

I Bear You My Testimony



by Edy Meredith

I was born on March 27, 1942, the second daughter of five children to a Latter-day Saint (Mormon) family in Provo, Utah. As far as I can tell from reading family histories and genealogy, my first ancestor to join the LDS Church was my great-great-grandfather, Janvrin Haynes Dame, born May 9, 1808, in New Hampshire. In 1833, he married Sophia Andrews, age 15, near Quincy, Illinois, *continued inside*

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope, then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me when you 'search for me with all your heart.

The Holy Bible, NKJV, Jeremiah 29:11-13

Both of them were baptized in 1835 and became followers of Joseph Smith. These people and others of my ancestors followed Brigham Young into the Great Salt Lake Valley after Joseph Smith's death by shooting in 1844.

Sophia died on January 31, 1847, in Ponca, Nebraska, in the Mormon exodus to the west following the birth of her sixth child. May 1, 1848, Janvrin was married to Lucinda Hayes, age 18, at Council Bluffs, Iowa, by Orson Hyde. They arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley in September 1848, and their lives continued to be very difficult. In the spring of 1850, Janvrin became a polygamist when he married Lucinda's sister, Lovina Hayes, my paternal grandmother's grandmother, making me a fifth generation Mormon. Most of my grandparents on both sides were raised in polygamous families.

I was thoroughly steeped in LDS history, teachings, and traditions. The highlights of my life have always involved seeking after God and spiritual activity. They include being baptized at the age of 8 and married at 19 in the Manti Temple to a returned missionary. I met my husband while attending Brigham Young University where I also worked and edited papers presented by professors of the Department of Religion.

After my husband's graduation from BYU, we moved to San Francisco where we both got degrees at San Francisco State University. Active in San Francisco Wards, I was Primary President, taught Relief Society lessons, and we attended the Oakland Temple as temple worthy LDS. Our beautiful daughter Kathleen was born in 1965.

After my husband completed his college program, he was hired by the San Francisco Unified School District as a teacher, and within a year he was also serving on a committee to set up Black studies programs. He brought home many scholarly books on Black history which we both read. Doctrine on

race for LDS comes from LDS scripture: *Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, Doctrine and Covenants*. In those books, white is associated with "fair," "beautiful," "exceedingly fair and delightsome," while black is called "dark," "loathsome," "filthy," "full of idleness and all manner of abominations," and "cursed." From these books, regarded as sacred scripture by LDS, was taught the doctrine that people of black African descent were not entitled to hold the LDS priesthood or to receive the highest blessings white Mormons were entitled to receive. As I studied, I was convinced that Mormon doctrine on race was wrong, evil, and could not be from God. I began to question other LDS doctrines such as eternal marriage (polygamy) and the teaching that an LDS woman married in an LDS temple would be resurrected if her husband called her out of the grave. From my study of LDS history and scripture, I began to regard these doctrines as the teachings of men in "scriptures" that had no objective historical or archeological basis created by self-proclaimed false prophets who taught from—"scriptures" containing evil and contradictory teachings.

I was faced with leaving my community of birth and disgracing my family or denying what I knew to be true. Because I knew that faith is not belief despite the evidence and that faith is obeying in spite of the consequences, I left the LDS Church. Within a year my husband and I were divorced, and at the age of 30, I was a single parent left to raise a 7-year-old daughter. Because I knew nothing of true Christianity, I viewed my rejection of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a rejection of Jesus Christ. I became an agnostic spiritual seeker.

I sought meaning in being a good parent, working hard, looking for the eternal truths in all religions and paths. I read and studied widely. I was self-sufficient and successful, although at times I would recognize that I had a lonely, empty, and aching heart, despite my happy and assertive facade.

In 1989 my life began to change. I was betrayed by a friend and stalked for a year by someone who terrorized me. The Loma Prieta earthquake shook up the Bay Area, and I saw parts of San Francisco burn, the Bay Bridge fall, and the Oakland freeway topple.

In 1990, I lost my employment and business-share to a friend I had worked with for 9 years.

In 1991, the Oakland fire destroyed 2,500 houses and 25 people died. My life was saved miraculously, but all of the things I had relied on as a support system over 20 years were gone—friends, position, salary, home, and community. When I began waking every morning at 3:00, I felt that God was calling me to pray to Him. I prayed for hours every morning. I gradually began to feel that I should leave California and go some place in the Southwest.

In June 1993, I left California visiting Arizona and New Mexico. Taos, New Mexico, had an endless supply of entertainment, local color, and scenery, and I loved it so I decided to buy land, build a house, and live there.

I bought 50 acres on the desert mesa, and in June 1994, I began to live on it in a temporary mobile home without running water or electricity. Plans were made for construction on my house to begin in July with completion by winter, but I found myself without money in the middle of winter living in an unfinished house.

That winter was very dark, cold, and depressing without electricity, heat, or running water. When I felt it could not get any worse, on January 6, 1995, my car rolled off the road and turned over in the snow and ice while I was driving into town. Seven difficult days later, while sitting in my unfinished house at about 6:00 p.m., I knew that there were at least 12 more hours of darkness. I looked up at the night sky covered with brilliantly clear and visible stars. *If only the Creator of the stars were this visible!*

I thought while rubbing my sore neck and back which still had bruises from the car accident. I despaired that there would be an end to my difficulties and that I would ever be able to solve them. As I looked up at the stars again, I heard my voice cry out, “O, Jesus help me!”

I had never called out to Jesus before, and it surprised me. What happened next surprised me even more. In an instant reply to my call, Jesus Christ appeared standing in the air about 3 feet above the ground in front of me and to the left. Looking upon His holiness, I immediately knew and said, “I am a sinner, original sin is true, and I am a member of a fallen race as a child of Adam and Eve.” ‘ I instantly bowed down, not because I thought about it, but because I could do nothing else. I was in the presence of perfect, holy, and almighty God! After I bowed down to Him, I raised my head and asked Him who He was. He told me that He is Jesus Christ who died on the cross for my sins and was resurrected from the dead, and that I could learn about Him by studying His Word, *The Holy Bible*, and that it alone is sacred scripture, and that no other books are. Then I felt the Holy Spirit enter into my heart as a physical feeling like the small flutter of wings in a 2-inch area on the right side of the center of my chest. I was filled with the glory of God, and I began to praise Him in words and sounds of glorious joy. With tears of repentance, I thanked Jesus for revealing Himself to me and for redeeming me.

He Saved me, not because I was good or anything that I had done, but only because of who *He* is and *His* great love, mercy, and amazing grace. I remember crying out, “My life is changed forever because of this.” I knew from that moment on that I belonged to Jesus, and felt the imprint of Him upon every part of my being. Since then, I’ve felt there is an indelible sign on the top of my head that reads: *This Person Belongs to Jesus.*

I continued to live by myself in the desert mesa enjoying and learning in the presence of Jesus for 9 more months until September 1995 when I was baptized in the Rio Grande River and then sent by Jesus to go back into the world to be a witness for Him. I’ve experienced both high and low moments. I’ve been both rich and poor, and if given a choice, I’d rather be low and poor with Jesus than to be high and rich without Him. To live with Jesus indwelt by the Holy Spirit is to be alive and free. Jesus has set me free and changed my life.

My desire is that you would surrender to Him. If you don’t know Jesus as Lord and Savior of your life, ask Him to come into your heart and make your life a new creation. He is willing and has the power to set you free. He is faithful and true to all who sincerely call upon His name. Are you willing to trust Him?

If so, just pray this prayer: “Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner. I ask you to forgive me of my sin, be the Master of my life, and Savior of my soul. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.”



Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke 'is easy, and my burden is light.

(The Holy Bible, KJV, Matthew 11:28-30)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

(The Holy Bible, KJV, Ephesians 2:8-9)

Copyright © 1999 by Edy Meredith

This testimony may be reproduced without change and in its entirety, except as provided by USA copyright laws.

To contact Edy Meredith, call (818) 760-3226, or write 12439 Magnolia Blvd., PMB 184, North Hollywood, CA 91607