

**What is the shelf?**

Posted by: amiable ( )  
Date: December 13, 2015 07:49PM

Is this a metaphor the church suggests for compartmentalizing your doubts, or was it conceived by actual questioners of the faith?

**Re: What is the shelf?**

Posted by: elderolddog ( )  
Date: December 13, 2015 07:52PM

The latter.

It's a metaphysical place where you store issues that perplex you, and until the explanation is given, you keep that item on your shelf.

Eventually, the shelf can become overburdened and it "breaks".

**Re: What is the shelf?**

Posted by: GNPE ( )  
Date: December 13, 2015 07:53PM

I believe it was first used by a doubter, one who saw thru the Lies; I've Never seen it used by a leader.

**Re: What is the shelf?**

Posted by: zero ( )  
Date: December 13, 2015 08:12PM

At the time I left in the 90's I'd never heard of the "shelf" terminology. It was only recently on this site and the NOM site that I heard the lingo. But the terminology makes sense with what I experienced leaving the Mormon church.

At first when I encountered stuff that didn't make sense I just didn't think about it, but then later I would encounter another fact that didn't make sense so I would have to put that fact in same place in my mind as the other fact. Eventually all these doubts kind of all came together (i.e. "collapsed") to form a picture, and the picture was that Santa Clause just wasn't real!

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 12/13/2015 08:13PM by zero.

**Re: What is the shelf?**

Posted by: Elder Strangelove ( )  
Date: December 13, 2015 08:25PM

From October 1975 Ensign, regarding Camilla Kimball:

Because of her family's hospitality toward searching and studying, Sister Kimball says, "I've always had an inquiring mind. I'm not satisfied just to accept things. I like to follow through and study things out. I learned early to put aside those gospel

questions that I couldn't answer. I had a shelf of things I didn't understand, but as I've grown older and studied and prayed and thought about each problem, one by one I've been able to better understand them."

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/1975/10/camilla-kimball-lady-of-constant-learning?lang=eng>

Re: What is the shelf?

Posted by: Brethren, adieu ( )  
Date: December 13, 2015 08:46PM

A friend of mine who is currently a bishop used that term once to describe the place where he puts issues like polygamy. It's a term used by believers used to describe their cognitive dissonance. They know it doesn't make sense, but they don't want to think about it.

Re: What is the shelf?

Posted by: poopstone ( )  
Date: December 13, 2015 08:57PM

In cognitive theory (which was discovered by communist psychologists), the idea is a child learns by compartmentalizing information. Knowledge is built on a previous accepted foundation. The teacher provides scaffolding for the student to compartmentalize info. So the shelf can be thought of as part of the brain. If info is too complicated or there isn't enough scaffolding of course the shelf breaks and the child doesn't learn.

(See the works of Vygotsky)

Re: What is the shelf?

Posted by: CrispingPin ( )  
Date: December 13, 2015 09:07PM

At a youth fireside in the early/mid 1970s, my bishop told us that when we came across something in the church that we couldn't understand or accept, we shouldn't lose our testimonies--we should put that "item" on a shelf and continue on. He said that as time went on, we'd be able to reevaluate those items with a different perspective at different times of our lives, and as we gained wisdom and knowledge, we'd be able to take some of those things off the shelf.

The two big items that immediately went on my shelf were the church's treatment of blacks and polygamy. Obviously, neither of those items ever were removed from my shelf/

Re: What is the shelf?

Posted by: evergreen ( )  
Date: December 17, 2015 12:50PM

CrispingPin Wrote:

- 
- > we'd be able to
  - > reevaluate those items with a different
  - > perspective at different times of our lives, and

> as we gained wisdom and knowledge, we'd be able to  
> take some of those things off the shelf.  
>  
Sounds like you took the entire TSCC off the shelf

Re: What is the shelf?

Posted by: Greyfort ( )  
Date: December 13, 2015 10:05PM

Whenever I would question something, my friend would say, "Just put it on your list of things to ask Heavenly Father someday."

The shelf became the place in your mind where you stash those doubts.

Re: What is the shelf?

Posted by: Lethbridge Reprobate ( )  
Date: December 13, 2015 10:32PM

Ones belief structure where it concerns the LDS church.

RB

Re: What is the shelf?

Posted by: Floridian ( )  
Date: December 14, 2015 09:47AM

Henry Eyring used the shelf analogy in a talk he gave at the SLC mission home. I was there in the fall of 1966.

The shelf is where the elf sits. (n/t)

Posted by: randyj ( )  
Date: December 17, 2015 01:19PM

Re: What is the shelf?

Posted by: Myron Donnerbalken ( )  
Date: December 17, 2015 01:27PM

The term "put it on the shelf" has been used by Mormons for years and years. Mormons are well aware that the beliefs are often hard to deal with. I was told my whole long life to just deal with the doubts and press on regardless. The metaphor they always used was the shelf. I was always told, "Just put that on the shelf. We'll find out the answer after we die." But they always said it as if I only had just one thing on the shelf. We all know by now that those things we have on our mental shelves are many, and so heavy that it can bring it down from the wall. That's why we're here.