

New Book Encourages Mormon Members to Improve Their Image

Dec 05, 2008 by Faroe Robinson

(KCPW News) California's Proposition 8 vote and the raid on a Fundamental Latter-day Saint compound in Texas has led to many misconceptions and rumors being told about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, according to Gary Lawrence, author of "How Americans View Mormons." He says the way to correct this is for individual members to reach out to non-Mormons.

"The point is, the more they understand what we claim to be, the more the uncertainty goes down, and as uncertainty goes down, fear goes down, as fear goes down, image goes up. So its just simply the more you get to know somebody who is of a particular faith, the more sympathy you have for that faith, you may or may not convert to that faith, but at least you understand them," Lawrence said.

Lawrence conducted a study of 1,000 non-Mormons throughout the country and says the more Mormons a person knows, the more they think of the religion favorably. He says the problem is that 25 percent of the people he interviewed said the reason they view Mormons unfavorably is because they don't know enough about them.

"Once they get to know several Mormons, then they have a greater opportunity that one of those will be an active Mormon, 55 percent do not know an active member of the Church, so as they get to know an active member of the Church they find out, my goodness, they don't have horns, they are reasonable. The antidote is still the same, get more people to get to know an active Mormon, and a lot of these things are going to go away," Lawrence said.

Lawrence says Mormons are viewed as being pushy, but argues that Mormons are exuberant and excited so they come across that way. He says this excitement is often viewed as something to fear. Lawrence spoke at the Hinckley Institute of Politics yesterday.