

My story kind of started with my parents' separation and divorce between the years of 1993-1995. I was 14 when it started in 1993. I am the oldest of 5 children, the youngest was 4 years old at that time. My father was excommunicated, partly because of the divorce but mostly because he had chosen a gay lifestyle. His being gay, of course, was a huge factor in the divorce, but it was just one of many, many factors. My father is still living a lost gay lifestyle in San Francisco. But back to the story... When my parents divorced, my mom was disfellowshipped, but then she immediately responded with requesting to be excommunicated and taken from the church records. Since I was the only one of my siblings old enough to really make a choice about religion and church, and since I was involved with Young Women's at that time, my mom took my four younger siblings out of the church and I stayed active. For two more years we lived like this. During those two years, God did a lot of work in my own heart as well as the hearts of my family members. My mom got married in July of 1995, to a man who I now consider my dad. God truly sent him to us, even though we did not recognize God's hand at that time. During those two years of being the only active church member in my family, I delved even deeper into the Mormon faith and beliefs. I wanted to know that it was the truth and I wanted to convince my family, friends and everyone I met that it was the truth. So, I studied the Book of Mormon harder, I prayed harder, I was consistent at seminary, I read the prophets' writings, I was gung-ho for the church. I participated in plays, took on extra duties in my YW calling, etc. But I started to feel "not right" about it all. God sent me a boy my junior year of high school with whom I would debate for hours during lunch at school and after school, about whether Christianity or Mormonism was the truth. I don't think that boy realized how much work God did in my heart thanks to him. I started to question Mormonism. I started to sense that something was missing from the list of rules and obligations. I started to get a feeling that there was more to faith than what I had and that it wasn't supposed to be about a man (Joseph Smith). But I wanted to be living in the truth so badly that I pushed those doubts away and just worked on trying to "build my testimony". In 1996, my step-dad got a job transfer, so in July of that year, the summer before my senior year of high school, I moved from where I had grown up in California to Denver, Colorado. My step-dad moved about five months before my family moved so that he could find a house and get everything set up. During those five months he was in Denver without us, a man at his work befriended him. My step-dad was invited to a Promise Keepers Retreat where he accepted the Lord. That man, who led him to the Lord, invited him to go to the church where my family, to this day, still goes. By the time the rest of my family moved to Denver, my step-dad was already growing in his new faith and a regular member of that church.

OK, now here comes the real conversion of part of the story. I didn't realize how much prep and background I had to give. Since that summer of 1996 was right before my senior year, I was planning on staying in California to graduate with my friends. I was planning on living with a childhood friend and her family, all of whom were TBM's (Totally Believing Mormons), but God had a different plan. The first Sunday that my family went to that church my step-dad

had chosen, was July 14, 1996. I was spending the summer with my family and had half of my stuff in California. I already had a plane ticket to leave around the 24th, or so, to go back to California. I will never forget the feeling that I had that first Sunday in the worship service. As soon as the music started, I knew that I had found what was missing in my Mormon faith. I stood there amazed as a whole room of people sang about their love for God at the top of their lungs. They really did love God! The sermon was about having joy in the Lord. It was a relatively new concept to me, but I remember knowing that that was how it was supposed to be. My younger brother and I went to the youth group, where we were warmly welcomed without question (also a new concept). We were invited to go, their treat, with the youth group to their Bible camp that left the next day. To this day, the only reason I can give for why I went, was that God sent me. I was leaving so I didn't have any need to make friends. I was a Mormon, and because of that, I didn't have any "need" to study the Bible. It was free, so money wasn't a problem. I asked my brother if he wanted me to go to support and be with him and he said he didn't care. It was just God that put me on that bus the next day and God again that sat me next to the pastor's daughter, who was my age and is still one of my best friends. She found out I was Mormon and immediately went to work on me. My heart was ready. I ate up her words. She challenged me, in a loving manner and quoted scripture, about the various contradictions between the Bible and the Mormon Church. She asked me, "If Mormons say they believe the Bible to be truth and the Bible contradicts Mormonism, they can't both be true, right?" By the time we arrived at camp my mind was already going a mile a minute. The theme of the camp that week (another amazing God-thing) was about weighing what the world says is truth to the truth in the Bible and using the Bible as your measuring stick for truth. Wow. God confronted me with all He had to make me make a choice, - either Mormonism was true or the Bible was true. They couldn't co-exist as both being truth; that was clear. The pastor's daughter had given me two pages of scripture contradicting the teachings of the Mormon Church and I spent every free moment reading those passages over and over. It didn't take long. On Tuesday night of that week of Bible camp, on July 16, 1996, God spoke directly to me. I was brought down to my knees and I asked Him the question, "Is it the Bible or is it Mormonism?" He might as well have been yelling it. I heard clearly throughout my mind and heart "The Bible" and then I prayed and asked that He would come and live in my heart and be my Savior. I called my mom the next morning (she had been praying for me the night before), and told her what had happened. I said that I was not going back to California, but staying in Denver with them. My own bedroom was set up by the time I got home on Saturday.

I just celebrated my 6th spiritual birthday. I am so amazed at how God miraculously pulled me out of Mormonism. I feel a close bond to the Apostle Paul because of his conversion. I was on my own road to Damascus, blindly following with all my strength the path that led away from God. But He loved me and wanted me enough to stop me, pick me up and place me on the path leading to Him. Since I left Mormonism, I have known that it is not from God, but from the

enemy. But I had not received the full impact of what God saved me from until I started reading what was on your site. (H.I.S. Ministries International). I praise God that he chose me to live in His truth, with a life devoted to the true Jesus Christ.

Right now, I teach elementary music in Denver Public Schools. I work with Children's Ministry at my church, the same church where I was saved. I also lead the children's choir at this church. God is laying it upon my heart that He has a mission for me to accomplish. I am beginning to hear his call to "go and make disciples of all nations." It is such a joy to go share the real truth, the real joy, the real Christ with the world. I hope this story can help others see out the real Author, Perfector, and Finisher of our Faith, Jesus Christ.

Stephanie