

Hank Smith: [00:00:05](#) Welcome to part two of this week's podcast. Give us a quick background on Joseph Smith Sr. from Dr. Dirkmaat.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:00:12](#) It's clear that Joseph Smith has a close relationship with his father, one in which his father both trusts and understands Joseph and that Joseph trusts him. Much of this is coming from Lucy Smith's account of things. She's the one who tells us that Joseph, when he's having his operation, wants his dad to hold him. It is his father that Joseph tells about this vision that he's had. And to his father's credit, his father says, "You better go do what that angel told you to do then." I don't know that I would have the same reaction. If my son came to me and said, "Dad, I just saw an angel."

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:00:53](#) I'd be like, "Okay, how much money do you need to have this conversation end?" I don't know that my reaction would be to believe that that's the case.

Hank Smith: [00:01:03](#) My kids know what I'd say back, "Well, why don't you go tell your mother."

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:01:07](#) "Tell the angel that until he appears to mom, it doesn't matter." The reality is that they're clearly close. And it's interesting because, I don't want to say this in a very negative way, but by the world's standards, by the standards of the world, who we know look upon the outward appearance, but it's God who judges by the heart, by the world's standards, Joseph Smith, Sr. in many ways is a failure. He is not a competent farmer. He hasn't been able to provide for his family. They still don't even own their own land that they're living on. There is still a threat of having everything taken away from them.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:01:50](#) His business ventures have failed. His children are forced to work as day laborers for other people. As far as the world is concerned, they view Joseph Smith, Sr. and say, "There's a guy who clearly isn't capable." But it's very interesting to see Joseph's reaction to his father, that he sees his father as someone he can trust, as someone he clearly loves, as someone who he can tell something that is profoundly unbelievable and that his father's response is going to be positive and supportive. So I think that Joseph Smith, Sr. and Joseph had a very close bond, one that I think increases even more so after Alvin dies-- after the mortality comes into full effect after Joseph's initial visions.

Hank Smith: [00:02:46](#) We should probably say that Joseph Smith Sr.'s difficulties aren't all his fault.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:02:52](#) There are very few people on earth who all of their difficulties are all their own fault.

Hank Smith: [00:02:57](#) He's had people rip him off.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:02:59](#) He's had bad luck.

John Bytheway: [00:03:00](#) --the volcano.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:03:01](#) Yeah. Farmers today have crop failures, and it's not because, "Well, you're obviously a sinner." Now again, though, in the 19th century, that was very much the way, especially in this Calvinist, New England, Upper New York type of world. If things were going poorly for you, it would very easily be a sign that you were under God's condemnation. And why would you be under God's condemnation? Well, because you're a sinner. Certainly, that would be the outward pressure that people would feel. You must not be favored of God, or your crops wouldn't fail. You'd get your ginseng money back. You wouldn't have ships that don't make their markets; you'd succeed.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:03:43](#) And so, yes, it's not a question of whether or not Joseph Smith Sr.'s willing to work hard or try different things. In the last great housing collapse--financial crisis in 2009--there are thousands of Latter-day Saints who lost their homes. And it would be a pretty cold-hearted, unfeeling thing to believe that the reason why they did is they just weren't paying their tithing. The reality is, we live in a mortal world that is at times terrible, and that that's something that we chose to accept. We came to this world knowing that it would at times be terrible. Yeah, sometimes we're punished for things that we do, but other times, it's incidents to mortality that things happen that hurt us.

Hank Smith: [00:04:36](#) I can see why when Dr. Harper told us that Joseph Smith, Sr., he doesn't like the hypocrisy in the churches--why that might be part of it. Just this, "Look at you, you sinner."

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:04:51](#) You could definitely see that. We know that the Smiths are profoundly affected by the sermon that is delivered at Alvin's funeral.

Hank Smith: [00:05:00](#) We haven't heard about that, Gerrit. Why don't you just quickly go over that?

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:05:03](#) Again, this is according to a later account, that the Smiths, most of them anyway, were members of the Presbyterian Church in Palmyra, especially Lucy, she's. . . . As poor as they are, she has

donated enough to the Presbyterian Church in town that they actually have a pew. All of you have had the experience of showing up to your local ward and the row that you usually sit on—you know there's some weird family there because it's a missionary farewell. And even though you shouldn't have the slightest . . . it shouldn't put you out at all, because it's not your bench, it's an open church. I guess, come sooner. People will still be like, "Oh, well, they're sitting where we. . . ."

Hank Smith: [00:05:48](#) "That's our chair!" The kids look lost.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:05:50](#) Exactly. Like, "No, dad, we always sit on that furthest back row so that you can be on your iPhone while they're doing the sermon." Yeah. Back then, many pews were built with these little doors on the end of them. And in order to get the key to that door, it was dependent upon how much you were donating to the church. And so they had their own pew. So clearly, they were very religious in that regard. Lucy, and obviously some of Joseph's sisters, they're very fervent. When Alvin dies, the preacher make--what he thinks is speaking truth. He thinks that he's saying, "Look, I'm going to tell you the truth here, and the truth is that Alvin isn't saved. And the reason why he's not saved is he was never baptized."

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:06:41](#) Now, Calvinists and almost all Protestant Christians in America at the time, followed this Calvinist idea, the idea that God chose to save some people, again, not because of their works, but because God could. As far as John Calvin was concerned, we are all sinners, all of us deserve to burn in hell, and God, because he's merciful, chooses a few of us to save. . . . Not because we're good, not because we helped a bunch of old ladies across the street, He does it because He can, because He is good. So how do you know whether or not you're saved? Well, if you have a call towards God...

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:07:22](#) For a Latter-day Saint, if they tell you their conversion story, they'll say, "Well, I read the Book of Mormon and I prayed about it and I felt the Spirit, and that's how I came to know it was true." For a Calvinist, it would be the exact opposite. It would be, "God gave me the gift of faith that saved me. Because he gave me that gift of faith, it caused me to read the Bible and to learn more about Jesus, and it manifested in my Christian walk, but all of the actions are on God. The only actions are God's."

Hank Smith: [00:07:54](#) God choose me.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:07:55](#) Exactly. Presbyterians don't believe that you have to be baptized to be saved, you have to have faith to be saved, but why is that preacher saying Alvin was never baptized? What he's saying is, "Well, Alvin was an adult. If Alvin didn't feel the call to faith, because he'd been given that gift of God, to the point where he desired to be united with a church through baptism--to publicly proclaim his faith in Jesus--then he probably was never given the gift of faith."

Hank Smith: [00:08:25](#) God didn't choose him.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:08:26](#) God never chose him. I think there's another internal conflict that's going on too, for Joseph Smith, Sr., and that is, when he comes down to Harmony, he has a boarder at his house, who is Oliver Cowdery. According to Lucy Smith--

Hank Smith: [00:08:43](#) His house back in New York?

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:08:45](#) Yes. Yeah--back in Palmyra. Well, again, another example of the fact that you are not able to make ends meet is, what do you start doing? You start taking in boarders. They're doing everything they can to pay their bills, and it's just not cutting it. And so the money that Oliver Cowdery is paying to stay with them is essential money. Cowdery of course has heard all about these crazy Smiths with a gold Bible, all kinds of negative stories. He's heard that. So he asks Father Smith about, "Hey, tell me about, your son found some plates or something?" And Joseph's Smith Sr., having seen the derision--it's not just derision, it's outright anger in Palmyra--to the point where Joseph feels like they need to leave.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:09:32](#) Martin Harris will later say that there are threats of tarring and feathering Joseph, as part of the reason why they go down to Harmony. So it's not just, "Oh, that's silly little Joseph," there's . . . there's anger, there is an animus there. And you could see that Father Smith, why he might not want to tell the source of income that, "Oh yeah, yeah, my son's got these plates. And an angel spoke to him." It's a whole thing.

Hank Smith: [00:09:59](#) "By the way, keep living here, please."

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:10:00](#) Exactly. "Please keep living here and don't go to the dozens of other places you could live." And so father Smith, he demurs. Cowdery asked him multiple times about it and he just doesn't want to talk about it. I think one of the contexts that you can see Doctrine and Covenants, Section 4, is that Father Smith is actually dealing with his own internal struggle. "Every other

person I've ever talked to about this has hated my son, has hated me, has threatened us. I'm just not going to talk about it anymore. I'm done. I'm done talking about it." Joseph doesn't know any of that. He doesn't even know that there is an Oliver Cowdrey, but he receives this revelation for his father.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:10:44](#) We don't have a connection to it. No one says, "This is the reason why Father Smith finally talked to Oliver." But what do we know? That right after this, he actually does go talk to Oliver Cowdrey and tell him what the gold plates are.
- Hank Smith: [00:10:58](#) So Section 4 could have been a catalyst for that?
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:11:03](#) It's the way that I see it. The timing is such that they receive it, he goes back up after being unwilling to talk to Cowdrey before, he suddenly seems to be willing to talk to him now.
- Hank Smith: [00:11:18](#) You know what's interesting is Section 4 has become a missionary section. It's basically been taken and said, "This is for missionaries." But that's not how it was originally given.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:11:28](#) Well, first of all, there weren't any missionaries.
- Hank Smith: [00:11:30](#) Right. There's no Church.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:11:32](#) In fact, there was no Church. So it's hard to make it fit into exactly the way we use it. But while there wasn't a Church, while there wasn't a missionary program, there was truth. And even though that was limited, even though they didn't fully understand it, there were certain things that they knew. They knew that God had called Joseph to translate this record and to bring it forth to the world. That they knew. And so I still see it in a way as a missionary record--a missionary revelation.
- Hank Smith: [00:12:05](#) . . . if you want to be part of the team . . .
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:12:07](#) There's so much that we *don't* know about what's going to happen--but there's one thing you can do--you can tell people the truth that you *do* know.
- John Bytheway: [00:12:15](#) And Hank, I would just add that President Nelson wants everyone involved in what has been termed, "The work of salvation." And you could say this chapter is not just missionary work--it's anybody and everyone, all of us are supposed to be involved in the work of salvation. And just a fun thing about this, years ago, theme for the youth was Section 4, verse 2, "Oh, ye that embark in the service of God." And I just for fun, I was

doing word searches. Guess how many times the word embark appears in the entire standard works? One time! It's in this verse. Now, you'll see it in synopses before a chapter. But in the actual text, I found one time and it's here.

- John Bytheway: [00:12:56](#) And when I looked it up and this is, again—an application-type thing, it means, “To board an aircraft, a vehicle as for a journey.” It's impossible to sort of embark--if you get on an airplane and it leaves, that can cause some great physical discomfort. And so, I love the message of, “Get both feet in. If you're going to embark, don't do it halfway, ‘Do with all your heart, might, mind and strength.’ “ And so that was just something fun I thought, the word embark is nowhere, except right there in the standard works.
- Hank Smith: [00:13:29](#) That's excellent. And go all in.
- John Bytheway: [00:13:33](#) Yeah. Don't be a halfway Harv and just do everything halfway. If you serve with half your heart, half your mind, half your might, half your strength, then you will stand *half* blameless before God at the last day.
- Hank Smith: [00:13:44](#) I've often said that standing in holy places takes both feet, that you got to have both feet in. I like that, John, that idea of embark--let's go. If you're going to embark in the service of God, give it your all--
- John Bytheway: [00:13:56](#) --both feet in type thing. And it is applicable to missionaries, too. Get both feet in the mission field and work hard. And then when you get home, you can get both feet in and say, "Okay, Heavenly Father, what do I do next?" So I love the idea of embarking.
- Hank Smith: [00:14:12](#) I like combining the context Gerrit has given us here with Joseph Smith, Sr., that--
- John Bytheway: [00:14:18](#) --he went right home and talked to Oliver. I love that.
- Hank Smith: [00:14:21](#) It's the idea of, you don't have to be this successful, grandiose Martin-Harris-type figure. You can be Joseph Smith, Sr., who's been down on his luck and all you have to do is desire. If you have desires to serve God--
- John Bytheway: [00:14:36](#) --desires to serve your call.
- Hank Smith: [00:14:37](#) Then he says, in verse 5, “I can qualify you for the work. If you have these certain. . . .”

- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:14:41](#) And if you think about their culture (that they're living in), it should be Joseph's father that is providing the financial means for him to accomplish this "great work." But it can't be Joseph's father because Joseph's father is in the financial straits that Joseph's in. And so, you can almost see the helpless feeling of the requirements of patriarchy in 19th-century America. For Joseph Smith, Sr. to feel like he was a successful man, he would need to be the one that can step in and help his son in a time of trouble. He's trying to do that halfway by going down to visit them. Joseph needs money, Joseph needs someone who's educated to help him with the translation, Joseph needs time, and Father Smith can't give him any of those things.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:15:30](#) I think that in many ways, this is a call like Jesus has called us his apostles. What matters is that you want to spread the truth about God.
- John Bytheway: [00:15:43](#) "Leave your nets and follow me." Yeah, that's cool. I just put in my margin because here's this list of attributes in verses 5 and 6: Faith, hope, charity, love, eyes single with glory of God, faith, virtue--not a bank account." That's what I put in my margin. There's nothing about you need assets to be able to engage in the work of God.
- Hank Smith: [00:16:03](#) That is awesome, John. The context that Gerrit has given us here is it makes me feel for Joseph Smith, Sr. Because I'm a dad, and I know that pressure of, "Oh, I want to provide, and I just don't want to provide, I want my family to go, 'Now, look at what our dad has done for us. Look at this, our dad provides. Aren't we lucky to have this dad and to have that?' Oh, I don't know if I can say that. I've caused my kids maybe more problems than help." And then the loss of Alvin--he was the one getting us up over the top.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:16:41](#) Yeah, he was successful. He was pulling us out. And then a tragedy.
- Hank Smith: [00:16:46](#) This section becomes more beautiful to me with all of that in mind that the Lord doesn't say anything about his failures or his poor choices or the poor choices of others that have led to this. It's a very positive section, which I think tells us something about the Lord, too.
- John Bytheway: [00:17:05](#) And the thing I was talking to my kids about the other day as we're trying to go through this is, "If you walked into a room of some of these, maybe the Eight Witnesses, Joseph Smith, Sr. would probably be the oldest guy there, is that right?" Aren't most of them young adults?

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:17:21](#) Yeah. They're all fairly young.

John Bytheway: [00:17:23](#) That's just so cool to me. It looked like you walked in on a YSA group and the Advisor over there was Joseph Smith, Sr. I love that because a 14-year-old boy prayed, we are here, and this initial group was a bunch of really young people. Is that fair?

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:17:41](#) Yeah, I think. Obviously, Joseph's being initially called to the work when he's 14, he's having an angel appeared to him when he's 17. He's not able to get the plates 'til he's 21. They are young men, certainly those that are involved. And Emma and her help that she provides, she's also essentially a young woman as well.

John Bytheway: [00:18:02](#) Gerrit, before we go to Section 5. Okay, all of this has happened. Martin comes to breakfast that turned into brunch that turned into lunch that turned into this cry fest. What's their relationship now, and how does Section 5 come about?

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:18:17](#) Well, obviously, to say that it's strained as is an understatement. Unfortunately, we don't really have good sources that talk about what their relationship was. We know that Joseph left angry, depressed, crushed, upset. We don't know they *may have* corresponded via letter. If they did, those letters don't exist. It's possible that when Lucy and Father Smith went down to visit Joseph, that they said, "Hey, we talked to Martin the other day and he's wondering how things are." But we don't have any record of that. For all we know, for all we can discern, when Martin Harris shows up in March down in Harmony, they haven't seen each other since that fateful summer, since the problems that existed.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:19:15](#) They obviously appear to reconcile fairly quickly. Martin Harris is going to again engage in helping him translate some of the Book of Mormon. I wish I had a better backstory to say that Martin was thinking this. Surprisingly, Martin Harris doesn't talk a whole lot about the loss of the pages in his various accounts that he gives. He talks a lot about other things, but he very rarely references the loss of the pages. Joseph doesn't really talk about his feelings towards Martin during this time period, so we're left assuming that things weren't on the highest of notes anyway.

Hank Smith: [00:19:53](#) --That would be devastating. And they do become friends again, that it seems. Things have changed.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:20:01](#) For Joseph, a lot of things changed right when he got D&C 3, when he received that revelation that said, "Oh, you're not condemned forever, that there's a way back, that the project isn't lost forever, that there's a way back."

Hank Smith: [00:20:14](#) "You're not going to suffer eternally."

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:20:15](#) Yeah. I think that already starts changing. Well, there's . . . there's a big difference between if you did something that has permanent damage or if it's temporary. Martin still is one of the few people that believes Joseph. He's still a man of means. He's still persevering. And in fact, that seems to be the reason why he's come down. At this point, you think every time Joseph sees Martin Harris walking down the lane. He might be a little bit of post-traumatic stress, actually.

John Bytheway: [00:20:45](#) --brings back some bad memories.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:20:46](#) Yeah, exactly. Like, "Oh, he's sitting on the fence, we're in for it." But apparently, Martin has at least another purpose in coming down, and that is that the tensions in Palmyra have not subsided. If the thought was that the loss of the 116 pages was going to end this whole project, it clearly doesn't. As Joseph is still planning on continuing the project, he's still translating the Book of Mormon--the gold plates. And there starts to be undertaken some legal efforts. Again, much of this is according to both Martin Harris and Lucy Mack Smith, after the fact. They report that there are illegal efforts being undertaken to actually make at least a civil, but possibly a criminal case against Joseph Smith and his family for fraud.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:21:39](#) Why? Because they're saying that they have gold plates that they got from an angel, and if they don't actually have gold plates and anyone gives them money, well, then that's fraud. Just like if I told you I have a Bahamian Island and I say, "You can visit it for this much money," and I don't even own the Island, that's a crime. It's fraud. And so apparently, Martin Harris's wife, other prominent residents of Palmyra are seeking to take further court action against the Smiths. And what they tell Martin Harris is that there is enough evidence against Smith to convict him. And that if he won't participate as a witness, that they will indict him as a co-conspirator.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:22:23](#) Martin Harris is a key witness because he actually has given \$50 to Joseph Smith.

Hank Smith: [00:22:30](#) Yeah. He's given the most money.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:22:32](#) --the most money. Yeah. Joseph Knight, Senior gives a half dollar, well, he also gives a barrel of fish--which fish is so terrible. You're like, "Well, can you do better, Joseph?" Obviously, there's all kinds of differences in the way that we look at money. But you could look at it as, Martin Harris has given Joseph a quarter of what Joseph's entire farm is worth. Joseph buys his farm for \$200. Martin Harris gave him \$50. It is a massive amount of money.
- Hank Smith: [00:23:04](#) And that was to move, right? That was to get out of Palmyra and--
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:23:06](#) It was so that Joseph could pay all of his debts that he had in Palmyra and move down to Harmony and get out of Dodge because there's these threats of mob violence that are growing by the minute, basically. So for the people who want to proceed with a legal case against the Smiths--all of the Smiths--because they're all lying about it, they're all saying that Martin Harris is the key. Because he's actually given money. And if he says that, "Yeah, Joseph stole my money and told me there were plates." Well, then Joseph's going to go to jail. This is going to work. Now, you can indict people for fraud, even if the person who has been defrauded doesn't want to believe they've been defrauded, but regardless, it is certainly something that's very much on the mind of Martin Harris.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:24:00](#) And he comes down to Harmony--I don't know what else they all talk about, but at least one of the intentions, and at least it seems to be the catalyst for this revelation, "What is the question that Joseph is asking that causes this revelation to be received?" A good thing is as you study the Doctrine and Covenants to always figure out what that question is. If I want to be able to apply this revelation to myself, I first need to figure out what question is Joseph asking God that causes this revelation to be received.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:24:32](#) The question here appears to be Martin Harris coming and saying, "Joseph, I need to see the plates. I need to see them because there's all this criminal conspiracy talk up in Palmyra, and if you put me on the stand after I've seen the plates, then I can say, 'Nope, not a fraud at all, I've seen the plates, the plates exist.' And the whole case falls apart." At least theoretically. So Martin Harris might actually have had good intentions in this desire to see the plates. And Joseph, apparently, wants him to be able to see the plates, again, both for himself and for Martin Harris.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:25:17](#) And so the context of Doctrine and Covenants, Section 5 is, again, these outward pressures that have driven Martin Harris to come there in the first place, and Joseph's desire to find a practical means to remedy . . . The easiest thing for all questions of fraud to be settled would be if Martin Harris saw the plates, then he wouldn't be telling his wife, "I lifted the box just like you did." He'd be telling her, "I saw them." He'd be telling the court, "I saw them not." Not, "I trust Joseph, I've known him a long time and he's always been honest." That's fine, but how much more powerful is, "I saw the plates, they exist. I saw them."
- John Bytheway: [00:26:02](#) And Martin is also, I don't know the timeline here, Gerrit, but Martin is also, his marriage is super strained at this point. She's almost kicked him out.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:26:13](#) There are two homes on the Harris' property, and he appears to not be living in the same home. Their marriage has had problems for a while. Again, it's all hearsay and conjecture of what's going on, but it is clear that they do not have the best relationship. And clearly, the loss of the pages, Lucy stealing the characters document, making her own copies, the antagonism, the attempts to try to raise legal actions towards them is only putting further strain. It's very safe to say that the whole Joseph Smith problem is certainly not helping the Harris marriage.
- Hank Smith: [00:26:55](#) Yeah, if you read Lucy Mack Smith's words, you almost are like, "Good for Martin!" Because she paints Lucy Harris as almost--insane.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:27:08](#) Yeah. She's flying about on her horse, going from door-to-door to try to find anyone who could testify against the Smiths. I mean, Lucy Smith certainly sees Lucy Harris as almost the antithesis of herself. I'm humble, and I'm going to follow what God wants me to do. Here's this high-class woman who is not going to follow what God wants her to do. They really come across as opposites in Lucy's work. And again, that's coming from Lucy Smith's perspective. Maybe Lucy Harris wouldn't have said it the same way. But regardless, there certainly are problems that have led to Martin Harris coming down and Doctrine and Covenants section five being received.
- John Bytheway: [00:27:52](#) Well, the one thing that sticks out to me is that the Lord tells Martin, "Okay, you're going to see them. You're going to be a witness, and these are the words that you will say." It sounds like he's giving him the script. What do you think, Gerrit?
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:28:08](#) Yeah, I think that what's really interesting about this is, as far as we know, Joseph hasn't translated this portion of the Book of

Mormon yet. The Book of Mormon is going to reference the Witnesses of the plates on two separate occasions, but especially in 2 Nephi. Well, in 2 Nephi, that's the last thing they translate because they finish the book and then go back around to the small plates of Nephi. And so the last major thing they translate is 2 Nephi and Jacob. And so it's not until the summer that...

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:28:42](#)

I don't know it was in the lost 116 pages, maybe there was a reference to "Witnesses of the book" that they had already read at one point, but we don't know that. Here you have this declaration that Harris will be a witness, and in fact, this is what you're going to say, that he's going to not make this same witness that you would make normally. He's not going to say, "Yeah, I saw the plates," which is what he's going for, that it's going to be shown to him by the power of God, not a man. One thing I find really powerful for me in this is the Lord tells Joseph and Martin, both, a further lesson about human nature.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:29:24](#)

It's something that the Lord tells his apostles, "That people, that demand a sign, they're wicked and adulterous, and then they're not going to actually believe." It is probably one of the most horrifying aspects of the New Testament that Caiaphas determines that Jesus should be destroyed not because he's a liar--lying about all these miracles he's claiming that he's done, but precisely because he raised Lazarus from the dead. The fact that it actually did happen is the problem. And it's hard for us, I think, sometimes to wrap our heads around, if someone who is witnessing God's power.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:30:08](#)

Really, it's what the people who stole the 116 pages did the same thing. They don't have a plan that says, "Hey, you know what we'll do? We'll just hold onto this. There's no way every word's going to be the same when he retranslate it because if you're copying a book, you're going to make three errors per page. The reality is, it's going to be different. We'll pull out what he already has and we'll demonstrate how wrong he is." Nope. They actually say, "He's going to make the exact same words again, so we'll change what we have." The very plan they have is an admission that this is being done miraculously, but Satan has gotten into their hearts to try to destroy the work.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:30:50](#)

So this natural tendency that I think all of us have, I know that I have it, so let me just speak for myself. There are certainly times that I say, "If I saw an angel, if an angel told me, 'Hey, you need to do. . . ' Yes, I would do it.'" And I think that's our natural tendency. We really believe, all of us believe that if we saw some powerful miracle that that would transform who we are,

we'd go from being lukewarm, Latter-day Saints to being dyed-in-the-wool, if we had some powerful experience.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:31:25](#) And what you get from D&C 5 is a statement from the Lord that that's just not how belief comes. This is in verse seven, "Behold, if they will not believe my words, they would not believe you my servant, Joseph, if it were possible that you should show them all these things which I've committed unto you." There are a lot of people who believe that if they saw the gold plates, then they'd believe. The reality is the same part of you that can't feel the Spirit of God when you read the Book of Mormon or the revelations of Joseph Smith, the same part of you that reads that and says, "Nope, that's not from God," is the same thing that would make you reject it even if you did see the gold plates.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:32:15](#) You'd probably spend your time instead [of] trying to argue about what the alloy of it was or, "You know what, I'm not entirely sure that that's how an Egyptian character would be. Okay, sure, he has played, but they can't really be from God." One of the great aspects of the Witnesses' experience is that it is both physical and spiritual. What's the easiest way to dismiss the Witnesses' experience? You simply say, "I guess you guys maybe got drunk or maybe you didn't get any good sleep. I'm sure you thought that you saw an angel who showed you these things." And that's how people would dismiss it.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:32:53](#) You don't have to be a liar. You just have to be confused to think that you saw plates when of course, you didn't. And yet, the Eight Witnesses have an experience that's completely physical. It's not miraculous at all, except for that plates exist, but how would you dismiss the Eight Witnesses' experience? You'd dismiss it by saying, "Well, okay, fine, Joseph has something." Even the most ardent antagonists of Joseph Smith today admit--there's just too many sources of people who hate Joseph Smith saying that he had something--to claim that he hadn't. "Maybe he had a bunch of lead that he put together and told people was plates.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:33:30](#) Or maybe he found copper printing plates out in the woods," or whatever the excuse is, the Eight Witnesses' experience demonstrates that Joseph has a physical item--plates exist. And so antagonists could say, "Well, yes, they exist, but they're not what you think they are." The Three Witness experience says, "These plates are from God, miraculously, they're from God." And so they really work together to refute both aspects of those people who'd want to reject it.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:33:59](#) This verses always really struck me that even my own nature is wrong because I'll say to myself, "If I saw this powerful miracle, I would somehow become a better person. Maybe I'd be closer to God." And I have seen miracles, the reality is, I'm the product of what you see now, even after having seen miracles. But the idea that you could just see the plates and then you would believe forever--it didn't even work for many of the Witnesses.
- Hank Smith: [00:34:31](#) Yeah. It seems to me that it's a merciful thing that when the Lord says, "I don't want anybody seeing them," He's almost saying, "I don't want anybody to come under that kind of judgment." Because if you see them and then you show up and say--
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:34:45](#) It's the same reason why the Lord speaks in parables. That way, you aren't going to be condemned for hearing the full truth and just rejecting it. At least you're acting upon if the Spirit's speaking to you. I've always thought this matters that it's really important that we have our faith-based upon the Holy Spirit of God, speaking to us what truth is, because whatever we rested on as far as physical, "Oh, this is the proof of why I believe." Or, "This is the proof." The reality is, if the Holy Spirit of God is working with you when you read D&C 5, the Holy Spirit is going to testify to you that this is a revelation from God. This is not Joseph Smith, jotting something down. This is God's speaking to you.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:35:35](#) If you're not able to discern that from the text or from the text of the Book of Mormon, then you're fooling yourself to believe that if an angel appeared to you and told you that you'd do it. You might for a day, you might, for two days, you might for a week, but it wouldn't create that lasting conversion that carries you through.
- John Bytheway: [00:35:54](#) Thank you so much. I love the fact that the Lord had a different experience in mind for the Three Witnesses and the Eight [Witnesses]. I just think that was--brilliant isn't the word--but how wonderful that one was very spiritual and one was very physical. And the idea that if I just see it, it just reminded me of 1 Nephi 16:38, where Laman and Lemuel said, "He says that the Lord has talked to him, and also that angels have ministered unto him. But behold, we know that he lies unto us. He tells us these things, and he worketh many things by his cunning arts," listen to this, "That he may deceive our eyes." So once they do see it, they say you deceived our eyes. I don't know how you did that.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:36:37](#) "If you could show us a miracle, I'd believe. Oh, wait--"

- John Bytheway: [00:36:41](#) “You deceived our eyes somehow.” And that's crazy.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:36:44](#) “Yeah, you can't trust your senses. How could you trust your senses? I thought you were the one who wanted to see it.”
- John Bytheway: [00:36:49](#) So that's just a new round of, “Okay, I need a better proof.”
- Hank Smith: [00:36:54](#) It seems to me that the Lord in Section 5 is focusing on, “Believe my words.” The one Gerrit read, verse seven, “If you will not believe my words, they would not believe even if I showed them the plates.” And then he goes over to verse 16, “Behold, whosoever believeth on my words, not seeing the plates, they get the manifestation of the Spirit.” I wanted to read this to you because I just love it. This is from Joseph Fielding Smith, it's a simple statement, but it helps us see why seeing some miracle, seeing the plates, doesn't create this all of a sudden, “I'm going to be a different person.”
- Hank Smith: [00:37:31](#) He said this, he said, “Through the Holy Ghost, the truth,” I love this, “is woven into the very fiber and sinews of the body so that it cannot be forgotten.” And I think that's the type of conversion or the type of experience the Lord wants us to have, not merely a physical, “I see a miracle,” He wants us to experience the manifestation, verse 16, of the Spirit, because that weaves the truth through our body. I love that idea.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:38:00](#) Yeah and that's exactly what the Lord tells Martin Harris, “I'm not going to let you see the plates to satisfy these physical inquiries of these potential enemies. I'm going to carry you through your enemies.” He needs to have faith first. “You're not going to see the plates so that you and others can believe. You're going to see the plates *because* you believe, and then you're going to testify to others. But you're actually already going to believe before you see them. Whatever lingering doubt you have, you're going to already have conquered that.” That's where he's told that he will have them, “That if he will exercise faith in me, behold, I say in him, if he will not, then he will have no such view for, I will grant unto him, no views of the things which I've spoken.”
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:38:49](#) If he doesn't do the things he needs to do, if he doesn't humble himself, this is verse 28. “And now, except he humble himself and acknowledge to me the things which he has done, which are wrong,” so apparently, some part of this is that Martin Harris hasn't quite made it right with God, what he's done before yet. “And covenant with me that you will keep my commandments and exercise faith in me, behold, I say in him, he shall have no such views for I will grant him no views of the

things which I have spoken." If he wants to be able to see it, he needs to first make himself right--he needs to be right with God. He needs to exercise his own faith. And then after that, he'll have the ability to do that.

- John Bytheway: [00:39:25](#) That's a nice verse. That's almost like a formula for all of us: We need to be humble; we need to acknowledge our weakness; keep our covenants; keep the commandments; exercise faith. Yeah, I love that.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:39:39](#) It reminds me tangentially, in the Council of 50 minutes, which are these, the records of the Church organization that was planning to prepare to move the Saints out of Nauvoo. So this is the tail end of Joseph's life. He only has a few months before he's murdered. They're looking at going to Mexico, they're looking at maybe going to Texas, the Republic of Texas, which was his own country at the time. They were looking to try to get out of the United States to go somewhere where they're going to be safe. And their plan is to go somewhere where no one else lives so that no one can complain about them.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:40:11](#) And that there they're going to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. They're going to establish the actual government that could be in place for when Jesus returns. And so, there's a committee of men that are assigned to write the constitution for that government. I imagine--all committee work is terrible--but imagine the committee work assigned where your job is to write the Constitution for Jesus when Jesus comes. It's a heavy responsibility. And John Taylor is on it, and Willard Richards and they do all kinds of work on it.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:40:46](#) And eventually, John Taylor sheepishly comes back to Joseph and says, "Maybe you can just receive this as a revelation because no matter what we do, it's not going to be good." Joseph teaches him this very important principle. He says, "If I just receive it," I'm paraphrasing here, "Then that would allow you to think and criticize and say, 'You know what, you should have included this too.' But if you expend all of your own efforts first and you create the best possible thing you possibly could, and then God gives revelation to provide greater details to change it. Then you'll know where the power of God comes from."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:41:31](#) And Joseph, he even uses the phrases, "There's always been some great big Elders to stand up and say, 'I am the great. . . .'" Essentially to say, "Oh, Joseph got this wrong. If it were me, I would have done this, but Joseph, he was wrong." It's this really interesting principle that in some way related that God expects

us to put forth *all of our effort*, in part so that when the miracle does occur, when that bit of revelation comes to us, when it enlightens our mind, when we have that flash of insight that we couldn't come up with on our own--that we actually know that it's from God. That it's not just what we came up with. It literally is the power of God.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:42:14](#) And at least Martin Harrison being taught something similar, "You're going to repent. You're going to exercise faith. You are going to put in all of your own effort. And then. . . . Even through all these legal problems that God's somehow going to help you through. And then having come through that, you're prepared to see the plates."
- Hank Smith: [00:42:32](#) It reminds me of what Tony taught us in Doctrine and Covenants, Section 1, where the three tried to write Section 1, they tried to write a preface and it was awful.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:42:43](#) The conference proceeded to pick it all to pieces. William McClellan is pretty bitter about that it seems.
- Hank Smith: [00:42:50](#) I personally look for awkward moments in the scripture sometimes. I love verse 21 where it says, "And now I command you my servant, Joseph, to repent, walk more uprightly before me and to yield to the persuasions of men no more." I wonder when Martin reads that he's like, "Ooh, not to name any names, we are not going to name any names—"
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:43:10](#) But the Lord does name names in the second half of that, where he tells him, "If Martin Harris isn't going to repent, you're not going to have anything else to do with him anymore." It is interesting because that really is the problem with D&C 3. It's the problem with D&C 4. It's the problem with D&C 5, they're all different facets of the same problem, and that is, as Protestant Christians are so fond of saying, "Can I let go and let God? Can I simply trust that even though I don't see any way that this could be resolved, that God will somehow do it as long as I put my faith in Him."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:43:45](#) And really, that's the problem surrounding the 116 pages, it's the problems surrounding Joseph Smith, Sr. and his reticence. And it's the problems surrounding Martin Harris coming down with Doctrine and Covenants, Section five. It's as if none of these men are willing to fully say, "God is going to take care of us somehow. Somehow this is going to work. We don't know how, but somehow it's going to work." And that He's trying to teach them that they aren't just leaning on God once in a while, or when . . . it is going to be a complete surrender or a complete

embarking in the service of God, a complete surrendering to God's will.

- Hank Smith: [00:44:22](#) I want to just mention verse 34, and I'm going to ask you a new question, Garret. In verse 34, he says, "Yea, for this cause I have said: Stop, stand still until I command thee, and I will provide means whereby thou may as to accomplish the thing which I have commanded thee." That seems to be a reference to Oliver Cowdery. Does that feel like that to you?
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:44:45](#) I'm certain in hindsight, that that's what he thought. But when this revelation was received, I'm sure that Joseph said, "How is it possible that he is going to deliver Laban into our hands for he is a mighty man?" When it's received, I'm certain that Joseph . . . as he says in his 1832 History, "Things are bad." In early 1829, things are really bad. Not only was there growing tension and problems in Harmony itself and with his father-in-law and with their family, there's still the problem of how are we going to get it translated and published--so Martin Harris's problem--
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:45:28](#) And then Joseph can't make the payments on his farm. And he says in his 1832 History that his father-in-law was about to cast him out of doors. So his father-in-law is at this point, threatening to evict his daughter and son-in-law from the property they bought from him. And so he says in his 1832 History that, "He cried unto the Lord," that he was really struggling. And then a few days later, Oliver Cowdery shows up. And unbeknownst to Joseph, God had actually been working the entire time behind the scenes. Joseph didn't know that Oliver Cowdery was at Joseph's Smith, Sr's home.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:46:10](#) He didn't know that he'd been asking about the plates. He certainly didn't know that when Joseph Smith, Sr. talks to Oliver Cowdery, it works on Oliver Cowdery so much that he actually has a vision. He's shown the plates, and he has this powerful experience where he sees the Lord--he sees the plates. And that here comes Oliver Cowdery walking in the front gate, if there was one, in early April. All of that was already going on when Joseph is crying out to God for help saying, "Aren't you going to do anything here?"
- Hank Smith: [00:46:44](#) That's a lesson.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:46:46](#) Joseph's life is so tragic. He's in the middle of doing everything he can for God, and his child dies. And then Emma and he are going to have two more children. They're going to have twins, and they're going to die. And they're going to adopt twins, and one of them is going to die. It's hard to find more horrific

struggles. And so I think it's really important for members of the Church to realize, in the world, you are going to have tribulations. The fact that your suffering is not an indicator, necessarily, that you're some kind of sinner.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:47:29](#)

The fact that you're suffering is because we live in a veil of tears. We live in this sinful world, in this world that's filled with disease and sickness. And yes, some of it's from the agency of others, sometimes it's our own, but the suffering that you're going through will eventually end. Joseph teaches later and maybe reflecting on his own circumstances, that everything will be made up to you in the resurrection. Now, I don't know how that's possible--that all of our sufferings, all of our loss of family members, all of our disappointments, the horrific long dark nights of the soul that we've suffered.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:48:13](#)

I don't know how Jesus is able to take those all away at some point. But that's part of what the prophet Joseph Smith gave, is that in the world you have this tribulation, but eventually, all of your losses will be made up to you in the next life. And that's the whole point of Christianity. It's not about this life. It's about the life to come and believing that there is something that isn't this life--that the Lord, through the Atonement, is giving us something that's better than this.

Hank Smith: [00:48:42](#)

You said something, Gerrit, that I want to emphasize. I want to hit this over and over in the podcast is: Joseph didn't know that such-and-such was going to happen. If we assume some of these people in the past knew the future, it takes away the struggle. If Joseph's knows that, "Oh yeah, it's going to work out, we'll eventually go to Ohio. We'll eventually go to Nauvoo and eventually there'll be hundreds of millions of copies of the Book of Mormon. I'm not too worried about it."

Hank Smith: [00:49:09](#)

If we do that, then all of a sudden we take away the struggle. When you say, "Joseph didn't know, he didn't know. "He maybe had some inklings of what the Church was going to become, but he didn't know how this is going to work out.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:49:22](#)

I think he left Palmyra after the loss of those pages, thinking that not only had he lost the Book of Mormon but that he was going to burn in hell forever. And now he, of course, doesn't know anything about hell because he hasn't translated the Book of Mormon yet, so all he knows is . . . hell surrounding him. I think that is really key. I think all of us have had experiences where we didn't know how the Lord was working. When I was applying for graduate school, I wanted to be a historian. I didn't want to be a Church Historian.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [00:49:49](#) My assumption was, look, I was a member, and I loved the Church, but I always assumed growing up that all of Church History was already all done. These experts have already taken care of it, so I'll move on. And so I never intended to go into Church History or studying Joseph Smith. My plan was to study Military History, actually. And I worked really hard as an undergraduate so that I could have the highest grades possible, so I could get the highest recommendation, so I could go to the graduate schools I wanted to go to.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:50:25](#) I graduated *summa cum laude*. I literally did everything I could have done to get into one of these programs that I wanted to get into. And when I got that rejection letter, it was devastating to me. Even saying it out loud, it sounds really trite. Obviously, there's people in the world that actually are suffering, that actually have a real problem--talk about your first world problems that I was so upset. But I'd spent so much of my life looking forward to this, and knowing that I'd all of the effort I could literally. . . . You can't get higher grades. I did everything I could do.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:51:07](#) It was devastating, but the school I went to instead, and the program I went to instead, it was because I was there that I started working with early Latter-day Saints history documents. And that's eventually how I ended up writing a dissertation that talked about Joseph Smith and working for the Joseph Smith Papers. And maybe you're all thinking, "Maybe that wasn't a good thing," by the end of the podcast, but the point is that I didn't know. I didn't know that God had a different plan for me. In the moment that I opened that rejection letter, I felt abandoned by God. And I was wrong.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:51:45](#) No doubt one of the many times I've been wrong in my relations with God. But I think that it's important for people to realize that you may not see how God is working, and maybe it won't be in this life, maybe it will be in the next life that you'll have all of those answers, and all those sufferings made up to you.
- Hank Smith: [00:52:01](#) But the pattern will be the same, the Lord already is having your personal Oliver Cowdery--He's already putting things in place. John, you want to ask that last question of Gerrit?
- John Bytheway: [00:52:14](#) Back in April of 1999, Elder Dallin H. Oaks then, he gave this talk, which I will never forget about Martin Harris. In fact, the talk was called "The Witness: Martin Harris," and let me put on my Baby Boomer glasses. He said, "Having a special interest in Martin Harris, I have been saddened at how he is remembered

by most Church members. He deserves better than to be remembered solely as the man who unrighteously obtained and then lost the initial manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon." Then I'm editing a little bit, skipping down actually,

John Bytheway: [00:52:45](#) "Fortunately, both Joseph and Martin were later forgiven by the Lord and the work of translation resumed with other scribes. We obviously honored Joseph for his magnificent ministry, but Martin's subsequent faithfulness continues under a shadow from which this important man should be rescued." And then he goes on to review some of the high points of Martin Harris's life. This is the paragraph that made me go, "Whoa," when I was listening to the talk live. He spoke about Martin and his brother Emer.

John Bytheway: [00:53:19](#) And he said, "The Harris brothers baptized about 100 persons, among those baptized was a family named Oaks, which included my great, great grandfather. Thus, my middle name and my last name come from the grandfathers who met in that missionary encounter in Susquehanna County in 1832 to 1833." And I thought, "Dallin Harris Oaks--wow." And so I loved that. Nobody wants to be remembered for a big mistake they've made in their life. The Lord has forgiven him and let him view the plates, and we can treat others in the same way.

Hank Smith: [00:53:59](#) That's beautiful. That idea of not letting people's mistakes define who they are and how we talk about them. We have opportunities to do that every day, in our family, in our friends, in our ward.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: When we are dealing with other people, we judge them by their worst day. We judge them by their worst event, by their worst day, by their worst sentence. And we create a caricature of that person, "Oh yeah. He always X." Judging by their worst interaction that we've had. But when we are dealing with other people ourselves, we want them to judge us by our best day.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:54:38](#) We want them to overlook the times that we were sinful. It's certainly how we want to approach God. We want to approach God hoping that He views us on what we were on our best day.

Hank Smith: [00:54:51](#) --our highlights.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [00:54:52](#) Certainly not what we were on our worst.

John Bytheway: [00:54:55](#) And I think in the Book of Mormon, we all remember Corianton. But it's so fun to see later in the text book that he was out on a

mission. I think Corianton would rather be remembered that he moved on from that long lecture his dad gave him in Alma 39, 40, 41, 42, and got back on the path. And so I appreciate that from President Oaks--now, President Oaks. And I always want to emphasize that in my classes, "You remember that about Martin Harris, but Lord forgave him for that and so should we."

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:55:28](#) We all want to be Nephi but we're more Laman and Lemuel than we want to admit. And that's the same thing, we all wish we were Joseph Smith, but the reality is, it's much easier for me to identify with Martin Harris--not that I have any wealth--but the idea that the way that people interact with me and the pressures that I have from the outside are driving some of my questions and some of my concerns. And yeah, he struggled and he sinned and he repented, and then he sinned again and repented. And that sounds like mortal life is what it sounds like. And hopefully, we can come to have that same charity for . . .

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:56:02](#) The reality is, the Book of Mormon was able to be published the way that it was because, when push came to shove, after all kinds of sins and missteps, Martin Harris eventually put his money where his mouth was, and put his faith in Joseph ahead of his entire fortune. He's going to go from being a middle-aged, well-off man to being essentially penniless--if Joseph is wrong about the Book of Mormon. And so that leap of faith that he takes after Doctrine and Covenants, Section 19, probably should be remembered far more because we have the Book of Mormon, because even though every professional bookseller that he talked to, every publisher said, "This is never going to sell." Martin Harris still put the money up for the book.

Hank Smith: [00:56:56](#) Yeah. And a lot of people don't realize that the Kirtland Temple, that I love to visit, was basically watched over by Martin Harris for decades after the Church left Ohio. He just . . . he's done so much good. I love that we're that we're talking about it. Wouldn't you be mortified if your biggest mistakes were in scripture and every four years, people had to keep reviewing? I'd just be like, "Whoa."

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:57:20](#) Well, they'd have to add a whole another book to the canon for mine, but yeah.

Hank Smith: [00:57:26](#) It would just be mortifying every year people are going, "Oh, who's this Martin Harris?"

John Bytheway: [00:57:31](#) This is one of those cases where if we want to have a merciful judgment, let's extend one to our brother, Martin Harris. I had a

wonderful History professor that you probably both know, Church Historian Richard Bennett.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:57:45](#)

Oh yeah.

John Bytheway: [00:57:45](#)

He wrote an article in March of 2001, which has just really blessed my life and it was called, "Carefully Schooled in the First Principles." And I had never made this connection before, but here's the first principles of the gospel outlined in the Wentworth Letter, Article of Faith, Number 4. And his whole thesis of his article was Joseph Smith didn't just have . . . what are the First Principles? Well, let me think about that. It'd probably be this, this, this, faith repentance, but he experienced them. So faith in Christ he tied to the First Vision, the faith to have the First Vision, the faith to act on what he heard, not just switch churches right, but which should I join?

John Bytheway: [00:58:24](#)

--Repentance--the loss of the 116-page manuscript. And I'm so glad today we've talked about the depth of the sorrow, the weeping, the sleepless nights he must've had of going through that, "I've offended the Lord. I've lost my soul." Martin feeling it, Joseph probably too. Faith, repentance, what next? This hasn't even happened yet, but as they resume translating baptism, "Hey, are we supposed to be baptized? And Section 13, we have John the Baptist appearing, and any sin of losing the 116-page manuscript is now remitted through baptism.

John Bytheway: [00:59:03](#)

And then of course, the gift of the Holy Ghost. And I thought, "I have never thought about this," but Joseph Smith just didn't have an opinion about First Principles, he experienced them. And he could write that with such power, faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, the Holy Ghost. And I've heard Hank say, it's one of my favorite quotations too, "a man with experience is never at the mercy of . . ." what, Hank?

Hank Smith: [00:59:27](#)

"--A man with an opinion."

John Bytheway: [00:59:30](#)

Right. Joseph Smith didn't just have an opinion about first principles; he experienced them to the depths of his soul and then could write about those beautifully. Some people there's a feeling or myth that, "Hey, be careful, if you study too much Church History you could put your testimony on shaky ground." And yet here are, one of the leading experts on Martin Harris and the efforts we're talking about, and you've done this in so many ways already, but could you just close a little bit with your testimony about Joseph Smith and the Restoration?

Hank Smith: [01:00:03](#) Here's someone who has made it their life's career to know about Joseph Smith and the History of the Church, and I see nothing but faithfulness.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [01:00:13](#) First of all, I'm sure there are many people that are greater experts than I am on Joseph Smith and their work--they've spent more time. I have for the last, essentially 20 years of my life, pursued understanding Joseph Smith--his teachings, his life. And in the course of that, I've read his revelations, published and unpublished, his journals, his letters, the sermons, the minutes of meetings he participated in. My work at the Joseph Smith Papers has afforded me an opportunity that people rarely have. And that is, that I've read the things that Joseph has had to say.

Hank Smith: [01:00:58](#) And I'll just throw this in, Gerrit, you're not just reading copies, you're reading-

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [01:01:02](#) No, the originals when you have them, yeah.

Hank Smith: [01:01:04](#) The original doc--the handwriting.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [01:01:06](#) It's a powerful experience to have a letter written by Joseph sitting on your desk as you're looking at it, and you're experiencing that. There's a power in that. Like I said, my life led me to where I was every day, all day long, every day, reading everything that Joseph Smith wrote--every interaction that he had with others. I can't say as a blanket statement that I've read everything--everything I know of. Sometimes, it's someone in a kind way saying, "I heard you worked at the Church History Department. Have you ever seen some stuff that just made you think it wasn't true?"

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [01:01:48](#) Sometimes it's in a more negative way where someone is assuming that I must've seen those things and I'm just perpetuating the lie by pretending that I still believe. First and foremost, I would guess that most of the people that I have interactions with, they haven't done that. They haven't either gone to get a degree to know how to read those documents nor have they spent two decades doing it. And so when they say things like, "Well, if you studied more, you you'd know it wasn't true." It's in some ways offensive because you're essentially saying that my belief isn't real.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [01:02:31](#) Because I've read all of those sermons of Joseph Smith, and all the letters of Joseph Smith, and all the journal entries of Joseph Smith, and the minutes of the meetings he was in, and I know

that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I believe that it matters far more *what it is we study and why we're studying it* than this idea that if you gain knowledge you would say . . . The problem isn't too much knowledge. . . . The problem is deciding that something that is just a pittance of knowledge, that is just a slice of it is actually an overwhelming piece of the whole. It's a little bit of knowledge that is the dangerous thing.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [01:03:11](#)

It's thinking that you're an expert on something simply because you read something somewhere once. I can say unequivocally, my testimony of Joseph Smith as a prophet of God has grown as I have read all of these various things that he wrote. I can feel the Holy Spirit speak to me. The more you study Joseph Smith's writings, his sermons, his revelations, the more you can know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God--that he really did see God and Jesus. And it matters a lot to me because the reason why I believe that Jesus is my Savior is because I believe that Joseph Smith saw Him.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [01:03:57](#)

I don't have the kind of mind that would naturally accept the supernatural, that's not the kind of mind that I have. I am grateful for the fact that I was born into a family where my father and mother taught me about the gospel, because I don't know that I would have accepted it otherwise. As I have read documents on my desk. . . . One time, I remember very clearly a colleague of mine, we were sitting on a desk going through a document together, it was a Joseph Smith document.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [01:04:30](#)

And as we read it, we both felt the Spirit at the same time and looked up at one another because the impression we both had in that moment was, "What we just read, was entirely beyond the abilities of Joseph Smith. And yet here it is, in what he's sending, this is from God that Joseph Smith was truly a prophet of God." And my testimony of Jesus that he's my Savior, is based upon that. Because I believe that Joseph Smith saw Him and that Joseph Smith conversed with Him, and that Joseph Smith learned the truth about the Atonement and our preexistence, everything that I desperately need to believe about my Father in Heaven and my Mother in Heaven, they come from the fact that Joseph Smith is a prophet.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [01:05:18](#)

So I would just say that when someone says to you, "Well, if only you've read what I've read, then you'd know that Joseph wasn't a prophet," I would say first and foremost, "I don't care what it is that they think they've read. There are people who are faithful, educated members of the Church, who have read that. Who know it--who can even tell you where it comes from--and they're certain that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God." And I

would add my testimony to all theirs. I know it, and it's not because I just haven't read enough on it.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [01:05:53](#) The great thing is individual members of the Church don't have to know everything. No one knows everything! No one else has the luxury of spending 20 years studying Joseph Smith documents--that's beyond the realm of most people. I'm not special or smart. The reason why I know the things that I do are *because* I've had that luxury of being able to do that as my job. You don't have to read every single thing that Joseph Smith ever wrote. You can know that Joseph was a prophet by the Holy Spirit speaking to you in this very moment.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [01:06:34](#) You don't even have to be able to read to feel the Holy Spirit speak to you and tell you that the words that Joseph delivered from the Lord Jesus Christ are true.
- John Bytheway: [01:06:45](#) And yet here you are. And your answer was beautiful, and like you said, Hank, people will say, "Okay, I'm staying as a result if we can keep putting out things like this." Here's some of the most well-trained historians that know this material so well, and look, they're firm in the faith. I love it. Thank you so much, Gerrit.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [01:07:04](#) Thank you guys.
- Hank Smith: [01:07:06](#) Another episode of followHIM is in the books. We hope that you'll come back and join us as we once again take a look at the Doctrine and Covenants and move on through the *Come, Follow Me* Curriculum with Dr. Janiece Johnson next time we're together. But until then, we want to say thank you to our producer, Steve Sorensen, our production team, David Perry and Lisa Spice, and a bunch of others who help us in this project. Thank you so much for joining us and we'll see you next time.
- Hank Smith: [01:07:49](#) We would love it if you went and picked up the podcast on Our Turtle House.
- John Bytheway: [01:07:53](#) Yeah, the app is great. A few years ago, Hank and I, and a wonderful woman named Meg Johnson, who accidentally jumped off while hiking a place called Turtle Rock in Southern Utah, became quadriplegic. And because of that, we've named our little group, Our Turtle House.
- Hank Smith: [01:08:10](#) So please, download the Our Turtle House app today.

