

## Excommunication of Mike Stroud Events leading up to July 19, 1994

The next meeting with the Stake President was on a Sunday afternoon. I remember it because the following day was Memorial Day and the day that Ezra Taft Benson, President of the LDS Church, died. In this meeting my Stake President started out by stating that all of my experiences were from Satan. I could not believe my ears! The person who had been so positive about what I had told him last time we met, had now reversed himself! His tone was clear that I was to follow what he said, for he was my priesthood leader. The feeling of “conform or else” was so strong, that it was all I could do not to jump up and run.

Never in all of my church experiences and with all of the positions that I had held, had I felt such a desire from a church leader to control someone else. The feeling was so suffocating it is hard to describe. He was so determined to force me to comply, that there was no feeling of love and I knew that this was why my spirit was so uncomfortable. I soon resolved myself to the fact that we were going nowhere with the conversation and I would be better off to just keep quiet. He was going to have it his way no matter what I said. I backed away from our conversation completely at this time and decided it would be better to just let the chips fall where they may. His last words to me were that I would be receiving a letter with regards to church action.

About a week later, two of the men that I had worked very closely with in the church, came to my door with a summons for me to attend the church Disciplinary Counsel. I could see that they were not excited about giving me this letter, and that they were feeling very awkward to be the ones to come and deliver it.

I tried to relieve the tension by saying that this would be fun, but they wouldn't have it. I could see that their hearts were pained by what they had been asked to do, and the word “fun” was definitely the wrong word to use under these circumstances. It was much too flippant for what they deemed as such a sacred and important matter. I took the letter and told them that I would be sure and be there.

I must admit to this point I really felt that I had a very good chance of going through this meeting and coming out with my church membership still intact. After all, I was just a publisher, like hundreds of other publishers, who have published any number of items that haven't gone exactly down the party line. I still expressed my love for the church and its leaders and my support of them.

However in my heart I knew if it came down to doing what they wanted or doing what I was directed to do by God, well, there would be no question; I would follow the direction from God, and the world or the church would have to answer for their own actions.

Through all of my experiences I had learned that even though many people want to do what is right, they often bend to the pressure of others, or the system, or they want to do things that will make them look good in the eyes of others. By now I had been stripped of most of those reasons.

I had learned that my personal relationship with God was far more important to me than anything the world had to offer. By now I was feeling that constant presence of love so deeply and so strongly that it had become the overriding factor in my life. I would do nothing to jeopardize that feeling and my closeness to God.

At the time I never could conceive that the church I loved so dearly could or would step between me and that feeling. I suppose that if I had been confronted like this a few years earlier, that I would have very willingly complied with whatever my church leaders had asked. However, too much spiritual water had gone under the bridge now, and "I knew it and I knew that God knew it."

Never in my life can I remember feeling such a pull, spiritually, in two directions. I truly loved my Stake President and the church that had given me so much of a way of life; but still I could not deny all that had happened to me. I even remember thinking to myself that if this love which I felt from the other side of the veil, and more directly from Jesus himself, was really from Satan, then I would take his program, for this feeling had given me a peace and joy which has led me to do good continually.

My church Disciplinary Council was set for July the 19th. About ten days before, my Father came to me and said, "I have someone here who wishes to speak to you." Immediately I felt the presence of Jesus, and my heart filled with that joy and love that only He can bring. It had been more than three months since I had talked to Him and my spirit longed for the closeness that we had experienced for those five short months. I knew that if I lived to be 100 there would be nothing that I looked forward to more than being with Him continually. How one Spirit could generate such a feeling of love and tenderness was still a vast mystery to me.

Jesus spoke to me and said, "When you stand before the council, these are the words that I want you to speak; tell them "Thus sayeth the Lord; I shall destroy the City of Salt Lake and most of the inhabitants thereof. And if you will believe, it shall be a sign unto salvation, and if you will not believe it shall also be a sign, but it will be a sign unto your condemnation."

I was shocked! My voice was desperate: "You want me to say that?"

He said, "As is always the case, it is up to you. This is our desire, but you can choose what you want to do. We will love you the same either way."

The problem with this last statement was that I knew that I would have trouble loving myself if I ignored their wishes and did nothing at all.

I wrestled for the next few days with why Jesus would ask me to say such a thing. As I thought about the statement, I noticed something in what He had said that made me question the statement altogether. Knowing that Jesus and the Father are the authors of creation, and not destruction, and feeling that to destroy the city of Salt Lake would definitely be negative, I asked my Father why Jesus would say such a thing.

My Father answered my inquiry with a long conversation that I shall try to paraphrase here.

Mike, you are correct in your understanding that we are not the authors of destruction. It is our work and joy to bring about the evolution and eternal advancement of mankind. Whenever this is done, it is accomplished by working with people on the level they understand. We work with you giving you only as much Light as you are able to handle and assimilate in the moment.

The church you are a part of, in general terms, operates and functions at a level much higher and with more Light and truth than does the population at large. We support it and help it to spread and bring the Light of Truth, or the gospel, to an ever increasing number of souls. We are supported in our efforts from this side by a

countless host of individuals who are also seeking to advance spiritually and grow in the Light they emanate.

Most of those in the church function in a narrow width or light band, although all of the tools are there to help them expand that understanding of Light to an unlimited spectrum.

They put up self-imposed barriers that hold them from progressing. In time all of the self created obstacles are swept away by the actual truth. Just as when a person dies, they are able to see many of the truths that they were oblivious to while in the flesh.

The destruction that will fall upon the inter mountain area is a result of the Law of the Harvest. These people will soon reap that which they sow. All of the planting and harvesting of the entire planet is tied together and affects more and more people all the time. What takes place here will affect many others. Jesus told you 'I will destroy the City of Salt Lake,' because that is in terms they would understand. In the sense of the overall picture, what He said was absolutely true, because He and all of us who are of the Light side are continuing to help mankind evolve to a greater understanding, or awakening, and they can only do so by experiencing.

What takes place will look on the surface, or to man, like a major calamity, but in time, all will see that it was exactly what needed to happen for the advancement of the whole of society as well as the individual.

Fear not for yourself during these times for as you have learned to go by the Spirit, even so it will guide you and I will direct you to be exactly where you need to be, when you need to be there. Love these people who are trying to advance themselves. Do good to them who persecute you in the name of God. We still love them and help them all when we can, or when they will let us. And know that we see the truth of each person, for their deeds and the intents of their hearts are completely open to us, but we do not condemn them because of where they are.

Your example of love will do more to help your friends in the church grow in the Light than any words you could tell them. Bless them and share your understanding with them as you are directed by the spirit.

There are many tasks that you have yet to perform; go forth and perform them with a cheerful heart. Remember that I AM always with you. As you continue to step out in faith and develop the Light within, there will be NOTHING that you cannot do.

The next ten days seemed to be the longest of my life. Even knowing that the only reason these days seemed long was because of the great value I had put on my church membership did not lessen the time. In my mind I kept trying to keep it all in perspective. I kept asking myself what was the most important thing to do in the position that I found myself in. What was for the greatest good of the whole, and what was for the greatest good of Mike Rigby and his family? What would the Lord do if placed in this same position? I drew upon my Father's voice more than ever in my life.

Never at any point during this time did I find that He did not respond instantly to my prayer with comfort and understanding. I shall be ever thankful for the personal interest that I felt from Him at this great time of need in my life.

Such were my thoughts of reflection as my wife and I sat in the waiting area counting each minute as it slowly passed by. Every so often she would give my hand a

little squeeze and I would feel that great capacity to love that she has always been blessed with.

I have often looked back at this point and known that without her support I would not have breached the veil and learned so much from my Father in Heaven. There will never be adequate words or time to tell her how much I appreciate that which she unselfishly did for me.

At last we were invited into the High Council room and took our seats to the right of the Stake President and his councilors.

After a brief introduction from the Stake President as to why he had called this meeting, he turned to me and asked if I would explain to the men seated in the room, the book that I was publishing.

I told them that in order to understand the origins of the book, they would need a little explanation about my life and what had brought me to the point of publishing this book.

I then proceeded to tell them much of what you have already read thus far. I talked for about fifteen minutes, when the Stake President jumped into the conversation and said, "We don't need to hear about these experiences; just tell them about the book."

It was hard for me to understand why he would not want me to give all of the details of my experiences, when it seemed like these experiences were pivotal to the decision about something as important as my church membership.

At that point I simply explained that I was publishing the book to help people get a greater understanding of God, and told them in general terms how I received the different parts of the book.

The president opened the meeting to questions and I fielded several questions from the council. I do not remember most of the questions; but one question unrelated to the book struck me between the eyes.

A man sitting just to the right of me turned and asked, "Do you claim to have seen the Savior?"

I said, "No, I have not seen the Savior, but I know His voice and the voice of the Father."

I tried to explain to him that I did not hold myself up as any better than anyone else for having learned to tune into these voices, but that I was fully aware that I had now experienced many things that I once only dreamed were possible.

When I finished answering their questions, the Stake President asked me if I had anything more to say. I said "no" and sat looking at him, when suddenly in my mind I heard a loud, almost shouting voice say, "ARE YOU FORGETTING SOMETHING?"

I immediately remembered what Jesus had wanted me to say, and I said, "There is one more thing." I then repeated to them exactly word for word what I was told to say.

It was as if I had just thrown ice water over the whole group. Without saying anything more I was dismissed, and my wife and I went back and sat in the lobby.

A little while later I was invited back into the council and was told that I was being excommunicated from the church and that I would receive a letter of explanation in a few days.

I fought to hold back the tears, but felt absolutely no desire to offer an apology or to give any further explanation. I could see that these men were doing only that which

they knew to do. And that was to follow their leader. The Stake President was only following the directive of those “above” him. What he said would be the final word.

The truth of the matter was that if everyone in the church felt and acted like I was now acting, there would be no need for the church or for any of their positions. I have always believed and still believe that the church was set up by God to bring people to Christ, and in me it had succeeded.

Though it was hard for me to see it that way at the moment, I later realized that the only reason I wanted to stay in was because I had placed my trust in it and not in God. There was no need on my part to feel ashamed or guilty; I had done all that I was called upon to do by the Lord, and had lived up to every covenant I had made with Him.

I still on occasion thank Him for the support and strength He gave me in this, one of my most needy hours.

The letter of excommunication came as stated, but with little explanation.

Not long after being cast out, I began to know the true meaning of Jesus’ words when he said to those Jews who believed on him, “If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

The operative word here is “continue.” I had become bogged down in trying to please God with how great my statistics were, and how many outward manifestations I could show, but now the chains and shackles had been loosed from me and I was completely free to be, and act, without the peer pressure created by the church.

I had bought into the self righteous attitude that I was better than the rest of the world because I attended all my meetings and wore the holy garment. There is nothing so humbling, yet liberating, for an individual to have all of that stripped away.

My excommunication was announced in each ward of the stake and within just a few days I felt the rejection of those I had grown to know and love so well.

I was surprised at the fear that gripped most of them. Some would not look at me and some would avoid talking to me. While in the local store people would go to a different isle if they thought that I might try to speak to them.

Overnight I had become the bogeyman. Later I realized that the big scare was that people were afraid that if they were seen talking to me it would look as though they were siding with me or endorsing that which I believed, and that could put them under the same skeptical eye of their leaders.

I thought this to be total nonsense until one time I stopped and talked to a man in our city park. This conversation was seen by the Stake President, and the man was called in and talked to by this president the next week.

Knowing this actually helped me to see the reason behind others’ actions and fears, and I soon began to try and alleviate their fears by just saying hello and not engaging in conversation.

To their credit, there were four or five people who treated me as though nothing had happened, and they were even bold enough to come and ask me what had taken place to cause such a stir with the church.

These people may not have believed a word that I said as I shared with them some of my experiences, but I will always admire them for the courage they had to come directly to the source and get first hand information.

When the world seems to turn on you it is amazing how thankful you are to those that are able to stay out of judgment.