

Transcript of 11.27.2018 Disciplinary Council held on behalf of Bill Reel

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BR: Okay, how are you?

Sure. - And the Stake High Council. - Okay. -

High Councilman (Opening Prayer): Our Father in Heaven, we come to this night, and in humble prayers, we begin this council for Brother Reel. And as for my spirit and blessing, to be with us here at this time. We are grateful, Father, for the blessings of the gospel in our lives. We're thankful for the teachings in the, for our testimonies of me and my son. We're grateful for, to live in a time when we have all the blessings. Father, as we lead this time, we ask for. To be with each one of us, first of all, Brother Reel and his wife, may God bless them and sustain them, help him with those things which he has decided to present, and represent. About his presentation, and each one of us can hear with an open heart, and that our ears and our eyes might be open to those things which he would present to us. We ask the blessing of discernment on each one of us, but particularly upon our Stake President, President Carnavale and his counselors, as we know, that ultimately it is through him that thy will will be revealed. We ask for thy spirit this time, forgive us of our weaknesses and our shortcomings, that we might be worthy. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

[Group] Amen.

SP: So the way we'll go about this. -

BR: Yeah. Okay.

SP: - And we will.

BR: - Sure.

SP: And then, if you'd like to go first, you can decide how you want.

BR: Okay

SP: I will leave it up to you.

BR: Okay

SP: This has been extremely hard for me. I am, I don't like to give talks in church, and write 'em down, I've never written a church talk before, but I was afraid tonight that I wasn't gonna be able to get my thoughts together if I didn't. So forgive me for, for reading it, but I felt like I was about to We are united here tonight High Council. On your behalf, Brother Reel. Specifically, high councils are a great opportunity for all to see the love of our savior, the love that our savior has for each of us, as well as to feel the power of his kindness. Brother Reel has had a chance to which to get to know you, and the over the past few months. Friends, I have learned that you are a good man, and an intelligent man, he loves his family, and I have found that And I also found that and character. I would like to express my appreciation to you and your wife for the way you received me in your home, you are a good friend. Brother Reel, you have been a member apart, you have been a part of this church for about as long as I have. We both came to the gospel of Jesus Christ in our teenage years, we were inspired and bound to it. The Holy Ghost testified of the truth, of these things to you, and although I did not fully understand all that I was committing to, I knew I was doing the right thing before my God. I have since grown in the gospel, and have spent many years in the service of our God. You have faithfully served many years in this church, even as a Bishop, and to our meetings, we have testified that the joy we felt in these callings, as a church, we were grateful to you, and your family for your service and your dedication to building the Lord's kingdom on this earth, and any And that is true, too, based on all the messages that I received, and I received lots of messages from people that knew you, that, people that. But this subscribes to your method

BR: Yeah.

SP: But it's said, you know, and he was my Bishop, and he was a great man, he did great work when he was a Bishop, and I, I've been there, I've done the Bishop work, I know how that can be, and just want to thank you. Thank you for that. However, over the last few years, the life and focus have taken on a different. The gospel of Jesus

Christ, this church, and especially the church's leadership. Your questions and concerns have been the topic of discussion for many years, especially in the form of those who oppose this church, and its leaders. I want to make it clear that in the gospel, and in this church, we won't shy away from asking questions, in fact, an approach used by our missionaries. Those who are sincerely seeking. Just as Joseph Smith did. In a statement by Elder Oaks, that you have actually quoted many times she says, but our position is not, and our position is what we will focus on tonight. The charges of this council is that you are reported to have acted repeatedly and in clear and open public opposition to the church, or its leaders. So do you admit, and do you agree with those charges?

BR: I think it's messier than that, I don't know that I would want to say yes or no. I don't think we live in a black and white world. I think there's plenty of people who disagree to 19, prior to 1978, about where we are at on race, I think people have a right to raise a concern or a criticism, if that criticism is valid. So I'm not, I don't think it's fair to say yes or no.

SP: I have some, I have gotten some evidence-- - Please. - Of what this is. I'm just gonna show some of these. So on May 29th, May 29th, you posted a picture of Brother Ballard, and this one. - Yeah. - Where you quoted a statement, where he stated that the church leaders made no attempt to hide anything from anybody, and in your comments below was that. The picture also had a liar stamp. Also, on May 29th, once again you call another apostle, you called a statement by Elder Holland. 100%, and another profanity, you then wrote, "Elder Holland, I welcome your confession as a stepping stone on the path of repentance. Quote Elder Holland, you are charismatic, you are jovial, quote you tell a good story, the problem is, "you just aren't a truth teller." This picture also had a stamp over Elder Holland's face. June 21st. And you posted a picture of Brother Oaks, and your connection with this, with for your faith in the prophet, you wrote, "A man who has zero God magic, and who is seen equal "or less accurate than most." Such as this one that you. Here's another one, this is from July 7th, and you posted another statement. LDS leaders who represent our Heavenly Father. And kind of went on, sarcastic, jokingly, whatever you wrote under Oaks, it was just open about his actual experiences. This one is more related to the church itself, and it's not targeting any, any prophet, but on July 4th, you made a comment about the Book of Mormon. And again, kind of made a joke about the, that there was only the, Moroni, or in special

translation, translated is the other one. And in causing concerns, and, and. And then, on July 13th, you had this picture, of Mona Lisa being painted on this side, and on this side, the, an ugly picture of Mona Lisa, and you called that Mormonism, in your statement, and you're saying, you subscribe to the three hour teachings you were getting on Sunday, but you don't know one 10,000th of a percent of what, what's being said, so there's, there's many more, I, I have it. Gentlemen, we all have questions, and you can I'm sure we all have questions, and defined the answers to those questions. Asking questions is an integral part of developing. And I will, seek ye diligently, and ye shall find it, ask, and you shall receive, knock, and this shall be opened to you. I have made myself available to you for discussion of questions, and in our second meeting together, I asked you to stop with the attacks on the church and its leaders while we work on some of these questions. Since then, your efforts have, have, your efforts to put down the church and its leaders have actually intensified. I know you made some comments on this in the letter about us meeting together, and that I was kind of framing you in that, but there's really no framing 'cause we're not, that's not the charges, the charges The charges is the opposition to the church, leaders of the church. In addition to the opposition of church leaders, the articles and podcasts have also targeted the most simple and sublime truths of the gospel. This is in your podcast titled, The Mythical Jesus. And some of these podcasts have diminished the powers. And acting and preaching against the blessings of the church he's trying to promote, and these are, these are the charges, these are the, the evidence that we have for you. Brother Reel, I will go ahead and, I'll give you 60 minutes now to give your, your response, we will not interrupt you.

BR Yeah, she'll, she'll talk at the end.

BR (Tells his story of his Personal Journey): So first off, during the prayer of thank you, the prayer mentioned, like, being open to listening. And when I've heard about these disciplinary courts in the past, people turned to, tend to put their heads down, and not pay attention, and I just ask they you give me 60 minutes of listening, and when you're, and when we're done, if you feel like I'm, I'm an apostate, great, then excommunicate me, and so be it. But I hope that you'll listen, because my story, in some ways, is your story. [So when I was 17 years old, I found the church](#), and it was the most beautiful thing in the world. I was using drugs, I was making bad choices, I was shoplifting, and I discovered Mormonism, and it was gorgeous, and it was like it picked me up off of one

path, and it set me down on another, and it changed my life. So I'm a 17-year-old kid, and I joined the church, and I'm committed, I'm both feet in. The first calling I served in was an assistant ward mission leader, then I was a secretary in the Elder's quorum Presidency, immediately following, I was a counselor in the Elders Quorum Presidency, I was then the President, I was a Bis... a counselor in the Bishopric, and [by 29 years old, I served as a Bishop in the Sandusky Ward in Ohio](#), a Midwestern ward, about 120 attending, a small ward, good people. And the trouble is that when we're in a religious system, we struggle to recognize if our system has any issues because we tend to listen to the authorities of our tribe, and we're skeptical of anything that comes from outside our tribe. And so tonight I hope to share with you a little bit of our history, so you can understand where I'm coming from, and then, once I've said my peace, feel free to, again, do whatever needs to be done. [When I was 32 years old, I was halfway through serving as a Bishop, and I had a faith crisis](#). And my faith crisis came because from the time I was 17, until that 32 years old, I was reading everything about Mormonism, I was reading about its history from faithful sources, I was reading from critical sources, I was going back to the original source material, and I simply wanted to know Mormonism, inside and out. And I started to discover some issues, I found faithful answers that worked, but they only worked if you understood the issue at a surface level, and then once you understood the issue, you realized it became way more complicated than the church led on it being.

BR ([Treasure Digging and Folk Magic](#)): So I want to share a couple of things. First, I'd like to talk about [Joseph Smith dabbling in treasure digging](#), and most of us in this room maybe don't even know what that is. Joseph Smith, in 1819, and again, I don't want you to take my word for it, if something I say tonight makes you uncomfortable, go look it up, go to the original sources, read both sides, and make up your own mind. In 1819, a year before the first vision, Joseph Smith is 13 years old, and he borrows a seer stone from Sally Chase, Sally Chase is a town scryer, she takes her stone, she looks at it, and she tells other people in the town where their lost items are, okay? In 1819, Joseph borrows that stone, and he looks into it, and he's told where his own seer stone is, and he's told it's 150 miles away, that's what he alleges. So he disappears, he comes back, and now he has a white translucent stone. In 1823 (actually 1822), while digging a well on the Willard-Chase property, he finds a second stone, it's the one the church has recently talked about, egg shaped, the church has had that stone in its possession all along, but my gut tells me, if we went around the room, and we talked about what story each of you grew up with, in terms of the Book of Mormon translation, each of you would say there were Nephite spectacles buried in a box, and that's what Joseph Smith used. The

church only recently, because we live in an internet age, feels compelled to now tell us a fuller story. That stone was in their possession, it was used to bless the Manti Temple. So in 1820, sorry, 1823 (actually 1822), he gets a second seer stone. A money digger, or a treasure digger, is somebody who claims to know where buried treasures are. Joseph Smith would get people in the town to pay him money, he would take his seer stone, put it in a hat, bury his face into it, excluding all light, and then he would tell people where Spanish treasure was buried. The trouble was, he never found it. He'd get paid, he'd tell them where to dig, and as they dug a hole, he would say, oh, it slipped further into the earth, it's gone. He scammed people, and we don't want to hear that, 'cause we like to set our prophet up on a pedestal, but it's more than that. When you understand treasure digging, you understand that Joseph Smith told people that there was buried treasure in hills, protected by guardian spirits, using his seer stone, which also represents, too, a similar story, right, Moroni and the gold plates, buried in a hill, Moroni is a guardian spirit, and he uses a seer stone. We don't talk about that history because it's not faith promoting.

BR ([The First Vision](#)): The first vision, my guess is, if I went around the room, we all know the story, “during this time of great excitement, my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness, and though my feelings were deep and often poignant, still, I kept myself aloof from the various parties”, we know the story, we taught it on our missions, right? Here's the trouble, though, there are four accounts of the first vision, the [earliest one was written in 1832](#), in Joseph Smith's personal journal, written by his own hand, in that journal, he writes down that he went only to have his sins forgiven, and when he talks about being visited by supreme beings, he only mentions Jesus Christ, there was no Heavenly Father, his own handwriting. Our own scholars, when talking about the 1838 account that we use as the official account, our own scholars, Richard Bushman, if anybody knows that name, Richard Bushman says that account is most likely written by Sidney Rigdon, or George Robinson, who were scribes of Joseph Smith. It's not his language, it's not the way Joseph wrote things. So we've told one story that's written much later, not in Joseph's writing, and we ignore a story that's much different, that comes in 1832. And the trouble is, in Mormonism, we stand up, and we bear testimony of things, we bear testimony that “we know, on a spring morning, in a grove of trees, that Joseph Smith prayed, and he was visited by God the Father, and his son Jesus”, but that's not the 1832 account. But again, we don't know that, and here's why. Joseph Fielding Smith was called as church historian in 1921, sometime between 1921 and 1940, [Joseph Fielding Smith cut that 1832 account out of Joseph's personal journal with a penknife](#), and stored it away in a church vault in the church historian's

office, and he referred to it as a peculiar first vision, and he mentioned it to very few people, he didn't want us to know it. Now, you can go on today and see it because in 1965, Joseph Fielding Smith, the rumor got out, and Gerald and Sandra Tanner, who were critics of the church, started to go public with the fact that there was this other first vision account, so what does he do? He takes it out of the church vault, he gets some tape, and he tapes it back into Joseph Smith's journal. You can go on LDS.org today and you can look at that 1832 account, it is taped back in, you can see the cellophane tape there, he tapes it back into Joseph's journal. The Book of Mormon translation, again, each of us grew up being told about Nephite and spectacles, the Urim and Thummim, buried in a box, but that's not the story.

BR (Connecting the First Vision to Joseph Smith's Folk Magic): And the reason the church didn't want to tell us about seer stones was because once we know there's stones involved instead of the spectacles, the next logical question is, where do those stones come from, and now we're back to talking about treasure digging, and Joseph duping people for money. A scholar, Dan Vogel, wrote an article that points to 17 different treasure digs in the Palmyra area. Here's another detail, we're not talking about just the six foot deep hole in the ground, we're talking about, essentially, digging out a cave into a mound of earth, having a dozen people work for days on end, digging a hole, thinking they're gonna get a treasure, and having paid to find it, only to be told it doesn't exist. My guess is, none of you, or very few of you, have heard those stories. We have passing quotes in Mormonism, we like to say things like, there's the quote from Joseph himself, that, it wasn't a very financially beneficial endeavor, he got paid 14 bucks, or \$14 a month, and he gave it up quickly, but that's not true. He was a treasure digger for years, and these things involve folk magic, and magic circles, and cutting dogs' throats, and sheep's throats, but again, none of us are told that story, I wasn't told that story. It was only by reading, and diving into the sources, and looking at journal entries from church members, as well as critics, where those things are talked about. Brigham Young himself talks about seer stones, and Joseph's treasure digging.

BR ([Book of Mormon Translation](#)): So we have this story of the Book of Mormon translation. And the whole time the church has got that stone in the vault, but they don't want you to know about it, and it's only until we live in an internet age, where they see members left and right coming across this information, that they are now saying, like,

oh, we have to talk about it because people are leaving. People are finding this stuff, and they're leaving.

BR ([19th Century material in the Book of Mormon](#)): The Book of Mormon itself, I love the Book of Mormon, I still look through its pages, but here's the problem. [It contains a lot of 19th century material, phrases, sermons, geographic locations close to Joseph Smith's own home](#), stories, well, let me give you one quote, and I'm sorry, I'm getting a little nervous. So Richard Bushman, this is a scholar, faithful scholar, holds the office of Church Patriarch, he says, "Translating the book without the plates, "even in sight, wrapped up in a cloth," again, notice, too, we have pictures, they have artwork on our walls that shows Joseph using the Urim and Thummim, and looking at the plates, and translating, that's not true. The plates weren't in sight, or they were covered up with a cloth, Joseph put a stone in a hat, buried his face into it, excluded all the light, and then dictated the Book of Mormon. Bushman says, ["Translating the book without plates even "in sight, wrapped up in a cloth on the table, "it's not something that comes right off the pages. "That is, the characters on the plates, so we don't know how that works, "and then there's the fact that there's phrasing everywhere, long phrases, that if you Google them, you find them in 19th century writings, the theology of the Book of Mormon is very much 19th century theology, and it reads like 19th century understanding of the Hebrew Bible, as an Old Testament, that is. It has Christ in it, the way protestants saw Christ everywhere in the Old Testament."](#) Okay, there's other translation productions.

BR ([Book of Abraham Problems](#)): there's the Book of Abraham. We were all told a story about a man who went through Kirtland, Ohio, who had papyri and mummies, and the church bought those, and Joseph told us that those were the writings of Abraham, written by his own hand. That papyri was lost, except in the 1960s, that papyri surfaced again, we thought it was lost in the Great Chicago Fire, it wasn't, another museum had it. The church bought it, the trouble was, now, even our church Egyptologists, when they read it, and look at it, we now know what Egyptian translates into because of the Rosetta Stone. The Book of Abraham papyri does not translate into the Book of Abraham, it is a standard Egyptian common funeral text that has nothing to do with Abraham, it's not the writings of Abraham, it's not written by his own hand. The facsimiles that we have in our scriptures, those facsimiles, Joseph named every single picture on those facsimiles, every single one of those, Egyptologists acknowledge, they're all wrong, he didn't get the translation correct. So now what we've done is we've

come up with a new theory, that theory's called the catalyst theory. And we say that the book of the papyri is not the Book of Abraham, but it prompted Joseph to essentially receive this story, even though he thought it was on the papyri, but do you see the trick there? We've walked it back to a place where neither one is discernible as an outsider, we've essentially moved the story to a place where whether it's a fraud, or whether it's real scripture, it comes out of Joseph's head, either way, and there's no way to discern, as an outsider. We're no longer teaching the stories that each of you grew up with.

BR ([Book of Moses issues](#)): The Book of Moses, the Book of Moses contains exact phrases and sentences, and sentence structures from Luke chapter four, and Matthew chapter four. Now, that book was written before the New Testament, in other words, it's anachronisms. It would be like if I had a painting on the wall, or a photograph I should say, on the wall, of Abraham Lincoln holding an iPhone, it's out of place. The Book of Moses contains New Testament sentence structure that does not belong, it shouldn't be there, it doesn't belong there.

BR ([JST issues](#)): The Joseph Smith translation, BYU itself just released studies where Haley Lemmon, who's a student, and Thomas Wayment, who is a professor, acknowledged that while we were taught that the Joseph Smith translation was a restoration of the bible, that had been lost or corrupted, [our own scholars at BYU now acknowledge it was a direct borrowing, which means plagiarism, from a contemporary source. Adam Clarke's commentary](#). BYU acknowledges that long phrases and paragraphs come straight out of a book that was accessible to Joseph Smith in his own day. This only makes sense if you're willing to make drastic shifts in your beliefs. Again, the story we were raised with, I was raised with, and each of you, doesn't hold up.

BR ([Kinderhook plates](#)): The last Joseph Smith translation production is called the Kinderhook Plates. There were a couple of people who wanted to deceive the Prophet Joseph Smith. They created really small, bell-shaped plates, they etched them with acid, making them look old, buried them in the ground, and then went and got a Latter-day Saint to help them dig, saying, let's go find something, and what do they find? They find these plates that they buried. They take 'em to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and he actually begins translating them, translating two or three sentences from the

Kinderhook Plates, before, for whatever reason, he quits. So there's some of the early Mormon history.

BR (Polygamy): What about polygamy, how many of you were raised thinking that Joseph Smith was a monogamist? How many of you knew that he had married 14, 15, 16-year-old girls? And we like to say that, oh, marriage was different back then, that's not true, that's the argument they come up with, but when we actually look at the data on marriages, they're not that different than what the ages are today, of males and females being married. Also, when a young girl did get married in that day, it was a young girl and a young guy, so you'd have a 14-year-old and a 19-year-old. But what we find in early Mormonism is 14-year-olds and 57-year-olds. Brethren, [Fanny Alger](#) was Joseph Smith's first intimate relationship away from Emma, Emma didn't know about it. If you go to LDS.org, there are Gospel Topic essays. The essay on polygamy, you have to, you have to click Read More, it'll open up further. Then it's gonna ask you if you want to read more about it, you have to click extra links, it sends you to an essay titled Polygamy in Kirtland and Nauvoo. When you read that essay, it acknowledges that Fanny Alger was a maid in the Smith home. Emma didn't even know about her, and Joseph had an intimate relationship with her, 14-years old. Another story, [Lucy Walker](#), she's 15 years old, and again, I want you to picture, for you guys who have daughters, I have two daughters, picture, for a moment, you have daughters. The, Lucy Walker, her mother dies. Joseph Smith comes to her, and sends her father on a mission, promising to take care of his kids as his own. So Joseph Smith sends Lucy Walker's father on a mission, promises to take care of his kids, the Walker kids, as his own children, he even goes out into public, and Lucy writes in her journal, again, these are their journals, not me just taking a critic's words. Lucy Walker says, "When we went out into public, "he referred to us as his own children." But when she turned 16, Joseph also proposed to her to be a plural wife of his. My guess is not a single one of you have heard of Lucy Walker. Think about that for a moment, the predicament that puts you in. You either have to accept that Heavenly Father is the kind of God who is okay taking a father-daughter relationship, and making it a husband-wife relationship. Now, I'm hoping that sits really uncomfortable with you, 'cause the should. A 16-year-old girl, living in the Smith home, propositioned by Joseph Smith, again, without Emma Smith's knowledge. By the way, the LDS.org essay acknowledges that Emma did not know about many of these relationships. [The Partridge sisters](#) were another set of sisters who lived in the Smith home, they were 19 and 22, Joseph propositioned them without Emma's knowledge, and got himself sealed to them, and had an intimate relationship with them without either one of them knowing about each other, and without Emma knowing about

them. Soon after, Emma finally gave permission for Joseph to enter a plural marriage. Emma suggests that he be sealed to these Partridge sisters, but unbeknownst to her, he had already done that, so what does he do, he holds a second mock sealing, in order for her to think it's the first one. Is that fidelity, brethren, is that what you would do to your wives, is marry other women, behind your wives' backs, without your wives knowing, and have second marriage ceremonies, without your wife even knowing that that had occurred? [The Lawrence sisters](#) were another young set of sisters, 16 and I believe 17, they also worked in the Smith home, and were wives of the prophet Joseph Smith. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner is a young lady who goes out when the book of commandments are being, the press is being destroyed, and they're blowing all around, and she saves them in her dress. And we're told that story in our manuals, the story we don't tell is that Joseph propositioned her at 12 years old. They ended up, she ended up being a plural wife with Joseph years later. [Joseph had at least 34 wives, most of which were young teenage girls, or women already married to other men, which is called polyandry](#). Again, the LDS.org essay on the church's website acknowledges that. Emma was the 23rd wife sealed to Joseph Smith, not the first, the 23rd. Now, I get it, he's the prophet of our faith, but [are you comfortable with that kind of fidelity?](#)

BR ([Priesthood Restoration](#)): Melchizedek Priesthood restoration, Peter, James and John, Richard Bushman, again, a faithful, active scholar in the church acknowledges that the information on Peter and James and John comes so late in church history that it is totally acceptable to be believed to be a later fabrication. David Whitmer himself writes that Peter, James, and John come, those stories about that priesthood restoration come way late in the timeline. It's not, nobody's talking about it when it happens, and I like, we like the story of, it's too sacred, but that's not what's going on. The very witnesses of the Book of Mormon don't hear these stories, Oliver Cowdery does, from Joseph, he's saying he knows it, he's not telling anybody, we don't get any public record of these stories being shared, but again, Peter, James, and John show up way late in the story.

BR (Mormonism's Racial Ban): Race and the priesthood. [George Albert Smith](#), from Brigham Young, from 1852 to 1978 with Spencer W. Kimball, our church taught that those of color were less valiant in the premortal life, and that they carried the curse of Cain. We, and on a multitude of occasions, including [first presidency letters in 1948, or '49](#), as well as 1962 or '63, we declare that those things are doctrine. So you have one

prophet who says, I know the mind and will of God, that those of color were less valiant, and were cursed from the preexistence. [Today, if you go to the LDS.org Gospel Topic essay, today's leaders disavow those doctrines](#), and call them disavowed theories. So we went from having one prophet know for sure one thing, to having a later prophet say he was wrong. So once you make that leap, you have to recognize that prophets can be deeply wrong, on very important things, even the very foundational doctrines of the church.

BR ([Adam God Doctrine](#)): Brigham Young taught what was called the Adam God Doctrine, where Brigham Young taught that Adam was our Heavenly Father, and that Elohim was our heavenly grandfather. Later on, Bruce R. McConkie and Spencer W. Kimball disavowed those doctrines, those, that doctrine of the Adam God was taught at the Veil at the St. George Temple. It was part of the presentation of the Veil, it was official doctrine in the church, taught by a prophet of God, and then disavowed by later prophets. So if the Holy Ghost is effective, then how can one prophet be adamant that ABC is true, only to have, 50 years later, another prophet say it's completely false.

BR ([Lamanite DNA and the Book of Mormon](#)): Lamanite DNA, in the LDS.org Gospel Topic essay, the church recently acknowledged that all Native Americans, there is no Jewish DNA that is in the right timeline, in other words, it shows up in Native Americans at the right part, where the Jaredites show up, or where the Nephites show up. The church, essentially, says there's no way anymore to know who's a Lamanite and who's not. We used to go around and anybody who had tan skin, whether they were a Polynesian, whether they lived in Mexico, whether they lived in South America, it didn't matter, we'd call them a Lamanite. And today, the church acknowledges that we no longer know who's a Lamanite and who's not, because the DNA isn't there, so the very people that we propose the Book of Mormon is written to, the Lamanites, we no longer know who to give the book to, and say, you're a Lamanite. Again, our doctrines are changing drastically, and they're doing it in a way that you're not even aware that it's happening unless you're paying attention, and you're reading away from just the correlated sources that you get in the three hour block. But go read the Gospel Topic essays, see if they make you nervous, in terms of the teachings you each grew up with in Mormonism, and see if the things in those essays match up with the story you were told growing up.

BR ([Valiancy in the Pre-Mortal life and Handicapped kids](#)): Handicapped kids. We were all raised in the church believing that those who are handicapped were the most valiant of our Heavenly Father's spirits. But here's what Harold B Lee taught, he said, "This privilege of obtaining a mortal body "on this earth is seemingly so priceless "that those in the spirit world, even though unfaithful or not valiant, were undoubtedly permitted to take mortal bodies, although under the penalty of racial, physical, or nationalistic limitations." Do you see that shift, we used to teach that handicapped kids were the least valiant in the premortal life, does anybody here have a handicapped child? Can you imagine being a parent of a kid, and having the prophet of the Lord teach that your kid was the least valiant of the spirits in the spirit world, it's atrocious. So which is it, brethren, is it one prophet who says they're the most valiant, or is it another prophet who says they're the least?

BR (Seeming lack of Supernatural Magic in our day and age): What about prophets themselves? We read the Old Testament, we read about Jesus in the New Testament, and we see miracles left and right. On my podcast, I once asked if there's anybody out there who's had a finger cut off, been born without an arm, had an ear cut off, had lost their eyesight, and got a blessing to have those things restored, to come forward, I'd love to hear their story. If we're honest with ourselves, when I say God magic, [there are no of those great, supernatural miracles anymore](#), we all say, yeah, you know, my daughter had the flu, and I gave her a blessing, and it went away. But there aren't the great miracles of biblical times anymore, and yet we live in an age of verifiable history. You see, the moment there became a media, and newspapers, and journals, and now smartphones, and the internet, Heavenly Father seems to have reduced significantly, almost to nothing, his ability to send fires down from heaven, in order to turn someone into salt, for turning back and looking at a city, to part seas, to put manna on the ground, those things, if we're honest, [those kinds of miracles don't happen today](#). In the Book of Mormon, we have our prophets who raise a hand, or say words, and smite a critic dumb for three days, or smite them deaf for three days, but my gut tells me that we all understand that nobody could raise a hand today, and strike a critic dumb for three days, or deaf. [Those things are gone](#). So your only option is to look at those stories and say, I wonder if they're embellished, I wonder if they're myth, I wonder if those stories, why, why did those stories happen that way then, and now, in an age of verifiable history, those things don't happen that way anymore? You can't restore limbs, even though Jesus restored an ear, we don't have stories anymore of limbs restored. We

have some people who get healed from cancer, and we have others who die, that's just human nature, that's just the way it works.

BR (Holy Ghost vs [Elevation Emotion](#)): I want to finish, in terms of talking about a little bit of the unhealthiness of the church, but I want to bridge it with this. When I talk about the messiness of our history, when I talk about the messiness of our history, and there's 1,000 more data points, where our story gets off. But what we have, what I did, and what I'm guess each of you do is say, that doesn't matter, Brother Reel, that doesn't matter, I've had some sacred experiences, I've felt the spirit, but here's the trick. In the end, Latter-day Saints dismiss things that people like me say because it doesn't matter, we've had these experiences. I understand that, I've had deeply profound experiences, too, when I served as a bishop, I had incredible experiences that were spiritual in nature. [The trouble is, people of all faiths have spiritual experiences](#), and people of all faiths receive reassurances that their truth claims of their religious system are just as true as the answers that we get about ours. The other thing we run into is a thing called elevation emotion. Mormonism imposes that the Holy Ghost is a burning in the bosom, a peaceful feeling, an increased love for goodness and truth. The problem is, in psychology, we have a better explanation, [it's called elevation emotion](#). Elevation emotion is an emotion elicited by witnessing virtuous acts of remarkable moral goodness, it is experienced as a distinct feeling of warmth and expansion that is accompanied by appreciation and affection for the individual who's exceptional conduct is being observed. You see, this happens to everyone, and it has nothing to do with truth, they can actually take people, and lie to them. But if the person being lied to perceives a virtuous act taking place, they feel warm in their chest, they feel an expansiveness in their body, and they are drawn towards goodness in the world. Everybody who's a human being experiences that, but as Mormons, we've monopolized it, we've said, no, that's only here, we have the Holy Ghost. And I get it, we like to say, yeah, other people feel the Holy Ghost, too. The trouble is, they're, everybody, us and them, are feeling this feeling around true things and false things, so if the Holy Ghost is dependable, that shouldn't be the case.

BR (Unhealthiness – extending credibility to the critic): Now, I want to talk a little bit about the unhealthiness that's in our church. First, in this room, so I've spent 20 years reading everything, I've interviewed our scholars, I've talked to authors of historical

books in Mormonism, [I've talked to Richard Bushman](#), [I've talked to Terryl Givens](#), I've [spoken to Adam Miller](#), and I don't know if these names even ring a bell to you, but these are the best scholars we have, [Patrick Mason](#), I've spoken to Elder Holland face to face. I've spoken to Marlin Jensen, by phone, and by email, Elder Holland by phone and by email, as well. Do you know what they tell me? They say, we don't have answers for any of this, you're right, Brother Reel, there are serious questions in our history, we're working to put out a better history, but the trouble is, they're doing it in a way that you're not even knowing it's happening, and it feels very deceptive. In talking with all of these folks, it becomes easy for people in a room like this to say, yeah, Brother Reel's just saying anti-Mormon stuff. That's not true. And again, I don't want you to take my word for it, I'd ask you go read, I'd ask you to challenge yourselves, and to look into what you believe, and just open up just the smallest space in your mind to say, I wonder if the story I was taught isn't the truth. And if you're willing to do that, like, the information's out there. Richard Bushman recently wrote *Rough Stone Rolling*, it's a Deseret Book, you can read Patrick Mason, *Planted*, you can read, any book by Terryl Givens will go into the deeper history, and they all, I've talked to these men, each one of 'em goes, yeah, it's way worse than the church lets on, it's way more complicated than the church let's on. And we're having a lot less truth in the stories we tell than what the church lets on.

BR (LGBT Issues and the November 2015 Policy): In November, so I tried to make it work. As I knew this history, I also said, like, I'm just not gonna let the history bother me 'cause these are good people, and we're having, we're having positive experiences serving each other, and we're making a difference in the world. And then, in November of 2015, we enacted a policy which not only said that disciplinary courts were mandatory for those who are in homosexual marriages, which, by the way, the church now acknowledges that being gay is not a choice. We all grew up with Spencer W. Kimball's *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, which taught us that masturbation makes us homosexual, which, if we're honest, brethren, that means all of us would probably have an issue with homosexuality, right? So we try to say that masturbation led to it, Spencer W. Kimball taught that not having a father in the home led to homosexuality, Spencer W. Kimball taught that having a dominant mother led to homosexuality, and the church now acknowledges, none of that's true. The church admits that being gay is not a choice. And in November of 2015, the church came out with a policy that not only made mandatory a disciplinary court for those in a homosexual marriage, but prevented the children in that family from receiving the saving ordinances of the church, including the Holy Ghost. So on one hand, we like to say our teenagers, they need the Holy

Ghost, they need it to get through school, they need it as a tool and a resource, and then on the other hand, we say, but, yeah, those kids don't need it, those kids don't need it, that's not fair, that's not right. By the way, Utah has the highest suicide rate in our country. You don't think that has anything to do with Mormonism, if you're honest with yourselves? You don't think there's a drop of our shaming and marginalizing our kids who are gay? Imagine being a gay kid in this ward, imagine being a gay kid in this stake. Do you think they feel good about themselves? Do you think they see an opportunity to enjoy a happy and wholesome life? If I asked each of you to be celibate for the rest of your lives intentionally, don't hold hands, don't go on a date, don't kiss anybody, how many of you would sign up for that? And, you see, our leaders, our prophets, when they get, when their wife dies, Elder Oaks, Elder Nelson, they remarry again, why? 'Cause they're lonely, they check all the boxes, they don't need to remarry again, but they remarry again, why? 'Cause they're lonely, and yet we have people who are LGBT who can't, [they didn't choose that. We now know the science, if a ring, if a one finger is longer than the other, you have a statistically higher chance of being gay. If you are the fourth son in a family, rather than the second, you have a statistically higher chance of being gay.](#) The church acknowledges that, and yet we still hold these beliefs that these people are broken, they need fix somehow, and they're just human, it's no different than being left handed, it's natural. And I know we want to, like, oh, no, it's not, that's not the reality, the science says so. And with [the highest suicide rate](#), specifically between 11 and 17-year-olds, there are gay kids hanging themselves from their parents' rafters, there are gay kids putting guns in their mouths, and pulling triggers 'cause they don't feel loved in this church. I've seen these, I know these kids, I've talked to their parents, I've talked to transgender kids who are on the brink of suicide, when someone like me, who understood the issues, took them aside, and lifted them up, and took them in, and told them, don't worry about that, you're loved, don't listen to what those people tell you, you're loved. [There are people deeply hurting, when they discover this doesn't fit, or they're gay.](#) Women in the church often feel this way, as well. So the suicide rate is not only the highest, it's also [the fasting growing in the nation](#), too, and we like to say it's the elevation. But we don't care that Colorado's got some mountains, we don't have a good excuse, we don't have a good reason for this.

BR (Unhealthy boundaries with Children): Children and sex abuse. [Sam Young, who's outside right now, on the other side of the building, was just recently excommunicated, he also served as a bishop. He was recently excommunicated for asking the church to change its policies around youth interviews.](#) Utah is one of the highest states in sex abuse, too, by the way, do we know that? I'm sure that has no connection to

Mormonism, either. Think about this, we're one of the few religions left in the world today who permits one on one interviews between an adult and a child behind closed doors. We are one of even fewer religious systems that then proceeds to ask children questions of a sexual nature, if I went around the room and asked each person, how many of you were asked by your bishop if you masturbated? And if you came to your bishop with some sort of sexual sin, I would love to ask each one of you if you'd been asked questions that you thought, wow, that was a little inappropriate. He asked me circumstances and contexts that wasn't necessary, that's what happens in a church when you also have lay, untrained leaders, who have interviews behind closed doors, and are permitted to ask sexual questions. You see, to be a bishop, you could be a plumber, or an electrician, or, in my case, a carpet salesman. And you can sit with 12-year-olds, or even seven-year-olds, as you prepare them for baptism, and you're told, whatever the spirit asks you to ask, go for it, and so you can ask anything. And some leaders, because we created a space, some leaders end up abusing these kids, or harming them, or causing trauma to them by asking things they shouldn't. So not only are we one of the very few churches left on the earth, right now, who asks questions behind closed doors with a stranger, essentially, and a child, we also have an untrained leadership. We don't learn boundaries, we don't learn ethics, we don't learn what causes more pain when we ask it, when we think we're helping, we don't realize that when we talk to a young kid, and teach them Mormonism, and teach them that this kind of a boundary is safe, and now they go out into the world, and they think these one on one conversations with a man behind closed doors is safe. So your daughters go to BYU, and they let this RM come home, and they think they're safe in his presence, 'cause he's a priesthood holder, and they've been taught their whole lives to trust in these situations, and what we've done is we've created very unsafe boundaries where abuse happens.

BR ([those with Doubts and Questions](#)): What about those who have doubts and questions? You see, Marlin Jensen and Terry Givens both said, we are losing our brightest, our best and brightest. The folks who are leaving the church over doubts and questions are the people who read, who are willing to critically think, who are willing to question things, and are willing to say, what if what I was taught wasn't true? My gut tells me, and again, I can't prove it, it's all anecdotal, for every 100 people who dive into the messiness that's Mormonism's history, and its policies and doctrines, my gut tells me about 95% of those end up outside the church at some point. Why, what do we do with people who have questions? We shame them, we tell them there's not safe places to ask those questions, you push back against them, we tell them the things they're

sharing are anti-Mormon propaganda, and it's not true, it's the facts of our history. We're gonna have to come to grips with it. Some members could care less about history, or truth claims, but for those who care, and who are willing to get uncomfortable, it is almost always, falls apart for them. I would challenge you, when this is over, instead of walking to your cars and going home, those are good people on the other side of the building. Go walk up, and shake their hand, and ask them their story. Give yourself 10 minutes to ask two of them to tell you their story. They cared, they didn't, it wasn't that Satan came in, and they got lazy, and they wanted to sin, and they just wanted to drink, that's not what happened. They read Mormonism's history, outside of the correlated material, and it fell apart. And so they took back their lives, and they chose to live their lives a different way now. So do that, there's donuts over there, there's cider, there's hot chocolate, they'll be nice, they'll smile at you, and they'll shake your hand, ask their story. Ask why it fell apart for them, 'cause their story is my story. In our church, we tell lots of stories, we badmouth Symonds Ryder for leaving because his name was spelled wrong, when that isn't why he left, by the way. We badmouth Thomas Marsh for leaving over milk and strippings, even though that's not historically accurate, either. We badmouth the three witnesses for their time out of the church, and we fail to discuss what they've actually written down about why they left, and what was going on in the church. We badmouth William Law, and William McClellan, we claim the Nauvoo Expositor was just spreading lies, none of those stories that we tell in our manuals about those things, and 100 other, are true. When we go to the source material, we find out that the stories we tell aren't historically accurate. Even in the present tense, we excommunicated D. Michael Quinn in 1992 for telling the factual history. We now quote him in our Gospel Topic essays, and refer people in the footnotes to his books that he was excommunicated over. We excommunicate John Belen, who's out in the back, as well, for acknowledging that this history doesn't add up. We excommunicated Kate Kelly for questioning [our patriarchy](#), and simply asking our leaders if they would ask God if women could have a longer role in the church. We excommunicated Sam Young for asking us to reconsider our youth interviews, and the dangerous boundaries that take place in those. And now, my gut tells me you're gonna excommunicate me for shining a light on all of that, that our history doesn't match up, and that we treat people in very unhealthy ways. And I've also been honest about the dishonesty of our leaders. By the way, we don't have one healthy story of someone who's left our church. Go search the primary manuals, go search James E. Talmage articles of faith, or search for Gordon B. Hinckley's Truth Restored, search any of our curricula, we don't have a healthy story of anybody who's left. We don't let people leave with their dignity, we don't let people leave when they came to an honest, sincere conclusion, that none of this added up, we treat them horribly. Every story we tell says they're broken, they're tares among the wheat, they're the chafe, they've fallen, they've apostatized. We don't have a single healthy

story about people who leave, when someone comes into the church, having left some other religious system, how courageous are they, how brave are they? When someone, as a seeker of truth, deconstructs Mormonism, and says it just wasn't true, and had to go out, what do we do? We turn our backs on them, and we treat them like they're broken and less than. There is no healthy space in Mormonism to ask questions, Elder Oaks says questions are honored, but try it, try walking into Sunday school, and raising your hand, and saying, that story we just told isn't true, when you know the story isn't true, and everybody in the room doesn't know. Some of the stories, by the way, I'll share it in a moment, my communication with leaders, again, I've talked to Elder Holland, I've talked to Marlin Jensen, I've talked to the scholars, every one of them admits our history is not accurate, we're working on it, but we don't want you to talk about it, it's gotta stay under, we can't, it has to stay hidden, we can't talk about it, so those changes will occur, but it can't be out in the open.

SP: Bro Reel you've got about 15 minutes left

BR (Leaders dishonesty): Thank you. I'm here today because of my criticizing leaders for being dishonest. [Elder Ballard says we haven't hidden anything](#), I hope on just some little degree, you can acknowledge that from what I've shared to you today, if what I said is true, we have hidden some things. Steven Snow, who was the church historian, said we need to be more transparent. He said, in the past, we used to withhold things, we used to not share as much, and we need to be more transparent. If we say that in another way, it means we need to stop hiding things, we need to start talking in the open. [So when Elder Ballard says we haven't hid anything, that's not honest, that's not truthful](#). Elder Ballard is being dishonest, because he does know the history. He's talked about, we need to read the Gospel Topic essays, he talks about his having read them, he does know these issues, but he doesn't want to acknowledge that we haven't been forthright with you guys. You guys received a story that doesn't hold up to the data, it doesn't hold up to the facts. Joseph Smith lied about polygamy, we know this, he kept it from Emma, that's a sin of omission, he told the public he wasn't practicing polygamy while he was, that's a lie of commission. No matter how we spin it, that's a lie. So to say our leaders don't lie isn't true, Joseph Fielding Smith, cutting out the 1832 first vision account, that's dishonest, he didn't want us to see it because he himself understood it was a peculiar, his own words, peculiar first vision account. Brigham Young continued

to blame the Native Americans for the Mountain Meadows Massacre, long after he knew it was his own people. Wilford Woodruff gave the 1890 Manifesto, acting as if the church was stopping polygamy, but guess what, he continued to authorize polygamous marriages underground, that's dishonest. We can justify it, maybe, we could say he had to, it was for the good of the church, but it still was a lie. In 1984, Ronald Poelman, for the gentlemen in this room who are a little older, I'm sure you recognize that name, he was a member of the 70, he gave a conference talk in 1984, gave the talk, it was a talk about leaning more, as you grow in the gospel, on yourself, and less on the church, when the talk was over, they had him re-give the talk in an empty conference center, and put a cough track in the background, and then put that on your VHS tape that you got the general conference. So if you happen to remember, in 1984, thought you, you thought you heard Ronald Poelman give one talk in conference, and then put your VHS tape in, and heard a second talk, and you thought, wow, that's not the way I remember it, that's true, it wasn't the way you remember it, it was very different. And so the church had him re-give the talk with a cough track in the background, and they said nothing about it. So now you can go on YouTube, and you can type in Ronald Poelman, and you can see both videos, side by side with each other, and you can see that they are completely different. Here's what Elder Steven Snow said exactly, he said, "My view is that being open about our history solves a whole lot more problems than it creates", do you see that? "We might not have all the answers, but if we are open, and we now have pretty remarkable transparency", which means we then didn't, "then I think, in the long run, that will serve us well. I think, in the past, there was a tendency to keep a lot of the records closed, or at least not give access to information" . Elder Ballard said we haven't hid anything. So when I put liar, as harsh as you think that is, the reality is, next to the church historian of our church, a general authority, that liar stamp is true. He said, "But the world has changed in the last generation," what's changed? It's the information age, it's the internet. With access to information on the internet, Steven Snow says we can't continue that pattern. I think we need to continue to be more open, in other words, there's still things they're not telling you. Yes, our leaders are dishonest, but you can't call them out as dishonest. The thing with Elder Holland, I did a podcast episode, titled, [Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire](#). It's cute, and it's harsh, but I show five times, using Elder Holland's own audio, juxtaposed against the actual data that shows that he is in fact lying. So you can, again, say my tone isn't okay, you can say I'm being too harsh, but the reality is, he did lie on five occasions. The guy has a problem with honesty, and this is a guy who I considered a friend, who reached out to me. The attached letter was received in my office a little over a week ago, titled, this is to Marlin K. Jensen from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, while I was on assignment in Africa. "Would you be good enough to handle, "as you feel appropriate, this letter "from Bishop William J. Reel, who in case currently serving "as a Bishop of the Sandusky, Ohio Ward? "Please express to

him my love and best wishes, "tell him I would respond personally, "were it not for other demands, including a grueling trip "to Africa, I'm concerned about such people." I've spoken to Elder Holland, I considered him a friend, and yet I also put my foot down, and say he did lie. Should I be punished for telling the truth? Should I be punished about talking about our messy history, should I be punished for telling a leader, and saying, that guy's lying, when the data imposes that he did? The issue is not about the lies, though. Sadly, it's whether anyone like me is allowed to shine a light on them, if that light imposes that we each get really uncomfortable, and our religion must come face to face with its unhealthiness. [Stories in our church that aren't true](#), by the way, [Brigham Young's transfiguration](#). The two first witnesses to that weren't even in town the day it happened, John D. Lee, Orson Hyde, both of them, in their journals, say they weren't in town, they're the first two guys to tell us that that transfiguration occurred. The Sweetwater Crossing, when we talk about these three 18-year-old boys, they weren't 18, there were more than three, and they died so long after, and yet we try to tell a story that they died so soon after, and Brigham Young promised they'd be in the, that's not true. The seagulls and crickets, [seagulls eat crickets all the time](#). And [how Brigham Young took control of the church](#)? I would challenge each of you to go home tonight, and do some serious research on how Brigham Young took control of the church, it's not the story you were told.

BR (Conclusion): By the way, nobody along the way has ever accused me of lying, or fabricating these details, and when I share them with anybody in the church, including apostles and church historians, they admit that what I'm telling is the truth, only that it's unacceptable to say it, it unacceptable to share the truth. I have, through this entire process, maintained integrity, vulnerability, and authenticity, I have only spoken the truth. So, President, I recognize that everyone in this room, their responsibility is to make sure the procedures are followed, it's your job to decide whether I'm an apostate or not. Tonight, you get to decide whether seeking, and also telling the truth, are acceptable endeavors in Mormonism, you get to decide whether the facts matter, or whether we simply need to protect a story and authorities, no matter how harmful, or dishonest that story or those authorities are. [Brethren, tonight you may have thought it was me that was on trial, but it was never me](#). It's the church that's on trial, it's its integrity, it's its honesty. It's the church that's on trial, and in part, each of you, as you sit in judgment of me. That's all I've got to say.

Amanda Reel (AR): So, as you guys can see, my husband's a smart man, he does not say things just to say them. He loves to learn. He loves history. So, like he said on how he came to this, and he just thought it was the coolest story ever. He wanted to know about it. So that's what he did, he learned about it. And when he found out that it just did not add up, he was alone, he didn't even tell me for awhile. And he didn't tell me because he first heard of the stories of where marriages crumble, divorces happen, families are now broken. There's, we get so many messages and visits about how he's helped people personally with their marriages, or helped them feel not alone, helped them feel like they're not crazy. He's validated them, time and time again, we get these messages, just out here, tonight, a young lady said, "You know, back in February, I was on the brink of divorce, "and thanks to you, my marriage is saved, "and we're happy, and we're together." We get these all the time. And so now because Bill has only sought out truth and knowledge, my eternal marriage, my way back to the celestial kingdom, it's on the line. Not because he wants to sin, or that he has sinned, it's because he wanted to truth, and search for knowledge.

BR: I've not done anything that's immoral, I'm not here because I'm caught in adultery, I'm not here because I did some kind of immoral sin, I'm here because I told the truth, and we're not really supposed to talk about that here. So now we will see what you guys do, now we see if you're willing to accept the fact that this gets really messy, and are you willing to let somebody stay among you who knows it, who knows it doesn't add up, and who can point you to the very sources that determine that this isn't what it claims to be. That doesn't mean it's true or not true, it just means that we framed it in a way to be faith promoting, and that doesn't hold up. So if apostles have lied, can you excommunicate a guy who shines a light on their lying? That would seem like that would be lack of integrity on your, and the church's part, not mine. So let's see what happens. I'm done.

BR: I'm done.

SP: Brethren, do you have any questions? Do you guys have any questions?

HC: Comment from High Councilman (unclear) at 1:11:26 If in all of your research you find out that the church's foundation is xxx. ?

BR: It is

HC: And it's leaders xxxx ?

BR: Yeah. I've thought about that a lot.

Unclear conversation with BR and HCM.

BR: Do you mind if I tell you? This is my tribe. I've served in this church. I've served these people. This is the language and the symbols which I operate in this world. Once doesn't So, in the Jewish faith, people leave Orthodox Jew and they become a Reformed Jew. There is a space for them to be less literal. There is a space for them to belong, but not have to buy into the story fully. In Mormonism we don't have that. We decide: this is the narrative we are going to hold to – and anybody who publicly says something different – we are going to start to distance ourselves from them. This is my tribe. I want to be here. Now this is not a healthy space for me to be active at the moment, but my hope is that in 20 years the church will come around. It will create a new story – which, by the way, it just published the “Saints” book, which is a new history. If you go read that, it's not the story you grew up with. So, the choice you have to make is – can you let me be a member and be honest to what I find, while the church works out the fact it's story is not accurate, not mine. This is my tribe.

HC: (unclear) 1:14:00 It's leaders It's not true today ... 20 years from now when they tell the whole story ?

BR: Most of us ... we know the way the brain develops ... most of stay in a black and white world We see the world very binary ... there is us and them ... there is black and white ... there is cat people and there is dog people. As people mature ... as their brain develops ... and it only happens to about 20% of the population ... they become less binary ... they don't see the world in black and white terms. I've gone through that process myself.

BR: Did you teach your kids Santa Claus?

HC: No

You didn't. But I'm guessing if I went around the room, people would say, yes, I did. And Santa Claus is a lie. But there is truth inside lies. There is importance in myths. A myth isn't true, but if a tribe stays around long enough, they take those myth stories, and take them literally. It makes those stories to be true stories, even though when they were first created, they were just myths. So, I see truth in Mormonism even if I don't see Mormonism as true the way you see it as true. Does that make sense? In other words, I'm still teaching my kids Santa Claus, even though I know the story doesn't hold up,
HC: Why would you teach your kids?

because my kids get something from it. There is value to believing myths, even if for a while you believe them to be literal. We would not kick people out because they teach their kids Santa Claus – that makes no sense. In a binary world we say: “if you believe, stay in, and if you don't, get out.” But what I'm suggesting is that Mormonism, as time goes on – and I think you're already seeing it – McConkie Mormonism is gone. Joseph Fielding Smith Mormonism is gone. We don't talk about the earth being 6,000 years old or Cain being Bigfoot. Those things are disappearing. The reality is we are moving into a space where we are going to allow less literal belief. If you go out right now and watch the last 10 talks given in the last 3 months by church historians and scholars,

you'll notice they've stopped using the word "translation" when referring to the Book of Abraham and the Book of Mormon and now we call it a revelation. In other words, it came completely out of Joseph Smith's own head. We still want to say it's inspired, but we no longer want to say that he translated the characters on these documents into another document so we can read it. So, again, you say "why do I belong" and I say "this is my home." this is not about whether I resign or not. it's about whether you have space for someone to be a non-literal believer, who also shines a light on the truth. To stay. There's a lot of people out there. I get a million downloads a year. There are news agencies that have covered it and there are reporters coming tomorrow. It's not me. The story they are looking at is whether or not they will let guys like me tell the truth about our leaders and about our story. And whether we get to stay or not. that's being decided right this moment. So far it's been excommunication, excommunication, excommunication. And we send the people that say these very same facts out the door. If anyone says "I'm not saying a fact" I'd welcome it. I'm happy to sit down with any one of you, President, you included, and take anything I say, and show me the original source and show you that our church teaches inaccuracy. So, can I be a non-literal believer, who shines a light on the truth and stay in this church? I don't get decide that. you do.

HCM: unclear at 1:17:45 (He is telling Brother Reel that Bro. Reel's way is the problem)

BR: Every other way has been tried. Whenever somebody tries to speak up in the church and talk about this stuff the church starts to put pressure on local leaders to do something. Again, I would challenge you. You are not going to understand that story unless you walk across the other side and you ask those people nicely and say: "Look, before I make any decision about Brother Reel, tell me your story." Spend an hour. Is my salvation worth an hour out there talking to people? Go ask them story. What they are going to say is: they tried every other way – and the church's culture is such – and it's sponsored by the leaders – that one cannot have doubt or questions in this church without beginning to feel shame, without parents beginning to shame their children, without wives beginning the threaten divorce with their husbands. It's unhealthy. So, you say, why don't try a different way? It's not working. These people are crying and falling apart and they don't know what to do. And they feel alone. When they discover this stuff, they are the only person in their ward, they are the only person in their stake. You ask for a better way, and I say, we need to start speaking up, because these people

deserve validation. These people deserve us saying “wow, that must have been hard to lose your faith and have it fall apart.”

HC: unclear at 1:19:30

BR: Will you tell me an effective way?

SP: unclear Something about “an approach” Maybe how to approach leaders about questions ??

BR: Can we tell these folks too (Bill is speaking to the SP about the HC)? We tried a different process. We sent 5 questions up to a Seventy. That Seventy sent those questions right back to him and said “we’re not going to answer those.”

SP:: unclear ... actually, they said they were going to work on those as well.

BR: I would welcome those answers.

SP: unclear

BR: That’s a dismissal. It’s easy to say that I’m not interested in finding answers. That’s not fair. I’ve spent 20 years trying to find answers.

SP: unclear However it might be I’m just saying ?

BR: Have I been dishonest? Have I been dishonest?

SP: I don’t know.

BR: So, you are going to excommunicate me on “I don’t know”. You get that, right? Like “I don’t know. You might be telling the truth. You might not.” But ...

SP: unclear

BR: So, you shouldn’t excommunicate on “I don’t know”.

PC: unclear Again, when we talk about ?retreat?

BR: No, calling Elder Holland a liar.

SP: That's not true.

BR: That's true.

PC: Yes. Yes. That's not why we are here? employed? Unclear

BR: Which particular thing am I being excommunicated for? Like, let's get one specific thing and say "You can not say THIS"

PC: unclear ... I don't think you can call anyone a liar? Apostles We hold. Prophet ... he holds ...

BR: Even if they lie?

PC: Even if they lie.

BR: I'm glad. That's beautiful.

PC: unclear

BR: You guys see that, right. If an apostle lies and a member shines a light on it. And that apostle is unwilling to acknowledge that he lied, then it is the member who shines the light on it that gets excommunicated. That is a lack of integrity in this system. There is no valid recourse for those people to get their questions answered.

Silence

HCM: unclear Why don't we just go around

HCM: I guess I guess the problem with what I say is just so xxxx ... I can't think of any (earthly) institution that promotes / allows to be torn apart from within There is (or maybe isn't) a productive way ... to figure out There are ... I mean just coming off xxxxx With the church ??? Change itself to the whims of public opinion ... you are not going to get What everybody else is

BR: We are just talking about the facts. I don't care about public opinion. The facts.

HCM: On every single issue that we are talking about. you bring up the LGBTQ Community ... and the church just swings around with what is popular ... and what everybody else wants to do. Where's the foundation? What is the purpose of any of this?

BR: Name one doctrine in this church that hasn't changed.

HCM: I don't want to be contentious

BR: Do you agree that there are unhealthy systems? where there is no healthy way to address concerns.

HCM: unclear ... Can I answer that I'm reluctant to do. Its embarrassing to me. I was in a situation not very long ago I notice there were problems We were not educating our fellow employees. We were just siloed ... we would not cooperate And I got called in and was told to knock it off ... A lot of these things I was right about, but I was tearing down the leadership, I was tearing down the institution and the people. And I fully admit It was me. I had the problem. If the company were able to do those things, then great. But we weren't. We were just a trucking company.

BR: This is Lord's church on earth.

HCM: This is the Lord's church ? And I am a much more humble person because I went through that. And I recognized that even though I had the right points, I was wrong in the way I went about it. I did not Not one thing that I did benefited the company until I made the change.

BR: We are a system were leaders don't step forward and say "we messed up". Name in a instance where we did that. Elder McConkie and 1978 does a little of that. Elder Uchdorf says "we've made mistakes some of which may have violated doctrine or principles". But we don't get anyone who says "yeah, you're right, I lied", "you're right, I messed up", " you're right, I thought I had the Lord's will but I didn't."

The trouble is, there are people out there who are hurting and nobody validates them. Nobody takes time to hear them But in a church run by Jesus Christ, we ought to have some integrity. Nobody takes the time say "Man, it's not that you tried the least; you tried so hard to make it work. And it didn't." So I hear you. But in a church run by Jesus Christ we ought to have some integrity.

HC: unclear

[BR says "please" and "yeah"]

HC..... I appreciate that. I can tell that you have spoken from your heart. Can you tell us how you feel about the church right now.

BR: (getting emotional) The church was the most beautiful thing in the world to the 17 year old me, because I bought it. I believed it with every little bit of my being. And I lived it. I showed up at every move. I showed up at every service project. You can call it pride, but you don't make Bishop at 29 unless you are doing Mormonism to the best of your ability. And I was. There is that 17 year old me to 32 where it worked beautifully. But the moment you stop seeing us and them and you start seeing that there are human beings both inside and outside the church, you start to have compassion and empathy for people who are different. So, I have a friend and their gay son almost killed himself. I have other friends who kids did take their lives. If we are going to protect leaders and excommunicate truth-tellers while kids take their lives (getting emotional) - what message is that. The only way real changes happen in the church is when someone at the bottom shines a light on it. We changed our interviews a little bit when Sam Young starts talking. We start making room for women to start talking in General Conference when Kate Kelly raises a voice. We start putting out Gospel Topic Essays when John Dehlin asks questions. Everyone of these shifts and changes where we become healthier happens when people like me stand up and say "the truth matters". So from 17 to 32 it was beautiful and from 32 on, I realize how much we hurt people who don't fit the mold, how much we damage them, and we even cause them to take their lives, we cause their spouses to divorce them because we make them "other". They are no longer one of us. And we tell each other Let's circle the wagons, that guy belongs over here, and we are us. It has to stop. Tonight, you can say: "from here on out, we're going to value the truth. And we are going to start having empathy and sympathy for people who are hurting and who this falls apart for we are no longer going to shame them. We are not going to distance them as other." We are going to say: "You're Mormon and if you can't make it work with your beliefs, I don't care." If you ignore the history and the harm the church does, it works wonderfully, as Elder Uchdorf said. But

the moment you open up your mind to say: is this hurting people unnecessarily, then, Mormonism becomes very toxic and unhealthy. And I'm living in both of those worlds where I love what it did for me, but I don't like what it is doing for me and others right now.

HC: I can see you care

BR: I cared too much

HC: unclear

BR: My integrity is not in question here. My tone maybe.

HC: unclear

BR: My tone may be in question, but my integrity is not on the line here. Noone has ever said ... I've not done anything immoral - and I've not done anything untruthful.

HCM: You've made that very clear tonight.

BR: Thank You

HCM: I appreciate your sincerity.? The things that you have researched. I know a lot of the stuff that you've brought up. I've been aware of it. The question is - knowing what you know is correct about the prophet and ? Book of Mormon ?, how do you feel about him? Is he a prophet? Did the Lord call him? Did he see what he said he saw? Is the Book of Mormon the only correct book on the face of the earth as the Prophet Joseph Smith said?

BR: I'm going to get to your question by focusing on the Book of Mormon. I still love the Book of Mormon. Do I believe it is ancient historical text? No. But I think it's scripture. But I still feel

HCM: Do you believe he translated it?

BR: I don't think the church anymore claims he translated it. I think the church is in the midst of acknowledging (that we are moving to no longer framing it as a translation)

HCM: I would disagree.

BR: I know you would. They are walking back from it being a literal translation - to it being a revelation out of Joseph Smith's head - and that's the words from our own church coming out in the last 6 months. And if you want, I'll be willing to send you the references from where the church says

HCM: I understand. I see some of that as well. Is the Book of Mormon what it claims?

BR: It's scripture.

HCM: Going back to Joseph Smith, the prophet did he see what he said he say?

BR: I wouldn't define him as prophet the way you would, but if we define prophet as somebody who pushes against the status quo, and calls us to connect with the divine, and while we like to say, Jesus spoke to him, and that's what makes him a prophet, I

think history actually shows that prophets are people who perceive some dysfunction in the status quo, and they push back. And they generally do it in ways that try to connect us to the divine, and I think Jesus did this all the time. Jesus is constantly pushing against his own true living church of his day, if you see who Jesus criticizes, it's the religious leaders of his church, which we believe is the true living church of his day. Jesus himself seems to have no problem saying, those leaders in my church, they're one off, they're missing the mark. And yet, we have no problem with something like that. When Joseph Smith says things like, he understood that none of the other churches were true, and he understood that the sermons of the minister didn't hold up, like, he's pushing back against the system, that seems to be what a prophet is, so my definition of prophet would be very different from yours, but you're not gonna catch me saying he's not a prophet. I believe the Book of Mormon is scripture, but I also believe it's scripture in the same way that the Bhagavad Gita is scripture, or the Koran is scripture, they're mythical stories, meant to connect us to the divine, and when taking literally, we miss the mark, and we hurt others, so, for example, in the Book of Mormon, when we say that we take away that the, that the Lamanite priest took away the virtue of the Nephite daughters, I don't remember the exact, but you know what I'm talking about, you can't take away someone's virtue by raping them. Someone's virtue is who they are, it's an incorrect way of using rhetoric and language in theology, so what, if you take it 100% literal, you're always gonna miss the mark when the scripture is one off. Your ability to say, like, there's myth there, and there's inspiration there, but I don't need to take everything verbatim, it gives you room to say, like, oh, that hurts people, that's not healthy, put that off to the side, this piece is useful, let's use it, I have no problem with the Book of Mormon as scripture at all, I still read from it. Do I believe it's a literal translation from gold plates? No, and I think I could demonstrably show at least enough space that you would say, yeah, there's room to think that.

HC: So the three witnesses, the one thing herein the, in the title page, and the eight witnesses, those, none of them were telling the truth?

BR: Here's the trouble, those 11 men didn't only speak on those two pages, their testimonies go far and wide in other documents, and they speak of these, in one place, they'll say it was a physical experience, and another place, they'll say it was a spiritual experience. In one place, they'll say they saw the plates, in another place, they say the plates stayed covered. Their testimonies are not cohesive, we like, as Mormons, all we

do is open the book and show the one testimony, the reality is, those 11 men said lots of things, and some of those things contradicted each other.

HC: But they never denied what they said they saw

BR: But they contradicted each other

SP: We are kind of going over the time that we had allotted, Brother R, Brother K, Brother M. Were the proceedings fair to Bro. Reel?

HC: I feel like we allowed enough time, and I think that they both had said everything that they wanted to say, and I believe that we listened with intent, and I believe that we gave you our complete and full attention, and that everything was done from love. We wanted to give you every, every benefit, and to give you a chance to tell us exactly how you felt in your heart, and I felt. I appreciate you, Sister Reel, for being here, and in helping us to understand how you feel, and giving your support.

SP: Brother M, do you want to add anything to this?

HC: No, I just believe that the points were made.

SP: I concur. Brother Hirschfield, and President ?, do you feel that this council was fair to the Church?

HC (money line): Yeah, I think this has been an opportunity to understand your point of

view. I think that the purpose of the Council, as was mentioned at the first, now your integrity is not in question at all. It isn't. The purpose of this council is to look at protecting the integrity of the church. And you mentioned that as well. And uh, but I believe now, that pretty much as you outlined every step of your presentation, If all that stuff is true, there is no integrity left in the church. And so that's a problem. There are a lot of nuances there. You are a very intelligent man. You've looked at sources as you've said... All the information there. It leaves the church with zero integrity.

BR: Yeah

HC: That we're all here to protect, and I think it's important, critical, in fact. Well. It's, and I think Brother Reel, as a member of this church, understands. You know, member of the church. And you're still in a better position to try to persuade other people to, to. Documents that you have, but also you've been critical. I think there's gonna be a discussion on all sides.

BR: Hey, can I just say it's not fair to say I don't believe anything about the church? I don't think that's fair.

HC: Sure

SP: Actually, why don't I give you a few more minutes

BR: Sure. Sure, so why don't I share my testimony? I don't know that Jesus ascended on the third day, I've studied the historical Jesus, as well. That said, I've been deeply affected by his mercy and his grace, I've started another podcast called The Mythical

Jesus, where I take the scriptures, and think and talk and speak about Jesus, 'cause I love him. So I can't ascribe to knowing, I can't ascribe to even probably believing, but I can say I hope. I have serious doubts that the Book of Mormon is a historical document, in terms of an ancient translation, but I have a deep, abiding testimony of it as scripture. Do our leaders talk to Jesus today? Not in the way they tell us they do. I think that is also demonstrable. But that doesn't mean that I don't think if the church is gonna make a change, it doesn't come through an inspired thought through the top, and for me, that's enough to hope in these men as prophets of some sort, even if they don't act all the time with integrity. So is this the true church or not? I've not spoken on that at all, I just said it's not what it claims to be. So I have a testimony on some level of Jesus, I've been affected by his grace and mercy, I have a testimony of the Book of Mormon, even if I don't believe in a historic, ancient translation, which Elder Holland has said, we make room in our church for those who have non-literal belief in the Book of Mormon. Do I believe in prophets, to some extent I do, and to some extent, I don't, it's a mixed bag. I don't see the world in black and white ways anymore. It would be really sad, in my mind, as you point out, if this is true, and all these facts come together, and I'm being accurate, if the church lacks integrity, and I wouldn't say it has no integrity, but it lacks a certain amount of integrity that we all expected it to have, and if you're acknowledging, on some level, that if I'm being accurate, I've told the truth, it would be a shame to excommunicate somebody for essentially shining the light on a lack of integrity, and forthrightness, and honesty on the church. Again, I don't think, at the end of the day, this decision, I don't think it has anything to do with me, I'm just one more guy who's shining a light, and when I'm done, six months from now, somebody else is gonna be doing it. Sooner or later, our church is gonna have to get comfortable with its story, with the facts of its story. And it's trying to, but it's doing it behind, in the shadows, and I don't think that's healthy for the people on the other side here. That's it.

SP: I want to For everything that you. And in the church, I promise you that there'd be, none of these. I pray that. And I also think that if someday, that if the world ever. It is not possible for you to And I pray that that light would always be shining. That you may remember that love that is Jesus Christ And I want to say a few words about these There are now 17 other members of this church that held together people and communities And I didn't know where or how to search for it, butis to help people. You're a good man. And I think that you did have an open heart. An honor to be, to beJesus Christ. And I want to say, you love testimony I have never seen Jesus Christ, I have never seen Joseph Smith, I have never seen the, I have never honestly, I. Honestly, I've. But I've had some crystal clear instances. But you think the head of this

church. To be false. But that's not all they search for, this church wants to. None of our bishops are. But I know they have good. But pray for them, and I do believe they are trying to do what is right. I love the gospel because of what. We need to reach out to other people, I don't see members of the church that I see some. And I love them just as much, and I don't think them any less, but they need, firstly, they belong to the church, and, Brother Reel, you. The last few weeks. And not be coming up with, what would. And I can say that I really tried to listen to what you had to say, I. And that's why I'm, I'm not. Say about it, and. And I'll personally come and. And thank you for being here tonight. And also, please let each of them know that we appreciate them, and I'm sorry.

BR: No, no problem.

SP: I just felt that.

BR: And if I can just say, one more time, I would just say, go out on the other side there, and ask people to tell you why it fell apart for them so you can have more empathy for them and their stories.

Closing Prayer

