

Davis County Ex-Mormon meetup Sunday Oct 19, 2025, 2:30 PM

[All links from Invitations.](#)

How to Find us: Sunday Oct 19, 2025 meetup is 2:30 PM at Smiths Marketplace, 1370 W 200 N, Kaysville, UT 84037. Entering Smith's turn right, take the up staircase on the right side of Starbucks, turn right on the 2nd floor at the top of the stairs, take 10 strides passing the lockers to the conference room entrance on the right. **Contact:** Francis 'Nelson' Henderson, 858-668-6943, francisnh12@gmail.com

Our purposes: First, when leaving Mormonism, people often find that they no longer have community or support. Our goal is to provide support for each other and to build community. So, whether you are a member, or left the church recently, or have been out for years, or were never Mormon but are looking for community, come and socialize with us and share your story.

Secondly, we uncover the fallacies, deception, and misinformation employed by the LDS Church to gain control over our lives.

Invitation: “President Oaks and the Ethics of Obedience”

1. A Historic Transition — and an Ethical Question

On **October 14, 2025**, at the age of 93, **Dallin H. Oaks** was sustained as the new **President and Prophet** of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This leadership change marks not just a generational milestone but a decisive moment to reflect on the **values, priorities, and culture** that continue to define the LDS Church.

Our upcoming Meetup will explore a central question:

Can President Oaks — and the Church he now leads — confront the ethical contradictions at the heart of Mormonism’s temple system, its authoritarian culture, and its long history of subordinating individual conscience to institutional power?

2. From Joseph Smith’s Shadow to the Modern Presidency

Oaks is not a typical religious leader. He is a **former Utah Supreme Court Justice, former law school dean, and lifelong institutional loyalist**. And yet, like his predecessors, he has spent decades inside a system whose deepest values were set nearly two centuries ago by **Joseph Smith**, a man who built the Church’s **ritual machinery of obedience** to shield himself from criticism, dissent, and scrutiny.

The **Temple Endowment**, with its oath of obedience and secrecy¹, is more than a religious ceremony. It is the **structural engine** that perpetuates Smith’s worldview. It teaches that unquestioning submission is holiness and that criticism is sin — a message Oaks himself echoed when he famously declared: “It is wrong to criticize Church leaders, even if the criticism is true.”²

Such a statement is not just ethically flawed — it is **profoundly dangerous**. It subverts the principle that truth should govern power, not the other way around. And it reveals the logic that has long guided LDS leadership: that the **preservation of authority outweighs the demands of conscience**.



¹ [The Immoral Purpose of the LDS Temple Endowment](#) By Francis N Henderson

² From the Temple ritual, Brother Oaks says that “[It’s wrong to criticize leaders](#)” (10:39) of the Church, even if the criticism is true.”

3. Loyalty Over Integrity: The Oaks Ethic

President Oaks's career demonstrates a consistent pattern: **institutional preservation over individual liberty**.

- Before the 1978 priesthood change, Oaks studied the Church's justifications for excluding Black members from priesthood and concluded that none held water — yet chose silence, suggesting his submission to authority illustrates a “virtue.”
- As BYU's president, he defended discriminatory policies against LGBTQ students as “religious freedom,” while seeking legal exemptions to deny their civil rights.
- As an Apostle, he endorsed the Apostolic Oath — a pledge that subordinates individual conviction to institutional unity, even when silence costs lives, as it did during the Church's era of LGBTQ exclusion and subsequent suicides



These choices reflect more than one man's temperament. They reveal a **personality type Bob Altemeyer³ identified as the “authoritarian leader”**: driven by control, allergic to criticism, and willing to subordinate truth to institutional survival

4. The Central Ethical Failure: Obedience as a Virtue

The deepest critique of President Oaks — and of Mormon leadership more broadly — is not that they are malicious. It is that they are **trapped**.

³ Bob Altemeyer, “[The Authoritarians](#)”, University of Manitoba Winnipeg Canada
[Enemies of Freedom: Understanding Right-Wing Authoritarianism](#) by Bob Altemeyer

Immersed for decades in temple covenants that equate obedience with righteousness, leaders become psychologically incapable of questioning the very system they serve. To doubt the temple's authority would mean dismantling the meaning of their lives. So they don't — and can't. But the cost of that blindness is profound:

- **Moral Agency is redefined** as conformity to institutional will.
- **Criticism is pathologized** as disloyalty, even when it is truthful.
- **Institutional rights are prioritized** over individual rights — a reversal of the very concept of religious freedom

In such a system, even good men become defenders of harm, and even sincere intentions lead to betrayal.

5. What Would It Take for Oaks to Change?

What would it require for President Oaks to act as a prophet in the fullest sense — not as a guardian of institutional privilege, but as a moral leader?

- **To confront the temple system itself** — to acknowledge that covenants of obedience made without full knowledge are coercive, and that submission cannot substitute for virtue.
- **To confess institutional wrongdoing** — to seek forgiveness and offer restitution for decades of concealment, discrimination, and manipulation.
- **To place individual conscience above corporate preservation** — to defend the right of members to speak truth, dissent, and live authentically without fear of reprisal.
- **To redefine religious freedom** — not as the Church's right to control, but as the individual's right to believe, act, and love without coercion.

Such acts would require Oaks to do what he has never done: **question the values that shaped his entire life**. They would require him to abandon the safety of institutional power for the vulnerability of moral courage.

6. Our Discussion

At Sunday's Meetup, we'll explore these questions together:

- What does Oaks's leadership reveal about the LDS Church's core priorities?
- Can an institution built on obedience truly evolve toward conscience-centered leadership?
- How do we, as individuals, resist internalizing authoritarian values ourselves?
- What might genuine repentance — by leaders and by the institution — look like?

This is not a call for cynicism. It is an invitation to **moral clarity** — to recognize the difference between **loyalty and integrity, submission and virtue, obedience and love**.

◆ Final Thought

"No power shall either command obedience or prohibit criticism because injury is done to the human person and to the purpose established by God when denying the free exercise of religion." — Dignitatis Humanae, Vatican II

Oaks may now sit in the Prophet's chair. But the greater question — for him and for us — is whether power will continue to serve itself, or whether, at last, it will serve **truth, conscience, and freedom**.

