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English 3

9 April 2019

### Oh My God

Imagine hearing laughter spill through a closed classroom door. You then walk in and the classroom quiets. Imagine feeling slightly confused and taken aback. Was it you that made them stop talking? You look around the classroom and see kids peering at you. Then, it registers. It's not your appearance that made them stopped talking, it's your religion.

This is a regular occurrence for members of the Atkisson family. People discriminate them because of stereotypes and misrepresentation of their religion. A lot of members of the Mormon church face discrimination. People judge Mormons based on stereotypes, and misleading accounts of the church in society. The Atkisson's are a family that combats these stereotypes and exemplify the Mormon ideals. In society, Mormons tend to have a bad reputation because they are thought to dislike the LGBT community.

The title Mormon is a nickname that originated from a book of scripture called the Book of Mormon. Members of the church have started referring to themselves as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS for short). This is because they wanted to be associated with Jesus Christ (Curtis Atkisson).

Members of the church believe in God and Jesus Christ. They “believe that Jesus Christ is [their] savior and that and it's through him that [they] will be able to live again someday” (Annie Shattuck). They also believe that their church was started by a man named Joseph Smith, who received a revelation. A revelation is when God sends someone a vision. Smith’s vision told him to start a church.

LDS members have a very specific belief. They believe that family should come before all else. This doesn’t necessarily mean people connected by blood, but anyone Mormons name as family should be number one on their list of priorities.

A big belief of the church is to help other people. They volunteer at charity as often as possible, and always try to help a friend in need. Even though members of the church are giving and selfless, they still face discrimination.

In 2018, Netty Atkisson received death threats from a man online because she expressed her religious views (Curtis Atkisson). Nothing came of them, but it was still scary and disturbing for the family. This is an extreme example of what the Atkisson family and a lot of other Mormons experience on a daily basis.

Sometimes it’s as simple as people not saying things in the families presence because they don’t want to say something that would turn out to be offensive. The issue with this is that the Atkissons can tell when someone doesn’t want to say something in front of them when they trail off or stop talking mid-conversation in their presence.

It's not just this one Mormon family that feels discrimination. According to Dan Gilgoff from CNN, "Nearly half of American Mormons say they face a lot of discrimination in the United States".

The Atkisson family are aware that the discrimination they face doesn't come close to what a lot of minorities have to face on a daily basis, But the discrimination that they do face, shouldn't happen.

One reason people of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints get discriminated against is because a lot of people think that members of the church hate people of the LGBT community. This is a stereotype. It may be true of some people in their church, but for many members including the Akissons, this is false. They always say that they moved to San Francisco by choice, knowing that they would be surrounded by diversity. They were excited to raise their kids around all different types of people. Curtis has faced discrimination from being a religious minority his whole life, so he would never want to put anyone through the same things that he has gone through.

The church as a whole has tried to help people of the LGBT community avoid discrimination. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Utah have helped pass a law to stop discrimination against LGBT people in the workplace. Mormon Church leaders and gay equality advocates put up a new bill meant to protect LGBT members from discrimination, as well as stop people who use religion as an excuse to discriminate (Michelle Boorstein).

Another reason many Mormons face cultural injustice is because of misrepresentation in the media. On HBO, there is a television show called Big Love. This program showcases a polygamist family and their struggles through life. Because the husband in Big Love has multiple wives, a lot of people assume that the family is part of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. However, the family in the show have no correlation with the church, because polygamy isn't allowed (Curtis Atkisson).

The Book of Mormon is a comedic Broadway musical, is another production of media that distorts the perception of the LDS church. The musical is about Church of Jesus Christ of latter-day saints. The actors playing Mormons say a lot of anti-gay jokes throughout the musical. In the song "Turn it Off" they talk about turning off gay emotions. They literally sing "Being gay is bad...so turn it off." Most members of the church understand that it's a joke, and a lot even think it's funny, but it makes a lot of people think that Mormons are anti-gay, anti-conflict, and anti-emotion.

The main ideal of the church is that family comes first. According to Spencer, the family is supposed to be number one on members of the church's list of priorities. The Atkissons try to spend as much time on the weekend and after school together. They regularly eat dinner together too (Spencer Atkisson).

Dinner at the Atkinson is beautiful and harmonious. Netty and Curtis are cooking whenever Curtis is home on time from work. Annie is helping set the table, and Spencer are outside playing with the dog or jumping on the trampoline.

Netty thinks her family is the most important thing in the world. She spends as much of her time with them as possible, coming up with fun trips to take them on, and showing them new spots in San Francisco. Her job is to take care of her family and give them as many experiences as possible (Netty Akisson)

If you go on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints' website, there are five tabs to click on: Scriptures and study, share the gospel, inspiration, and news, serve and teach, and family. Family is so important to them that it is one of the main pieces of their official website. Once you click on the family tab, it reads out "the family is central to God's plan for the eternal happiness of all His children." People of the church really do put family above all else.

Ever heard of the saying "be the buffalo?" The proverb is based on a story of a crow and a buffalo in a storm. The crow flies away from the storm, but the buffalo charges towards it, trying to help the animals stuck in the tempest. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints are like the buffalo's of the community. It is one of the top priorities of the church not shy away from helping others. They try to help as many people as they can. The Atkisson works at a soup kitchen for the homeless and hungry at least a few times a month. They leave their house at 8 am to help make hundreds of sandwiches to give to people for lunch. They don't just help the less fortunate, they also help friends in need.

Nettie knew this woman about 20 years prior. Her name was Miki, and she was Nettie's boss. They lost contact when Netty and her family moved to California, but when Miki called Nettie 3 years ago, she picked up and offered to help. Miki was moving to California for work with her family. Her job started 3 months before the house she received became available, so she

had to move to California months before the rest of her family, and with no home. When she told Nettie about this, Nettie let her move in with open arms. She decided to live with Nettie for the first few weeks in California, but with the amazing hospitality and generosity of the Atkisson family, they let her stay the entire time before her family arrived.

People like to judge others before meeting them. They enjoy fitting people in boxes based on oversimplified ideas about them. A lot of people won't even give others the chance to prove those stereotypes wrong. The Atkisson family is an example of people who prove so many bad misconceptions wrong, and most of society won't get the chance to converse with and realize that. Maybe just next time you meet someone who isn't deemed "normal", talk to them before you judge them.

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