



Mormon Diaries

Sophia L. Stone

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Brought up in a religious home, Sophia believes the only way to have a forever family is by following church leaders and obediently choosing the right. She goes to the right school, marries the right man in the right place, and does the right thing by staying home to raise her children. But when she starts asking questions about grace, love, and the nature of God, she realizes her spiritual struggles could rip her family apart.

Mormon Diaries Details

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Angie says

How do you critique a memoir? I certainly don't have the chutzpah to say one person's story is better or worse than another but Sophia's story truly spoke to me and in many ways healed me. I think my anger is gone – I'm sure it will come and go intermittently but it is gone and I owe that to supportive friends who have stood by me and also to this story. I want to have Sophia's courage and to reach out to the people I've hurt and offended over the years by my ridiculous judgment and possibly get their forgiveness too. This book is beautifully written and I loved it.

Ingrid Lola says

An engaging, honest, approachable memoir. Sophia Stone did not come off as angry or resentful .. It seems like that would be difficult. She is also a terrific writer - her style is pretty straightforward, honest, not sentimental. I was also very touched by the foreword by Pastor John Bradford.

Laurel Garver says

I was completely riveted by Sophia Stone's moving spiritual memoir about growing up--and away from--her Mormon faith. It's an intensely personal, never polemical story of her struggles to grasp promised spiritual rewards that remain always out of reach.

Her quick mind and sensitive heart shine through this well-paced, beautifully written narrative. As she awakens to the abuses in her church, which ties one's eternal destiny to one's earthly family, her whole world shifts. It's deeply satisfying to watch Stone change from timid pleaser to a brave voice in the wilderness who won't be silenced any longer. And yet her abiding desire to truly know God remains a steady pulse throughout.

I'd highly recommend this book to anyone who's ever struggled to be "good enough" for God's love.

Natalie says

I loved this book. I loved the raw, simple honesty in it. While I did not have the over-zealous mother and I'm not married, I still related so much to Sophia's journey and her feelings of self-discovery. While I really love Joanna Brooks, I like Mormon Diaries better than The Book of Mormon Girl: Stories from an American Faith. I felt the writing and story were clearer and more concise. It resonated with me more. Here are a few of my favorite quotes: (I read it on my kindle, and can't provide page numbers)

"If I had written down my directions to godhood they would have looked something like this: Continue straight to early morning seminary, take a left and enter Brigham Young University, climb the hill to the temple and marry a worthy priesthood holder, multiply and replenish the earth and then eat the delightsome

fruit of divine motherhood. Everything important was drawn out for me through living prophets. All I had to do was use the thick black marker of my choices to trace the lightly penciled sentences that were written by those with authority, who'd lived longer and knew better about my life's purpose."

"My failure was inevitable; I knew that in my gut. Every person I worked to please, every empty emotional cup I tried to fill would eventually break, leaving a trail of glass and water and blood."

"I knew Heavenly Father loved me and that he accepted my doubts. I understood that my relationship with him didn't need to be connected with the church. That he would be there for me no matter where this journey ended, and that doubting was okay. When I embraced my doubts, my tears dried and my outlook brightened. The heavy weight in my heart was gone. God was so much bigger than I realized."

I admire people who put their hearts on the line and speak of their experiences. It's hard to question the foundation of your life. Reading Sophia's experiences touched me to the core. She is someone that I would like to be friends with. Her book is not written as a condemnation of Mormonism. It's more a journey of self-discovery and coming to terms with herself and who she wants to be. It's her journey of learning to love herself.

Even though Mormons will probably understand the nuances of Sophia's journey, I think this book holds appeal for a wider audience. I would recommend this book to anyone who has felt guilty for doubting or anyone who is learning to love themselves and trust their own hearts. (11/4/12)

Sandra says

A remarkable book that tracks the author's progress from questioning the beliefs she was brought up to understand as absolute truths to finally accepting that what she had been taught from childhood was not what she believed. She describes the difficult relationships within her family and the pain she goes through whilst trying to explain her decision to no longer maintain her membership within the Mormon church. She vividly portrays the despair she feels when her issues and concerns are dismissed and her openness in her faith transition is seen as an attack on the church. Her pain is evident but so is her joy at finally coming to a point where she can live her life with her new faith in a way that offers the spiritually and comfort she has craved. A must-read for anyone who is going through or has ever gone through a crisis of faith, or who is questioning why someone they know has chosen that path. Sophia manages to put into simple words those things that are difficult to explain to those who refuse to contemplate there is a world outside their own.

February Grace says

Masterfully written, poignant and heartrending in its honesty, this book is a testament to courage the likes of which most cannot even begin to imagine. An inspiration. Five well deserved stars.

Brady says

This memoir of someone who grew up in the Mormon church was definitely enlightening. Wasn't necessarily my favorite writing style, but I did seem to breeze right through the book in only a few hours.

The most insightful thing I take away is how when anything gets added to the simple gospel of Jesus Christ - that He died for our sins so that we can live - it no longer is good news. Legalism always fosters resentment, self-righteousness, or a belief that if you just perform well enough, you'll earn God's favor. The good news of the gospel is that we already have won God's favor - when He looks at us He already sees the righteousness of Christ. The author's story makes me genuinely sad for everyone trapped in legalistic religion with no hope for salvation except by earning it. There is a better way and this book is exhibit A of the reason why.

I would like to give this 3.5 stars, but I rounded up. Worth the read though, quick and insightful.

Michelle says

An eye opening book that in many ways broke my heart. Well written and easy to read.

Jessica Bell says

Sophia L. Stone captured my attention from the get-go. This collection of personal essays, about questioning the legitimacy of Mormonism after having faith in the religion for the first 30-something years of her life, is not just a controversial quake to a reader's heart and soul. Stone's voice is brave, bold and intriguing. And surprisingly relatable to someone who is not religious. For Stone, after looking critically into the strict laws of Mormonism and its origin, the religion became a hot constricting corset, and the rules she'd abided by all these years, suddenly seemed inconsequential. There are many ways one can serve and have faith in God. And it doesn't have to involve wearing clothes to bed. But sleeping naked for the first time, is just the tip of the iceberg. Realizing that a Mormon's God does not consider a woman as worthy as a man really is the crux of it all. Take a walk in Stone's shoes to see how she dealt with this insubordination. You'll be truly inspired.

Melissa says

Recommended on one of my Mormon feminist blogs, so I read it, but Sophia Stone is no Joanna Brooks. The writing was just OK and the story wasn't terribly compelling. It was \$3 for Kindle and a quick read, so . . .

Lindsay Lock says

Truly moving memoir. Sophia takes the reader through her challenge of resolving her childhood faith and her cognitive dissonance. I related to this book and her feelings she experienced throughout this book. It presents the viewpoint of former Mormons in a loving tone while keeping in tact the confusion, angst, & worry that naturally occur with those who "fall away". I highly recommend this book for anyone who is falling away from Mormonism; wanting to understand what it's like for those who fall away; or those who are simply at a spiritual crossroads. It will touch your heart. You can see the trailer for the book here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcNOrG...>

Leigh Moore says

First, the writing is gorgeous. In perfectly chosen language and passages, Stone describes her early feelings of doubt. Then as she matures, we experience her fear at questioning her faith, her struggles to be more devoted to her family and deny herself, and ultimately her break.

The tale of her journey is so evocative, despite my not knowing much about Mormonism, I had tears in my eyes reading.

For the uninitiated, she explains what certain practices mean and why they're significant. Religion can be so entwined in every aspect of our lives that change can be a huge risk. In Stone's case, her decision might ultimately cost her everything--mother, father, siblings... husband, children...

I won't give away the ending, but I will say you're left rooting for her. More importantly, you're rooting for all of us to find a place where it's safe to question entrenched belief systems. Where it's acceptable to have an experience with God that's different from your parents' or even your spouse's.

I highly recommend this book. Despite the title, it's more than a Mormon story. It's a story of how true devotion and true seeking can ultimately lead to real and lasting faith. It's a story of encouragement for anyone looking for answers.

Al says

Although well done, my initial thought about *Mormon Diaries* was that its appeal would be limited to a small niche of readers, possibly just those Mormon women who have had a crisis of faith and want to know that they aren't alone.

However, upon reflection, I realized I'd sold the book short. I remembered reading the now out-of-print *Housewife to Heretic* by Sonia Johnson more than twenty years ago and the impact it had on my thoughts on what it was like to be a female Mormon. I never looked at my Mother or the upbringing my sisters had in the same light again. The appeal shouldn't be limited to women; there is something here for current or ex-Mormon men too. Even non-Mormons who are interested because they have Mormon neighbors, or anyone interested in the different faces of spirituality, would get something out of *Mormon Diaries*. With the focus this often-misunderstood religion is getting during the current presidential campaign in the US, there may be a lot more potential readers than I thought. Not that a large potential readership matters. That's one of the great things about indie publishing: it gives even a book with a small potential readership a chance to find its audience.

I can't help comparing *Mormon Diaries* with *Housewife to Heretic* (or at least my possibly faulty memories of it). Stone does an excellent job of communicating what it is like to be a Mormon, specifically a female Mormon, but does this in a way that, while pulling no punches, is also not overtly political or as likely to offend devout, yet open-minded, Mormons as Johnson's book would have. She captures the dynamics of Mormonism and how family, friends, other church members, and leaders influence those within the faith. Whether you're a Mormon or an ex-Mormon, wanting to compare notes, or someone who would like to

understand Mormonism better, Mormon Diaries is a good place to start.

**Originally written for "Books and Pals" book blog. May have received a free review copy. **

Jim says

It's not the longest or most in-depth book you will read on this subject. It's obviously written by a nice lady who really doesn't want to hurt, upset or offend anyone and yet in all good conscience can't stay silent. She even uses a pseudonym so as not to do anything that might damage her family. She's not an angry, bitter or vindictive person. This is where this book is worth reading because you don't feel like you're reading someone who is out to destroy Mormonism. She's simply a woman who felt let down by it.

You can read my full review [here](#).

Madeline Sharples says

Author Sophia Stone has created a powerful piece. Written with elegance and grace, I found Stone's story compelling and very informative for this reader. I am a complete novice about anything Mormon.

I think the heart of this book is the author's struggle with her identity as a woman. She writes that she has been itchy about being a Mormon most of her life - never understanding the plausibility of the priests' teachings and why she or other girls cannot be Deacons in the church like the boys. She wanted to share the honor with her brothers who became Deacons at age twelve. Later on she resents her husband's role as a priest. He is charged with power in the church. He can lay his hands on her and other's heads to heal them while she and the other women in the church are only meant to take care of their own homes and families. Stone shares how tired she is of the way the church leaders justify their treatment of women. They say it's because they love women so much they don't want them to be burdened with other work.

Now four young children later, Stone feels more ill at ease with her Mormonism and her role within the church than ever. And she has so much to lose in writing down these very personal thoughts and feelings (her husband, her children, her friends, her family, her church, and her entire way of life).

And now I want to know how all this turmoil going on in her life and heart will turn out. Will author Stone stay in her marriage, will she join another church, will she still be able to continue to be a role model for her children? I also wonder how different Stone's experience in being a Mormon woman is from that of women Muslims and Orthodox Jews who also must be obedient to the will of their male religious masters and husbands.

I recommend this book for anyone who has struggled with his or her religious upbringing or for anyone just wanting to know about the Mormon Church. Stone has written a brave book that will inspire you to look within yourself as well.
