



Ministry Update from Provo, Utah. John Austin Roberson

Week 3 (May 22-27)

I sit here exhausted, burdensome, and even tempted with the lie that what I am doing is hopeless! I am able to remind myself of the gospel of truth which I am preaching amongst the lost people of Utah. People I met in the previous weeks who I thought showed signs of receptivity have not shown interest in meeting or have even ghosted me. I hesitate to continue on with my relationship with Edward as he seems turned off from the biblical gospel. He invites me to a pool party on Tuesday night; I contemplate whether or not I should go. I accept the invitation but bring Joseph, my ministry partner along. At the party, Joseph and I begin talking to Edward and his friend, Timothy. I can feel the conversation shifting towards the gospel. I am conflicted. I don't want to hurt my relationship with Edward as we have grown to be friends but I also know that I am not supposed to be ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Thankfully, Joseph leads the conversation as he begins to demonstrate the differences between evangelical Christianity and Mormonism. It is in that moment that my fears are tossed to the wind and I am reminded of the reason for this trip and essentially my life, to make disciples. As the conversation continues, Edward and Timothy fail to see the false teachings and works-based faith of the LDS church and how they are not the same as the biblical gospel. Joseph and I return home and go to the Lord in prayer. We thank Him for the opportunity to present the gospel in a loving way but also in directness, not being shy of the reality of hell, judgment, the depravity of man but also Christ's grace and mercy on sinners such as ourselves. We pray that God would give us another opportunity to talk to Edward and Timothy at a later time.

On Thursday, our team attends an institute class where we learn about Mormon doctrine and teaching. Nauseous. I feel nauseous as I sit through this disgusting class about a false Jesus and his gospel that is anything but true. To hear such teaching that is contrary to Scripture not only brings pain but sorrow as I watch the others in this class listen closely. The professor has suspicions about our team and talks to us after the class. He gives us the opportunity to return next week and tell the class about what we believe in and how he believes we have a lot more similarities than differences. I grit my teeth as I could not disagree more. I hold back my frustration as our team accepts the invitation.

Perhaps this is an opportunity the Lord has given us to present the true biblical Jesus and his gospel that is so contrary to LDS teachings. God gives us the opportunity to meet up again with Edward and Timothy. Our prayers came true. Oh how glorious and marvelous He is as he

answers the prayers of his children. We meet with them for lunch and continue our conversation. As we talk, I see that Edward is nervous as his hands and legs are shaking. It appears as if he is beginning to realize the difference between the biblical gospel and the false gospel that he is following. Although I will not be able to meet with him again as he departs town, I pray that someone else will come along and water this seed that has been planted so that he would be saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. We conclude our week at Mosaic Church, a comfort to the soul as we gather with believers who encourage and pray for us. What a beautiful picture of Christ's bride who are unified through the blood of the Lamb.

**Names changed*

Week 4 (May 28-June 5)

As my time in Utah is closing, the work is far from finished. Before coming to Utah, a month seemed like a lengthy time for a mission trip. However, as we build relationships and get to know people better and as we continue on in our gospel conversations, it is clear that one month is not long at all. We are grateful for what the Lord has done through us and the team that just arrived who will continue laboring in the harvest which is plentiful. As we say goodbye to the people we met, we thank them for the relationship we built and the conversations we had. Although they did not come to saving faith in Christ Jesus, a seed was planted. Some of these people heard the biblical gospel for the first time in their life, we pray that the Lord would use that in ways that only He can.

On Thursday, we are able to attend the institute class in hope of a gospel centered conversation afterwards. As the class ends, I pray for patience as I can sense we will need it in this conversation. As we dive into the conversation with LDS students, we quickly emphasize that we believe differently. They disagree as we continue in our conversation. We make claims such as the Deity of Christ, the lack of temples and modern-day prophets, The Bible being breathed out by God, the nature and holiness of God, the reality of hell, and our motivation for missions that differentiate from their beliefs. I notice one guy in the back is deeply invested as he appears to be questioning what he believes. I introduce myself to him afterwards as I learn his name is David. As we leave, I am frustrated. I do not understand why many cannot see the difference between the biblical gospel and this false gospel. However, the Lord reminds me that they are blinded by the enemy who has them under his thumb. Only until the blinders come off can they see the truth and light found in Christ.

The next evening, we host a party with the new mission team that just arrived. The purpose of this party is to introduce people we have met and are open to gospel conversations to the team so they can continue to engage with them. Sadly, the people I met with are unable to attend but later in the evening, David from the previous night shows up. I want to talk to him and ask questions but I hesitate. I am reminded of 1 Corinthians 3:6 which Paul says "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." Although I want to continue in conversing with him, I realize that it would be better if he built relationships with the team that will be here when I leave. It is not easy to step back but I realize the fruit that will come if I do. I planted, the team will water, and God will give the growth.

We conclude our final week with our last gathering with Mosaic Church. It is a hard goodbye as I have enjoyed worshipping with them through song, teaching of the Word, and communion this past month. I am grateful for this church. God's hand is upon them as He is doing great and mighty things through this body of believers. It was a privilege and honor to work alongside them.

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I apologize for the delay in the update. However, these past few days have allowed me to reflect and ponder this trip God so graciously allowed me to go on. It is difficult to summarize what all the Lord has done this past month in Provo, Utah. Nevertheless, this trip has reflected a verse in Scripture that is true for the Christian life everywhere. Matthew 13:3 simply says this: "A sower went out to sow." A simple sentence that reflects the duty of disciples everywhere, to make disciples. This first comes by sharing the gospel, sowing seeds. The Lord reminded me of this verse that has been my responsibility not only in Utah but in every place I go. My prayer comes from *The Valley of Vision*, a book of Puritan prayers and devotions. It is this: "Here, it is my duty to be as Christ in this world, to do what he would do, to live as he would live, to walk in love and meekness; then would he be known, then would I have peace in death." Lord, let this be true for all of my days, for your glory and your love for the nations, Amen.

John Austin Roberson