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Episode 111: Dr. Lisa Tait Part II

Doctrine and Covenants 23-26

- Hank Smith: 00:03 Welcome to Part Two of this week's podcast. Right now, we come to one of the most often-quoted sections, Section 25 about Emma Smith. I'm excited, really excited to hear from Lisa because this is your area. What do we know about Emma and her childhood and her eventually marrying Joseph? What do you suppose these first few years of their marriage have been like? We'd just love to hear what you know about this, Lisa, and how you can help us understand this.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 00:36 Yeah, Emma is someone that I find that members of the church really want to know about and want to know more about. She was just a little bit older than Joseph. She's born in 1804. Her parents are Isaac and Elizabeth Hale.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 00:57 She grows up in pretty comfortable circumstances. Her family's quite prosperous, here in this Susquehanna Valley in the Harmony, Pennsylvania area. Her father made a comfortable living in shipping meat and other merchandise down river to Philadelphia and Baltimore. I think he was known as quite a prolific hunter. Big game was a way of procuring meat at the time. They lived in a fashionable frame home that was sometimes called a mansion in the area, and lived in fine circumstances, so Emma received a really good education for her time and place. She liked to ride horses, she was good at canoeing, apparently, and she was very strong, very independent. She was a tall woman, I think about five foot nine. Very tall and strong and sturdy.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 01:56 Her family, evidently, was not particularly religious for some time but she was baptized into the Congregational Church as a baby, as a child. Then, as was the case in so many places in the United States in the early nineteenth century, there was schisms and splits and preachers who'd come through and religious revivals and so forth.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 02:27 At one point, Methodists, circuit riders, the preachers, the Methodist preachers came into the valley, and Emma, as a fairly young child. I don't know the exact age, maybe about seven years old, she finds religion, so to speak. She becomes

converted and she becomes a member of a class in the Methodist Episcopal Church. So, in these classes, she would have learned to read the scriptures, to receive instruction about the gospel.

- Dr. Lisa Tait:            03:03            Then, in 1812, so what... she would have been about eight years old, a Methodist circuit rider came through Harmony and was encouraging young people to go into the woods and pray, to have spiritual experiences. A local hunter reported that he found people in the woods praying all the time, when he was out trying to hunt.
- Dr. Lisa Tait:            03:28            In fact, there's a story told that at one point, Emma's father found her praying for him, that she was praying for the welfare of her father's soul. That really impressed him and brought him to have some kind of religious faith of his own.
- Dr. Lisa Tait:            03:46            So, that's a little bit about Emma's early life. She was well-educated, she was very smart, she was very strong, she was an independent... I was going to say independent-minded, that had a certain meaning in the nineteenth century, but she was an independent woman, independent thinker.
- Dr. Lisa Tait:            04:05            We kind of see that in her relationship with Joseph Smith, because he comes into the area as a young man with Josiah Stowell on this expedition to try to dig up the Spanish treasure, that Stowell is just convinced is there for the finding. Joseph ends up boarding with the Hale family when he is working for Stowell. Now, Isaac Hale will later write that Joseph Smith followed a business of which he could not approve. This was one of the reasons that he says he didn't take a shine to Joseph Smith, so to speak. There is some indication that maybe Hale himself had thought about looking for that Spanish treasure, so I don't know about that.
- Dr. Lisa Tait:            05:05            When Emma is 21 years old, this young man named Joseph Smith comes into the neighborhood and boards with her family. He's working for Josiah Stowell digging for the treasure. Apparently, Joseph is smitten with Emma immediately. He's really just head over heels for her. Apparently, she comes to have some feelings for him as well, even though her family is not at all in favor of this relationship. Again, she comes from a respectable, prosperous family and no doubt, they felt she could have done a lot better than this itinerant treasure-seeker and farmhand than Joseph Smith was, who, again, also was not very well-educated. The words, bitterly opposed, have been used to describe how her family felt about Joseph.

- Dr. Lisa Tait: 05:59 But it's one of the oldest stories in the book, right? That true love will prevail. Stowell actually facilitates Joseph and Emma meeting, and so does Joseph Knight. He lets Joseph borrow his sleigh to, "Go and see his girl," as he puts it. Joseph and Emma are courting each other, or I guess Joseph is courting Emma as best as he can. He's not in Harmony anymore, I think he's up in Colesville, working for Joseph Knight or for Mr. Stowell, I can't remember the details in the moment.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 06:39 But Emma later tells her son. She says, "I was visiting at Mr. Stowell's and saw your father there." So, apparently they would meet each other up at Josiah Stowell's place since her parents didn't agree or didn't approve. Said, "I had no intention of marrying when I left home, but during my visit at Mr. Stowell's, your father visited me there. My folks were bitterly opposed to him and being importuned by your father." Now, importuned is a big word that means begged. "Being begged by your father. Cited by Mr. Stowell, who urged me to marry him, and preferring to marry him than to any other man I knew, I consented. We went to Squire Tarbell's and were married." So, in other words, they eloped. This is a time-honored practice of young people who were in love and their parents don't approve.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 07:33 So, they were married in January of 1827. They went from there to go and live with Joseph's parents up in Manchester in the Palmyra area in New York. That's where they were, then that Fall, when Joseph finally receives the plates in September. Of course, it's Emma who goes with him on that occasion.
- Hank Smith: 07:58 I love this so far. It seems that Joseph Smith in my studies, he just was not complete without her. That the moment she comes into his life, he not only becomes spiritually ready for the plates, he just grows up. Some of the things that Moroni's been begging him to do for the last four years, he does with Emma in his life.
- Hank Smith: 08:25 The importuning part reminded me so much of my own courtship, right, John? The begging part, the, "Please, please, I know this might not look good to you, but it looks amazing to me."
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 08:43 Yeah. Even throughout their lives, we have a few letters between Joseph and Emma. We have more that he wrote to her than that she wrote to him. But in those letters, his expressions of love and affection and longing for Emma are consistent and really beautiful.

- Dr. Lisa Tait: 09:08 He writes to her, for example, when he is in Liberty Jail. He says, "If you want to know how much I want to see you, examine your feelings how much you want to see me. I would gladly walk from here to you barefoot and bareheaded to see you and think it a great pleasure and never count it toil." So, throughout their marriage, they definitely loved each other.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 09:33 In fact, in the same interview where she talks about their courtship, she tells her son that she and Joseph got along really well, that they didn't quarrel. "He knew that I wished for nothing but what was right. And as he wished for nothing else, we did not disagree. He usually gave some heed to what I had to say," she says. "It was quite a grievous thing to many that I had any influence with him." So, they definitely seemed to have had a partnership, and maybe even to a degree, that wasn't typical for a marriage in that period, where he gave heed to Emma's opinions and advice and feelings in a way that maybe wasn't expected for men in a marriage in that time.
- Hank Smith: 10:29 No. At this time, like you said, she is baptized in July. Is that where this revelation comes from? Post-baptism?
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 10:38 Yeah. She's baptized in June, at the very end of June, and it's that occasion where someone's broken up the dam and then they have to re-dam the stream and then before she can be confirmed, Joseph is arrested. So, it's been a really intense experience for her just to get baptized. By the time they go back to Harmony where this revelation comes, she has not been confirmed yet and hasn't received the gift of the Holy Ghost. That figures into the revelation as well.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 11:11 We wish we knew more about the reasons for this revelation, like where did this come from? Was there a question that was asked? Was there some kind of perceived need that led Joseph to inquire? We just don't know. We don't know what the background was for this revelation but it is such a personal and beautiful response by the Lord to Emma's thoughts and feelings and needs and to her potential and her gifts and her future.
- Hank Smith: 11:48 Yeah. I love this section, one, just because of what it teaches and also that the Lord is no different with His daughters than His sons. He sounds the same. He doesn't say, "Well, hi Emma, yes, thanks for doing your work. Is there a boy there I can talk to?" He is really, He has a lot in store for her. He speaks the same to them. He even says, "All those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom." Beautiful.

Dr. Lisa Tait: 12:26 He addresses her as my daughter, which he'll do with Joseph. "My son." He'll say that many times in the revelations. There may be another layer here because Emma was so estranged from her own father that the Lord is reminding her, "You're my daughter, whatever your earthly relationships are, you are mine."

Hank Smith: 12:46 Yeah. I was just thinking as you were giving us Emma's background, how different her life would have been had she not married Joseph Smith. She stays on the farm, she inherits probably this wealth.

Dr. Lisa Tait: 13:00 Marries well.

Hank Smith: 13:03 Here she is. I have a quote from her mother-in-law, quote, "I have never seen a woman in my life who would endure every species of fatigue and hardship from month to month and from year to year, with that unflinching courage, zeal and patience, which Emma has ever done. She has been tossed upon the ocean of uncertainty, she has breasted the storms of persecution, and buffeted the rage of men and devils, which would have borne down almost any other woman." I wish my mother-in-law would say such wonderful things about me. That is a beautiful, a tribute to her.

John Bytheway: 13:46 I read that too and I thought, "This is pretty cool. This is a mother-in-law talking about her daughter-in-law." I loved how supportive and... I was thinking about this baptism where people come and interrupt it. I mean, it sounds like it's malicious, what they're trying to do. I always have thought we've put such emphasis recently, in recent years, on teaching the Savior's way. When I read the Bible, when the Savior was teaching, He had opposition there so many times. I'm thinking trying to have a baptism and make a beautiful memory and what do you have there? People opposing it and getting loud and obnoxious. And here's Lucy saying, "Hey, Emma, unflinching, doing this." I love that, I've read that too, Hank, and I really liked that. That made me feel like there must have been a friendship there. Maybe Lisa can speak to that of Lucy and Emma.

Dr. Lisa Tait: 14:50 For sure. Lucy makes that statement in her history that she dictates in about 1845, I think. In the year or two after the death of Joseph and Hyrum. So, I think we should note by that time, there is already some bitterness towards Emma, there's already some bad feelings, and so this statement that Lucy makes is meant to defend Emma, I think, within that context.

- Dr. Lisa Tait: 15:21 Lucy does live with Emma in her last years, even after the Saints have gone west. So, Emma takes care of Lucy in her old age, which is a pattern for Emma throughout her life. She's always taking people in, she's always taking care of people, to the extent that she ever has resources to share, she's sharing them.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 15:43 In Kirtland, she and Elizabeth Ann Whitney put on a feast, a feast for the poor, where they made all kinds of food and invited those who were needy to come and partake and have plenty to eat. So, that's just one example of many that we could multiply of how Emma was such a generous... I think if you could have talked to the Saints in Nauvoo about her, that's what they would have said. That she was a great help to Joseph and she was a great help to the Saints in her unflinching, unfailing attempts to sucker those who needed it and to provide help to those who were in need.
- Hank Smith: 16:32 I mean, she crosses the frozen river to get from Missouri back into Illinois. I've read about when they first settled Nauvoo, and it was Commerce, Illinois, and everyone got so sick with the malaria that her home basically became a hospital. She's stepping over people inside the house and outside the house.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 16:54 Yeah, yeah. Those were the circumstances. That was not at all unusual for her.
- Hank Smith: 17:00 What do you see, Lisa, that we could use today, from the Lord's message to Emma?
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 17:08 Well, we could go through every verse in this revelation. There's something rich in every verse. Before I apply it to myself, I always want to know what it meant for the person who's receiving it at the time. The Lord tells her, "I'll preserve thy life." We don't know how threatened she felt at various times, but there were certainly other times in her life when she could have felt that her life was in danger.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 17:43 In fact, let me read to you from the letter that she writes to Joseph. He's in Liberty Jail at this point, and she has had to make this flight from Missouri in the middle of winter with her four little children. She says, "The walls, bars, and bolts, rolling rivers, running streams, rising hills, sinking valleys and spreading prairies that separate us and the cruel injustice that first cast you into prison and still holds you there, with many other considerations, places my feelings far beyond description. No one but God knows the reflections of my mind and the feelings of my heart when I left our house and home and almost all of everything that we possessed, excepting our little children, and

took my journey out of the State of Missouri, leaving you shut up in that lonesome prison. But the reflection is more than human nature ought to bear. And if God does not record our sufferings and avenge our wrongs on them that are guilty, I shall be sadly mistaken."

- Dr. Lisa Tait:            18:48            Then, she concludes... I mean that's such a powerful expression of what she's been through. She says her feelings are beyond description. She can't even give words to what's she feeling. But then she concludes and says, "I shall live and am yet willing to suffer more if it is the will of kind heaven that I should for your sake."
- Dr. Lisa Tait:            19:09            That actually is just really poignant to me because we know that she has yet to suffer a lot more, even at the moment that that letter is written. "So, I will preserve thy life," the Lord tells her. That must have been a promise that she clung to.
- Dr. Lisa Tait:            19:27            He goes on to call her, "An elect lady." Now, here's another example of biblical language. This comes from the New Testament. This will become important in Nauvoo, which we'll talk about here in just a minute. Says, "Murmur not because of the things which thou hast not seen, for they are withheld from thee and from the world, which is wisdom in me in a time to come."
- Dr. Lisa Tait:            19:53            When we think about, she's there by Joseph's side, as so many of these things are happening. Yet, if we think about what has she not seen, she hasn't seen the angels. She hasn't seen the plates in the way that the witnesses and some of the other people did. She definitely saw them in the sense that she talks about how they were lying on the table, covered with a cloth, in the same room where she was working. She rustled the edges of them and moved them from place to place as she needed to in order to do her work. But she has not violated what she understands to be this commandment that they're not to be shown to anyone, and she affirms that to her son in this interview at the end of her life that no, she never saw them. So, there are many things that she hasn't seen at this point. The Lord is telling her, "I know that that may be difficult for you."
- Dr. Lisa Tait:            20:55            "The office of thy calling shall be for a comfort unto my servant, Joseph, with consoling words in the spirit of meekness." Then, it talks about her being a scribe for him when Oliver Cowdery needs to go and do other business. We know, of course, she had already served as a scribe during the translation of the Book of Mormon. There were times when she wrote for Joseph and we do have her handwriting on some of the pages of the Bible

translation, so we know that she did fulfill this calling of being a scribe for Joseph Smith.

- Dr. Lisa Tait: [21:34](#) Then, it goes on to say, "Thou shalt be ordained under his hand to expound scriptures, and to exhort the church, according as it shall be given thee by my Spirit. For he shall lay his hands upon thee, and thou shalt receive the Holy Ghost, and thy time shall be given to writing and to learning much." Okay, well, there's so much we could say here as well. She had not been confirmed yet so this seems to point to that happening. If we look at Section 27, the revelation that comes just a short time later, that comes in conjunction with the time when Emma was confirmed. So, we know that that did happen, but this idea that she's going to be an elect lady, that she'll be ordained to expound scriptures and exhort the church, seems to say that she's going to have a role to play as a leader, a leader in the church.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: [22:33](#) Of course, this comes to be understood as being fulfilled in 1842 when she is called and set apart or ordained, as they use the term then, as president of this new Relief Society for the women that's formed in Nauvoo. This idea of expounding scriptures and exhorting the church. This word, exhort, had a particular meaning in the Methodist Church that she came from. Exhorters were lay preachers who had a calling to teach the other members of the church. There's no evidence that this is fulfilled, that she takes this role at the time, at least in a public way. This seems to be, and Joseph gets up on March 17th, 1842 at the organization of the Relief Society and says that, "This is a fulfillment of this revelation to Sister Emma."
- Dr. Lisa Tait: [23:30](#) He also says that she was ordained at the time, meaning in 1830, that she had previously been ordained as this revelation instructs. Now, whether that was something separate from her confirmation and receiving of the Holy Ghost as a member of the church, whether there was anything else particular done, we don't know, at that time. We just know that Joseph says that she had been ordained in 1830.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: [23:59](#) Let me just read you a few things that he says here. So, this is in March of 1842, Joseph stands up in front of the women and he reads this revelation, this Section 25 and stated that she had been ordained to expound the scriptures to all and, "to teach the female part of the community in that not she alone, but others may attain to the same blessings." He goes on to read from the Second Epistle of John, first verse, which is where we get the term, elect lady, and he reads that to show that respect



was then had to the same thing and why she was called an elect lady is because she was elected to preside.

- Dr. Lisa Tait: [24:45](#) According to the customs and the procedures of the day at this organization meeting for the Relief Society, Elizabeth Ann Whitney had nominated Emma to be the president of the society and the sisters had voted on that, and in that sense, elected her to be the president of the Relief Society.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: [25:06](#) So, again, gosh, there's so much more we could say about her leadership of the Relief Society. If you're interested, you can go online to the Church Historian's Press or actually it's in your Gospel Library app now, the book, The First 50 Years of Relief Society contains all of the minutes of the Nauvoo Relief Society. You can read those minutes and you can see Emma leading, you can see what she says, and the really vigorous leadership that she takes of the Relief Society in Nauvoo.
- Hank Smith: [25:43](#) So, you would just go to your Gospel Library app, you would hit Restoration and Church History, then there's another tab called The Women's History and under that, there is that book right there, The First 50 Years of Relief Society. That's going to be my scripture study.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: [26:02](#) That's right.
- Hank Smith: [26:04](#) I'm going to go through and look at that.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: [26:06](#) It's a really impressive volume. It's a very substantial volume. It's very much like a Joseph Smith Papers Volume. But the section introductions, the introductions to the documents are very readable and very, very helpful. That book is so amazing for so many reasons that go beyond Emma. It's great for people to know that that's there.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: [26:33](#) While you're there in that Women's History section, you should also look at the book called At The Pulpit, which is a collection of discourses given by Latter-day Saint women over the span of the history of the church. We do have some of Emma's words in there, we have Lucy Mack Smith and comes all the way up to the last decade. So, that's also a really important resource that people should take a look at and use in your talks and your lessons.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: [27:02](#) But Emma says that this opening meeting of the Relief Society says, "We are going to do something extraordinary. We expect extraordinary occasions and pressing calls."

- Dr. Lisa Tait: 27:11 Well, let's just make note of the end of verse eight, "Thy time shall be given to writing and to learning much." That's not necessarily a commission that a woman in this period would expect to receive at that time and it speaks to her abilities and to the role that she can play in the church.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 27:33 Now, we get to verses nine and 10, which are really the connection to Section 24. We talked about what Joseph and Emma had been through in terms of their poverty and reliance on other members of the church to support them. You can see that this must be weighing heavily on Emma's mind because the Lord tells her, "Thou needest not fear, for thy husband shall support thee in the church; for unto them is his calling, that all things might be revealed unto them, whatsoever I will, according to their faith. And verily I say unto thee, that thou shalt lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better."
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 28:20 I mean, again, Emma came from very prosperous circumstances and she definitely must have felt the difference in her life that it had made to marry this poor man who's a religious leader and held in suspicion and disesteem by a lot of people. By this point, she has lost her first child, she is or shortly will become pregnant with twins that she will also lose early the next year, she's beginning to have a sense of hardship that her life may entail. So, the Lord speaks to her fears. "Don't be afraid, thy husband shall support thee in the church." When you read that together with Section 24, with the other revelation, and then throughout the revelations, we have sprinklings of this idea of the church supporting Joseph and his family.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 29:30 There's no question here that the Lord is not promising her wealth. He's not promising her ease and comfort. In fact, He says, "Lay aside the things of this world and seek for the things of a better." That's maybe one of the places where we all can do some soul-searching about what are the things of this world, how do you lay them aside, how do we seek for something better? Can we really do that when the chips are down? Because it's hard. It's hard when you don't know if your children are going to eat. It's hard when you don't know where the next pair of shoes is going to come from. I think Emma experienced that and I know many of us have experienced that. Many of our members experience that.
- Hank Smith: 30:26 Yeah, wow. That verse. That is something I've always... it means to me now than it ever has with your explanation. I've used that verse to question myself many times. Am I just okay with distractions sometimes? A new show on Netflix, great. The

things of this world and the Lord's kind of saying, "Hey, could we put that aside for a little bit?" All these distractions.

- Hank Smith: 30:54 I teach the New Testament at BYU, Lisa, and one thing I teach every semester is the parable of the sower and the one soil that probably scares me the most is the soil that has so many weeds, so many other things in it, the plant just cannot grow. Because all these weeds are taking all the resources, all the sunlight, all the water, taking all the nutrients out of the soil and the plant doesn't get any. I've wondered how many times this has been me. Probably neither of you. But it definitely has been me where I've got so much entertainment going on in my life that the things of a better world aren't getting my time. If the Lord would probably say that to me as well, "Why don't we lay aside the things of this world and come after what I have for you?" Oh.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 31:50 He does say that, many different times in many different ways, throughout the scriptures.
- John Bytheway: 31:56 I had underlined the footnote to Ether 12:4 right there because here's Moroni who is all alone. I like to think of Moroni as the ultimate single adult because his greatest work was done while he was alone. But he finds this Book of Ether and here's a second one as for how nations fall when they reject Christ, puts in the record of the Jaredites. But in Ether 12:4 which is footnoted there, he says, "Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world." And he couldn't improve his world. It was all over for him, for Moroni, but he always had hope for a better world. So, I love the phrase here. This, "There's a better world coming and focus on that one."
- Hank Smith: 32:49 In the parable of the sower, the Lord says that the weeds are the deceitful of riches.
- John Bytheway: 32:54 Of riches.
- Hank Smith: 32:55 The deceitful of riches and the cares of this world. You're right, Lisa, this is throughout the scriptures. Lehi's dream, do you want the building or do you want the tree? You've got to make a choice. Do you want the things of this world or do you want something? The Lord even... He flat out says it, "Do you want something better? What I'm offering you is better than what the world offers you." So, it's got to be frustrating for Him to think, "Why? Why? What is so attractive about the things of this world that you would rather have that than what I'm offering you over here?"

- Dr. Lisa Tait: 33:34 I think He understands it actually. I think that's why He says this. I think He knows exactly what human nature is, exactly what the human condition is. To what John said, unlike Moroni, we can make our lives better, most of us. We live in a world, especially those of us who are blessed with the prosperity of middle-class American life these days, there's no limit to what we can seek for and obtain, riches-wise, in this life. There's some limit, but we like to think there's not. So, we really can spend our lives seeking after the things of this world. As long as we pay our tithing, as long as we go to church, that's enough, right?
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 34:33 This is one of the difficulties, and if we were talking about the law of consecration here, which you'll get to in later sections, I think the core question that it comes down to is how much is enough? How much is enough? We have to ask that question of ourselves. That's what it comes down to is we have to ask, how much is enough? When I have sufficient for my needs, then my imperative is to give and to spend my life seeking for the things of a better world.
- Hank Smith: 35:15 Yeah, that's so instructive. In the Book of Revelation, there's this moment where the Savior calls to the people in the great and spacious building and He says, "Come out of her, my people. That you receive not of her sins and of her plagues. Come out of her." I just liked what you said. Throughout the scriptures, the Lord is saying, "Leave that, come here. Leave that, come to me. I offer you something better."
- Hank Smith: 35:44 I want to move to this selection of hymns. What can you tell us about this? This is a new thing. We have a church. We're going to need a hymn book.
- Hank Smith: 35:57 Let me read the verse. It's verse 11. "It shall be given thee, also, to make a selection of sacred hymns, as it shall be given thee, which is pleasing unto me, to be had in my church." And then He goes on to talk about, "My soul delights in the songs of the heart, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and I'll answer it with a blessing upon their head." I think the Lord tells... He likes music. "Wherefore, lift up thy heart and rejoice, and cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made." What can you tell us about Emma and the hymnbook?
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 36:29 Yeah. One thing that I can tell you is that singing was a big part of the Methodist tradition that she came from. We still have in our hymnbook many hymns that came out of that Methodist hymn tradition. I Know That My Redeemer Lives is one of them, for example.

- Dr. Lisa Tait: 36:46 This is 1830. It appears that the plan was to publish the hymnal along with the Book of Commandments and the early revelations that William W. Phelps was working on in Jackson County in the summer of 1833 when the mob comes in and breaks up the press. So, the Book of Commandments is never finished, the hymnal is not published at that time.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 37:15 Emma's role, initial role, in selecting hymns seems to have been just that. Deciding which hymns would be included. I don't know how much we know, this isn't something I'm a total expert on, but the development of this first hymnal becomes kind of a collaborative thing between Emma and between W. W. Phelps, as he's known. He's contributing many hymn texts that he's writing which are either hymns that he's taking from the Protestant tradition and adapting with Latter Day Saint content and lyrics, or he's writing original hymns. So, she definitely plays an important role and this is recognized as a responsibility that's given to her by revelation, to select the hymns.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 38:13 The first hymnal is finally published in... the date on it is 1835. It looks like the book itself didn't actually come out until 1836, but it's around the same time that the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants is published. It's a little tiny book. If you ever come into the Church History Library, we have had one of the first hymnals in our display cases there in the Church History Library, so you can see for yourself that it's just a little tiny book that you could put in your pocket. It didn't have the music, just the lyrics to the hymns.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: 39:01 Over time, there's felt like a need to have other editions of hymnals come out. It always comes back to what's Emma role in all of this? In about, I think it was about 1840, the brethren who are in England are wanting to publish a hymnal for the use of the Saints in England. I think it's Brigham Young that takes the lead in that. There's some back and forth about it, but there's an edition of hymns that bears more of the apostles' influence on it. There's been some interesting study done to look at what were the types of hymns that Emma chose and emphasized as opposed to maybe what some of the male leaders did? Emma's affinity was for hymns that expressed a personal relationship with Christ, that spoke of personal religious experience of the grace and power that came from these personal religious experiences. Whereas the Apostles' Hymnal, as it's called, tends to emphasize priesthood and restoration and big doctrinal themes.

Dr. Lisa Tait: 40:20 In the long run, that becomes more of the basis for our hymnbook than what Emma's early hymnal was. But we do still have, and if you look at the bottom of the page, if you still use a paper hymnbook or if you're using the electronic version with the images, it does note which hymns were included in that first hymnal. So, we know that Emma did play a major role. In fact, Lucy Smith describes Emma's work at this time as her whole heart being in it, that she was very much interested in this calling that she'd been given. That was a significant thing for a woman to be given that kind of a responsibility in the early church.

Hank Smith: 41:02 Wow. Music is such an integral part of my own spirituality that, to me, I'm so glad that from the very beginning, the Lord is saying, "Yeah, music needs to be a part of this." Because I know for many of the students I've taught, it's the language of the spirit to them is music.

Dr. Lisa Tait: 41:24 Absolutely. The way it's expressed here, the language is so beautiful, "My soul delighteth in the song of the heart." The Lord says, "My soul." The Lord's soul delighteth.

Hank Smith: 41:32 My soul, yeah.

Dr. Lisa Tait: 41:33 "In the song of the heart, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me." I think we've all had that experience of singing in a prayerful way, in a way that becomes a communion and a plea to the Lord. So, it's expressed really beautifully there.

Hank Smith: 41:49 Yeah, I think in the Gospel of Mark, it says, "Just before the Savior goes to the Garden of Gethsemane, He and His disciples, the Apostles and others, they sang. They sang just before that." I've always thought of that as I sing the Sacrament Hymn. I'm thinking, "This is what the Savior did before He went to Gethsemane."

Hank Smith: 42:09 I think most of us would just say, you can feel it. You can feel the Holy Ghost, the Lord, love music. There's a language there that sometimes can convey things that just words cannot, in music.

Hank Smith: 42:26 So, let's finish out this section, Lisa. Where the Lord talks about, "Lift up your heart and rejoice. You're going to receive a crown of righteousness."

Dr. Lisa Tait: 42:37 Something I noticed in verse 13 that's really interesting, where it says, "Cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made." As

far as I could tell, this is the first time in the revelations that that word covenants is used in this sense. That covenants that you have made, a personal covenant with God. It talks about covenant of Israel and stuff earlier, but this is, as far as I could tell, the first time that He's talking about your covenants in a personal way.

Dr. Lisa Tait: 43:09

Of course, that takes us back to Mosiah 18, and Emma's just recently been baptized. You're willing to enter into a covenant with Him. That seems to be very clearly a reference to her baptism and the covenant there. Perhaps again, we don't know how well she knew the Book of Mormon at this time, but certainly, that was a passage in the Book of Mormon that had stuck out to Joseph and Oliver as they're figuring out what this new church is going to look like.

Hank Smith: 43:54

You described her life to us as earlier, she does bear other people's burdens for the rest of her life. Her husband's and others.

Dr. Lisa Tait: 44:04

Yes, she does.

John Bytheway: 44:05

One of the questions I was going to ask because I want to know if this story is really true and accurate, because to me, it's kind of a window into Joseph and Emma's marriage maybe, is when he is translating and says, "Emma, does Jerusalem have a wall around it?" Can you shed some light on that fun story?

Dr. Lisa Tait: 44:28

Yeah, that's a story she tells. She recalls that when he was... I guess it's when she was serving as a scribe. He stops and he just looks horrified. He's been, I guess, had his face in the hat looking at the stone and he looks horrified and asks Emma, "Do Jerusalem have walls?" Of course, Emma being well-educated in the Bible, says, "Yes, of course it did." And he's very relieved. "Oh, good. I thought I'd been deceived there for a minute."

Dr. Lisa Tait: 45:03

So, she used that as an example to show how unlearned Joseph Smith was at the time he translated the Book of Mormon. She testified strongly that he couldn't even write a well-worded letter at the time that he is translating the Book of Mormon and says, "Though I was there and witnessed all of the events, it is a marvelous work and a wonder to me, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon." So, she bears a really strong testimony of the miracle that that was. So, yeah, that story is part of her illustration of how Joseph Smith was not capable of writing this book of his own initiative.

John Bytheway: 45:50 I kind of just love the window into the marriage of Emma's more educated than Joseph is and he can rely on her. I love that he could immediately stop, "Emma, does Jerusalem have a wall around it?" And that she would-

Dr. Lisa Tait: 46:05 It's one of the reasons Joseph has so much respect for her and so much reliance on her is that she fills in some gaps that he has, especially at first.

John Bytheway: 46:15 Yeah, I love that aspect of their marriage. My wife just creamed me in the ACT test, so I have to rely on her sometimes like this.

Hank Smith: 46:27 Lisa, as you were talking about Emma's final testimony to her son, I have this thought and you both can correct me, but if a critic of Joseph Smith and the church is willing to say that, "The Book of Mormon is a fraud." Then, what does that say? What are you saying about the character of Emma Smith? That she was willing, on her deathbed, to lie to her own children? Are you willing to go there? If you're willing to say, "Hey, I don't believe in the Book of Mormon. I think it's a fraud," then you also are saying that Emma Smith has no character whatsoever. That on her deathbed, she's willing to lie to her own children. I would never be willing to go there. I would never be willing to impune her like that or anyone else involved, but her especially.

Dr. Lisa Tait: 47:16 I have had students ask me in the past because they're aware of Emma's later life and her disaffiliation with the church that comes to Utah. That final testimony that she gives is given to her son, Joseph Smith III, who is the leader of RLDS Church at the time, so we have to understand that to some extent, her lot is in with the RLDS Church at that point. So, when she's testifying about the church, she's seeing that in a different way than what we would see it if we read that testimony out of context.

Dr. Lisa Tait: 47:55 But I don't think that that's a deal breaker. I think as members of the church today, we can still rely on that testimony of Emma's because she's speaking primarily of the events of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. So, whatever her later relationship with the church is is not... that's not up for grabs at the time in the late 1820s.

Hank Smith: 48:24 [crosstalk 00:48:24]. I don't know if you had a chance to listen to our interview with Casey, but he says the same thing. He says her, David Whitmer, there's no reason to say they're... they're telling us how miraculous it was. Why would we refuse to hear them on this?



Dr. Lisa Tait: 48:38 Yeah, in some ways, the fact that they didn't stay with what we think of as the mainstream church adds credence to that because, especially in the case of a David Whitmer whose disaffection from Joseph Smith is so keen, he had every reason in the world to repudiate that and yet he didn't. Likewise, with Emma, she just doesn't qualify her testimony.

Hank Smith: 49:03 Dr. Lisa Olsen Tait, that is your official title. You are a historian and a scholar. You know as much about this history as anyone else. Certainly, you know as much about this history as a critic of the church. Yet, here you are, faithful, believing. Yet, here you know the details of where Joseph and Emma are, according to the month and year.

Hank Smith: 49:39 We want to talk to Lisa. What has the restoration done for Lisa as a mother, as a wife and also as a historian and a scholar?

Dr. Lisa Tait: 49:49 When people ask me why I do history, what is it that drew me to doing history? My answer is people. I'm interested in people. I'm interested in the human condition and the human experience over time, how we're the same, how things change, how people have experienced life, and how much we share with the people who have come before us in this world.

Dr. Lisa Tait: 50:18 For me, my bedrock perspective on history then is that it's about people. By definition, that means people are human. They have weakness. They're frail. They're imperfect. What we call history, they called life. They were embedded and enmeshed in the same kind of uncertainties and messiness and difficulties that we deal with all the time.

Dr. Lisa Tait: 50:49 To me, that perspective makes the hand of the Lord more evident when it is there because we see the experiences, the events, the things that happen that are beyond human capability, that are beyond just what human beings can do and experience on a day-to-day basis.

Dr. Lisa Tait: 51:17 In my own life, I have had those experiences too. They usually come in very quiet ways. They're usually very much bound up in the circumstances and the complexities of my life as it unfolds from minute to minute. Recognizing that about Joseph Smith, about Emma, about the early Saints, I think is important and I think is helpful in recognizing how God really works in the world. It's through the weak and the simple, as He says. It's through small and simple things. It's through the still small voice. Then, there are the moments when it's a little more than

that. We recognize those because they do lift us out of the everyday circumstances of our lives and we can see that that's how it's been for people in the past as well.

- Dr. Lisa Tait: [52:24](#) That having been said, it's utterly impossible for us to ever go back and completely reconstruct the past. I can't go back and reconstruct yesterday, minute by minute. Because we don't have... what would you base that on? We can only reconstruct history based on the sources that we have. That is subject to so many variables, of what got written down and what got saved and was it accessible and do we have it now and then can we make sense out of it, given that our world is so different than their world?
- Dr. Lisa Tait: [53:03](#) So, I just find that my testimony is based on the witness of the spirit. My testimony is based on seeking and immersing myself in the word and having experiences with the Lord that are very powerful and very real, just like these revelations that we've been talking about today were for the people who received them.
- Dr. Lisa Tait: [53:33](#) My confidence in these people and their experiences is strong based on the records that we have and the experiences that they've recorded for us. I think we can learn a great deal from those and we can be inspired by them. But no matter how deeply we study, we can't prove anything one way or another through history. You also can't disprove anything through history. The faith and testimony, that comes through the Holy Spirit and only through the Holy Spirit. But by reading about the experiences of other people, we can share in their experiences and we can have our own faith strengthened and we can have our experiences become more meaningful as we see how we're sharing in that human experience over time.
- Hank Smith: [54:34](#) Wow. I love that. The idea that here are ordinary people having extraordinary experiences. For me, this podcast, I feel like a very ordinary person having an extraordinary experience this year. John, don't you feel the same way?
- John Bytheway: [54:52](#) Yeah. My Doctrine and Covenants will never be the same. Every week, I just look forward to taking more notes, and my nodding muscles are getting sore, like "Oh." Thank you so much.
- Hank Smith: [55:09](#) I ran out of room on my Section 25 margins as I was writing.
- John Bytheway: [55:14](#) Oh man, yeah.

Hank Smith: 55:15 So, I just learned some much. Dr. Tait, Lisa Olsen Tait, thank you so much for being here and giving us your time and giving our listeners so much information and so much knowledge in making these sections now so rich. Thank you so much.

Dr. Lisa Tait: 55:33 Thank you. It's been fun.

Hank Smith: 55:35 We want to thank all of our listeners, of course, for sticking with us. We want to thank our producer, Shannon Sorensen. We want to thank our production crew, David Perry and Lisa Spice. As I said now, we are on social media so we want to thank our social media expert, Jamie Nielsen. Thank you so much to our entire team and we'll see you on the next episode of Follow Him.