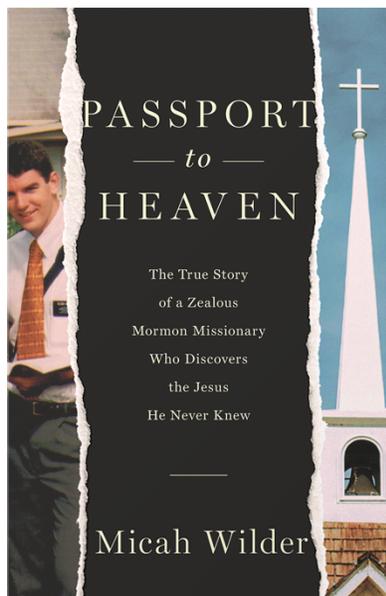


Q&A with Micah Wilder
***Passport to Heaven: The True Story of a Zealous Mormon Missionary Who
Discovers the Jesus He Never Knew***



Q: You write in your book that you grew up in a devout Mormon family in the Midwest. What was your family and spiritual life as a child? Where did you encounter God most deeply?

A: I was raised in a loving and faithful Mormon home in Indiana, and God was introduced into my life at a young age—both through church and the private Christian school I attended. On the banks of the White River as a child, I developed a relationship with God and a desire to know Him and be loved by Him. More than anything, I pined for the assurance that my sins were forgiven. I strove to follow God through the strict precepts of my religion.

Q: Your family moved to Utah when your mom began teaching at Brigham Young University. During your teenage years at the epicenter of Mormon life, did your religious commitment deepen?

A: When my family moved to Utah, my life changed drastically. The community where we replanted, Alpine, is comprised of approximately 98% Latter-day Saints. This religious immersion helped solidify my faith in the Church and I centered my life on being its most devout member among my peers. I felt like Saul of Tarsus, unparalleled in my zeal for God through my religion. I was certain I was destined to be a future leader in Mormonism. For me, serving God was serving the Church, and I served with all my heart. Throughout my high school years, I strove to faithfully follow the commandments and ordinances of the Church with exactness. As to the law of Mormonism, I felt blameless.

Q: Young men in the LDS church are encouraged to serve two-years as a Mormon missionary. How did you prepare for your mission? Where did you hope to go for your mission?

A: I spent years zealously preparing for my two-year mission trip. I read the Scriptures, prayed, was active in my church meetings, attended the temple unfailingly, and strove to obediently follow the moral codes my religion. I dedicated every aspect of my life to purifying myself to be worthy to be a missionary—according to the Church’s standards. My hope was to serve an exotic foreign mission like my two older brothers before me, who went to Russia and Denmark. My most coveted destination was Australia—but God had other plans for me.

Q: What was it like to leave your family and your girlfriend, knowing there be very little contact for the next two full years?

A: As a young man only nineteen years old, having to leave everything I had ever known and loved for two years was a terrifying prospect. Not only would I be severed from loved ones by distance, but communication with the outside world was limited to weekly email correspondence. In addition, we were given the privilege of calling immediate family only two times per year. Saying goodbye was a painful and heart wrenching experience I will never forget.

Q: You were sent to Orlando, Florida. Describe your typical day as a Mormon missionary. How were you received when knocking on doors? Did you make many converts?

A: The days as a missionary were long and often monotonous. We arose at 6:30am, exercised, prepared for the day, ate breakfast, and studied. Then, late morning, we would leave our apartment and commit ourselves to proselyting until 9pm. Much of our time was spent knocking on doors or contacting people on the streets and sidewalks, seeking for any opportunity to engage with potential converts. Overwhelmingly, we were met with vehement rejection. Very few people would interact with us, and even fewer would treat us kindly. Throughout my mission experience I had people yell at me, swear at me, pull guns on me, let dogs loose on me, throw glass bottles at my head, and even try to run me over with their cars. Regardless, I was successful in making converts throughout my mission, but it was hard work. The Mormon mission experience is certainly not for the faint of heart.

Q: One of the most important conversations you had as a missionary was with a Baptist preacher. Tell us about the encounter as you tried to convert this pastor to Mormonism. Did you take him up on his challenge?

A: Only a few months into my mission trip in Florida, I had a life-changing encounter with a Christian minister. As a response to my fervent attempt to convert him to Mormonism, he lovingly witnessed to me the saving Gospel of Christ as revealed in the Bible. Never in my life had I heard the Gospel with such clarity and simplicity, as he lovingly proclaimed that salvation was by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. His message was in stark contrast to the “gospel” I had been taught in the Mormon Church. At the conclusion of our meeting, he invited me to read the New Testament through the eyes of a child—to put away any preconceived notions and allow the Spirit of God, through His Word, to teach me. Reluctantly and with pride in my heart, I accepted his challenge with the intent of proving him wrong. The rest, as they say, is history.

Q: You begin reading through the New Testament on your own, like a child, without an LDS lens. Do you remember how soon you noticed a discrepancy between the Jesus of the Bible the Jesus of the Mormon church? Who could you talk with about this spiritual conundrum? Did you talk with your family or your girlfriend about your new understanding of Jesus?

A: Much like the proverbial frog in the water, I didn’t fully understand the significance of the changes that were taking place in me until I reached the end of my journey and looked back at where I began. Although I noticed small discrepancies within the first few months of reading the New Testament, I never would have imagined they would lead me away from the Church. The more times I pored over the New Testament, however, the more blatant these discrepancies became, and I tried hard to reconcile them with the teachings of my church leaders. Eventually, God revealed His truth to me in a way that I could no longer ignore, and I was forced to confront the religious dissonance that was growing within me.

Throughout this process, there were few people—at times if any—that I could really confide in about what I was coming to know. I was somewhat hesitant to fully disclose the extent of what I was learning to my parents and siblings, who were devout members of the Mormon Church. I didn’t know how they would respond. However, by God’s grace, I did meet a friend who became a sounding board for me at crucial times of my journey, and he continually encouraged me to find answers in God’s Word. The more deeply engrossed I became in Scripture, the more emboldened I became to share with my family members what the Bible was teaching me. Slowly, I would impart to my loved ones the simple truths that were transforming my heart. I was most open with my high school girlfriend, Alicia.

Q: Over the remaining 18 months of your mission, you read through the entire the New Testament about a dozen times. You became convinced of your need for grace, rather than good works, in order to be right with God. Did your new love for Jesus impact your day-to-day life and leadership among fellow missionaries?

A: The marvelous truths I was learning in the New Testament made a tangible impact on my missionary work. As God was washing me with the water of His Word and opening my eyes, I couldn’t hide the changes that were taking place in me. As a leader in the mission, I had been given a unique opportunity to boldly witness of Jesus and His Word to my peers. My daily emphasis became centered on grace, faith, and love. What God was teaching me through the Bible I was then teaching to other missionaries, who, in turn, taught others. As one torch lit another, the flames went on to spread like wildfire in the mission.

Q: You eventually found yourself at a crossroad during your mission – you could either testify to the truth of the Mormon church or the truth of the Bible. When did you finally have to make a public declaration of your faith in Christ alone? How did the LDS leaders in Florida respond to your new beliefs?

A: At the end of my mission, with only three weeks remaining, I had the opportunity to stand before fifty or so of my missionary peers and share my departing testimony—a witness of what I had learned throughout my two-year mission trip. I knew that I could no longer contain the Spirit of God that was flowing out of my heart like rivers of living water. By God’s grace and through His strength, I publicly witnessed of my newfound faith, testifying solely in Jesus Christ and His finished word on the cross as the only way to have right standing with God. Rather than witnessing of the testimonial pillars of Mormonism, I simply declared that Jesus was all I needed for eternal life. Two days later, my Church leadership summoned me for a meeting where I was interrogated about my new faith in Christ.

Q: When your mission was officially cut short, and you were sent back to Utah, how did your parents respond? How did your local LDS leadership respond?

A: I undoubtedly placed my parents in a difficult predicament, and I can’t imagine the internal discord they must have been experiencing. At the time, they had been consummate members of their religion for over thirty years, and it was apparent they were torn between allegiance to their son and their Church leadership. However, their hearts were ever-so-slightly open to the message of the Gospel—perhaps out of curiosity more than anything—and they desired to know more about why I was willing to forsake the only life I had ever known and loved. God opened doors for seeds to be planted in their hearts. My leadership in Utah, though, did not demonstrate the same understanding. They chastised and debased me for my open profession of the sufficiency of Jesus Christ alone for my salvation. I was accused of being possessed by Satan, threatened with ex-communication, and told I was an anti-Christ.

Q: How did your girlfriend and her family respond to you losing your testimony in the LDS church? How did your family members respond to the Gospel message over the months and years that followed?

A: Throughout my two-year mission, my girlfriend, Alicia, and I were communicating weekly through hand-written letters. As God was radically transforming my heart and mind through the New Testament, I was sharing with her the wonderful things I was learning. I issued her the same challenge the Christian pastor had given to me: Read the Bible like a child. By God’s amazing grace, she too underwent the same transformation as me, and was born again while a student at BYU. Initially, her family was not supportive of her change in faith and it caused tension in those relationships for a time. To this day, Alicia’s family is all still rooted in the Mormon Church, however, those relationships have been healed and we pray for their salvation. As for my family, my parents and two of my siblings accepted the invitation to read God’s Word and after a long a tumultuous process, have all come to saving faith in Jesus Christ and left the LDS Church. Praise God!

Q: Did you launch the Adam’s Road ministry to share the true Biblical Gospel with LDS church members? What does the ministry look like today?

A: When I—along with four other young men who had left the Mormon Church for Jesus—founded Adam’s Road in 2006, we did so with the express purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ through song and testimony. We felt a unique calling to directly put the Bible—God’s very Word—into music, as a medium to reach those of our former community. In our nearly fifteen years of ministry, we have produced ten full length albums, along with instrumental and spoken word albums, all for the purpose of advancing the Gospel. Today, Adam’s Road consists of Joseph (a former Mormon missionary), Matt (my older brother), and Lila (a young woman from a polygamous community in Mexico). The four of us spend up to five months each year travelling throughout North America, proclaiming the Gospel, equipping and encouraging the Church, and passionately witnessing of the Good News of Jesus Christ. We do not charge fees for ministry, and we distribute all our CDs and other materials free of charge.

Q: Now that you’ve published your full testimony in a book, who do you hope will read it?

First and foremost, I echo Paul's heart for his people, the Jews: "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." (Romans 10:1-4). This is my heart for the LDS people. I desire that they too will come to know the righteousness of God revealed in Christ, be released from the bondage of man-made law, and set free in Christ Jesus through His Word. In addition, I pray that this book will be an encouragement to Christians to be bold and loving witnesses of the Gospel to the lost. My testimony is one of millions that is evidence that no one is beyond the reaches of God's amazing grace.

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By Micah Wilder

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