

Author Jeremy Runnells Resigns From LDS Church At Excommunication Hearing In American Fork

By **Nancy Van Valkenburg** - April 18, 2016

AMERICAN FORK, Utah, April 18, 2016 (Gephardt Daily) — After years of questioning his LDS faith, in private and in public, Jeremy Runnells' spiritual journey led him to the back of a gray pickup truck parked outside a church building in American Fork. "So, a decision has been made," said Runnells, author of "Letter to a CES Director." CES stands for Church Education System.

"I have excommunicated the LDS Church, (stake) president (Mark) Ivins, and their kangaroo court from my life," Runnells told his supporters, who had gathered in the parking lot to await the results of his church excommunication hearing.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary describes a kangaroo court as a "mock court in which the principles of law and justice are disregarded or perverted."

"I handed in my resignation to President Ivins just a few minutes ago," Runnells said. "My membership evaporated the second that I gave President Ivins my resignation letter."

Runnells was a sixth-generation member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and a descendant of Utah pioneers. He is a returned missionary and Brigham Young University alumnus, and married in the San Diego Temple.

In 2012, Runnells had a crisis of faith, and an LDS Church Education System director asked him to share his concerns.

Runnells detailed his questions and doubts about the legitimacy of church history and doctrine into written form in what would later become "Letter to a CES Director."

Runnells' book

The book was shared by multiple websites, was downloaded thousands of times, and went viral. It has been translated into multiple languages, and its influence has spread worldwide.

A few of the many the questions Runnells raised are:

- What are errors exclusive to the 1769 edition of the King James version of the New Testament — the edition LDS Church Founder Joseph Smith owned — doing in "The Book of Mormon," which is said to be an ancient text?

- Why are horses, cattle, oxen, sheep, swine, goats, elephants, wheels, wheat, silk, steel, and iron mentioned in "The Book of Mormon" when they did not exist in pre-Columbian America during Book of Mormon times?
- Why are so many of the locations referenced in "The Book of Mormon" so similar in name to locations near Smith's home in modern times?
- And why did Smith give multiple and conflicting versions of his first vision?

To read more on examples of Runnells' concerns, click here.

A lack of answers

"They refused to answer any questions that I asked them," Runnells told his listeners on Sunday. "I've asked questions over and over for the last three years, and a year and a half with the stake president. They have not answered one question. It has become very clear to me that the church does not have answers to a truth crisis.

"The questions I asked the stake president over and over for a year and a half have been 'What errors are mistakes are there in the "CES Letter" or on my website that I can publicly correct? If there are no errors or mistakes, why am I being punished for seeking and sharing the truth? What questions am I being punished for?' And he never answered any of those questions once.

"Yet that didn't stop him from attempting to spiritually execute me. And I find that very, very disturbing. They're trying to take someone's salvation while not answering their sincere, reasonable questions," Runnells said.

The crowd interrupted Runnells several times, with cheers, gentle laughter and applause. He is legally deaf, yet seemed to see and appreciate the support. A video of Runnells' talk with the crowd is posted on YouTube, and also can be watched on the video player above.

"I am disgusted by the LDS Church's and President Ivins' multiple attempts to place me in the same category as murderers and rapists and child molesters for officially seeking answers to such problems," Runnells said. "I have done nothing wrong. I just wanted the truth.

"For those of you who are struggling with doubts — stop doubting your doubts. Cherish your doubts. Explore your doubts. Resolve your doubts. Doubt is the beginning to knowledge and wisdom. The only power that the church has is the power that you give them.

"Tonight —," Runnells said, pausing a few seconds as if trying to regain his composure, " — I took back my own power."

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