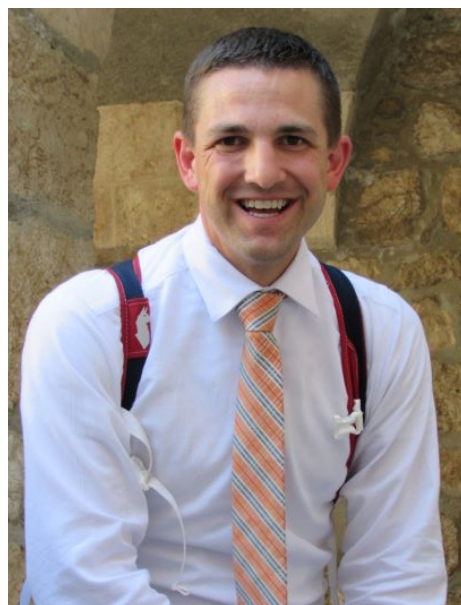


Excellence is the step beyond mediocrity.



Joshua Matson

College: Arts and Sciences

Program: Religion

Degree: PhD

Why did you choose to attend FSU to pursue a graduate degree?

The FSU [Department of Religion](#) has one of the few programs in North America that offers balanced training in the study of religion in antiquity and provides access to a renowned professor in Dead Sea Scrolls research.

What motivated you to pursue a graduate degree?

My love of learning and the pursuit of further knowledge in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Additionally, my obsession with puzzles could only be satisfied by writing this dissertation!

Importance of your research and work:

My research and work is important because it highlights and brings to life the process by which religious communities collect and authorize texts and underscores how the interpretations of those texts come about over time. While we may assume that such processes are limited to antiquity, even in our current world, there is a constant shaping of interpretation of authoritative religious texts that play a pivotal role in how individuals live their lives, how they vote or participate in politics, and how they interact with one another.

Briefly describe your career aspirations.

My greatest aspiration in a career is to help people better understand the development of religious ideas in the past and help them navigate the utilization of religion in our world today. Whether that is as a teacher in the classroom, as an author on a page, as a counselor, or as an adviser in an office, I hope that I can help people better understand the role religion plays in the world and how to better navigate and interact with it.

Advice for anyone considering graduate school.

Study what you love and pursue it with all your heart. If you love what you are going to study, graduate school will be the best thing you have ever experienced. If you are pursuing it for a career or for prestige, it isn't worth it!

Accomplishments during your graduate career that you are proud of.

I am most proud of the fact that I was able to obtain sufficient funding to spend a year abroad studying in Israel, handling Dead Sea Scrolls manuscripts, walking where the authors of the texts walked, and working with some of the brightest and most talented minds in Dead Sea Scrolls research. To fund this research, I've obtained a [Brigham Young University Dissertation Research Grant](#), an [Orion Center for Dead Sea Scrolls Research Grant](#), and a [State of Israel Advanced PhD Research Grant for International Students](#).

