another. Style doesn't explain duplicated translation artifacts.

“Families can be together forever.”

In LDS doctrine that promise is conditional — on temple sealing, worthiness interviews, and full tithing. Families that don't qualify are, by the same doctrine, separated in eternity. As presented on doorsteps it's a comfort; as doctrine it's a condition.

“God has provided a way for everyone — ordinances can be performed for the dead.”

Which concedes the point: the default fate of my family, as non-members, is separation unless they posthumously accept Mormonism. 'Families are forever — terms and conditions apply' is not the sentence on the pamphlet.

“That history is complicated — polygamy ended over a century ago. Let’s focus on the message.”

The church's own Gospel Topics essays confirm Joseph Smith married roughly 30–40 women, including girls as young as 14 and women already married to living men — while he publicly denied practicing polygamy at all. That's not complicated; it's documented, by the church.

“Don’t judge the message by imperfect people. Have you read the Book of Mormon and prayed about it?”

The message's entire chain of evidence runs through that one man's reliability as a witness. If he would deceive his own congregation about his marriages, what basis do I have to trust his account of angels and gold plates?

- Church investment fund revealed by a 2019 whistleblower: over \$100B; the SEC fined the church and its fund manager \$5M in 2023 for obscuring its holdings.
- Joseph Smith translated primarily with a seer stone in a hat — per the church's own essay and artwork releases — not the breastplate method taught for decades.
- The Book of Abraham papyri survive; Egyptologists identify them as common funerary texts (the Book of Breathings), unrelated to Abraham.
- Black members were barred from priesthood and temple ordinances until 1978; the church has disavowed every theory once taught to justify it.

- "I've studied the church's own essays and I'm confident in my conclusion — I wish you both well."
- "Please mark us down as do-not-contact — thank you."
(They keep area records; this genuinely works.)
- "I'm happy to talk history if you are — but I won't be praying about claims the evidence already answers."
- Offer them water. They walk all day. Decency costs nothing.

FIELD NOTES – WHAT THEY SAID / WHAT WORKED