

Polygamist Sects Are Not “Mormons,” Church Says

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SALT LAKE CITY — Many news outlets are reporting on the recent arrest of fugitive polygamist leader Warren Jeffs, who is on the FBI’s Most Wanted list.

Some media outlets have been very careful to describe Warren Jeffs as a “fugitive polygamist sect leader.” Other reports refer to Mr. Jeffs as a “Mormon,” “fundamentalist Mormon,” or as the leader of a “Mormon sect.”

Some may debate what the definition of a Mormon is, but terms like “Mormon Tabernacle Choir,” “Mormon Temple” and “Mormon missionaries” are universally understood to refer to the 12-million member Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Quite simply, calling Warren Jeffs a Mormon is misleading and confusing to the vast majority of audiences who rightfully associate the term “Mormon” with members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The following information may be helpful in further drawing the distinction:

Warren Jeffs Is Not a Mormon

Warren Jeffs is not a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and never has been.

Mormons Do Not Practice Polygamy

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints discontinued the practice of polygamy in 1890. ([Read history.](#))

In 1998, President Gordon B. Hinckley said: "I wish to state categorically that this Church has nothing whatever to do with those practicing polygamy. They are not members of this Church. Most of them have never been members. They are in violation of the civil law. ...

"If any of our members are found to be practicing plural marriage, they are excommunicated, the most serious penalty the Church can impose. Not only are those so involved in direct violation of the civil law, they are in violation of the law of this Church." ([Read full statement.](#))

There Is No Such Thing as a "Mormon Fundamentalist" or "Mormon Sect"

The term "Mormon" is a nickname commonly applied to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There is no such thing as a "Mormon fundamentalist," nor are there "Mormon sects." A correct term to describe these polygamist groups is "polygamist sects." The inclusion of the word "Mormon" is misleading and inaccurate.

Associated Press

The *Associated Press Stylebook* states, "The term *Mormon* is not properly applied to the other Latter Day Saints churches that resulted from the split after [Joseph] Smith's death."

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[Contact a Church public affairs representative \(journalists only\)](#)

Style guide note: When reporting about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, please use the complete name of the Church in the first reference. For more information on the use of the name of the Church, go to our online [style guide](#).