

Read the Book of Mormon and Pray to Determine if it is True – Is this Good Biblical Advice?

“If you read and pray about the Book of Mormon, the Holy Ghost will reveal to you that it is true.” This is a common claim that missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) often make when attempting to make converts as they go door to door. Does the Bible call us to pray to understand the truth?

Prayer for truth?

In support of their advice, Mormons usually cite James 1:5:

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (*James 1:5*)

Wisdom vs. knowledge

The problem with citing this verse is that wisdom has nothing to do with determining truth. The Greek word, *sophia* (Strong's #G4678),¹ translated “wisdom” is never used to describe knowledge or truth. The two words are quite different and are not synonymous. For example, the Greek words translated knowledge are *eido*,² *gnosis*,³ and *epiginosko*.⁴ The Greek words for truth include *alethos*,⁵ *aletheia*,⁶ and *alethes*.⁷ The New Testament makes it clear that wisdom and knowledge are not the same. For example, Romans 11:33 contains both words. The distinction is made between the words since the Greek uses the conjunction *kai*, translated “both” to emphasize that these are two different concepts:

Oh, the depth of the riches both [kai:G2532] of the wisdom [*sophia*] and knowledge [*gnosis*] of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! (*Romans 11:33*)

¹*sophia* (G4678) σοφία

sof-ee'-ah

From G4680; *wisdom* (higher or lower, worldly or spiritual): - wisdom. (*Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*)

²*eido* (G1492) εἶδω

i'-do

A primary verb; used only in certain past tenses, the others being borrowed from the equivalent, G3700 and G3708; properly to *see* (literally or figuratively); by implication (in the perfect only) to *know*: - be aware, behold, X can (+ not tell), consider, (have) known (-ledge), look (on), perceive, see, be sure, tell, understand, wist, wot. Compare G3700.

³*gnosis* (G1108) γνῶσις

gno'-sis

From G1097; *knowing* (the act), that is, (by implication) *knowledge*: - knowledge, science.

⁴*epiginosko* (G1921) ἐπιγινώσκω

ep-ig-in-ocē'-ko

From G1909 and G1097; to *know upon* some mark, that is, *recognise*; by implication to *become fully acquainted with*, to *acknowledge*: - (ac-, have, take) know (-ledge, well), perceive.

⁵*alethos* (G230) ἀληθῶς

al-ay-thoce'

Adverb from G227; *truly*: - indeed, surely, of a surety, truly, of a (in) truth, verily, very.

⁶*aletheia* (G225) ἀληθεία

al-ay'-thi-a

From G227; *truth*: - true, X truly, truth, verity.

⁷*alethes* (G227) ἀληθής

al-ay-thace'

From G1 (as a negative particle) and G2990; *true* (as *not concealing*): - true, truly, truth.

Truth is determined through knowledge

Likewise, the Bible indicates that truth is determined through knowledge and not prayer:

- This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:3-4)
- And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, (2 Timothy 2:24-25)
- For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Timothy 3:6-7)
- Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness-- (Titus 1:1)
- For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, (Hebrews 10:26)

The role of prayer

Of course prayer is important in the life of the believer. However, prayer for wisdom is quite different from prayer to understand what is true. Wisdom is required in life to know what to do in certain circumstances that are not clearly defined in the Bible. However, for the most part, knowing what to do is more an issue of biblical knowledge than wisdom. For instance, one would never pray whether or not to commit adultery, murder, or theft or even whether to get a tattoo. All of these issues are clearly defined in the Bible and require no prayer. Of course, one could pray for the strength to avoid temptations.

Biblical advice to determine truth – investigate and test

What is the biblical advice for determining the truth? We are to determine the truth through careful examination and testing:

Test everything. Hold on to the good. (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

The physician Luke, in his prologue to his gospel revealed how he determined the truth:

it seemed fitting for me as well, **having investigated everything carefully from the beginning**, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; **so that you might know the exact truth** about the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:3-4)

Luke determined the truth through careful investigation. He didn't pray about what was true, he *investigated the matters carefully*.

Truth – through the declaration of the creation

God Himself in His revelation to Isaiah stated, "Come now, and let us reason together..."⁸ God, the Creator of humans and human reasoning ability⁹ wants us to use that ability to determine

⁸"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. (Isaiah 1:18)

truth. How do we determine if the Bible is true? We test it and see if what it says is reasonable. Psalm 19 tells us that the universe “declares the glory of God” and that this “voice goes out into all the earth.”¹⁰ Evidence for God from Science is dedicated to showing how the universe declares God’s love and design. In fact, the Bible says that the evidence for God’s design of the universe is so strong that people are “without excuse” in rejecting God and His plan of salvation.¹¹

Truth - through the declaration of scripture

God wants believers to be knowledgeable, especially regarding their faith. A lack of knowledge leads to apostasy and destruction, as God Himself said to Hosea, “My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge.”¹² A zeal for God is not sufficient to please Him, since many Jews have this zeal, although it is misplaced since it is “not in accordance with knowledge.”¹³ The Bible encourages believers to have a knowledge-based faith, built upon sound biblical doctrine.¹⁴ When Paul preached the gospel, he did it through reasoning from the scriptures and not an appeal to blind faith.¹⁵ Paul, in his letters told believers to do away with childish thinking and reasoning.¹⁶ Christians are advised to set an example for others in teaching by modeling “integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech.”¹⁷

Testing scripture for truth

The Bible itself defines how religious writings are to be tested for truth:

1. Prophecies come to fulfillment with 100 percent accuracy (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).¹⁸

⁹For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding. (*Proverbs 2:6*)

¹⁰The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. (*Psalms 19:1-4*)

¹¹...what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. (*Romans 1:19-20*)

¹²My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. (*Hosea 4:6*)

¹³For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. (*Romans 10:2*)

¹⁴Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. (*Titus 2:2*)

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; (*2 Timothy 4:3*)

You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. (*Titus 2:1*)

¹⁵And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, (*Acts 17:2*)

So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles*, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. (*Acts 17:17*)

And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. (*Acts 18:4*)

And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. (*Acts 18:19*)

But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. (*Acts 26:25*)

¹⁶When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. (*1 Corinthians 13:11*)

¹⁷In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. (*Titus 2:7-8*)

¹⁸“And you may say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’ When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.” (*Deuteronomy 18:20-22*)

2. Support the laws, precepts, and principles set forth in the rest of Scripture-without contradiction (Isaiah 8:20; Matthew 5:17; John 10:35).¹⁹
3. Communicate only truth, in all disciplines of knowledge (Psalms 119:160; Hebrews 6:18).²⁰

The Book of Mormon fails each of the three test listed above. For this reason, we can **know** that the Book of Mormon is **not true** and, therefore, cannot be scripture.

Conclusions

The Bible never encourages people to pray about what is true. Instead, the Bible encourages us to test everything and examine the scriptures carefully. The Bible even tells us how to determine what writings are true and should be part of holy scripture. Those writings that don't pass the biblical tests for truth can be eliminated as potential scripture.

¹⁹To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. (*Isaiah 8:20*)

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. (*Matthew 5:17*)

“If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), (*John 10:35*)

²⁰The sum of Thy word is truth, And every one of Thy righteous ordinances is everlasting. (*Psalms 119:160*)
in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. (*Hebrews 6:18*)