

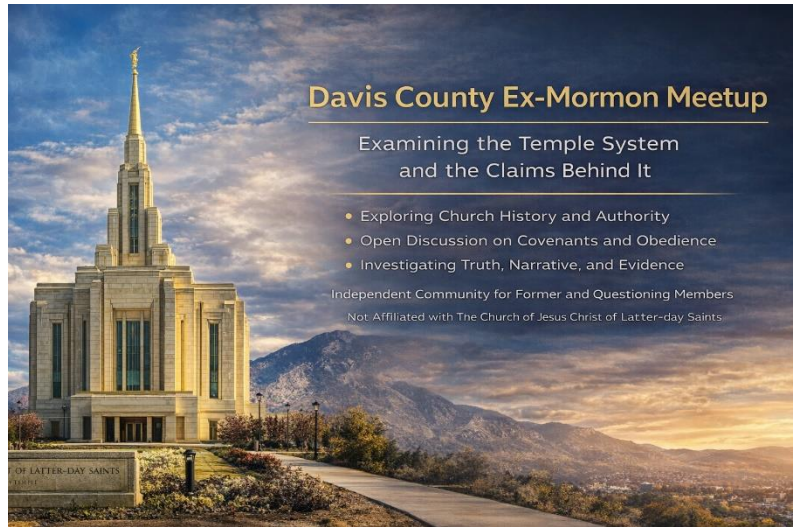
Davis County Ex-Mormon meetup Sunday Sept 20, 2026, 10:30 AM

At Smiths Marketplace, 1370 W 200 N, Kaysville, UT 84037. Entering Smith's turn right, take the up staircase on the right side of Starbucks, turn right on the 2nd floor at the top of the stairs, take 10 strides passing the lockers to the conference room entrance on the right. **Contact:** Francis 'Nelson' Henderson, 858-668-6943, francisnh12@gmail.com

[All links from Invitations](#). (380 Members)

Our purposes: when leaving Mormonism, people often find that they no longer have community or support. Our goal is to provide support for each other and to build community. So, whether you are a member, or left the church recently, or have been out for years, or were never Mormon but are looking for community, come and socialize with us and share your story.

We assist anyone wishing to resign their Church membership or post their own Exit Statement. Recommend www.wasmormon.org.



[Duty of Candor](#) The Church is not entitled to decide what the individual gets to know.

[Temple-Temptations](#) Web Site: Life Belongs to the One Who Lives It.

[“The Grand Deception”](#) Art Carpenter’s comparison of the New Testament KJV to LDS doctrines.

[Full Exit Statement](#) of Francis 'Nelson' Henderson

2026-09-20 Invitation: What kind of man experiences his own interests as the will of God?

Joseph Smith's conduct has already been established without psychological diagnosis. The 34 women, husbands, associates, court records, revelations, letters, and Smith's own words came first. Only now do I ask what the pattern means. That order matters.

Joseph Smith died in 1844. No modern clinician examined him. No responsible historical argument can pretend that a medical diagnosis made almost two centuries later possesses the certainty of a clinical examination.

I therefore do not need to diagnose Joseph Smith with Narcissistic Personality Disorder. I make a narrower and, I believe, much stronger claim:

Joseph Smith repeatedly exhibited behaviors strongly characteristic of narcissism: grandiosity, entitlement, exploitation, manipulation, lack of reciprocal empathy, exceptional rules for himself, intolerance of resistance, and the conversion of personal interests into claims of divine necessity.

The question is not whether Smith satisfies every item on a modern diagnostic checklist. The question is whether narcissism provides a recognizable human explanation for behavior we have already observed.

The Most Important Evidence Is Relational

Joseph Smith's grandiose statements are easy to find. Near the end of his life he boasted:

“I have more to boast of than ever any man had.”

He declared that he had kept an entire church together when even Jesus's followers had not remained united. Such statements are evidence of grandiosity, but they are not the strongest evidence.

- A boast can be rhetoric.
- A military uniform can be theater.
- A presidential campaign can arise from political circumstances.

The more revealing evidence appears in **relationships**. Again and again Joseph Smith entered relationships in which another person possessed something he wanted:

- a woman's affection or submission,
- Emma's acceptance,
- another man's daughter,
- another man's wife,
- a follower's property,
- an associate's loyalty,
- a critic's silence,
- or a community's obedience.



The revealing moment came when that other person possessed an **independent interest conflicting with Joseph Smith's**. What happened then? That is where the pattern becomes disturbing.

Entitlement: Other People's Boundaries Become Negotiable

A healthy relationship recognizes another person as possessing interests independent of one's own.

Narcissistic entitlement operates differently. The other person's boundary is experienced not simply as a boundary deserving respect, but as an obstacle to what the entitled person believes he deserves.

The polygamy evidence has just supplied repeated examples:

- Emma's marriage did not prevent secret additional marriages.
- Nancy Rigdon's refusal did not end Smith's effort to obtain her.
- The Lawrence sisters' dependency and property did not prevent their guardian from becoming their plural husband.
- The Partridge sisters' family relationships were subordinated to secrecy.
- Lucy Walker's reluctance encountered God's supposed command.
- Helen Mar Kimball's youth did not constitute an absolute boundary.
- Henry Jacobs's marriage to Zina did not constitute an absolute boundary.
- Orson Hyde's marriage to Marinda did not constitute an absolute boundary.
- Mary Lightner's marriage could supposedly be superseded by Smith's claim that she had belonged to him before mortal life.

The details vary. **The direction does not.** When another person's boundary conflicted with Joseph Smith's claimed purposes, the boundary repeatedly became negotiable.

Exploitation: People Become Instruments

This is where the word **exploitation** becomes important. Exploitation does not require hatred of the person being exploited. One can feel affection toward another person and still use that person instrumentally.

The ethical question is whether the other person remains an equal moral subject, or increasingly becomes a means through which one's own purposes are accomplished. Joseph Smith's relationships repeatedly show the latter danger.

- A young woman's religious faith could become leverage.
- A parent's belief in the prophet could facilitate access to a daughter.
- A husband's loyalty to the Church could weaken his ability to resist the prophet.
- Emma's belief in Joseph's calling could be invoked against her resistance to his additional marriages.
- Followers' willingness to sacrifice could become institutional resources.

The pattern is not merely that Joseph Smith possessed unusual influence. **He repeatedly benefited from the trust that other people placed in him.** The greater their belief that he spoke for God, the greater his power over their independent judgment. That is precisely why their trust imposed upon Smith an extraordinary obligation **not to exploit it.**

When Resistance Becomes Disobedience

One of the most revealing narcissistic-authoritarian patterns is the inability to permit another person to remain an equal while saying **no**. Disagreement becomes something more than disagreement:

- It becomes disloyalty.
- Insubordination.
- Betrayal.
- Opposition.

In a religious system, it can become opposition to God. Nancy Rigdon illustrates the mechanism almost perfectly. Nancy said no. Smith's *Happiness Letter* supplied a moral system in which conduct ordinarily considered wrong could become right when God required it:

“Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is.”

Lucy Walker resisted. Smith eventually answered: **“It is a command of God to you.”**

Emma resisted plural marriage. Doctrine and Covenants 132 transformed a marital dispute into a question of obedience to divine law and warned repeatedly of destruction.

The independent conscience therefore faced a remarkable transformation. The person no longer merely disagreed with **Joseph Smith**. Joseph's claimed revelation made disagreement potentially disagreement with **God**.

The narcissistic behavioral matrix identifies precisely this pattern: resistance becomes insubordination, while revelation turns Emma from a wife disagreeing with her husband into the supposedly disobedient party. That is an enormous transfer of power.

The Most Revealing Transformation: “I Want” Becomes “God Requires”

This may be the central psychological feature. An ordinary man who desires something must say:

I want this.

That leaves the other person morally free to answer:

I do not.

Joseph Smith possessed another possibility.

God requires this.

The transformation changes everything. The disagreement is no longer between two human beings with competing interests. One person's preference has acquired infinite authority. Joseph Smith becomes not merely a participant in the dispute but the interpreter of God's position within it. And remarkably, God's position repeatedly coincides with Joseph Smith's interest.

- Joseph wants plural marriage. God commands plural marriage.
- Joseph wants a particular woman. God has supposedly given that woman to Joseph.
- Joseph encounters reluctance. God supposedly requires obedience.
- Joseph faces Emma's opposition. Revelation threatens Emma.
- Joseph's conduct appears to violate an ordinary moral rule. The *Happiness Letter* explains that what is wrong under one circumstance can become right under another.

This is the recurring transformation identified in our Meetup group¹: **personal desire becomes divine mandate**, eliminating ordinary negotiation between equals.

That does not prove Joseph consciously invented every revelation. Something more psychologically interesting may have occurred.

Joseph Smith may have sincerely experienced his own desires, judgments, and interests as divine.

Sincerity would not solve the problem. It may help explain it.

Grandiosity

Grandiosity is more than boasting. At its deepest level it is an enlarged conception of one's own importance. Joseph Smith's claims expanded dramatically during his short adult life. He was not merely a minister.

- He became prophet, revelator, translator, seer, Church president, mayor, Lieutenant General, presidential candidate, and central figure in an expanding theological universe:

- He produced scripture.
- He spoke for God.
- He restored supposedly lost authority.
- He claimed priesthood extending beyond earthly government.
- He introduced ordinances necessary for exaltation.
- He became indispensable to the salvation history he himself narrated.

His famous boast therefore deserves to be considered not in isolation but against this accumulation of roles:

“I have more to boast of than ever any man had.”

Grandiosity alone does not establish narcissism. But grandiosity combined with entitlement, exploitation, exceptional rules, and intolerance of resistance becomes more significant.

Lack of Reciprocal Empathy

I would state this carefully. We cannot know that Joseph Smith was incapable of empathy. Historical accounts include occasions when he could be affectionate, generous, charismatic, and emotionally responsive.

Narcissistic behavior does not require a person to be incapable of warmth. The more important question is what happens to empathy **when another person's wellbeing conflicts with the narcissistic person's interests.**

Emma provides the clearest example. Whatever affection Joseph felt for her, he knew that plural marriage caused her profound anguish. Yet the secret marriages continued.

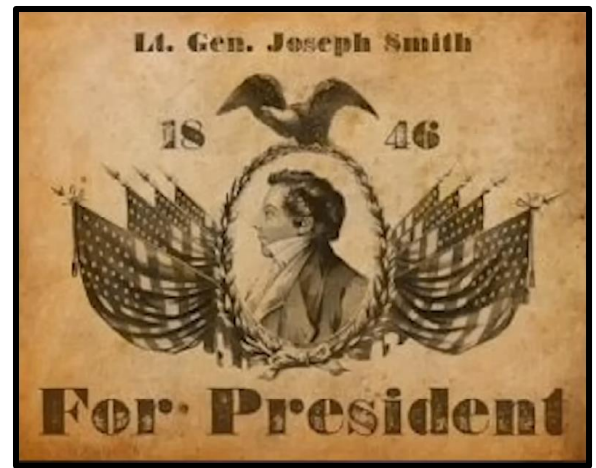
When Emma finally obtained some ability to participate, Joseph concealed material facts from her, including his previous marriages to the Partridge sisters. When Emma resisted, revelation did not primarily protect Emma from injury. It demanded accommodation from Emma. That is the relational failure.

Joseph's purposes repeatedly retained priority when empathy should have required restraint.

Exceptional Rules

Entitlement becomes particularly visible when moral rules apply asymmetrically.

- Joseph Smith taught fidelity. He secretly accumulated wives.
- He demanded loyalty. He crossed the marital boundaries of loyal followers.
- He expected followers to accept prophetic correction. Resistance to his own conduct could become apostasy or persecution.
- He demanded sacrifice. His revelations repeatedly increased his own religious position.



The issue is not that leaders sometimes possess different responsibilities. It is that Joseph Smith repeatedly claimed **exceptions advantageous to himself**, with the authority for those exceptions supplied by revelations he alone could authenticate.

The system therefore contained a dangerous circularity:

Joseph Smith possessed exceptional authority because God had chosen Joseph Smith.

How did others know God had chosen Joseph Smith?

Joseph Smith told them.

And when God supposedly granted Joseph an exception to an ordinary rule, who authenticated the exception? Again:

Joseph Smith.

Sincerity May Be Part of the Explanation

This is where I depart from the simple accusation that Joseph Smith was merely a conscious fraud. Some conduct clearly involved deception. But conscious deception does not require us to conclude that everything Joseph Smith said about himself was cynically fabricated.

Human beings possess a remarkable capacity to rationalize behavior favorable to themselves.

Narcissistic personality characteristics can make that process particularly powerful because entitlement does not necessarily *feel* like entitlement to the entitled person.

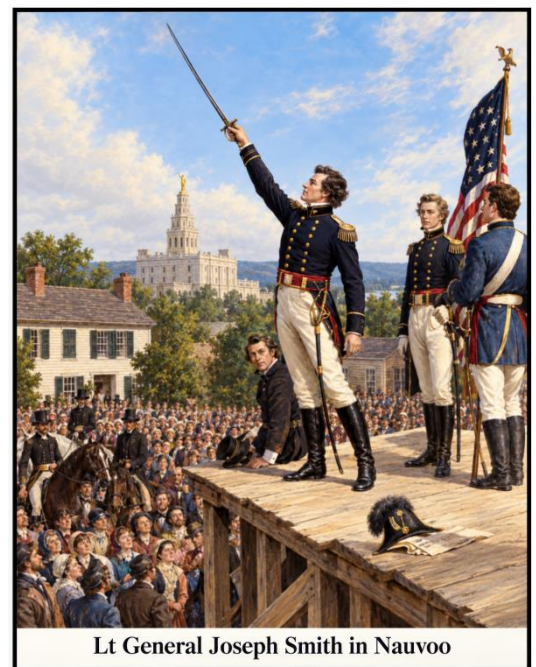
- It can feel like justice.
- Superiority can feel like competence.
- Control can feel like leadership.
- Resistance can feel like betrayal.
- Exploitation can feel like exercising one's rightful position.
- And self-interest can feel like destiny.

For Joseph Smith, **personal desire may have felt like revelation**. That possibility does not excuse him. It places responsibility where it belongs.

We no longer need to accuse God of commanding conduct that repeatedly injured other people for Joseph Smith's benefit. We can recognize a human mechanism capable of producing the same result.

The Narcissistic Pattern

I therefore do not rest my case upon a posthumous clinical diagnosis. I rest it upon observable behavior. The pattern includes:



- **Grandiosity** — an extraordinary conception of his own importance and divine role.
- **Entitlement** — ordinary boundaries and rules repeatedly yielded to his claimed exceptional status.
- **Exploitation** — other people's faith, loyalty, family relationships, property, marriages, and consciences could become instruments of his purposes.
- **Manipulation** — secrecy, selective disclosure, supernatural promises, divine commands, and religious consequences altered other people's decisions.
- **Resistance treated as disloyalty** — independent judgment could become opposition to the prophet and therefore opposition to God.
- **Lack of reciprocal empathy when interests collided** — another person's injury repeatedly failed to impose a sufficient boundary upon Smith's purposes.
- **Self-interest transformed into divine necessity** — the interests of Joseph Smith and the commands of God became remarkably difficult to distinguish.

These characteristics substantially overlap the narcissistic-authoritarian framework developed in our² newer analysis. That document appropriately treats the strength of individual historical examples differently rather than pretending every parallel has equal evidentiary weight.

Joseph Smith Seen Through His Own Footprints

We do not possess Joseph Smith's clinical examination. We possess something else.

His footprints.

- We can observe what happened to people who trusted him.
- We can observe what happened when women refused him.
- We can observe what happened when Emma resisted him.
- We can observe what happened when another man's marriage stood in his way.
- We can observe what happened when associates challenged him.
- We can observe the expansion of his titles, claims, revelations, privileges, and power.
- And most importantly, we can observe the recurring relationship between **Joseph Smith's interests and Joseph Smith's God.**

A loving and just God cannot be made the author of Joseph Smith's self-serving injury to other people.

The simpler human explanation deserves consideration:

Joseph Smith repeatedly projected his own desires, entitlement, and sense of exceptional importance into the voice of God.

Whether that process was sometimes conscious, sometimes rationalized, or sometimes sincerely experienced cannot now be known.

Nor must it be known. The ethical result was the same. Other people were required to surrender freedom, dignity, marriage, property, conscience, or wellbeing because Joseph Smith claimed that God required it.

That is why narcissism matters here. It provides a recognizable human explanation for something theology otherwise asks us to attribute to God.

Perhaps God was not behaving like Joseph Smith.

Perhaps Joseph Smith's God was behaving like Joseph Smith.

And if that is so, the problem extends beyond the personality of one nineteenth-century religious founder. Joseph Smith did not merely leave behind stories about himself.

He built his demand for submission into the religion that survived him.

That brings us to the next question:

What happens when the founder's personal demand: trust me, believe me, follow me, accept what I tell you God requires—becomes an institution?

Your newer work already has the answer waiting for us: the behavioral matrix concludes that what began as Smith's interpersonal requirement became reproducible without Smith physically present, culminating in the Temple's Law of Obedience and the broader surrender of judgment, body, time, and resources.

--- The End ---

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