

Guidelines for writing your FreeBYU profile

FreeBYU profiles provide a way for you to make your voice heard on the issue of religious freedom at BYU. If you or someone you love has been affected by BYU's faith policies, or if you simply want to voice your support for the movement, we'd love to hear from you.

Your profile can be as short or as long as you want it to be. If you have a lot to say, a one to two page description of yourself and your interest in the FreeBYU movement would be fantastic. A single paragraph expressing your support for religious freedom at BYU would also be great. Please avoid language that could be seen as attacking the LDS Church and BYU.

It is best to keep your story as up-beat and positive as possible.

Your profile can be anonymous if you would like. For those who don't need to hide their identity, we'd love to include your picture on the website so that people can put a face to your story.

To get your profile started, you might consider answering one or more of the following questions. It can also be helpful to review existing profiles to see what people have written (See the end of this document, or visit <http://www.FreeBYU.org/profiles>).

For everyone

- Why do you support the FreeBYU movement?
- Have you or has someone you love been affected by BYU's faith policies? In what ways?

For students and alumni

- Why did you choose to attend BYU?
- What do you love about BYU?
- If you contribute to the BYU annual fund, why do you do so?
- Why do you feel that BYU should allow LDS students to pursue their personal beliefs?

For students and alumni that have changed their faith

- Why did you choose to attend BYU?
- What led you to change your beliefs? (Please avoid specifics that could be seen as attacking the LDS Church or BYU)
- How has BYU's faith policy affected you?
- How has BYU's faith policy affected those that you love?

For parents

- How does BYU's faith policy affect your view of the University?
- Does BYU's faith policy make you more or less likely to have your child attend the University?
- Why is it important for you that BYU maintain an atmosphere of religious freedom?

Submitting your profile

You can send your profile to stories@FreeBYU.org

If you have any questions, please email us at the same address and we'll be happy to help.

Example Profiles

Here are some brief profiles that can help you get started. We definitely want to hear your own story in your own words, but these examples illustrate the kinds of things that can be included in a profile.

From an LDS Student

Hi, my name is Jeff.

I am an active member of the LDS Church and a student at BYU. While I have no personal desire to change my beliefs, religious freedom is a fundamental part of my faith. It does sadden me when people choose to leave the faith that I love so much, but I feel that we should embrace everyone, regardless of what they believe. If an LDS student who lives the Honor Code wants to change his beliefs, it doesn't seem right that he should be expelled and kicked out of his housing for following his moral conscience.

I support Free BYU.

From a nonmember student

Hi, my name is Kristen.

I am a Presbyterian, and I'm an undergraduate student at BYU. I love my school, but it doesn't make sense to me that I could convert to Mormonism while my LDS classmates couldn't convert to my religion without being kicked out. Is that really freedom of religion?

I support Free BYU.

From a formerly LDS student

Hi, my name is Caleb.

I graduated from BYU with an MS degree several years ago. I loved my time there and, to be honest, I still miss it. Now that I'm finished with my degree I maintain my connection with BYU by reading the Alumni magazine, following college sports, and contributing every year to the Annual Fund. Studying at BYU was one of the best times of my life, and I want to give back where I can.

Unfortunately, not all my memories of BYU are pleasant. While working on my Master's degree, I spent a significant amount of time studying the roots of my faith in Mormonism. I found to my horror that many of the things that I always took for granted seemed to wither away whenever I looked more closely.

The cracks in my faith started with the religion's epistemology and spread through its history and doctrine until I finally had to concede that I no longer believed. It was an intensely painful and stress-filled process, and it dragged on for over a year. I finally found peace and solace one spring evening while listening to the patter of a light rainstorm. In a moment of powerful spiritual transcendence I felt that God was happy with the direction I was moving and that everything would be OK. That settled it for me.

I mostly kept my change of faith a secret, but during my final semester I finally decided to confide in my bishop. In the process of expressing my feelings I found, to my surprise, that he was angry. I suppose that I can't blame him for it. I had at one time been just as distressed by the issues I discussed with him.

We met several times to talk. In the end, he accused me of hiding a secret sin (because why else would my testimony fail?) and he indicated that he wouldn't sign an endorsement for me to continue studying at BYU. It was fortunate that I was in my last semester and wouldn't need a new endorsement, but I realized that he had the power not only to withhold a new endorsement, but to withdraw my existing endorsement and prevent me from graduating.

And according to BYU's Honor Code, he would have been justified in doing so. My only crime? Failing to believe in Mormonism. This naturally came as a big shock to me. It never occurred to me that confiding in my bishop might result in my dismissal from BYU during the final semester of my Master's studies.

To my discredit, I didn't have the intellectual honesty to stand by my beliefs and risk losing two years of hard work. So I pretended to change my mind. I came to church early every week and sat on the front row. I actively participated in Sunday School. I even shed a few repentant tears in an interview with the bishop.

It hurt to be dishonest about my beliefs, to hide myself behind this false veneer to appease the man who had the unilateral power to prevent my graduation. But for better or worse I did it. In the meantime, I grew to resent both my bishop and the church he represented. When I finally received my diploma in the mail, I felt a sense of relief to officially remove myself from the organization that had (I felt) needlessly imposed its will on me.

BYU's belief policies seem incongruous for an organization that presumes to value religious freedom as a fundamental article of faith. While I'd honestly love to go back for a PhD someday, I fear that my new beliefs will prevent that from happening.