

Gentile Girl: Living with the Latter-day Saints
Interview with the Author

Q: Tell me about *Gentile Girl: Living with the Latter-day Saints*. What's it about?

A: This book is a memoir about my years as a Gentile student at Brigham Young University. It's an easy-to-read story that provides outsiders with an introduction to the Mormon Church.

Q: Where did the name *Gentile Girl* come from?

A: In Utah a Gentile is a nonmember of the Church. I like to joke that in Utah even Jews are Gentiles. I wondered for years what to call this book. Then one day, as I was ready to submit the manuscript, the name *Gentile Girl* popped into my head.

Q: Why did you write this book?

A: After I left BYU, people often said to me, "You should write a book." I discounted that idea at first, but the more people said it, the more I realized there was a story worth telling. There's a lot of curiosity about the Mormons outside Utah, and I was privileged to have this inside look at the Church by attending BYU. At that time I wasn't much of a writer, so the first draft was rocky, but now I have a master's degree in English and I spent the last year polishing the text.

Q: Are you for or against the Mormon Church, or what?

A: Neither, really. I just tried to tell it like it was. You have to read *Gentile Girl* to get the details, but in the end I didn't join the Church. Actually, one publisher declined to publish it because I didn't take a strong stand for or against the Mormon Church.

Q: So what religion are you?

A: At BYU I would tell people I was a Christian, and they would look at me blankly and say, "So am I." I was a member of the Baptist Student Union at BYU and I attend a Baptist church today. During our years overseas I loved worshipping together in international churches with people from many different denominations all over the world.

Q: You spent some years overseas? What were you doing?

A: For several years in the 1980's, I was the Dean of Women at an American school in the Dominican Republic. Later, after graduate school, my husband Ron and I went to China to teach English, and after a year we moved to Mongolia

from 1992-1996 where Ron was the director of an English language institute. Then we were back in Shanghai for a year where he was the program director for a business training company. I taught some English and music myself, but my kids were young during that time, so I was busy as a mother during those years.

Q: What was it like being a Christian at BYU?

A: At times, oppressive. At other times, invigorating. I think LDS Church members had just as much trouble understanding me as I had understanding them. *Gentile Girl* is an interesting read for members of the LDS Church as well.

Q: Do you think Mormons are Christians?

A: They certainly are by their definition. But I believe that the Jesus they worship is significantly different from the Jesus of the Bible. As Kenneth L. Woodward said in his *Newsweek* cover story last fall, the Mormon faith has a “distinctive theological profile.” And the LDS plan of salvation is merit-based while the Biblical plan is based on unmerited grace.

Q: How’s this book been received so far?

A: We keep getting the same comment from readers: “I couldn’t put it down.” Most people read the book in one sitting, and they can’t wait to find out what happens next to this bewildered young woman. People are impressed the kindness of the writing toward Mormons. *Gentile Girl* has been reviewed in industry publications like *CBA Marketplace* and the *Christian Library Journal* as well as local newspapers.

Q: How can people get a copy of *Gentile Girl*?

A: It’s stocked in all the Family Christian Stores and LifeWay Christian Stores, and available online through Amazon.com and of course at the official site, www.gentilegirl.com. Bookstores can order it through Riverside Distributors as well.