

# Faith Journeys and Boundaries: A Practical Workbook



By Dr. Kristy Money  
[mormonjourneys.org](http://mormonjourneys.org)

## Setting Boundaries and Faith Journeys

### Introduction

We Mormons aren't really taught to make and respect boundaries. In Mormon culture, everyone is in each other's business, because, Gosh darnit, your eternal salvation is at stake (!)

All healthy relationships need boundaries. They serve as healthy prevention tools, because often a line will be drawn one way or the other eventually. So it's ideal if that boundary happens earlier, when you are in a calm headspace and when you have more control, rather than later when in reactive mode/anger. For example, let's imagine that your in-laws are giving you advice about your spiritual life over the phone, but you think you should just bite your lip and listen because you know you'll be visiting them soon. Honestly, it would be wise to bring it up while still on the phone, letting them know ahead of time that for the sake of the relationship you would ask that they don't advise you about such personal matters. You could even set that boundary right away when you first communicate that your beliefs are evolving, especially if you already have a history of them advising you about religious matters. If you don't set the boundary early, there's always a chance--during a visit or later on--that they will try to give you advice and it could lead to a tense situation and possibly shouting, and/or someone running out to the car to cry alone, after an in-the-moment, understandable reaction out of exasperation like, "You're always giving us advice about the church, I can't take it anymore, STOP IT NOW or we're leaving!" That kind of outburst in and of itself is a boundary maker, but not an ideal one if one goal is to preserve the relationship. Especially because bottled up emotions only explode eventually, my rule of thumb about boundaries is: *the sooner, the better.*

### Boundaries and Social Media

Especially when communication about a change in beliefs is relatively new (though honestly this is a good idea anytime), I would advise that *solid* boundaries around social media be set. I would advise having an explicit conversation in which it is made clear that, for the sake of everyone's mental and emotional well-being (and blood pressure), you will be adjusting your privacy settings on social media so that your family only sees non-political, non-religious posts. In order to create a sense of balance and keep things mutual, if you are the one setting the boundary you can also suggest that they do likewise to their level of comfort. Explain that you care so much about your relationship that you don't want online postings/disagreements to get in the way of it. Since social media does not accurately mirror real life or substitute well for in-person interactions anyway, and since the stress of religious online conversations can negatively affect your relationship you are going to update your social media privacy settings going forward. In my professional experience, giving this type of explicit "heads up" is better than setting a social media boundary around someone (like unfriending or blocking) without telling them--they will find out eventually, and if they do not know it usually leads to much more turmoil than had the boundary been explained ahead of time.

Some examples of healthy social media boundaries:

- 1) Disconnecting on Facebook (or whatever platform on which you are most vocal) to preserve the relationship but explicitly staying in touch on another platform like Instagram so that they can see updates about your kids, fun family pictures, etc.
- 2) Adjusting your settings on Facebook so that you create a group or privacy setting just for family. This way, if you post things about religion that might create drama, you can adjust your settings on that post specifying that the family group will not see those posts. You can add/subtract individuals from this type of group easily at any time.
- 3) Unfollow family members on Facebook who post about religious topics that raise your blood pressure. This way they stay your friend and they aren't notified that you unfollowed them, but since you don't have to see their posts in your feed you can avoid unnecessary stress.
- 4) Similarly, if a family member expresses that it upsets them when you post critical things about the church, and that they take it personally because the church is central to who they are, rather than arguing with them (saying things like "It's not personal," "These aren't anti-mormon," etc.), you can instead express how you think it might

be a good idea for them to unfollow you on Facebook, explaining how it is done (perhaps even send a facebook help link to that topic). You could also offer to put them in a specific privacy setting group that does not see church-related things.

- 5) If the above boundaries are repeatedly violated (For example, they continue to send you calls to repentance even though you have asked that they stop, or after you have restricted your privacy settings they have others spy on you or take screenshots of your posts and then confront you about it), you may need to simply block their account. If you feel it has gotten to the point where you have to do this, be explicit about why (for everyone's well-being) you think in-person interactions would be better for your relationship than social media (you could argue that social media is a poor replacement for real life, etc.). Being explicit is necessary so that the change does not catch them by surprise, as these types of actions (i.e. blocking) have much more powerful emotional reactions than we often expect. It is best to be explicit about what you are doing, making sure to emphasize that you are taking these steps to *preserve* the relationship.

### Common Boundaries over Faith Journeys and How to Set Them

Here are exercises exploring the ten most common boundaries I have seen people on faith journeys establish with family and friends.

For each example, I first provide details about the area of concern, followed by specific wording of what you can say in response, and then at the end of each is an open space where you'll have an opportunity to tailor these common concerns to your own unique situation. Prevention is key!

1. **Attempts to Convert or Activate.** You're worried about family or friends proselytizing you and/or your kids. You feel anxious/scared about how they might be worried that they won't see you after death because you've left the faith, or are taking a sabbatical, or are not renewing your recommend. You might feel like saying: "We really want our little family to be cohesive and for our children not to ever worry about their parents' salvation or being together forever, so please don't talk to them about church, or any doctrine or practices. Please don't bear your testimony to them or us, or send them church material. We understand that these are beliefs that you hold dear, and we wouldn't ever want to take them away from you, but we would ask that you respect our choices as parents and do not interfere with how we are bringing our children up according to the dictates of our own conscience."

Do you foresee this situation for your own life? Write out *How* you would say it in your own words, personalized to your situation, to *Whom*, and *When* you want to set the boundary:

Who: \_\_\_\_\_

When: \_\_\_\_\_

How:

---

---

---

---

---

2. **Finding Other Ways to Bring in Religious Instruction.** You may need to be more specific than you were in #1, because sometimes boundary disruptions and miscommunications occur around extended family's rituals, like morning/evening prayer (Example: Elder Groberg in *The Other Side of Heaven* book/movie. The father of the family they were trying to convert set a boundary that they could come over so long as they don't preach. So Elder Groberg offered a prayer over the meal and turned the prayer into a sermon, expressing appreciation for the

Plan of Salvation, Book of Mormon, etc). Children are naturally curious, and might ask faith-related questions during/after prayer or FHE, and some family members might not see answering those questions as violating the boundary set in #1. From their perspective, they might feel that they are not instigating a discussion about the church, but simply performing family rituals and then answering questions that arise naturally. So your child may return from a visit telling you about what they learned. Some of you might be OK with this, and that's great--after all, it gives you a chance to show your kids how your beliefs compare/contrast to those of other people in their lives. However, if this prospect makes you uncomfortable, you can say something like: "I respect your family traditions. At the same time, though, you are not responsible for answering all our children's questions about those traditions or the church in general, so if they ask you any faith-related questions, please refer them back to us. You can tell them that they can ask us, their parents, those questions."

Do you foresee this situation for your own life? If so, explore below *Who* this might happen with, *When* it might happen, and *How* you might go about addressing the situation in your own words:

Who: \_\_\_\_\_

When: \_\_\_\_\_

How:

---

---

---

---

---

3. **Getting Articles/Talks, etc.** You don't want to be sent religious material. You might want to say something like: "I know the church mean a lot to you, and I respect your beliefs, but I would just ask that you please not send via mail, email, text, gifts, etc, articles/blogs/books/talks/ensign clippings/news/general conference articles/scriptures (note: be very specific!). I understand you may be thinking about me when you read them, and that you may be worried about me. I'm sure you have the best intentions. I just would ask that you respect my wishes not to receive them, because I want to focus on our relationship and sending these things has a tendency to put a strain on our relationship rather than strengthen bonds." If you find yourself receiving a regular weekly/monthly family email from parents to adult children, you could say: "I appreciate these weekly emails, but please do not include scriptures or GA quotes or Ensign articles, etc."

Who: \_\_\_\_\_

When: \_\_\_\_\_

How:

---

---

---

---

---

4. **Taking Kids to Church.** You don't want family to take your kids to church or church activities without your knowledge or consent. You might want to say: "Thank you so much for being willing to watch our kids. Please, when they are with you, do not take them to church or YM/YW/activity days with you. If you really do not want to miss out on church personally that week (because of callings, etc), please consider trading off with family in terms of who will watch our kids during the three-hour block, or let us know that you don't want to miss church and we will make other arrangements." (Note: This one is tricky, and I think it's a personal choice only you can

make. For example, depending on where you are in your journey you might feel OK about your parents or family/friends taking them to church with them while they are watching them for a weekend or extended period, as long as you set another boundary that you don't want them to be proselytized to by family. Perhaps you feel confident that the kids have experienced enough outside the church that they wouldn't enjoy it anyway, so it's not a threat. Or you may not want them to go to Sunday meetings but are OK with ward activities/parties. In any case, especially if the ward they might be attending is a ward that knows you, where people might ask where you are or where ward members might try to activate the kids, you should trust your instincts on a case by case basis).

Who: \_\_\_\_\_

When: \_\_\_\_\_

How:

---

---

---

---

5. **Being Treated Differently.** If you and/or your children are being treated differently, or you're worried about that happening, you might want to say something like: "Please don't treat us or our children any differently from other family who are still in the church. I understand it might be hard because a lot of the activities you do might be related to the church so it could be hard to know how to go about treating us all the same, but we can all work together to think of activities and events that don't involve church that we can all do together or that you can do with the kids to balance out when you do things (temple trips, priesthood/women's session traditions, etc.) with the other kids. I really appreciate you!"

Who: \_\_\_\_\_

When: \_\_\_\_\_

How:

---

---

---

---

6. **Getting Compared to Active Family.** If you have been compared to other family members who are still active, consider: "I know it can be hard *not* to compare us to people who are still in, and that sometimes these thoughts come naturally. We don't expect you to stop having those inward thoughts, we get it, we even used to do it when we were in your shoes. But please don't make *comments* or *actions* comparing us or our kids to other family or friends who are still active. I know sometimes motives may be good (you might think comparisons like this may inspire us to be better!), but in every case the research shows comparisons like that backfire and lead to resentment in families, and the most important thing to us is family. We want to preserve these relationships. Please don't communicate to us, through words or actions, that you are disappointed or wish we were like so-and-so, or bring up to us church related accomplishments of our cousins or our siblings--unless you'd be willing to match those comments with equal expressions of how proud you are of our kids for other things they do in school or life outside the church."

Who: \_\_\_\_\_

When: \_\_\_\_\_

How:

---

---

---

---

7. **Arguing about Religion.** If you're worried about religion coming up at family gatherings, consider something like: "I'd like to ask that we please not discuss religion while we are together, at least for now while all this is fresh. I think time will help us not get so heated about these issues. It could be good practice for us to talk about other interests, we could get to know each other better, explore our unique hobbies and perspectives on a wide range of things."

Who: \_\_\_\_\_

When: \_\_\_\_\_

How:

---

---

---

---

8. **Getting Contacted by Ward.** If you don't want family/friends/leaders to try to activate you through your local ward, consider saying something like: "Please do not contact my local leadership about me, or bring up my name as a topic for discussion in leadership/ward missionary meetings. I have no ill will for the church, but I do not want to be contacted by missionaries or local ward members about the church at this time."

Who: \_\_\_\_\_

When: \_\_\_\_\_

How:

---

---

---

---

9. **Wedding Speculation about Worthiness.** If you won't be attending a temple wedding and don't want rumors to spread about worthiness, consider saying something like: "We are very excited about XXXX's wedding, (if you want to be there just not in the temple: "and we can't wait to celebrate with you at the reception and cheer them all together at the temple doors")." You can leave it at that, because it sends the message that you won't be at the temple so people aren't speculating "Will they or won't they?" And it is very matter of fact, sending a message that you're not ashamed. If you'd like to, you can add something like this: "We would ask that you please not talk or speculate about why we are not attending the sealing. It is for personal reasons regarding our beliefs, and we would appreciate it if family and friends do not speculate about why. If someone asks you why we are not there, we would ask that you respectfully tell them they can ask us directly if they'd like to know. We would appreciate not being the subject of rumors or discussions when we are not there to respond."

Who: \_\_\_\_\_

When: \_\_\_\_\_

How: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

**10. Asking Personal Questions.** If you haven't been open yet about your faith journey, as time passes it's likely your family or friends will suspect. They may ask you or your kids common questions like, "How did you like church this week?", "What's your calling now?" or "Would you like to go to the temple/General Conference with us?" You can decide to take steps to be more open with them soon and prepare for how you're going to tell them if you've already made up your mind (via email, in-person, etc), or you can respond with something like: "Actually Mom/Dad/Whoever, we are working through some questions we have about the church right now. We're not sure what it's going to mean for the future, but for now we are figuring things out and would like to do so in a personal/private way." You could add that "I appreciate your concern, but if you'd be willing to stop asking those questions or try to fix the situation, that would mean the world." At the same time, you might want them to ask you questions about your concerns with the church, not to necessarily change their minds but because it would be symbolic to you that they care about you and want to hear what's upsetting you, even if they disagree. Honestly, you may not ever get there--it's a lucky journeyer who gets a response like that. But if you do want to encourage that type of follow up, instead of asking that they don't ask personal questions, you can say, "I won't get into details beyond XXX, XXXX, XXXX, so if you'd like to know more about where I'm at I'll wait until you ask me yourself--just know that I won't try to change your mind, I will respect your beliefs." It's important to recognize that they may not be in a place where they can ask you those types of questions without it hurting too much.

Who: \_\_\_\_\_

When: \_\_\_\_\_

How: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

### **Boundaries: Exercise in Sorting through Options**

Below are some other common situations that come up. Circle how you would most like to set boundaries, if any, in a way that feels authentic to you. Keep this handy to refer to as needed:

*1. My bishop wants to talk about my crisis of faith and/or change in attendance. I (do/don't, circle one) have a very close relationship with him. I (do/don't) think he would understand, and I may lose my callings and become a ward project. I (would/wouldn't) like be released from my callings. Thus, in response to his invite I think I want to:*

- a.** Be very general (especially if I want to remain active in the church), but still talk to him as I want to make him aware of my change in perspective.
- b.** Say no thank you, as I don't know him very well. I am not as close to him as I am to family/friends, and I will find more meaning in focusing on those relationships and being my authentic self with them.

- c. Be specific in describing my issues. He is a close friend/neighbor and I want our relationship to grow closer, and I think he will take it well.
  - d. None of the above, here's what I'm thinking:
- 

*2. My parents know about my faith journey. They regularly email me conference talks and articles about doubting doubts and the importance of being worthy. When we are together, I am lectured about these things in person.*

- a. Politely ignore emails, perhaps with a simple "thank you" to acknowledge you received them.
  - b. Make it clear they can still talk to you about their church life, as it's an important part of their daily life, but ask them not to preach, lecture, or encourage me to return to "the way you were before."
  - c. Use different metaphors to try to help them understand: Trying to put toothpaste back into tube, etc.
  - d. Be frank and point out (if you have a pretty solid relationship with your parents) that these attempts to persuade you have, in other documented situations, historically had the opposite effect than is intended 99.9 percent of the time. Since you are doing them the courtesy to not try to convince them to your way of thinking, you would appreciate them extending the same courtesy to you.
  - e. None of the above, here's what I'm thinking:
- 

*3. You notice your friends/family aren't inviting you over anymore or aren't talking to you as much as they used to. You sense they might be avoiding you.*

- a. Communicate how you feel. Behavior like this is often unconscious--they simply don't know what to say to you, and we are culturally taught to avoid conflict. They may also have irrational fears that you plan to argue with them or use "anti-mormon" rhetoric. Encourage them to treat you like they always have--remind them that you are the same person, you simply have a different perspective now on one aspect of your life.
  - b. If you need to (depending on the person), say explicitly you won't be corrupting your younger siblings, cousins, friends, etc. or trying to persuade anyone else to your point of view. In return, you'd appreciate being treated the same way you were before. Assure them that they have nothing to worry about.
  - c. Do nothing--perhaps you want or need the time and space. If the situation doesn't correct itself and normalize over the years, maybe you can bring it up when/if you notice they are treating your children differently.
  - d. None of the above, here's what I'm thinking:
- 

*4. I need to take a mental health break from church, or take a sabbatical. I have one/two (circle one) callings that would make it difficult/impossible for me to take a break, so I need to be released.*

- a. Have your spouse or a friend inform the person you report to that you would like to be released.
  - b. Email or text your bishop, with the following, giving 2-4 weeks notice: "I am writing to notify you that my last day as XXXXX will be on Sunday the XXth, so that you have time to find a replacement for this calling."
  - c. If you don't want to get called in to try to be persuaded to keep the calling, add to Option B something like "I would request that you please not call me in to chat or discuss the situation, as my mind is made up and I'd rather not talk about it. I wish you all the best."
  - d. None of the above, here's what I'm thinking:
- 

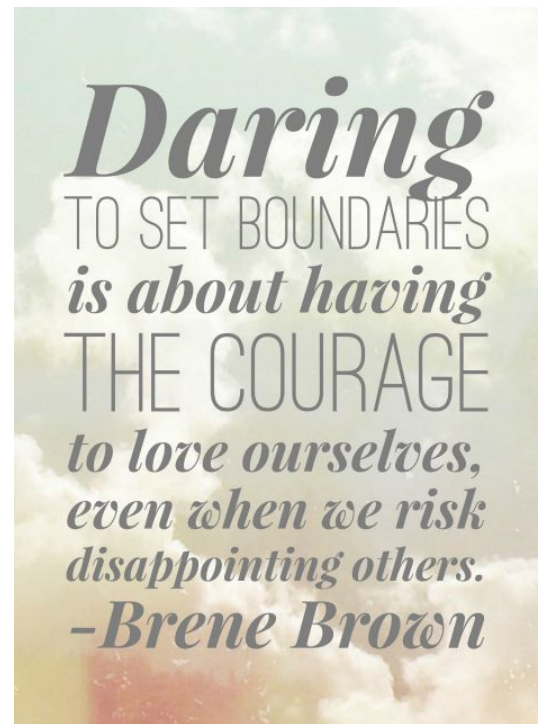
*More boundaries I would like to have in place going forward:*



- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

### **Beware Boundaries as Punishment/Tough Love**

You will want to be careful about using boundaries as a way to punish family (most of the time this happens unconsciously--when you feel hurt, it's a way of hurting back). Sometimes I have seen unnecessarily cruel things done in the name of boundaries, with a person hoping that such treatment will "knock them back into their senses" and change their behavior "back to the way things used to be." Examples include not inviting people to weddings or family events, or cutting off communication abruptly. The most common example of this that I've seen is forbidding a loved one to come home because they've set the boundary that your presence would upset the spirit in the home, and they need to protect it like the temple (The underlying message being change, and you're welcome home again). This is inappropriate, and it might be worth mentioning to a loved one that there's no scriptural/doctrinal basis for this behavior (As one example, you could cite the parable of the prodigal son). The flipside of this I've seen (though it is less common) is not allowing your loved ones to see your children or visit because they have a hard time not talking about the church. I think if there are some underlying mental health issues that make visits regularly turn into shouting matches and calls to repentance, there might be a reason for that, but I see it as the "nuclear option," *only* to be used when there are repeated violations of reasonably established boundaries (Such as "Please don't try to convert my children, or bear testimony to them, or tell them their parents don't have the whole truth etc."). And even then, it might be appropriate to bring up why you won't be visiting this time, citing the repeated boundary violations, and emphasizing that things can change after there's been time to cool down. I'd advise against ending visits indefinitely, or keeping the ban in place for years without trying to mend bridges.



*Example: I've seen adult children not be allowed to come home to visit (not even step through the doorstep) for going on four years because of the above mentioned reason that it would disrupt the spirit of the home, etc. I think that by that time, with no reassessment, such boundaries are in place as punishment, to send a signal to siblings/other family members that "this is what happens when you disappoint us." By definition that is technically a boundary, but my clinical opinion is it is unnecessarily cruel and is done for behavior compliance and to make an example of someone, rather than to foster healthy relationships.*

### **Preventing Cruelty Checklist**

I would advise when making a boundary (to those on both sides of the faith aisle) that if you're worried your boundary might be perceived as overly punitive/cruel, to first ask yourself the following four questions:

- ❑ Have I repeatedly (i.e. more than three times) told this person about my boundary, explicitly asked them to respect it, and they have violated it anyway?
- ❑ Is this boundary related to concrete actions (i.e. trying to persuade me/my children about religion), or rather your disagreement with beliefs that they hold and share regularly with others? Perhaps you've seen them post on social media things that you do not agree with--that in and of itself does not mean there is a risk of them proselytizing you or your family in person, as social media does not mimic real life well. However, if they have explicitly attempted to persuade you or your children in person, and you've told them to stop but they continue to do so anyway, that would be a clear boundary violation.
- ❑ If in response to the previous questions you feel they have taken concrete actions deliberately violating your boundaries, try to think of specific examples, and make sure that they have actually done these things. At times when we are upset it is easy to assume we understand other people's motives when their actions can be reasonably interpreted in different ways.

*Example: Sarah found herself on a faith journey and tried to strengthen her relationship with her younger siblings in order to prevent the type of distancing that can happen in orthodox families. The fact that she was making an effort to strengthen the relationship did NOT mean she had a hidden motive, trying to supplant her parents' authority or replace them in her siblings' eyes, converting her siblings to her "apostate" agenda. This may seem like an extreme example, but I've seen it happen, and this example illustrates the importance of sticking to the facts and only dealing with behavior that is explicitly boundary-violating, rather than relying on assumptions or fears about others' motives. A helpful mantra to repeat to yourself in evaluating situations like this might be, "Facts are not feelings," or "Stick to the Facts."*

- ❑ Have I given this boundary time to set in, and am ready to give them another chance?

I have found that, especially when loved ones hear bad news for the first time about changes in belief, they may not act ideally as a result of being in shock, denial, or anger (All of which are normal stages of grief). It is important to give your loved ones time to work through their feelings. After giving them some time, you might consider possibly giving them another chance later to heal the relationship, rather than assuming for years that they will always react the same way.

### **Surviving Family Reunions/Holidays**

If you are thinking about a short-term stay, so long as no-one is engaging in abusive behavior, you may want to consider accepting super-orthodox family behaviors exactly the way they are. In short, pick your battles. Some of your loved ones have been Morm-ing for 60+ years, and they are not likely to change. They will probably want to talk about their trips to the temple or their callings, go to church instead of spending family time, and so forth. Ideally, it would be nice to see these things change, but realistically, it might not happen--at least not right away. Over time, though, you may be pleasantly surprised.

*One example: Jake came from a big family, and was hesitant to share his faith journey because he had been behind the scenes when other siblings or family members doubted or left. He was one of the last remaining siblings in the church. Even though his family was civil to these relatives in person, in private they talked about their disappointment or disapproval after family reunions and holidays. In the end he decided to tell them, and while it was hard, after a little over a year had passed his mother pulled him aside and said, "I just want you to know, even though my testimony is still strong, I have to say, you and your siblings being honest with me led me to finally realize that the Church has hurt my children, and I'm starting to see why. I hope some of these issues change for the better."*

## Negotiating Boundaries in Mixed Faith Marriages

Many of the examples in this workbook become more challenging when you are in a mixed-faith marriage, or in a joint custody situation. You might be on the same page as your spouse or ex, but you may have different levels of comfort in setting appropriate boundaries for extended family and friends. This will require compromise, and there is no easy answer to compromising--except a lot of practice. The more you practice compromising as a couple, the better you will get. Setting boundaries as a couple is a particularly steep learning curve, and many honest mistakes are made at first with no malice or ill-intent. The upside is that the more you practice, the less likely these things will come up in the future! As a guiding principle, if you are married, maintain your spouse's wishes as a priority over your own parents or extended family. Ideally, extended family would recognize that and not try to come between you two, but stressful in-law situations are pretty universal to the human experience! Here are a few examples to illustrate the possible complexities of setting boundaries as a mixed-faith couple, which show how others have learned from experience.

**EXAMPLE 1:** Jane and Robert's parents and grandparents have been asking when their almost eight year old daughter will be baptized. The couple hadn't talked about the baptism situation in a while, and Jane (who is active, Robert has resigned) had assumed based on what Robert said previously that he would be OK with the baptism if their daughter said that she *really* wanted to. So Jane asked their daughter a few weeks before her birthday, and she said yes, so Jane gave inquiring family members a date to plan for. This really upset Robert, because he wanted to talk about it together again explicitly before setting a date with family members who have been pressuring Jane.

**Prevention:** Before making any concrete plans, talk about this ahead of time, being very specific about how to approach potential situations (such as "What do I say when family keep bugging me about a baptism date?"). Family can exert a lot of pressure, making it hard to delay things, especially when family say that they need to plan ahead of time to arrange travel/vacation/flights/etc. To avoid stress, address these situations long beforehand. It is also important to be explicit--if you mutually agree to go ahead with the baptism if the child wants to, be very clear what that will look like. Parents might see differences between a child simply saying yes to the question "Do you want to get baptized?" (An answer that might be a result of peer pressure, not wanting to be abnormal, wanting to please parents) vs. a child repeatedly and independently showing an interest in baptism over time.

**Possible Solution:** Jane may have to report back to family that she spoke too soon, or that there was a miscommunication, clarifying that they are actually still discussing what they are going to do as a family, and when that will happen. Robert could also have a heart-to-heart with his daughter, to confirm that she really wants to be baptized and isn't just responding to peer pressure or wanting to fit in. Robert could also make an effort to acknowledge and validate Jane's feelings, making it clear that he understands how stressful it must be to be the believing spouse, how much pressure she must be feeling from family about setting a date, and how lonely it must be to shoulder all of that by herself.

**EXAMPLE 2:** Edward and Amy are both taking a break from church, though Edward still maintains some ties to his Mormon heritage. Amy would rather be done with it all. They have four kids. Edward's parents subscribe their household to the Ensign, New Era, and Friend for a year as a family Christmas present. When the first month's magazines arrive, Amy is really upset. Edward didn't mean any malice by giving the OK for his parents to do that (which was their idea, of course), he just felt awkward refusing their gift and the idea didn't bother him as much--he never planned on reading them to their kids at all. To Amy, however, it represented Edward choosing his parent's comfort over her own, which he NEVER intended.

**Prevention:** Talk as early on as possible in one/both of your faith journeys about what you plan to do when extended family offer church-related gifts or reading material to you or your children. Find a compromise you can both live with if you're not on the same page. For example, you could agree to accept the gifts but then donate them immediately to

someone else who would appreciate them. Or you could designate the spouse that feels the strongest about not receiving such material to be the one to respectfully ask family that they don't do that.

**Possible Solution:** Magazines can immediately go into recycling for the year, and as the holidays approach next year they could respectfully tell Edward's parents that they would appreciate gifts that the children are really into right now (perhaps pointing them to an Amazon wish list). They can also be even more explicit and simply ask that they not renew the subscription.

**EXAMPLE 3:** Kelly's parents are staying at their home for Thanksgiving. Kelly and Zach have three kids, all under three years old, so when her parents offer to watch the kids, or take them out of the house, they appreciate it as a kind gesture. Kelly and Zach haven't gone to church in a while, and her parents are aware of this. The parents checked lds.org to see the ward starts at 9 AM, and on Sunday morning her parents take their kids to church while Kelly and Zach are still sleeping after a long night with the baby. When they realize what happened Zach is pretty upset, especially since they talked to her parents beforehand about not bringing up religion with their kids. When they come home from church, the parents explain that they always go to church even when on vacation, and they thought Kelly and Zach would like to sleep in.

**Prevention:** As a couple, discuss a scenario like this (what do we do when the kids are with our parents, or our parents are visiting us), and see where each other is at in terms of comfort levels about letting them do that. A lot will depend on the age of the children and other factors, as each family is different. Establishing these norms early is helpful as then when you bring kids over to parents, or your parents come to visit, at the outset of the visit you can talk about what to do about Sundays.

**Possible Solution:** Kelly and Zach could reiterate to Kelly's parents how strongly they feel about being given the heads up before doing something like this with their children in the future. In doing so, it would be helpful to emphasize how they appreciate Kelly's parents' intentions, but that in the future they would be willing to stay with the kids while the parents attend church, mentioning that they would love for the parents to take the kids out and spend quality time with their grandchildren on a different occasion.

Please see the Mixed Faith Marriage workbook on [mormonjourneys.org](http://mormonjourneys.org) for more practical tips on how to navigate scenarios like this and preserve your relationship! You may also want to consider going over the earlier exercises in this workbook as a couple.

*Faith Journeys and Boundaries: A Practical Workbook* is provided as part of our value-for-value model. If you found this workbook helpful and would like to help the Healthy Mormon Journeys Foundation\* help others you can donate \$1-\$20 at [mormonjourneys.org/donate](http://mormonjourneys.org/donate).

*\*Because the Healthy Mormon Journeys Foundation is a 501(c)(3) registered non-profit organization, all of your donations are tax deductible, just like tithing would be, and all funds are transparently used to fulfill our organization's goals of providing cost-free counseling to those struggling with maintaining relationships after changes in belief.*