

followHIM

Podcast Episode 5

D&C 6-9

Dr. Janiece Johnson

Hank Smith: 00:00:02 Welcome to followHIM, a weekly podcast dedicated to helping individuals and families with their Come, Follow Me study. I'm Hank Smith.

John Bytheway: 00:00:10 And I'm John Bytheway.

Hank Smith: 00:00:11 We love to learn.

John Bytheway: 00:00:12 We love to laugh.

Hank Smith: 00:00:13 We want to learn and laugh with you.

John Bytheway: 00:00:15 As together, We followHIM.

Hank Smith: 00:00:22 Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM, a podcast designed to help individuals and families with their Come, Follow me study. I'm back with my co-host John Bytheway. Hello, John.

John Bytheway: 00:00:34 Hi, Hank.

Hank Smith: 00:00:34 Yep. We are going to have a great episode today. As you know, we bring in experts from all over the Church to come and tell us about these Sections. These are people that most of the Church doesn't have access to, and we want to help people have access to these incredible brilliant minds. Today, we are talking with Dr. Janiece Johnson.

John Bytheway: 00:01:02 Janiece Johnson is a Willis Center Research Associate. She specializes in American religious history--specifically Mormon history, gender, and the prosecution for the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Dr. Johnson has graduate degrees in American History and Theology from Brigham Young University, Vanderbilt's Divinity School. Wow. And the University of Leicester in England. Dr. Johnson's current research centers on the Book of Mormon in practice and the relationship of early Mormon converts to their new American scripture. And I want to ask, what was it like to go to Vanderbilt's Divinity School, Janiece?

Janiece Johnson: 00:01:43 I kind of fell into Divinity School. I wasn't completely sure of what I was getting myself into, but for me, it was a really expanding and faith-affirming experience to participate with many people of faith, from a variety of different traditions and to, I think, get a little bit of an outside glimpse of my own religion and my faith and my belief. But it

was a really . . . a foundational experience for me and my scholarship, but also just my self as a spiritual person.

John Bytheway: 00:02:29 Thank you for bringing that experience here with us today.

Hank Smith: 00:02:34 I am excited. Dr. Johnson comes highly recommended by her peers. People we've already had on followHIM. All right. Let's jump into our lesson. I have my scriptures open. John, I hope you do too.

John Bytheway: 00:02:46 Yeah, absolutely.

Hank Smith: 00:02:47 I'm ready to take notes here. We're going to start in Doctrine and Covenants, Section 6. We've already talked about the loss of the pages. We've talked about Martin Harris. If I'm a first-time reader of the Doctrine Covenants, I run into the name of Oliver Cowdery. It says Oliver Cowdery began his labors as scribe in the translation of the Book of Mormon in April of 1829. Janiece, If I'm kind of new to Church History, tell me who Oliver Cowdery is and how he comes across Joseph Smith.

Janiece Johnson: 00:03:18 Oliver does a lot of things during his life. He is a clerk. He's a teacher, a Justice of the Peace, a lawyer, a newspaper editor. He does quite a few things, but he runs into the Smiths, originally, when he is teaching in Manchester, New York. The Smith's home is actually in Manchester, just over the border from Palmyra. And at this time, teachers would often board in the homes of their students, and Oliver actually boarded in the Smith home over the winter of 1828 to 1829. He hears from Lucy and Joseph about their son and about the gold plates. And he actually later has a vision of the Lord and a vision of the plates and wants to go and help Joseph. And so, Joseph meets him. Joseph has actually prayed for a scribe. Emma Martin Harris had helped him previously. Emma had helped him, but it was very difficult for them to take care of their family and make progress on the translation. And Joseph prays for a scribe and very shortly gets one.

Hank Smith: 00:04:34 I've asked my own children before, what would it be like to have your teacher live with you? Right. Mrs. Smith comes down for breakfast in the morning. My kids are like . . .

John Bytheway: 00:04:46 "Pass the eggs."

Hank Smith: 00:04:47 "Hello."

Janiece Johnson: 00:04:48 Is she wearing her robe and pajamas? That's my question. Was she already dressed for the day?

John Bytheway: 00:04:55 You couldn't say I forgot to do my homework when . . . "I saw. You were messing around last night."

Hank Smith: 00:05:01 I remember hearing that Oliver got that job kind of on a whim, right? Wasn't it his brother's job at first to be a teacher in Manchester? And then right at the last minute, for some reason, the job falls to Oliver?

Janiece Johnson: 00:05:17 Oliver. Yeah. He's going to go to meet Joseph. I'm not sure that his plan is initially to stay. We don't really know about how that. . . . But he wants to help. So maybe it is to stay, but he's had this prior witness from the Lord that he should go help. He arrives on April 5th, and they start on April 7th on the translation. So there is not a lot of kind of getting to know one another or taking that time. They just jump right in. And they're able to finish the translation in a really short period of time, probably around--under 70 days, but the next three months, they're spending on translation. We know they weren't spending every day. We have some days that we know they're definitely not spending on translation. So it's probably somewhere around 68- 69-days that they're able to translate the entirety of the Book of Mormon, which we have today.

Hank Smith: 00:06:23 There's a lot of moments in Church History that I would love to have witnessed. And Joseph meeting Oliver has got to be one of them, right? Do they have any idea what they're going to see together? Right? What they're going to go through together. So let's talk about Section 6. Why did Joseph petition the Lord for Section 6?

Janiece Johnson: 00:06:46 That's a great question. And I think that we don't get something in the text that tells us specifically, but early on, a lot of those who are helping Joseph, who are working with Joseph, they want their own revelation from the Lord. I get that impulse, right? I want to go to the Lord and know what the Lord would have me do. And believing Joseph as a prophet, as a revelator, and one who can mouth these revelations for the Lord, I would want to use that resource. And we see that with Oliver. And as the revelation begins, we get kind of some repetition. In some of the words that we had in Section 4, the Lord said, "Look, if you have desires, you're called to the work." And so, some of these things are universal. If we want to be a disciple, these are . . . this is a guide for us. These words are important.

Janiece Johnson: 00:07:52 But for me, one of the things that repeatedly sticks out in this section is that the role of agency. And I think that one of the great truths that Joseph is going to reveal to us is really the premise of agency. And the Lord here is saying, "Oliver, if you have desires, then you need to ask me," and we get in lots of different ways . . . He asks him to, "If you will ask of me, you shall receive. If you desire, if you inquire, if you be good and you're diligent." All of these things, I think, focus on Oliver and how much he wants to do. And he's already shown his initiative here. He traveled to Harmony. He made that trip, and now he is ready and willing to help Joseph.

Hank Smith: 00:08:48 Yeah, I really liked that. So I think you can learn a lot about Oliver from the revelation because the Lord knows him so well. And so as you read into it, you're like, "Oh, I can see that this is very personal." I think it was Tony who taught us that until 1834, Joseph was giving these revelations. And eventually, they called his father, Joseph Smith,

Sr. as the patriarch of the Church. And so that kind of shifted over to him. But these first few years, what is this? 1829? Up till 1834, five years, you can go to Joseph and say, "What does the Lord want from me?" And he can say, "Write this down. Here we go."

Hank Smith: 00:09:27 I would definitely take advantage of that.

John Bytheway: 00:09:30 Well, I love what Janiece said about the. . . . What did you call it? "The primacy of agency." And in the Come, Follow Me manual, it talks about. . . . It says notice how many times words like "desire" or "desires" appear in Section 6 and 7. And so I kind of went through and underlined them. And like in Section 7, there are only eight verses, but five times the word desire or a form of desire appears. And our little Come, Follow Me manual says, "What do you learn from these sections about the importance God places on your desires? Ask yourself the Lord's question in D&C 7:1, "What desirous thou?" That begins that revelation. So, I love that, but I wanted to go back to something Janiece said because I think it's fascinating, and I needed to be reminded of this. Oliver had a vision before he met Joseph of the plates. And it was kind of like he became one of the Three Witnesses before the official Three Witness event.

Janiece Johnson: 00:10:32 Right. And we get specifics in the text in Section 6 that point us to that. Verse 16 says, "I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart. I tell these things as a witness unto thee-- that the words are the work, which thou has been writing are true." And so, He's offering another witness. You had this initial witness before you came that propelled you to come here, and then, the Lord is also teaching Oliver something about the importance of remembering. And I think that is one of the most frequent admonitions we're going to get in the Book of Mormon is this emphasis on remembering and remembering seeing the hand of God in one's life.

Janiece Johnson: 00:11:24 In verse 22, the Lord says to Oliver, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things. Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?"

Janiece Johnson: 00:11:44 And I love how the Lord says, look, He's built on the answer's Oliver has already received, but He also says, "Look back and remember these answers you've received, because that provides this important foundation." Moroni does the same thing when he gives us the promise at the end of the Book of Mormon, "Look back and look at the hand of God and look how God has been merciful with you in your life." And that gives us a foundation. Elder Maxwell used to say, "The Holy Ghost will preach to us from the pulpit of memory." And I think that scripture also does that, but these things bring to mind these experiences. And the Lord says, "Look, Oliver, you're building your testimony and your witness here. And now you get this opportunity to help translate the Book of Mormon, which is going to give you more of my words." And Oliver is a really diligent student of the Book of Mormon.

Hank Smith: 00:12:58 That is a theme in the Book of Mormon. Alma the Younger, in almost all of his sermons . . . it's very much, "Do you remember the captivity of your fathers? Do you remember what God has done for you?" [inaudible 00:13:09] Right. "Oh,

remember, remember." So Section 6 fits right in with here, I want a witness from God. And He's saying, "You've had a witness from God, don't you remember?" And it would be striking for Joseph Smith, who knows nothing of that experience, to start talking about it. Can you imagine being Oliver and going--

John Bytheway: 00:13:31 "Whoa, how did you know that?" Hank, if I can add something quickly, sorry. I think that to do a modern application, President Henry B. Eyring-- I just remember a talk where he talked about keeping a journal, and it wasn't to document your trips and your travels and your trophies. It was document the hand of God in your life. It was a way of remembering so that you go back. And as Janiece said, was it Elder Maxwell who preached from the "pulpit of memory?" And you mentioned Alma the Younger. Didn't the angel say, "Do and remember the captivity of your fathers." It's a great phrase, "Go and remember." And I loved that idea. And then I wrote in my margin this morning on verses 22 and 23, that Janiece read for us, "Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter?" It was like he was getting a revelation to tell him that he'd already had a revelation. Is that a fair statement?

Hank Smith: 00:14:30 Yeah, I like that. Here's a revelation.

John Bytheway: 00:14:32 You already had one.

Hank Smith: 00:14:34 A revelation to tell you you've already had a revelation. Right?

Janiece Johnson: 00:14:38 And I think for those of us who sometimes get worried about the moment when we get caught up in our present concerns, sometimes we forget that peace . . .but peace comes directly from Christ. That is the most valuable gift that we can have in the chaos of mortality.

Hank Smith: 00:14:59 Yeah. Verse 23, "Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter?" I want to add two things. One, I remember as a Seminary teacher, I went to a morningside, and the speaker told the students there that they could find out from the Lord if He knew who they were and their name, and he challenged them all to go home and that day to ask. And I thought, "Well, I'll be a good student. And so I knelt down that night, I remember, and this is probably overly personal, but I knelt down that night, and I said, "Do you know my..." I didn't even get the full sentence out when I got . . . "That was for students, not for teachers. You need to stop. You've had this way too many times. We're not starting over." This idea of like, "I already told you a long time ago, so you need to just. . . ." And I almost got up like mid-sentence, like, "You're right. Sorry. You're right. I'll move forward."

Hank Smith: 00:16:01 And then I really liked something in verse 7 that just stands out to me. He says to Oliver, "Seek not for riches, but for wisdom." I remember an old story that has always stuck with me about a man who said, "You have two choices in life." A mentor of mine said, "You have two choices in life. You can chase money or you can chase wisdom, but you can't chase them both." He said, "If you chase money, wisdom is not jealous. It

won't chase you. It just doesn't get jealous. But if you chase wisdom, money gets jealous and chases you." So he said, "Always chase wisdom, and you can get them both." And that's always stuck with me. And here I see it, right? The Lord telling them, "Seek not for riches, but for wisdom."

Hank Smith: 00:16:48 And then He adds, "Then you shall be made rich. He that hath eternal life is rich." And to me, it's all of a sudden, priorities become set in order. And all of a sudden, I have clarity going, "Oh, yeah!" This idea of you never see a U-Haul behind a hearse because you can't take anything with you, right? "He that hath eternal life is rich."

Janiece Johnson: 00:17:11 I think that in Section 7, I think that we all have kind of an inclination to hope for a prosperity gospel. We want to be righteous, and we want to be blessed. We want to be monetarily blessed when we are righteous, and the Lord right here is saying, "Look, that's a counterfeit idea. The way that you define rich is messed up. Richness is having eternal life, and neither Joseph nor Oliver are ever going to be prosperous. They're never going to be rich from this project. They're always going to be in debt from this. But the Lord says, "Look, that's a counterfeit. I'm giving you a new definition. To be rich is to have eternal life and to receive that gift of eternal life."

Hank Smith: 00:18:07 Now, that's a deal ultimate paradigm shift for . . .for all of us, too. I think you're right, Janiece. Inside, each of us has this hope of, "Oh, if I'm righteous enough, I'm going to prosper." Like the Book of Mormon says, "You'll prosper in the land," but I might have the wrong definition of prosper. Right.

Janiece Johnson: 00:18:28 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:18:29 At the end of Section 6, I just think some of these are beautiful--verse 34, "Let earth and hell combine against you." He doesn't say, "I am going to stop earth and hell from affecting you." He says, "Well, let them combine, but they won't prevail. If you're built upon my rock, they cannot prevail." Another thing--36 just intrigues me, "Look onto me in every thought." And as I love to say to my students, is every a high percentage?

Hank Smith: 00:18:59 That's a high percentage word.

John Bytheway: 00:19:01 Yeah. "Every thought, doubt not and fear not."

Hank Smith: 00:19:03 "Yeah, every thought, doubt not and fear not." And I think the gospel; the Lord actually asks us to think our thoughts according to a plan. And I think there are times when our thoughts can be pretty random or, go through our day, watch a show, and here's the Lord saying, "I even want your thoughts to be remembering me." And then I looked at 37, and I thought, I want to ask both of you this, does this imply a vision? Look at, "Behold the wounds," doesn't that mean "Look at this?"

John Bytheway: 00:19:34 Look, yeah.

Janiece Johnson: 00:19:34 I love, so, both in 34 and 36, we get this "Fear not" message. And I think that that plays into the remembering, right? What if we remember these experiences, and I do think that 37 could be very literally, if Oliver has already seen a vision of the Lord, "Behold the wounds which pierced my side and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet. Be faithful. You have had this witness, now remember this witness and move forward, don't fear. Hell will be nipping at your heels, but I've got you. You're good."

Hank Smith: 00:20:15 They won't prevail.

John Bytheway: 00:20:16 Yeah.

Janiece Johnson: 00:20:16 Right.

Hank Smith: 00:20:17 And signing up, I don't know, I mean, sometimes in our heads we think, "Well, it's Oliver Cowdery, of course, he's going to sign up to be with Joseph Smith. But he doesn't know that at this time. This is real life for him, and signing up with Joseph Smith, signing up to be on Joseph's Smith team here . . . is going to come with consequences.

Janiece Johnson: 00:20:36 And there is a time where he decides it's too much. But then he repents of that and later comes back.

Hank Smith: 00:20:45 One of my hopes as we're discussing this is for those who are listening to really come to a love for, at least in 1829, the bravery of Oliver Cowdery, to say, "I am in."

John Bytheway: 00:20:57 "Take this on," yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:20:59 Let's move to Section 7, and we can always jump back, you guys if we miss something. Section 7, same month, April of 1829. I mean, they've just met, and we're receiving all these revelations. And there's a term here, "Urim and Thummim." I read a book called The Alchemist, or I listened to a book called The Alchemist, and they called it, "Urim and Thummim," and I was like, oh, Urim and Thummim. And, Janiece, could you tell us a little bit about these objects, Urim and Thummim, and . . .

Janiece Johnson: 00:21:31 We actually get this mentioned in the intro to Section 6. Joseph inquires of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim. The use of the word Urim and Thummim is interesting; we think that perhaps it was W. W. Phelps who said, "This is what these objects are." So, when Joseph gets the plates from the Hill Cumorah, with them are these, Lucy Mack described them as "spectacles," kind of thick glass, that I imagine would be somewhat warped if you're just trying to look through. These are like stones, but may be transparent stones, but they are fixed with a wire, they are fixed into kind of glasses, like old spectacles.

Janiece Johnson: 00:22:15 Joseph, when he receives them, he tells his mother, he says, "I can see anything, they're marvelous." This is a really miraculous thing. But they don't really have a name for them. W. W. Phelps says, " Wait, maybe this is the same thing as the Urim and Thummim that's mentioned in the Bible. And so, I think they begin to pick up the use of this term Urim and Thummim because they want it to be understandable, that this is something that is going to bring more knowledge.

Janiece Johnson: 00:22:48 Now, interestingly, Urim and Thummim, the term in the Bible doesn't really give us a lot of understanding. My Hebrew Bible professor would say, "Yeah, we don't really know what that means, maybe the priests were casting lots with these stones." I would say Joseph gives us a whole new answer to what you do with these stones, but Joseph is looking in these stones and receiving revelations, and seeing things--not entirely unlike his seer stone that he will use. These are objects that help him in that process of receiving revelations.

Hank Smith: 00:23:29 Absolutely, yeah, I love that idea of when he says to his mother, "They're marvelous," as I've read, the history, he almost seems more enamored with the spectacles than he does with the plates, right? He's like, "Yeah, the plates are nice."

Janiece Johnson: 00:23:41 The plates are a static thing, you know, but the spectacles--he can see a vision of everything.

Hank Smith: 00:23:50 Yeah, I think for me personally, I thought that Urim and Thummim was mostly a Latter-day Saints' term, I haven't opened up my Old Testament--really like I should have--and I find out that this was something anciently the High Priest had with him as part of them. The one High Priest over the tabernacle had with him. He actually kept it in his clothes, right? Actually, in the breastplate of the High Priest's clothing, the things you learn when you teach--the things you have to learn in order to teach.

Janiece Johnson: 00:24:26 Well, and for the Saints in the 1830s, they are a people of The Book. They know the Bible inside and out. Their knowledge was far superior to ours today, and so they're going to get that reference. They're going to understand, and in calling these stones the Urim and Thummim, they are also expanding that this is connecting the restoration to these ancient practices--these ancient things that we already know in the Bible. This is not something wholly different, this is the same gospel, and it continues through time.

Hank Smith: 00:25:04 --That would influence how they see Joseph Smith, as well, right? That here is the High Priest.

Janiece Johnson: 00:25:10 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:25:11 Correct me if I'm wrong here, Janiece, but I think, from what I've read, that they also end up calling the seer stone kind of Urim and Thummim--just kind of lumping them together as these tools of revelation?

Janiece Johnson: 00:25:23 Well, so, Joseph F. Smith, more specifically than the contemporaries do. Well, he sees the seer stone as something inferior to the superior object of the Urim and Thummim, and so some of that conflating happens with Joseph F.

Hank Smith: 00:25:46 Right, because my students have asked me, "Was it the Urim and Thummim, or was it the seer stone?" And I'm saying, "Well, by our day, they kind of use all these terms interchangeably as tools of revelation."

John Bytheway: 00:25:57 If we look at the actual text of Section 7, it sounds like this is kind of a question about John the Beloved in the Bible. And it sounds like they had a vision of an actual document that John the Beloved wrote and were able to translate that through the Urim and Thummim, is that right, Janiece?

Janiece Johnson: 00:26:16 Yes, so, I think that Section 7 is an odd fit--in between these sections that are so focused on Oliver and revelation. But I think that it also fits this broader understanding of how revelation but also translation works. Most of the time, we think of translation as someone going from one language directly to the next, but Joseph never claims that he's got a knowledge of Reformed Egyptian, or whether this was written in Aramaic or Greek or whatever this early John parchment was. But, yes, he sees it in vision, and then he is able to translate, or the translation is given to him.

Janiece Johnson: 00:27:05 Now, how that exactly happens, and those specifics, we've got lots of questions on. We don't know. And Joseph doesn't give us the benefit of explaining it all to us. He says, "This all happens by the gift and power of God." But this gives us another, and I think, another example. And I think that it should help us broaden our perspective of translation--that translation is not just this narrow translating from one language to another. Actually, in the 1828 Webster's Dictionary until "translation," a translated being, and that kind of translation actually comes in the definitions before translating from one language to another.

Janiece Johnson: 00:27:54 And Joseph, in his role--his prophetic role--he is transforming. He is translating this scripture for us. And it is transformed into a way that we can access it, that it can be intelligible to us as mere mortals. And translation does, when a body is translated, it's so that that body can withstand the glory of God. This is taking a text or a source of knowledge and making it . . .changing its form so it can be understood by us mere mortals.

Hank Smith: 00:28:41 Man, Janiece, I think this is absolutely crucial, you've opened my mind to this idea. When I say Joseph Smith is a prophet, seer, revelator, translator, I've got to be careful how they are defining that term of translator, because you're right, 2021, we're going to assume, a translator can read ancient texts and put them into a language of today.

John Bytheway: 00:29:04 Like Google Translate or something.

Hank Smith: 00:29:06 Right.

John Bytheway: 00:29:07 That's what my kids would relate to.

Janiece Johnson: 00:29:08 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:29:08 And, Janiece, I've never made that connection, sorry, I keep letting my personal lack of spirituality out on this podcast. But I've never made that connection to translated beings; that's a completely different view of the word translation and what Joseph is doing. I love what you said, "Broaden our view of translation," because if you get so narrow on that, you can end up kind of disillusioned.

Janiece Johnson: 00:29:39 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:29:39 To put that word transform with it is really helpful. Let's make that a synonym of transforming. I think there was a joke about if you're translated, do you feel pain? Well, if you're translated correctly. I can't remember the joke. It's something like that, but that makes a lot more sense with the being . . . I was transformed in a way.

Janiece Johnson: 00:29:58 And I think here, I mean, the question is perplexing enough that they're arguing about it, what happened to John the Beloved, and we get an answer to this question, but I think that there is a larger purpose here. And I think it has the potential of broadening our perspective of what this project is, what Joseph does in this role as translator. And it is not merely putting his finger. . . . I think sometimes the official Church images we have, Joseph with his finger on the plates and he's reading it off to Oliver. It didn't happen that way.

Hank Smith: 00:30:39 That's . . . that minute view of translation.

Janiece Johnson: 00:30:41 It's something much broader. And I think that that's also part of why Joseph maybe doesn't give us more, even though I'm still a little frustrated that he doesn't give us more, that it's this miraculous thing. It is a miracle any time this happens, and he is opening up this perspective and these ancient records to us when he doesn't have the skill of these languages to actually be able to do this. It is done by the gift and power of God.

Hank Smith: 00:31:14 I can't tell you how excited I am about this, because I think what you can do is help inoculate youth, and even adults, against this idea of, "Well, look at the Book of Abraham, it's not a real translation."

John Bytheway: 00:31:30 --of a word for word translation, yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:31:31 And you're going, well, that's not what was happening, that comes from a bad assumption on what you think the word translation means. What Janiece has kind of opened us up to this idea of it's a much more spiritual transformation--changing--than it is . . . And that makes total sense. I mean, we're dealing with the Lord here. And the Lord deals in those kinds of transformations. I want to say one thing, just that I really, I was reading Section 7, and Peter is having this discussion with the Lord about what's John going to do. And, to me--

Janiece Johnson: 00:32:09 [crosstalk 00:32:09] Anyone else think Peter's freaking out? Like, "Crap, I chose wrong."

Hank Smith: 00:32:12 Right? And, to me, this reminds me also of [D&C] 35:28, where you've got The Three Nephites-

John Bytheway: 00:32:17 [crosstalk 00:32:17] The Three Nephites.

Hank Smith: 00:32:18 Saying, "Well, I don't know," and I learned two things: one, from Peter, maybe not be so worried about other people's spirituality. How other people are serving the Lord? "What about John? John's not doing what I think he should be doing, so can you fix it? What's going on there?" And the Lord's basically, "Worry about yourself. Worry about yourself." And second, they've got two different desires. Peter has a desire to be with the Lord as soon as he can. John has a desire to stay on the Earth and serve, and yet the Lord seems to be pleased with both.

John Bytheway: 00:32:54 With both of them.

Hank Smith: 00:32:55 Yeah and those are two totally different things.

John Bytheway: 00:32:57 I thought the same thing, I thought isn't it wonderful that the Lord didn't say, "You want this? Wrong, wrong, wrong." No, he didn't. He just said, "That's a good desire, and that's a good desire, and I'm so grateful for that--that both of those are good desires and you joy in what you have desired." I mean, that's the end in verse eight there, "Ye both joy in what ye have desired." Thank you, okay, so it wasn't wrong for me to want that. It was . . . they were both good desires. I'm thankful for that verse.

Hank Smith: 00:33:25 I run into this at BYU, especially when President Monson made the change for missionaries. And sister missionaries could go serve at 19, and there were some girls, many, many girls flooded the mission field, and they're doing such good work. There are also many girls who didn't go on missions. And they've started to feel, over the next few years, like second-class citizens because they didn't serve a mission. They didn't jump right in, and I like to use 35:28, and I'm going to use Section 7, too, to connect it. That there's more than one way to be righteous, and . . . "You have this desire? Awesome, I want you to do that. You have this desire, or this is where I want you in the vineyard?" Awesome!

Janiece Johnson: 00:34:04 So, I got home from a mission. My sister is 18 months younger than I am. I got home right when she was turning. It was 21 then. Everybody just expected her to go. And her getting that answer that that was not the right thing for her to do was really important for her. And to be able to say, "Okay, no, this is not what the Lord wants me to do." I also think that perhaps this gives us a good structure to think about Mary and Martha.

John Bytheway: 00:34:37 Yeah, yeah. Thank you.

Janiece Johnson: 00:34:38 That it's not that Mary chose the right thing and Martha chose the wrong thing. They were both good things. There is a time to sit at the feet of the Lord, and there is a time to work in the kitchen and get stuff prepared. Both of those things are good, valuable, worthy tasks of disciples. And neither of them should be denigrated.

John Bytheway: 00:35:05 I'm going to put "Mary/Martha" next to that verse, that's great.

Hank Smith: 00:35:08 Let's move on to Section 8 and 9. These seem to be about kind of the same issue, that it seems has desires to do what Joseph is doing with translation. So he's watching this happen. He's watching Joseph with the Urim and Thummim. He's watching Joseph with the seer stone going, "It seems like he's saying, "I want to be part of that. I want to do that side." Why do you think, Janiece, what do you think is going on here in Oliver's mind, and why are these desires coming up?

Janiece Johnson: 00:35:43 Well, I think that in the earlier revelation, the Lord opened up the possibility. He says, "You have a gift, you can expand that gift," in verse 11, "If thou wilt inquire, thou shalt know the mysteries which are great and marvelous if thou exercise the gift." And so, we get this. The Lord opens up--

Hank Smith: 00:36:02 [crosstalk 00:36:02] That was back in Section 6, right?

Janiece Johnson: 00:36:03 That was back in Section 6, the Lord opens up that possibility to Oliver. And then we get it more specifically in these sections that Oliver wants to translate, and he has that opportunity. And I think this also opens up a lot for us to learn about the process of revelation, but I think there are also some things that are perhaps specific to the process of translation. As I was growing up, I think that 98.5% of the talks that I heard on personal revelation quoted Section 9, and this pattern because we get this really succinct . . . this lovely little pattern in Section 9.

Janiece Johnson: 00:36:55 You must study it out . . . you ask if it be right, and if it was right, "I shall cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore you shall feel that it is right," and that's Verse 8. And verse nine, "But if it be not right, you shall have no such feelings, but ye shall have a stupor thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong." Now, this is a lovely little formula. But, growing up in the Church, I never felt something that I would describe as a burning in my bosom. I was a little uncomfortable with that idea. And I still don't know that I have felt something that aligns like that for me. And it took me a long time to realize that that's not the only way to get an answer to a prayer. That's not the only way that God speaks to us. I was comforted when I heard . . . I think it was then Elder Oaks say, "Yeah, I've never felt something that I would describe in that way, maybe I feel really warm," and I was like, "Oh, hallelujah. It's not just me."

John Bytheway: 00:38:05 I have that quotation. I was excited to share this. This is from a talk or an article called "Teaching and Learning by the Spirit" in the March 1997, *Ensign* on page 13. So here's--

Hank Smith: 00:38:19 Wow, the 1900s! We're going way back into the 1900s. All right.

John Bytheway: 00:38:23 This was actually on parchment too. Okay. So this is what I guess it would then be, Elder Dallin H. Oaks said. "This may be one of the most important and misunderstood teachings in all the Doctrine and Covenants. The teachings of the Spirit often come as feelings. That fact is of the utmost importance yet some misunderstand what it means. I have met persons who told me they have never had a witness from the Holy Ghost because they have never felt their bosom burn within them. What does a burning in the bosom mean? Does it need to be a feeling of caloric heat like the burning produced by combustion? If that is the meaning, I have never had a burning in the bosom. Surely the word burning in this scripture signifies a feeling of comfort and serenity. That is the witness many receive. That is the way revelation works. Truly this still, small voice is just that, still and small."

John Bytheway: 00:39:21 And that's the end of the quote, but going back to Section 6, "Oliver, remember the night I spoke peace to your mind? That's a witness. What greater witness can you have then from God?" And I just might add while I'm in section eight, it speaks about, "I will enlighten your mind." And I'm so grateful for that because if I had to feel like if I had to explain how I feel like I receive inspiration, it would be more of that. I feel enlightened up here. Then I feel a burning here. And we're all different that way. And it's so wonderful to hear President Oaks say, "I've never had that before."

Janiece Johnson: 00:40:00 I'm glad that my paraphrase wasn't completely off. I panicked for a minute there.

John Bytheway: 00:40:04 No, you got it! And I was excited to share this because I think a lot of people will feel comforted. In another place in the Church News, he said, "I've heard adult members of the church say they don't have a testimony because they've never felt the burning in the bosom." And I'm certainly glad he wanted to correct that and say, "Well, I've never had that."

Janiece Johnson: 00:40:23 Joseph described revelation as "pure intelligence flowing onto you." That is something that I have experienced that matches my experience, but I think the beauty is that it happens for each of us differently. And we have to learn. Julie Beck said, "the most important skill that we can gain," this is again a paraphrase, "but the most important skill we can gain in mortality is to learn the skill of recognizing the Spirit and being worthy of receiving that Spirit and following that Spirit." And I think there are very few times that we can speak in such exclusive terms. The single most important gift. And that is learning that skill. And it's a skill. It is not something that we just instantly get it and everything, all the revelation flows down into our heads. It takes time for us to learn that skill.

Janiece Johnson: 00:41:24 And here we get some insight into Oliver's process. And I think that the more that I have gotten into the Doctrine and Covenants, the more I think I've grown frustrated with us focusing so much on Section 90 because I actually think that's pretty specific to the process of translation that Oliver is trying to learn that skill. When in verse . . . Section 8, the Lord says, "Yay, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart by the Holy Ghost which shall come upon you, which shall dwell in your heart. Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation." And I think in just the section before the Lord says, "This is it." [crosstalk 00:42:12]. "Your mind and your heart." And in Joseph's and Oliver's context, I think this is supremely important because intelligence and that intellectual answer was elevated above emotions.

Janiece Johnson: 00:42:29 Women in many instances were considered to be emotional. And that was a negative thing. And here in the revelation, the Lord says, "Look, you need both your mind and your heart, and both of those coming together is how you know that this is an actual answer." And we don't say. We don't negate emotions; emotions are important. And this is not something that just silly women have. All of us have emotions. And listening to those emotions is important, but it is also important that we use our brains. God gave us brains and intellect for purpose. And this isn't a male/female thing. This is an everybody thing. This is a mortality thing. We all need to listen to both our mind and our heart.

John Bytheway: 00:43:19 I love that. Our emotion and our intellect.

Janiece Johnson: 00:43:22 Emotion and our intellect and both. "And this is the spirit of revelation; this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground" (D&C 8:3). And I love that Elder Holland's "Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence" talk is one of my favorite talks of all time. I was at BYU when he gave it. I'm trying to remember if I was a Master's student or I was just teaching adjunct at that point, but he talks about this. Why is Moses? We usually think about this as a miracle. Why is this the perfect example of revelation?

John Bytheway: 00:44:05 Moses coming through the Red Sea.

Janiece Johnson: 00:44:06 Moses coming through the Red Sea and parting the Red Sea. It's not just the miracle of it. It is a miracle, but that he received revelation of what to do. And I think that that is, opposition and fear will always play a role. And Oliver certainly knows that that revelation almost always comes in response to a question. And when we receive that revelation, we need to go forward and trust that God will provide anyway. And I think that this is really important for Oliver. The Lord says, as he continues, he says, "Look, you've got a gift." And Oliver has a number of gifts, but one of them . . . here he is learning this skill. He's got some more practical gifts. We get the gift of Aaron, which is one of the instances in these verses that the language has changed over time. Originally we have, it goes from the sprout to the rod, to the gift of Aaron. Oliver Cowdery is a douser. He uses a divining rod to find water. Farmers still today will . . . people have this skill to use a divining rod to find water. And Aaron held a rod and the rod, he held Moses's rod, and the rod performed the miracles that Moses did in

Pharaoh's court. And here, the Lord is saying, "Look, there's this general gift of revelation, but I've also given you a specific skill. And you develop this skill and use this skill."

John Bytheway: 00:45:57 It sounds like Oliver is going through very similar things as Joseph, as a young man, realizing he has some gifts, right? With seer stones and finding lost objects, finding lost things. Oliver has the same gift of divining rods, finding water. And the Lord saying, "Yes, yes, these are good. We're going to develop them into more spiritual, right, tools." Am I getting it right?

Janiece Johnson: 00:46:23 I think so. But I think that we can also think about it in terms of there is nothing that is wholly temporal, right? Everything is spiritual to the Lord. And some of those things that, whether it's seer stones or divining rods, which seem weird to us because it's not our context and not something we're familiar with, but all of the temporal world is important and has spiritual implications.

John Bytheway: 00:46:59 Wow. And I can use your gifts in the work, right? I can use your . . . your specific gifts in the work. Before we move on, I want to just, Janiece. I think you taught us a skill that I want to point out. And that is, we have to be careful that when we see something like you said in Doctrine and Covenants 8 and 9 about studying it out, "your bosom will burn within you." If not, you'll have a "stupor of thought." We've got to be careful at saying, "Okay, I found it. I found revelation. Now that's the pattern I'm going to teach." And throughout the Doctrine and Covenants, we've got to be careful about over-generalizing things that may be were specific to Oliver. Like you said, specific to translation.

John Bytheway: 00:47:40 And if we're not careful, we might end up causing a little bit of damage, saying, "Oh, okay, now I know how to get revelation. I'll teach it to somebody else." And they're like, "Well, I guess I've never received revelation then." How do I read the Doctrine and Covenants and scripture in general and not over-generalize? I guess, or take things that were meant for an individual and apply them to myself? That'd be misapplying them. To myself . . . how do you be careful with that? This is careful scripture study. Don't misapply things that weren't meant for you specifically.

Janiece Johnson: 00:48:19 I think that there probably are a couple of things. I think that learning context is really important. I think that that helps tether us to when this was originally given, and that helps us understand, "Okay, is this a general principle or is this something specific to this time?"

John Bytheway: 00:48:41 So don't read the Doctrine and Covenants without knowing who Oliver is, who Joseph is, what they're going through. Don't just come in it.

Janiece Johnson: 00:48:48 It's easy for us to cherry-pick out a certain verse. And I think that sometimes it's reading carefully, it's trying to think about context. It's reading really carefully and not just assuming, not just reading the verses we have underlined because we really like. Sometimes I think reading clean scriptures helps me do that. Reading the Book of

Mormon, particularly in another format or the Bible in another format, helps me to think about it differently because I don't just go to the things that I've always gone to. But I think that and trying to pay attention. Here, I don't know how long it took me to go, "Wait, there's this much better example, but it's not as neat and tidy in the section before." And I think that naturally, we want $A + B = C$. [crosstalk 00:49:52] We want a formula that's always going to work.

Janiece Johnson: 00:49:54 And maybe we can make some general formulas that are always going to work. Elder Scott, Richard G. Scott said, "Look, I can't give you a formula for revelation. It doesn't work that way. It's going to be different." And I think that there are certain things that we can learn over time. I think there are patterns in which the Lord speaks to us. If I go back and look at my life and look at some of the biggest decisions that I've made, they've all happened in a very similar pattern, but that doesn't mean revelation always comes in that pattern. If I'm not seeing it coming in a different way, I'm missing some of what the Lord has for me.

John Bytheway: 00:50:38 I love the way that the story unfolds in the Book of Mormon is Lehi with this theophany--this huge vision. And then Nephi has to pray about it. It's fun to watch the members of Lehi's family gain a testimony, one at a time. And then Nephi prays about it, gets an answer. And then all he does is tell Sam, and Sam believes him. And we start to see we're talking about these gifts, a spiritual gift for others to believe on their words. Sam believes Nephi. But the one that intrigues me is Sariah because Sariah, when she sees the boys come over the hill with the plates of brass, says, "Now I know." She doesn't say, "Hey Lehi, I just had a burning in the bosom." Hers is more, at least what we have. There could be a lot more.

John Bytheway: 00:51:33 But what we have at first Sariah was an evidence thing. "Look, the Lord has protected my sons. He's delivered them out of the hands of Laban." And it's kind of fun to watch in the book of Mormon, the different ways people came to know. It wasn't every one of them had a burning in the bosom. They were different gifts. And Sam just believed his brother. And I think that's instructive. And it helps me say, "Look, different people came to believe Lehi in different ways."

Hank Smith: 00:52:00 I would say, as I'm reading Section 8 and 9, Janiece, what I've heard from you is, "Don't be so caught up in this is how to receive revelation. Instead, look at it as Joseph and Oliver are both learning how the Lord speaks to them. How does the Lord speak to you." Instead of going specific into here, let's just maybe say, "Okay, wow. Joseph and Oliver learned how the Lord speaks to them. Okay. Now I really have got to," like you said, I'm going to analyze and go, "How does the Lord speak to me?" I'm going to look back in my life. And yeah, there is a pattern for me as well. This was Oliver's pattern or Joseph's pattern. But I have a pattern in my life of how the Lord speaks to me. I really like that because--

John Bytheway: 00:52:41 And take some comfort that for President Oaks has never felt a burning in the bosom if we're thinking of it like a feeling of caloric heat, as he called it. Take some comfort in that. And he has found out how it works for him. And how does it work for you? Just last night, I was talking with one of my Young Adult children about the mind and heart

nature of revelation. It will make sense to you. It will feel right. And we are trying to work out how this works for this particular child of mine. And so I'm like, "Whew, I wasn't preaching burning in the bosom. I was talking about, isn't that interesting? It'll make sense. And it will also feel right in your heart."

Hank Smith: 00:53:24 Emotions and intellect.

Janiece Johnson: 00:53:26 I have done this exercise pretty consistently with students where I ask them, as we're talking about revelation, I asked them how they feel revelation. And it's always an interesting thing because it starts off slow. But I have written them down. I keep track of them as people are saying. And I've made word clouds out of them. And there are some things that are really consistent for lots of people—feeling peace, feeling enlightened, though you get lots of different descriptions—sometimes feeling a direct no. I think that's one of the things that's interesting to me about Section 9 is it doesn't give an option for a no. I have definitely gotten a no from the Lord. And it just says, "No, you're just forget about it." It doesn't have a no option there if we're just going with that pattern.

Janiece Johnson: 00:54:24 But I think that it's really useful not only for individuals to think about, "Okay, how do I feel the Spirit?" Because I feel the Spirit in different ways. Sometimes it feels like there's this conduit attached to my head and this direct enlightenment, but that is the exceptional thing. Sometimes the Spirit makes me hyper and makes me get up earlier than I would get ready to start working for the day. And sometimes it is that warm feeling. Maybe that's the burning in the bosom. I don't know, but that I just have this quiet moment. But I think that it is useful for us to recognize that everybody feels it differently.

John Bytheway: 00:55:13 I've always wondered when Alma describes planting the word in your heart, which we know is Christ. He talks about maybe . . . He is helping us by giving us different reactions. It will "begin to swell," (physical reaction) "burning in the bosom," or you will "fill your soul enlarged," or it "will enlighten thy understanding," or it will "be delicious." You'll say, "Oh, I've never heard that but I like the sound of that. That tastes good." And I thought, "I wonder if Alma was doing that too? You may feel it like this. You may feel it like this. You may feel it like this." So anyway, I love this discussion.

Hank Smith: 00:55:52 I also, when Janiece talked about, "Why would the Lord include Moses walking through the Red Sea as a part of revelation" I wrote in my scriptures that maybe the Lord is saying, "This is going to lead to action." This is an active thing. When you feel it in your heart and your mind and impelled to act, that's part of revelation as well as the actions that come.

John Bytheway: 00:56:19 That's the Elder Bednar thing. Joseph didn't ask which Church is right but, "Which should I join?" Implying, "I'm ready to act."

Hank Smith: 00:56:27 "I'm ready to move forward." And that's maybe part of getting an answer from the Lord is the Lord knowing we're ready to act, right? "I want to know if

the Church is true, but I really don't want to change my life." Well then, if we're not impelled to act--

John Bytheway: 00:56:43 Sincere heart--real intent. I really intend to act.

Janiece Johnson: 00:56:47 And we get this repeated message from the Lord, "Ask and don't fear. Move forward." And I think those are some of Elder Holland's steps in that "Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence" talk, and it's that moving forward. Fear and opposition are going to come. They sometimes come before. Sometimes they come right after the big decision, but they are going to be part of it. But I think once we know that, that can give us power, not just to say, "Okay, I'm going to have enough faith that there won't be any fear." I think fear is inherent in mortality. That's how it works. When we have faith when we don't have complete knowledge, there is going to be some element of fear, but we can't be counseled by those fears. We can't let those fears paralyze us, so we can't move. We need to move.

Hank Smith: 00:57:40 I know when I'm feeling the Holy Ghost because I get excited like you said. You get a little hyper, and I want to just act. I'm like, "Okay, what have I been scared to do in the last couple of days? I'm going to go do it," because I feel like I can do this.

Hank Smith: 00:57:51 Speaking of fear, right at the end of section nine, the Lord tells Oliver, "It was expedient when you commenced, but you feared and the time is passed. It is not expedient now." This seems like kind of a disappointing thing for Oliver to hear, like, "Oh." But why is that an important thing for the Lord to teach him and Joseph?

Janiece Johnson: 00:58:19 I think that he and Joseph, and all of us, that there are some opportunities that we will miss if we don't act. If we don't let go of that fear, we can miss good--important opportunities. But there is still the Atonement. There is still repentance. Even if we have missed an opportunity, there is always a way back. There are compensatory blessings that, okay, so Oliver's not going to get this opportunity to translate right now. B.H. Roberts thought he just didn't get how hard it was, that it was a really difficult process, that it wasn't just Joseph looking at the seer stone and suddenly he's got the whole translation, that there was a lot of mental effort.

Janiece Johnson: 00:59:10 I think B.H. Roberts might be speaking beyond the sources a little bit there, but something happened with Oliver that he couldn't do this. But that doesn't stop his progression. It doesn't halt his progression. We repent, and we move forward. Mistakes and sins are part of mortality. They're part of how we function and the whole plan. We shouldn't let that, again, paralyze us and stop us from doing good. If we know we've sinned, we repent, and we move forward.

Hank Smith: 00:59:49 Yeah, I just love this.

Janiece Johnson: 00:59:49 There are some opportunities we'll miss

Hank Smith: 00:59:54 Yeah, but the Lord seems okay with it.

Janiece Johnson: 00:59:55 But it's okay. Others will come.

Hank Smith: 00:59:55 Yeah, the Lord seems okay with it. You feared. The time passed. "Neither of you are condemned," He says in verse 12. "Neither of you is condemned. Yeah, you feared. You missed it, but that's okay. Let's keep going." I love that with my children, in my own life, of "Yeah we missed that one." For some reason, we want to be able to hit it every time. That's our nature. I don't want to miss a single opportunity, and the Lord seems a little bit more flexible with, "Yeah, you missed that one and that's okay. We've got plenty ahead."

Hank Smith: 01:00:27 I want to hear anything else that either of you has for Sections 6, 7, 8, and 9. I want to add something while you're thinking. One overarching principle for me in these sections, at least in this part of the history, is that the Lord can raise up friends--that here I am. Joseph's been called to the work. He's lost the pages, and he's really down. He's praying for a friend. You said he's praying for a scribe, and the Lord provides that.

Hank Smith: 01:00:58 I can think, in my life, of people that I feel like the Lord has raised up to cross my path at the right time, to really build my confidence and to accelerate my growth. You said, Janiece, this is less than 70 days. The translation goes into hyperspeed once Oliver comes. So, I hope that anyone listening can maybe look back in their life and think of those that God has raised up at the right moment for you. That's something to always remember. Like we talked about earlier, remember what the Lord has done for you. Remember the friends that God has raised up.

Hank Smith: 01:01:40 I remember meeting John. It was 2008--

John Bytheway: 01:01:43 Here we go.

Hank Smith: 01:01:44 . . .we met for the first time. And here we are.

John Bytheway: 01:01:46 You were a teenager.

Hank Smith: 01:01:47 Yeah. I'm talking about the 12-year-old one. That was back in the 1900s, but I remember meeting John when I was an adult for the first time and had no idea that we'd become such close friends and that John has, I feel like, the Lord had us cross paths at the right time and really has blessed my life.

John Bytheway: 01:02:08 The idea of studying it out in your mind . . . this is Section 9, and we all know this is specifically about translation, but that idea has really blessed me too. I love to tell the story of my Mission President when I told him one day, "Hey, there's this problem." He said, "Elder, by the way, do you want to get ahead in business or life or

something?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Solve your bosses problems." He said, "Never come to your boss with a problem. Always come with a recommendation."

John Bytheway: 01:02:38 Now, I'm taking this and making it a world application. I'm not talking about translation right now. But it helped me tremendously to think, "What would President do? What would President say? How would President solve this?" I know that Hank and I both love to talk about the brother of Jared having this problem with the barges and how he had to go figure it out. Doing that work is kind of when the revelation came—this studying it out in your mind part.

John Bytheway: 01:03:08 Although everything we've talked about, I'm 100%! I'm on board, what this is about, specifically about Oliver and about translation. But I love the idea of having the Lord do a little bit of the work before coming to Him when we have a question or a problem. That idea of studying it out in your mind has really blessed--

Hank Smith: 01:03:29 Yeah, John, I think you're right on here. I don't think it qualifies as the "burning of the bosom" reference because "study it out" is a common theme throughout the scriptures. I love that you brought up the brother of Jared because that's immediately where my thought went, when he says, "What should I do about the light?"

John Bytheway: 01:03:49 . . . The light-

Hank Smith: 01:03:50 And the Lord--

John Bytheway: 01:03:52 . . . and the air. We can't steer.

Hank Smith: 01:03:53 . . . And the Lord's response is . . . well, in my language it's, "I gave you a brain. Use it."

John Bytheway: 01:03:59 "Go figure it out."

Hank Smith: 01:04:00 "Go figure something out on your own. Bring me something. Bring me an idea. I can make your idea work. But bring me an idea. Bring me the fish and the loaves. I can make it work. But you've got to bring me something." So, study it out, to me, that could be a family night with my kids, or that could be a Seminary lesson or whatever the Lord expects effort on our part. That's a theme throughout the scriptures.

Hank Smith: 01:04:26 There's also the steering of the boats where the Lord tells the brother of Jared, "I'll take care of it." I've received that answer before. "That's my problem, not your problem. This battle is not yours, but God's." That's my issue. So, these different forms of revelation that we're drawing out of the scriptures here are crucial for people to say, "Oh, wow, that happens to me and that happens to me. Not that one so much, but yeah that one, that one a lot."

Janiece Johnson: 01:04:53 My last thought about these Sections, I just want to read a couple of verses from Section 9 because this applies to the process of revelation but also, just more broadly, to our time and mortality. The Lord says to Oliver, "Be patient, my son, for it is wisdom in me." That plea for us to be patient. He's just said, "Yeah, sorry. You missed out on this opportunity. It's not going to work. Don't do it." And then the last verse. That was verse three. The last verse of Section 9, "Stand fast in the work wherewith I have called you and a hair of your head shall not be lost and you shall be lifted up at the last day. Amen."

Janiece Johnson: 01:05:44 Part of believing in the Atonement of Jesus Christ is believing that all things can be restored to us. Even those things that we have purposely sinned or purposely lost or messed up on. All of those will come back to us. Oliver will get this lost opportunity. It will be restored to him ultimately. Nothing is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Nothing is irredeemably lost. It always can come back. That is the restorative function of the Atonement that ultimately, all of the things can be restored to us.

Hank Smith: 01:06:27 Janiece, I have a question for you. There seems to be, sometimes, a myth among people that the more you get to know Church History, the more you'll become repulsed, and you'll say, "I can't believe anymore." That is a narrative out there. I've heard it from my students. I've seen it online. "I was a believer until I really studied Church History. But here we have you, Dr. Johnson, who knows everything there is to know about this specific part of the Church's history and, a broader term, you have studied. . . . When we talk of Mountain Meadows, that's one of the most controversial--one of the most difficult pieces of Church History. You know it probably better than anyone, and yet here you are, a believer. Can you let us into the mind and heart of Janiece Johnson here? How can someone be this brilliant, know this much, and yet you don't fit the myth of the more you know you check out?

Hank Smith: 01:07:25 You know it as well as any anti-Mormon website, any truth-seeking website. You know it as well as they do. I doubt there's a student who can come to you and say, "Dr. Johnson, I don't want to rock your faith, but I'm going to tell you something that I've learned," and you're going to go, "Ah, I've never heard that."

Janiece Johnson: 01:07:42 It's a good question because I think there are a couple of things. I have spent. . . . I don't know. Let's see. I started working on Mount Meadows in 2000.

Hank Smith: 01:07:57 Two decades.

Janiece Johnson: 01:08:01 Yeah. That's a long time. But having spent that much time in what I think, arguably, is the darkest moment in our history, I think that there are a lot of things. It has changed me. It has changed how I approach Church History if I might offer a bit of a critique of something you said earlier, Hank.

Hank Smith: 01:08:25 Please. Please do.

Janiece Johnson: 01:08:26 You talked about using inoculation as this term, and I actually don't love that inoculation, because to inoculate someone against a virus. . . . Actually, our new COVID vaccines work to function differently . . . but old-school immunizations would give a little bit of the virus to inoculate against it. I don't think Church History is a virus. I think that, yes, those of us who study Church History and have given our lives trying to study this, we know it more deeply, and we know the dark corners, but we also know the beautiful, miraculous moments.

Janiece Johnson: 01:09:19 I think that it's important that we recognize them all. I don't think that we should try and shove things under the rug or try and make Church History, cram Church History into nice cute little boxes with bows on top. Primary does this, but as we become adults, we need a more complete version. We need to take seriously when people have hard questions because those are real . . . hard questions. We don't just pretend that that's a lack of faith that has brought about that question. Questions are real. We wouldn't have a restoration were it not for a punk 14-year-old kid with questions.

Janiece Johnson: 01:10:02 But when you look at it all, I cannot ignore the light. There is so much light and goodness. The gospel has changed people's lives. Now, that doesn't mean that it suddenly made them not human. They're still human with imperfections and sins and mistakes and things where we really wish it would've gone a different way, but that does not negate the overall goodness and the light that is there.

Hank Smith: 01:10:39 I thought of my own life, and it has both dark times and light times, but the dark times, they're important. As much as I kind of go, "Oh, let's not. Let's not talk about that. Let's not bring that up," but they're important. They're important to who we are and who I've become.

Hank Smith: 01:11:00 Same with the Church. Our dark times have--

Janiece Johnson: 01:11:03 Yeah, the dark shapes us as much as the light does. Lehi teaches us that there's opposition in all things, and that includes each of us. We call ourselves saints aspirationally. We want to become the Holy Ones. That doesn't mean we're already there.

John Bytheway: 01:11:21 Thank you.

Janiece Johnson: 01:11:23 We don't have Catholic idea of sainthood, that we've already done three acts that canonize us and make us officially saints. We use it aspirationally. We want to become holy. In that search, there is light, and there is dark. It's there for all of us. Culturally, maybe, we like focusing on the light, but the dark shapes us as much as the light does. We do need all of those things. They all have the ability, ultimately, to be turned to our good.

Hank Smith: 01:12:00 I love that. We're Latter-day Saints, hopefully. We are Latter-day Saints. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints--we really want to be.

Janiece Johnson: 01:12:11 We're working on it.

Hank Smith: 01:12:12 Yeah, they're working on it.

Janiece Johnson: 01:12:13 Come join with us and work on it together.

Hank Smith: 01:12:16 Someone asked. I was with my companion once, and someone said, "Are Mormons Christian?" He said, "Oh, most days. We really try to be." I thought that was a perfect answer.

Hank Smith: 01:12:27 Dr. Johnson, Janiece, I think I have been so edified today. I feel like I understand this portion of Church History and these sections of the Doctrine and Covenants just a little bit more, right John?

John Bytheway: 01:12:41 Absolutely. Beautifully spoken. I will not forget that phrase, "I can't avoid the light." It's there. Thank you so much.

Hank Smith: 01:12:50 My friends, thank you for joining us on another episode of followHIM. We hope that you are enjoying all the episodes so far. We hope you're learning. Stick with us as we are learning how to run a podcast.

Hank Smith: 01:13:11 Thank you to Dr. Johnson. Thank you to John Bytheway, and we're especially thankful to Steve and Shannon Sorensen, who are our Producers, along with our production team: Lisa Spice and David Perry.

Hank Smith: 01:13:25 My friends, join us on our next episode of followHIM.