Standing Strong - Articles of Faith

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Look at what learning the Articles of Faith did for one young boy, Matt Richardson.

"Like many others, I rode the bus to junior high school. Each day I would walk to the bus stop and wait with my friends and other students for the bus to arrive. One particular morning, as I rounded the corner to get to the bus stop, I saw a group of my peers huddled together in a group talking. One of them noticed me walking towards them and said loud enough for me to hear as he pointed his finger at me, 'Here he comes!' As I drew closer to the group, I heard someone say, 'Oh, he'll show you, just you wait and see.'

"I nervously greeted everyone and asked what was going on. The group parted and there standing in the middle was a young man with a confident smirk on his face. Ronnie was fond of teasing and taunting the kids who were Latter-day Saints, and it looked as if he was at it again. One of my friends quickly explained. 'Ronnie said that we Mormons are nothing but a bunch of sheep.' Ronnie stood unmoved—smirking with assured bravado. My friend continued, 'He said that we didn't know the first thing about our church and that we just follow our parents around like a bunch of sheep!' Ronnie began bleating like a sheep. 'So,' another person said loudly in an attempt to drown out Ronnie's obnoxious imitation of a sheep, 'we told Ronnie that we weren't sheep at all and that we actually know quite a lot about the what the Church teaches.' She continued, 'So Ronnie told us to tell him what the Church believes, and we said, "Just you wait until Matt Richardson gets here. He will tell you all about the Church." ' I could feel my stomach drop as I heard the story unfold. Immediately my friends rallied together saying, 'So go ahead and tell Ronnie about the Church. Show him we aren't sheep!' Ronnie stood smirking and added, 'Go ahead, Mormon, tell me what your church believes in,' and then he started bleating again.

"As all eyes fell upon me, awaiting my response, and bleating filled my ears, I could hardly think. It was as if my mind had been erased. I quickly said a sincere prayer pleading for Heavenly Father to save me from this awful predicament. To my surprise—and to my great relief—the bus immediately arrived and students scrambled to get

on. I felt relieved as I climbed up the bus steps and walked to my usual seat in the back of the bus. 'Saved by the bus,' I thought gratefully. It wasn't long after I sat down that bleating started up again. It grew more frequent and louder as Ronnie turned around to face me and said, 'Come on, Mormon, tell me one thing that your church believes.' He then started bleating again. It was hard to concentrate with the loud 'baaa, baaa' filling the air while at the same time my friends were rallying to offer words of encouragement. 'Come on, Matt,' they would say, 'tell him about the Church. Show him that we aren't sheep.'

" 'Well,' I paused, trying to gather my thoughts. 'We believe … we believe,' I stammered as my mind raced to think of something, anything, to say. 'We believe …' I said again very slowly, hoping something would happen. 'Can't think of anything?' Ronnie taunted. 'Just what I thought; you are a sheep!'

"And then it happened. It came to me in a flash. I sat upright, looked at Ronnie, and said, 'We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.' Ronnie couldn't hide the surprised and stunned look on his face. He quickly recovered and shot back, 'That doesn't count. Everyone believes in God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost.' Back to his normal self, he sneered, 'Tell me something else, you sheep.'

"My friends quickly looked back at me, obviously wondering what would happen next. I calmly stated, 'We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.' Hardly taking a breath, I launched into the third article of faith, followed by the fourth, fifth, and sixth. My friends enthusiastically joined in unison at the beginning of each new article of faith, saying, 'We believe' only to leave me to finish the rest alone. I recited all thirteen articles of faith. When I was finished, there wasn't a sheep-like sound to be heard.

"While I am unsure of the impact this event had on Ronnie or any other person, I know for a fact that one person on that bus was forever changed. That person was me! I left that bus realizing that I knew much more about the gospel and the Church than I thought I did. I also realized that I had a much stronger testimony of the gospel than I expected. I left that bus deeply grateful for my Primary experience and especially for the opportunity to memorize all thirteen Articles of Faith. It prepared me for an unexpected moment when it would really matter the most."