

My story... In a nutshell... by Cliff Bentley

Once upon a time, I was happy and content and God was talking to me and everything, or almost everything, life basically made sense, though I really kept wanting more, to know more. I was a little impatient, I'll admit. I always wanted God to do more, be more, say more, and "make His arm bare" in my sight.

Every day I would pray, and regularly I would do the home teaching (ministering), I'd help others, do work projects, teach lessons in Primary or Gospel Doctrine Sunday School or Priesthood meeting. I'd research not only the lessons, but my own personal 'projects' like being 'born again' and 'baptism of fire' and the Second Coming. I married in the temple and had nine children with my wonderful wife. We always serve in our neighborhoods and Wards (congregations).

One day I learned through the Holy Ghost that my need to learn was a worthy desire; I could excuse myself from the general Church counsel to limit my research to "Church Sources". Because these sources did not have the information I sought, specifically on the 'baptism of fire'. After some hard work, I found what I was looking for. And a lot more. I rejoiced in the information I was finding. I could discern and taste the truth, and it was good!

"This is good doctrine. It tastes good. I can taste the principles of eternal life, and so can you."
- Joseph Smith Jr.

And I noticed my fellow seekers had many and varied opinions, most of which I'd never heard before.

It was a wonderful experience, but I soon discovered there were voices that did not like things that I myself loved, such as my Church. I determined to speak up and defend my faith. As I did, I found that I myself did not know as much as I had thought I did. And **that** revelation was at times bewildering and thrilling, and at other times annoying and alarming. So I decided to faithfully engage and learn still more. I followed the wise adage of Stephen R. Covey to "Seek first to understand, and then to be understood." And I discovered that sometimes, the other guy was right.

So I valued 'truth' enough to change my thinking whenever I found truth, regardless of the price I had to pay. The price was often loss of comfort, painful re-evaluation of other perceived truths, laying aside things I had thought were 'truth' but turned out to be not as true as I had thought, beliefs sometimes falling like a long, winding snake of Dominoes, one after the other. I also learned the value of teachings such as what is found in Psalms 24, which changed my life. And I realized that my faith, my beliefs, had become 'nuanced'. Peculiar. Unique. Then as the World Wide Web developed, I found online communities that were quite 'unique' also. I learned to sort through them and become discriminating, discerning, and very, very careful.

In the midst of all this discovery and re-evaluation of beliefs, I had three things buoying me up and sustaining my faith: family heritage, personal mystical experiences and my active participation in the Mormon Tabernacle Choir (now known as 'The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square').

It's at this point in the story that I should begin a statement with "Until finally...", but I find that I can't do that. Not yet. Because my story is not finished. I'm still learning. I'm still changing. Change has become a way of life for me. I love the Church of my birth, my heritage. I also love the 'truth'. But I've found a greater value or principle than truth itself, as shocking as that may sound. Or perhaps I've found that it's a necessary hand-in-hand companion to truth. It is Love.

Today I am a practicing, active member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Fully orthodox, and somewhat less orthodox in my beliefs than I used to be. Most assume I'm normal. That's fine with me, I am at peace.

I have now dedicated my limited remaining years of life to helping others who struggle with feelings of doubt, betrayal and grief in the unsettling information that they have found. I've been there, and I'm here for you. Yes, I charge money for coaching people to happiness and a peaceful state of mind. It's because my time is valuable and limited. And I truly can help to tame the chaotic and painful emotions for most people, until they can find inner peace. If you have a diagnosed mental condition, I may still be able to help you while you work with a therapist. I am a life coach, not a therapist.

“For the simplicity that lies this side of complexity, I would not give a fig, but for the simplicity that lies on the other side of complexity, I would give my life.”

-- Oliver Wendell Holmes

I have given my life to understand this. I help angry, confused, devastated, anguished, doubting Latter-day Saints who want to understand their feelings and get themselves out of chaos and into peace and understanding. Tall order, and it won't happen overnight. But progress is very possible, and simplicity on the other side of complexity is real.