

# *Examining Mormon Prooftexts*

Eric Johnson  
Mormonism  
Research Ministry



See a PDF file of this PowerPoint presentation by going to  
[mrm.org/sharing-with-Mormons-context](http://mrm.org/sharing-with-Mormons-context)

# 5 IMPORTANT RULES IN ENGAGING A LATTER-DAY SAINT

**1. Never tell the other person what he/she believes**

**Ask them, “What do you believe about**

**\_\_\_\_\_?”**

# 5 IMPORTANT RULES IN ENGAGING A LATTER-DAY SAINT

**2. Never use the word “you” in a conversation**

**Doing this sounds like an accusation against the person, leading to defensiveness**

# 5 IMPORTANT RULES IN ENGAGING A LATTER-DAY SAINT

## 3. Never let words go undefined

- **“What do you mean by...”**
- **“What do you mean when you say ‘grace’?”**
- **“What do you mean when you say ‘scripture’?”**
- **“What do you mean by ‘preexistence’?”**

## **IN MORMONISM...**

**Grace = Enabling power provided by God a person needs to successfully keep God's commandments**

**Scripture = One of 4 books plus the words of the current leaders**

**Preexistence = Place where all people lived as spirits in a previous existence**

# 5 IMPORTANT RULES IN ENGAGING A LATTER-DAY SAINT

## 4. Never allow the topic to change

- **If the Mormon wants to go off topic, just say, “I’m happy to talk about that later, but could we please conclude this topic first?”**
- **Otherwise you end up rabbit holing**

# 5 IMPORTANT RULES IN ENGAGING A LATTER-DAY SAINT

## 5. Never read a Bible verse by itself

- Consider the context
- Consider other scripture

# LET'S CONSIDER THREE COMMON PROOFTEXTS USED BY MANY MORMONS

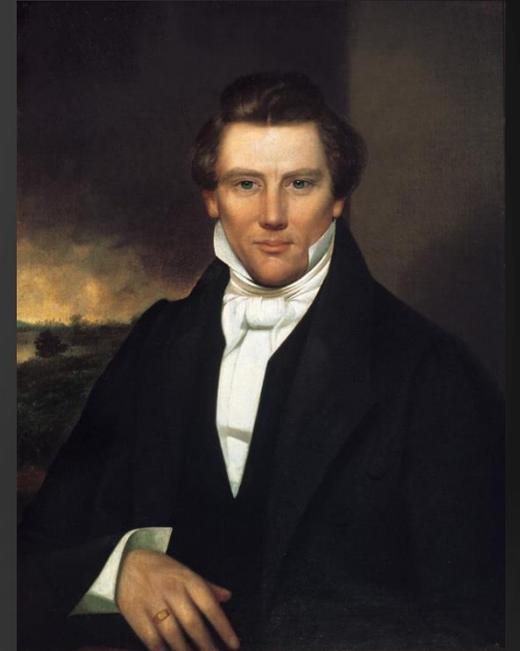
- **James 1:5**
- **1 Corinthians 15:29**
- **James 2:20**

## 1. JAMES 1:5

***“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”***

# JAMES 1:5

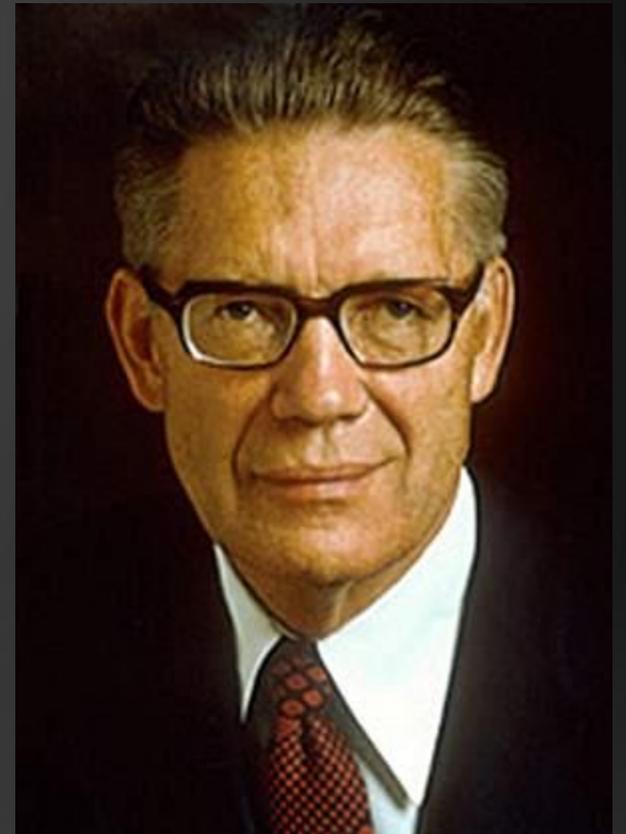
- **Joseph Smith used this verse to pray about which of the denominations were true**
- **Joseph Smith-History 1:12:13: “Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at the time to mine . . . At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness or confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God.”**



Joseph Smith, founder

## JAMES 1:5

**“This single verse of scripture [James 1:5] has had a greater impact and a more far reaching effect upon mankind than any other single sentence ever recorded by any prophet in any age.”**



Apostle Bruce R. McConkie

## ALSO USED IN SUPPORT

**Moroni 10:4: “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.”**

## ALSO USED IN SUPPORT

**D&C 9:8: “But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.”**

# SOME THINGS WE SHOULD NOT PRAY ABOUT

- **If James is talking about praying about something already made clear...**
- **“Should I steal my neighbor’s car?”**
- **Yet God said, “Thou shalt not steal.”**
- **Should we pray about the Vedas and the Bhagavad Gita (Hinduism); the Qu’ran (Islam); the Ta Te Ching (Daoism), etc.? Or even the Bible itself?**

# SOME THINGS WE SHOULD NOT PRAY ABOUT

- **1 Thessalonians 5:21: “Test everything.”**
- **1 John 4:1: *“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”***
- **Matthew 7:15: *“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”***

## JAMES 1:5

**Author Rachel Nielsen writes:**

***“Ask yourself if the thought or the feeling is inviting you to do good. If it is, you can be assured that it is from God.”*** Problem is that **our hearts/feelings can mislead**

***“What If I Don’t Feel a Burning in the Bosom?”*** *New Era*, June 2014, 19.

## JAMES 1:5

- **Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”**
- **Proverbs 14:12: There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.**
- **All the good feelings in the world cannot override false LDS teachings**

## JAMES 1:5

- **Context of the passage: Gaining wisdom, *not* knowledge**
- **Wisdom is the proper application of knowledge**
- **According to this passage, wisdom can be sought when undergoing trials and temptations**

## 2. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:29

***“Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?”***

# 1 CORINTHIANS 15:29

**“Not a few commentators have tried to explain away [this passage’s] true significance; but its context proves plainly that in the days of the apostles there existed the practice of baptism for the dead; that is, living persons were immersed in water for and in behalf of those who were dead—not who were ‘dead to sin’ but who had ‘passed to the other side.’”**



9<sup>th</sup> President  
David O. McKay

# BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD: PROBLEM 1

**This was not a common practice of the early  
biblical church**

## 1 CORINTHIANS 15:29

**“There is no good evidence for vicarious baptism anywhere in the New Testament or among the earliest apostolic fathers. By the same token, there is no hint that this vicarious baptism (if that is what it was) was intended by the Corinthian believers to cover as many deceased people as could be named . . .**



D.A. Carson

## 1 CORINTHIANS 15:29

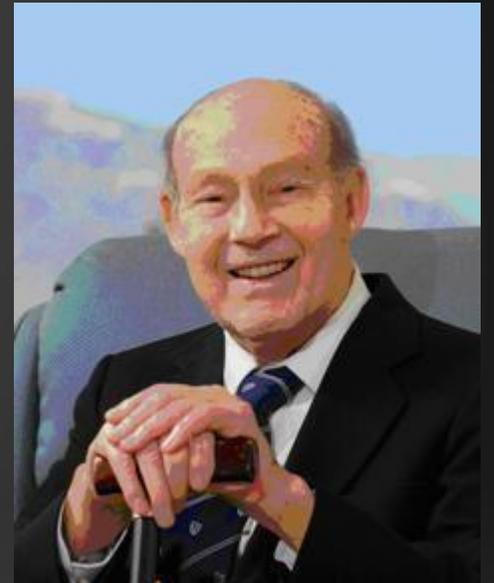
**If the practice existed at all, it may have been tied to a few people or special cases—for example, when a relative died after trusting the gospel but before being baptized. We really do not know. If it were something like that, one could understand why Paul does not make a federal case of it. In any case, Paul’s clear emphasis is that people are justified by grace through faith.”**



D.A. Carson

# BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD: PROBLEM 1

**“Apart from a possible reference in Tertullian (De res, 48c), there is evidence of such a practice only among heretical groups like the Cerinthians and the Marcionites,’ and neither of these groups existed when 1 Corinthians was written.”**



G.W. Bromley

# BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD: PROBLEM 2

**Why did Paul use the “third person” pronoun (“they”) when the context uses “first person”?**

# PRONOUN USAGE

**“It should be noted that the voice changes from ‘we’ to ‘they’ for this verse only: Else what shall ‘they’ do? And why are ‘they’ baptized for the dead? Then the shift is back to ‘we’— why stand ‘we’ in jeopardy? Could Paul be alluding to a practice that only ‘they’ (not ‘we’) were participating in?”**



*Charles R. Harrell,  
Former BYU professor*

# BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD: PROBLEM 3

**Why are there no other places to support such an important teaching?**

# ONE-TIME OCCURRENCE

**“The reason is not that God must say things more than once for them to be true or binding. The reason, rather, is that if something is said only once it is easily misunderstood or misapplied. When something is repeated on several occasions and in slightly different contexts, readers will enjoy a better grasp of what is meant and what is at stake. That is why the famous ‘baptism for the dead’ passage (1 Cor. 15:29) is not unpacked at length and made a major plank in, say, the Heidelberg Catechism or the Westminster Confession.”**



D.A Carson

“Must I Learn How to Interpret the Bible?” *Modern Reformation* 5:3  
(May/June 1996, pp. 18-22.)

## BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

**“Over forty interpretations of that passage have been offered in the history of the church. Mormons are quite sure what it means, of course, but the reason why they are sure is because they are reading it in the context of other books that they claim are inspired and authoritative.”**



D.A. Carson

“Must I Learn How to Interpret the Bible?” *Modern Reformation* 5:3  
(May/June 1996, 18-22.)

# BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

## FINAL ISSUES

- **Chapter 15 concerns the bodily resurrection.**
- **Paul is not attempting to make a case (in one verse) for a doctrine that is not at all the issue.**
- **The doctrine is not taught anywhere else.**
- **Besides contradicting the Bible (Heb. 9:27 and 2 Cor. 6:2), such a teaching contradicts the Book of Mormon (Alma 34:32ff).**

## ALMA 32:32-35 (BOOK OF MORMON)

**“For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors. . . . do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. .**

## ALMA 32:32-35 (BOOK OF MORMON)

**... if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth seal you his; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you; and this is the final state of the wicked.”**

### 3. JAMES 2:20

*“But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”*

# GENERAL VS. INDIVIDUAL SALVATION

**“Salvation is twofold: General—that which comes to all men irrespective of a belief (in this life) in Christ— and, Individual—that which man merits through his own acts through life and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.”**



10<sup>th</sup> President Joseph Fielding Smith

# FAITH AND WORKS IN MORMONISM

- **Grace (and the Atonement) is available to all humans (because of your obedience in the preexistence)**
- **Everyone (except “Sons of Perdition”) will receive one of the three kingdoms of glory**

# FAITH AND WORKS IN MORMONISM

- **Celestial kingdom is known as “eternal life” or “exaltation,” also referred to as “godhood” and the ability to be together with one’s family forever**
- **Based on this verse, Mormons will want to show how grace, by itself, is not enough to “exalt” a person in the celestial kingdom**

## EPHESIANS 2:8-9

**“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.”**

## BUT WHAT ABOUT VERSE 10?

**“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”**

# FAITH AND WORKS

**And what about James 2:10 :**

**“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”**

# ONE SIN CAN DAMN YOU

**“Joseph Smith said, ‘Any person who is exalted to the highest mansion has to abide a celestial law, and the whole law too’ (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 331). To be exalted we must be cleansed from all sin (D&C 50:28-29). One sin can damn a person.”**



D. Kelly Ogden



Andrew C. Skinner

# REVIEW

- 1. Just because a verse sounds like it supports a teaching does not mean it does.**
- 2. Context, context, context...for every verse**
- 3. Consider the rest of scripture**
- 4. Define your terms**
- 5. Be familiar with the passages most often used by Latter-day Saints to support their unique doctrines**

# Q&A

## MORMONISM RESEARCH MINISTRY

Visit our website at [www.mrm.org](http://www.mrm.org)

Consider our books as well...

