



A Closer Look at the 7 Habits of a Highly Successful Mormon, Stephen Covey

It may come as a surprise to many Christians, but the popular personal growth programs written and promoted by Stephen R. Covey are meant to subtly promote his Mormon beliefs. Ironically, one of the reasons his materials, such as *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, are so popular among Christian leaders is because they give a prominent place to spirituality in personal growth.

Yet *7 Habits* contains many of the same principles, anecdotes, and illustrations found in Covey's earlier book, *The Divine Center*. This book was written to promote Covey's Mormon beliefs and show that any spiritual model other than the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is a false map that limits the personal development of its followers.

In *The Divine Center*, Covey explains that he has discovered how to communicate Mormon truths to non-Mormons by simply changing his vocabulary. He writes, "I have found in speaking to various non-LDS groups in different cultures that we can teach and testify of many gospel principles if we are careful in selecting words which carry our meaning but come from their experience and frame of mind" (*Divine Center*, p. 240).

In *The 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People*, Covey writes that he finds renewal in daily meditation on the scriptures (*7 Habits*, p. 292). In *The Divine Center*, he identifies the most powerful scriptures in his life as "the Gospel of John, the epistles of Paul and Peter, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants" (*Divine Center*, p. 298). He also writes, "Cultivate the habit of reading the scriptures everyday—perhaps just before retiring. It's better to go to sleep on Helaman or Moroni than on the latest TV talk show" (*Divine Center*, p. 197).

Covey, in *7 Habits*, refers to "natural laws in the human dimension that are just as real, just as unchanging and unarguably 'there' as laws such as gravity are in the physical dimension" (*7 Habits*, p. 32). What Covey does not say in *7 Habits*, that he does state in *The Divine Center*, is that these laws of nature are the teachings of the LDS Church which "enable the individual personality to grow and develop until eventually he can become like his Father in Heaven" (*Divine Center*, p. 246). For example, *The Divine Center* reveals that Covey derives his principle of being pro-active rather than reactive from Mormon scriptures. (Compare *The Divine Center*, p. 176, with *7 Habits*, pp. 70-77.)

Those who have read *7 Habits* are familiar with Covey's use of the term *map* for a paradigm of life (*7 Habits*, pp. 29-35). He writes, "The more closely our maps or paradigms are aligned with these principles or natural laws, the more accurate and functional they will be. Correct maps will infinitely impact our personal and interpersonal effectiveness far more than any amount of effort expended on changing our attitudes and behaviors" (*7 Habits*, p. 35). In *The Divine Center*, Covey identifies both correct and incorrect maps. He claims that the true map is the LDS Church and that evangelical Christianity is a false map.

Covey adds:

Because of the incorrect map inherited through centuries of apostasy, the sectarian world does not understand the above concepts. The map so distorts the knowledge of who we really are, who our Father in Heaven really is, who Jesus Christ really is, and who the Holy Ghost really is, that it imposes enormous limitations on the software program of those who 'buy into it.' It also impels their minds to great accusation and

criticism of those who are correctly programmed in these matters. They call the Latter-day Saint concept of an anthropomorphic God arrogant, presumptuous, and narcissistic. Their concepts drastically reduce man's ultimate potential. To them, that potential is not to become like God, not to have eternal life—that is, to have the kind of life and character that God has, to become perfected as he is—but instead to become his eternal robots, worshipping him in a saved condition throughout all eternity. This rules out the celestial family stewardship, the opportunity to become eternal co-inheritors of all that the Father has, and the eventual opportunity to become like the Father, a god, capable of eternal increase, of spiritual procreation. The true map, on the other hand, tells us what Elder Lorenzo Snow summarized in his couplet: 'As man now is, God once was; As God now is, man may become.' (*Divine Center*, p. 81)

Covey not only castigates evangelical denominations for promoting incorrect maps he states that those who follow these false maps "are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men" (*Divine Center*, p. 16). He writes, "No wonder Joseph Smith under inspiration identified the 'creeds of the fathers' as 'the very mainspring of all corruption'" (*Divine Center*, p. 17).

He also argues that the beliefs of traditional Christianity are "false maps . . . in the form of beliefs or doctrines or creeds" (*Divine Center*, p. 15). Covey refers to Mormon scripture (*Joseph Smith—History* 1:19) to prove that the beliefs of evangelical churches are "an abomination in the sight of God" (*Divine Center*, p. 15). (Note: *Joseph Smith—History* 1:5 reveals that the three churches in question were Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist.)

Covey charges that the message of non-LDS churches is an inaccurate and distorted map. "Such a warped map gets just about everything wrong, including God, man, man's relationship to God, the role of Christ the Savior, and the purpose and meaning of life. Naturally, it also produces a warped understanding of what the commandments are and what obedience is" (*Divine Center*, p. 246). Covey calls the doctrine of the Trinity an "apostate doctrine" that has led "people to believe that we are a *creation* of God rather than his *literal offspring*" (*Divine Center*, p. 82). According to Covey, the true map places no limitations on the development of human capacities and potentials (*Divine Center*, pp. 14-17). He also declares that with the help of the LDS Church's gospel ordinances people can develop "godlike powers and capacities" (*Divine Center*, pp. 208-9).

Covey, in teaching about the upward spiral, writes, "Renewal is the principle—and the process—that empowers us to move on an upward spiral of growth and change, of continuous improvement" (*7 Habits*, p. 304). Not surprisingly, *The Divine Center* reveals that he is referring to the Mormon principle of *eternal progression* (see *Divine Center*, pp. 180, 207, 213). He claims that it is this "constantly expanding, upward-spiraling movement in the development of the human soul that constitutes the road to perfection" (*Divine Center*, p. 207). He also explains that we eventually can become literally like Heavenly Father. "We can become perfect, just as he and our elder brother, Jesus Christ, are perfect" (*Divine Center*, p. 77).

We have within us "the eternal seed of godhood," writes Covey (*Divine Center*, p. 206). Following the correct map found in the LDS Church "liberates man" and "releases his divine potentialities" (*Divine Center*, p. 246). Covey's belief that people have a limitless potential is derived from the Mormon doctrine that people are gods in embryo (*Divine Center*, pp. 164-66). He writes, "Since we truly are sons and daughters of God the Eternal Father, we possess in embryo his nature and potential" (*Divine Center*, p. 166).

Covey contends that since we are "literally the Father's children," we "can literally become perfect even as he is perfect" (*Divine Center*, p. 81). He also claims, "Jesus Christ was the first begotten in the spirit and the Only Begotten in the flesh. He shows each of us that we can do it because he did it" (*Divine Center*, p. 78). According to Covey, we should not get discouraged about the possibility of becoming perfect like God. This is because we are of the same nature as Jesus and God the Eternal Father (*Divine Center*, p. 79).

Warning his readers against privately interpreting scripture, Covey advocates that they "look to the present prophet and (LDS) church leaders and official church policies for the manifestation of the Lord's will and interpretations" (*Divine Center*, p. 199). He also writes, "The inspired words of living prophets may be of greater worth to us than the words of the dead prophets. Their words also can be scripture" (*Divine Center*, p. 199).

Those who oppose the LDS prophet are opposing the Lord and are guided by an evil spirit, writes Covey (*Divine Center*, p. 225). He argues that the LDS Church is "literally God's church, and the President of the Church is truly God's prophet" (*Divine Center*, p. 224). He also contends that "God will never allow his prophet to lead the Church astray" (*Divine Center*, p. 224).

Covey's beliefs about salvation are also uniquely Mormon. He warns his readers against seeking "any kind of 'special' relationship" with Jesus Christ (*Divine Center*, pp. 67-68). He writes, "The Christ-only approach is inappropriate for Latter-day Saints and for this book" (*Divine Center*, p. 83). He argues that the grace of Christ is not efficacious "except through our obedience to gospel standards of righteousness" (*Divine Center*, p. 158). He also claims that eternal life is only for those who obey the gospel principles of the LDS Church (*Divine Center*, p. 294).

Covey labels the evangelical doctrine of salvation by grace alone a false concept and an apostate doctrine. (*Divine Center*, p. 68). He even claims that it is Satan's lie to suggest that all God wants us to do is receive Christ Jesus through faith (*Divine Center*, p. 271).

This analysis reveals that Covey's religious beliefs are Mormon, not Christian. There is no doubt that churches and religious organizations should seriously reconsider whether it is appropriate to use a personal growth program developed by someone who believes and openly promotes these false doctrines.

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