

EPISODE 50



Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt

*The Articles of Faith &
Official Declarations 1&2*



“We Believe”

Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

Follow Him: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Sunday.

Podcast Episode Descriptions:

Part 1:

Could you list some fundamental truths of what you believe in 13 short statements? Join Brother Ahmed Corbitt as he discusses the Articles of Faith, their clarifying statements of what Latter-day Saints believe, and their relevance to us today.

Part 2:

Brother Corbitt returns to discuss Declaration 1 and 2 and his personal reflections as a black convert to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints--an episode not to be missed!

Timecodes:

Part 1

- 00:01 Welcome to Part I
- 01:33 Introduction to Brother Ahmed Corbitt
- 03:28 Background to the Articles of Faith
- 10:10 Joseph insisted the Articles of Faith be published in their entirety to avoid mistakes
- 12:08 Brother Corbitt recites the Standard of Truth
- 12:43 *The Cincinnati Gazette* falsely predicts the end of Mormonism
- 14:47 Elder Perry memorized the Articles of Faith and it begins with the bedrock of who we are
- 18:00 Article of Faith 2
- 19:19 Article of Faith 3
- 22:59 Article of Faith 4
- 25:34 Joseph is only 36 years old at the time of the Wentworth Letter
- 27:04 John shares a personal story about donating his kidney to his brother
- 28:48 Article of Faith 5
- 32:01 Women who are set apart are by priesthood authority
- 35:45 Article of Faith 6
- 36:32 Brother Corbitt shares a personal story about learning from the missionaries about apostles and a prophet
- 42:37 Why go to church?
- 48:36 Article of Faith 7
- 50:06 Discussion of the Fast and Testimony meetings evolved
- 52:18 Article of Faith 8
- 54:25 Article of Faith 9
- 58:20 Follow the current prophet
- 1:03:23 Brother Corbitt shares a personal story about the Holy Ghost and his mother
- 1:05:51 Article of Faith 10
- 1:09:22 Elder Oaks tells us to defend the US Constitution
- 1:11:12 Article of Faith 13
- 1:15:03 End of Part I
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Part 2:

- 00:03 Welcome to Part II
- 00:08 Brother Corbitt's personal experience with OD 1
- 02:41 Brother Corbitt's personal experience with OD2 and writing
- 04:51 Brother Corbitt has a personal sidebar essay to OD2 and Race and Priesthood
- 10:24 The Church is the positioned and authorized to gather all of Father's children
- 14:28 Zion includes children of every race
- 17:04 What the Book of Mormon teaches about using race to start conflict
- 26:32 Help for Seminary and Institute teachers

- 28:24 Thoughts on racism and Brother Corbitt's experience joining the Church
- 35:26 End of Part II
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Biographical Information:



Ahmad S. Corbitt was sustained as first counselor in the Young Men General Presidency on April 4, 2020.

Ahmad Corbitt was born on August 16, 1962, in Philadelphia. He and his wife, Jayne, have six children.

He received an undergraduate degree in sociology from Richard Stockton College of New Jersey and a law degree from Rutgers University School of Law.

His past Church service includes time as a full-time missionary in the Puerto Rico San Juan Mission, stake president and president of the Dominican Republic Santo Domingo East Mission.

Ahmad Corbitt worked as a trial lawyer, executive director of corporate communications and associate general counsel of a Delaware company and vice president and general counsel of a New York public relations firm. Brother Corbitt was director of the Church's New York Public Affairs office. He currently works for the Church's Missionary Department.

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EPISODE 50 • PART I



Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt

*The Articles of Faith &
Official Declarations 1&2*



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| Announcement: | | Hello everyone. This is Hank Smith, co-host with John Bytheway of the followHIM Podcast. We have loved learning the history and content of the Doctrine & Covenants with you this year and we are excited to announce that we will be back next year for the Old Testament. We want to build faith in the Lord and the words of his prophets in as many people as possible. Bring on, Come Follow Me 2022! |
| Hank Smith: | 00:00:01 | Welcome to followHIM. A weekly podcast, dedicated to helping individuals and families with their <i>Come, Follow Me</i> study. I'm Hank Smith. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:00:09 | And I'm John Bytheway. We love to learn. We love to laugh. We want to learn and laugh with you as together, we followHIM. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:00:20 | Hello everyone. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I'm your host. I am here with my honest, true, chaste, benevolent and virtuous co-host, John Bytheway. I've been excited for that one for a couple weeks, John. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:00:38 | Wow. Just pronouncing benevolent is an effort. Thank you, Hank. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:00:42 | Right. Right. I think it was you a long time ago who taught me that that sounded a little bit like being chased by an elephant, and I've always wanted to thank you for that. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:00:51 | Oh. That's what my dad used to say. Honest, true, and chased by an elephant. Yeah. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:00:55 | Chased by an elephant. Hey, we want to remind everybody to come find us on social media, on Instagram, and Facebook. We've got all sorts of extras on there for you. Please subscribe to rate and review the podcast that actually helps us more than you might realize. Come to follow him.co, followhim.co for show notes and transcripts which you can get in French, Portuguese, and Spanish. And of course, if you want to watch the podcast, John and I have no idea why you'd want to do that, |

but if you want to watch the podcast, you can come over to YouTube and find us there. All right, John, what a week. What a week we have. Tell us who's joining us.

- John Bytheway: 00:01:33 Yeah. We're very honored today to have a face that's familiar to you if you watch General Conference. So, this is Brother Ahmad Corbitt, the first counselor in the Young Men's General Presidency. And we're so happy to have him here today. I have a little bio. He was born in Philadelphia, and he and his wife, Jane, have six children. He has an undergraduate degree in sociology from Richard Stockton College in New Jersey and a law degree from Rutgers University School of Law. He served as a full-time missionary in Puerto Rico and was the state president and mission president in the Dominican Republic. He served as a trial lawyer, executive director of corporate communications. He's got a long list of professional accomplishments, was the director of the church's New York public affairs office at one time, and currently works for the church's missionary department. And also, like I said, serves as First Counselor in the Young Men's General Presidency. So, we are really thrilled to have you here today with us, Brother Corbitt. Thank you.
- Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:02:40 Thank you. It's great to be here with you both. I'm so honored to be here and thrilled and privileged to be able to speak to your audience. I thought Hank was going to say, John, that you had endured all things as well.
- John Bytheway: 00:02:55 That's true.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:58 He didn't say you were lovely, but I was waiting for him to say you endured all things.
- John Bytheway: 00:03:05 Yeah. When you look at me, you think that dude's been through a lot. That's what people, there's a lot of mileage.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:14 That is funny. With me as his co-host he has endured a lot. That is true. I should have mentioned that. Well, welcome Brother Corbitt. I think everybody is so excited to hear from you.
- John Bytheway: 00:03:28 Yeah. The lesson this week from the *Come, Follow Me* is the Articles of Faith and Official Declarations 1 and 2. So, it's really fun, interesting stuff we have to talk about today. And I think some very faith-building things as well.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:46 Right. And I think, Brother Corbitt, John and I just want to listen and learn.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:03:51

Well, this is a great area. I love the Wentworth Letter. John mentioned my background in public affairs and public relations. The Wentworth Letters, I see it from that standpoint, was a public relations attempt to help people outside of the Church mainly, understand that some of the falsehoods and things that were being said by the Church and that was important to do. The Church, by the way, had just established *The Millennial Star* just a short time before in *The History of the Church*. I love this article that's from *The Millennial Star*. It's February 1st, 1842. It's a little long, but I'll try to read it fast. It says, "In the midst of general distress, which prevails in this country on account of the want of employment, the high price of provisions, the oppression, priestcraft, and iniquity of the land.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:04:55

It is pleasing to the household of faith to contemplate a country reserved by the Almighty as a sure asylum for the poor and oppressed. A country every way adapted to their wants and conditions and still more pleasing to think that thousands of Saints have already made their escape from this country and all its abuses and distress, and that they have found a home whereby preserving industry, they may all enjoy the blessings of liberty, peace and plenty." So, it goes on, and this is talking about Saints who have come from England as well. It is not yet two years since the Saints in England, in obedience to the command of their Heavenly Father, commenced the general plan of immigration to the land of Zion. They were few in number, generally poor and had every opposition to encounter both from want of means and from the enemies of the truth.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:05:51

And here's the point, who circulated every falsehood calculated to hinder or discourage them. Newspapers and tracts were put in circulation, sermons and public speeches were delivered in abundance to warn the people that Nauvoo was a barren waste on the seashore, that it was a wild and uninhabited swamp, that it was full of savages, wild beasts, serpents. That all the English Saints who should go there would be immediately sold for slaves by the leaders of the Church. And that there was nothing to eat, no water, and no way possible to obtain a living. And it goes on and on, when in fact, much of the opposite of that was true. They had a great economy, and all kinds of good things were happening in Nauvoo. The Church leaders were wise enough at that time, and they still are to publish the truth and help people to see what the kingdom of God is.

Hank Smith: 00:06:51

That sounded like our day. Listen to this. Who circulated every falsehood calculated to hinder or discourage. That happens to the Church still.

John Bytheway: 00:07:05 That's our day.

Hank Smith: 00:07:06 Yeah, absolutely. Every falsehood. When my students sometimes hear things about the Church, I'm sometimes amazed of the things that some people come up with to hinder or discourage people from the Church.

John Bytheway: 00:07:21 The Wentworth Letter is let's set the record straight.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:07:24 Let's set the record straight. Yes. PR can have a bad name. And of course, if it's manipulative, if it's false, if it's spinning things, then it ought to have a bad name. But it was clear to leaders of the Church, and it's clear to leaders of the Church today. The Church has a Church Communications Department and great leaders who lead that, and they're not out spinning things or manipulating. They are setting the record straight just like Joseph Smith did with the Wentworth Letter when asked by *The Chicago Democrat*, name of the newspaper at that time in Illinois, what his Church believed in, and what they were all about.

Hank Smith: 00:08:08 You can read the entire copy of the Wentworth Letter if you want. If you have your Gospel Library app and you go to this week's lesson, if you scroll down just a little bit, there's a paragraph where it says, "See also Guide to the Scriptures, the Articles of Faith, an L. Tom Perry message." You can just tap on Chapter 38, the Wentworth Letter and Teachings of the President of the Church, Joseph Smith. And you can read the entire letter right there. So, the Articles of Faith were really just a part of this.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:08:41 The Articles of Faith were part of the Wentworth Letter. Yep. They sure were.

Hank Smith: 00:08:46 And I think it's called the Wentworth Letter, correct me if I'm wrong here. But I think it's called the Wentworth Letter, because it was written to a man with the last name of Wentworth.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:08:55 Yes.

Hank Smith: 00:08:57 It was a newspaper editor and he was writing a history, I think.

John Bytheway: 00:09:00 Yeah. John Wentworth of *The Chicago Democrat*. And it surprised me. They were writing the history of New Hampshire or something, New Hampshire? And I thought now, what does New Hampshire? I know that Joseph Smith was born in Sharon,

Vermont, but those states, they're kind of small. Maybe there was some interaction. I don't know why New Hampshire exactly.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:09:24 Of course Joseph Smith was born in Vermont. You're thinking his parents were from New Hampshire?

Hank Smith: 00:09:30 Lucy Mack was born in Gilsum, New Hampshire.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:09:35 Joseph Smith goes on to say as Mr. Bastow, and this is the man who's writing the New Hampshire history, as Mr. Bastow has taken the proper steps to obtain correct information. All that I shall ask at his hands is that he published the account entirely, unvarnished and without misrepresentation.

Hank Smith: 00:09:56 Can we send this? Let's send this to some of the Church's critics today, right? Just we ask that you try to not do anything with this, but just tell the truth. How about that?

John Bytheway: 00:10:07 Just tell the truth.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:10:08 Correct information. That's all we're after.

John Bytheway: 00:10:10 Just give correct infor...Yeah. And we hear about that, Hank. It's like somebody on the news, they interview him for two hours and then show 30 seconds of clips. They find something they can use and so, I can see why Joseph Smith would say we published the whole thing. I totally understand that. Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:10:35 Yeah. And in fact, as BYU employees, we are not supposed to give interviews because for that very reason that something can be twisted and taken and manipulated. And that was happening to Joseph Smith. I think all the time this falsehood is causing so many problems. And how do you fix that? Right? How do you fix a loud voice that is lying about you? That's got to be so frustrating. No social media. You can't have your own Twitter account. So you're relying on publishers to put out correct information. And then when they don't, I can't imagine the frustration.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:11:17 Turned out that this request blesses the entire world. Had John Wentworth or Mr. Bastow not made this request; we may not have this rich set of Articles of Faith and the Standard of Truth as well.

John Bytheway: 00:11:35 Yeah. That's part of the last part that's so compelling and motivating that, in fact, I believe it's just before the statements

of belief of the Articles of Faith is that the Standard of truth has been erected.

- Hank Smith: 00:11:51 Why don't we read that, John? Do you have that in front of you?
- John Bytheway: 00:11:53 I do, actually.
- Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:11:54 Or we can all recite it from memory. No we can't.
- John Bytheway: 00:11:58 Do you have it Brother Corbitt? Would you like to read it?
- Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:12:01 I don't have it, but how about if I recite it and you guys check me.
- John Bytheway: 00:12:06 Okay, because you've memorized it.
- Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:12:08 I think so. The standard of truth has been erected. No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing. Persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent until it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.
- John Bytheway: 00:12:42 That statement makes you want to stand up and cheer. It's prophetic. I think I shared on another one, *The Cincinnati Gazette*, in an article about July 3rd, I think, of 1844 reporting the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, and the last three words of the excerpt were, "Thus ends Mormonism." They thought, "That's over," but they're not very good at prophesying *The Cincinnati Gazette* because 11 years later, there was no *Cincinnati Gazette*. But this idea that nothing can stop this in this part of the Wentworth Letter is very compelling.
- Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:13:20 In many missions, missionaries are baptizing more converts during the pandemic than they did previous to the pandemic. The Lord has made means and provided means a lot of it is through technology. A lot of it is people feeling isolated and humbled and needing the Lord and some missions are truly baptizing more during a pandemic, which is amazing. It's astonishing to think that. Nothing can stop the work from progressing is the prophecy.
- Hank Smith: 00:13:56 "The standard of truth has been erected." Nothing can stop this work. I love it. And then he moves. Yeah, he does. He moves right into the Articles of Faith. You want to know what we

believe? It always is funny to me when critics of the Church will try to tell us what we believe. I'm like, wait. I'm pretty sure I get to state what I believe. Right?

- John Bytheway: 00:14:17 I heard Steven Robinson once, the author of *Believing Christ*, and he talked, somebody was telling him, "You guys believe this or that." And he said, "You know what? I am the world's expert on what I believe." And we could all say that. "I know what I believe. I'm the world's foremost expert on what I personally believe."
- Hank Smith: 00:14:41 Yeah. So here comes Joseph Smith saying, "You want to know, here's what we believe. Here's our basis."
- Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:14:47 They're so powerful. And many Primary children have them memorized. Once Elder Perry, he was in his nineties and he said, he still had the Articles of Faith memorized and he would advocate and teach that children still continue to memorize them and learn them, and he could recite them from when he was a child, decades, many decades earlier.
- Hank Smith: 00:15:18 Some of those songs stay. I can still sing them from my Primary days.
- John Bytheway: 00:15:22 From Primary days.
- Hank Smith: 00:15:23 I won't make you suffer through it, that would be ... in all things. But I can still, yeah.
- Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:15:29 That wouldn't be lovely and a good report.
- Hank Smith: 00:15:32 It wouldn't be lovely. He starts out, and this is the bedrock of who we are. "We believe in God, the Eternal Father in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost." When I talk to a student or a friend, who's going through what they call a faith crisis I usually come back to here. Do you believe in God? Do you believe in Jesus Christ? And do you believe in the Holy Ghost? Right? Let's have us. This is the foundation. Let's see how deep this fissure in your faith, how deep it goes. Does it go this deep? Do you believe in God? Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Do you believe in the Holy Ghost? If we can start from there, it feels like we can build something strong.
- Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:16:15 Great way to start. And funny you talk about faith crisis because Joseph Smith said in the *Lectures on Faith*, that knowing that there is a God and his character, are two of the three main things that you need to know in order to even have faith in God.

Hank Smith: 00:16:33 Right. We can't worship a being we don't know.

John Bytheway: 00:16:36 And I think about the First Vision, "He called me by name and said pointing to the other." What did he learn in that instant? "He looked like me. He had hands, He had a voice, He called me by my name." Amazing what he learned in that instant. And what was that thing that the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "Once, should you gaze ..."

John Bytheway: 00:17:03 What was that thing that the prophet Joseph Smith said once? "Should you gaze into heaven for five minutes, you would know more than by reading everything that was ever written on the subject." And that's exactly what he got to do.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:17:12 As a father, he rescued him from that thick darkness when he was just about ready to surrender to despair and destruction, as he thought and sensed in his own mind, Joseph, his father rescued him and chased darkness away from him. What a fatherly thing to do.

Hank Smith: 00:17:34 Yeah, that's beautiful. I've always told my students that when you believe in Jesus Christ, when you believe in the resurrected Jesus Christ, every other miracle becomes very plausible. If you believe in a resurrected Jesus Christ who still lives today, every other miracle becomes really kind of small potatoes. Opens up to a world of possibilities. The resurrection of Jesus.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:18:00 Oh, this is good. People will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression. Isn't that so liberating? Unless you do something wrong. There have been times in my life where I thought, "Oh no, I'm going to be punished for my own sins."

Hank Smith: 00:18:17 I would rather be punished for John's sins, because there aren't any.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:18:23 See, that's what I was thinking.

John Bytheway: 00:18:24 I catalog mine in a journal. Let me get volume four out for you. No, I think the idea of agency is affirmed there. I think a lot of the Articles of faith were responding to probably questions they got at the time, and maybe even to say where we're distinct. So the idea of original sin is kind of refuted there in that Article of Faith. The depravity of man, one of the tenets of Protestantism is, "Well, we'll be punished for our own sins, not for Adam's transgressions." That's a nice thing to know. I remember Robert Millet saying to our class once, "Raise your hand if you are responsible for Adam's transgression." And nobody raised their

hand. And he said, "Raise your hand if you've been affected by it. We all raised our hands." But that's a very important distinction.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:19:19 And of course that leads us to the Savior's Atonement, "That through it, all mankind may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel." President Nelson has taught us all, the whole church, to refer to the Atonement as the Savior's Atonement, or the Atonement of Jesus Christ, as opposed to just the Atonement, as you know.

John Bytheway: 00:19:42 Just the Atonement. Yeah.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:19:44 This sort of amorphous act, or event that saves us rather than Christ saving us through that act.

Hank Smith: 00:19:51 Right. You cannot separate the Atonement of Jesus Christ from the character of Jesus Christ. Who he is. The only reason we have an Atonement of Jesus Christ is because of His choices, His character.

Hank Smith: 00:20:06 Interesting, John and Brother Corbitt incorporate here that we've got Creation, Fall, Atonement. If you believe in God, you've got a creator. You have the Fall and verse two in the Atonement. The three pillars, really, of the plan of salvation are Articles of Faith: 1, 2, and 3.

John Bytheway: 00:20:24 Wow.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:20:25 Well, well said. Great observation.

John Bytheway: 00:20:27 That's great. And I like that ... Something that we need to state that may feel like a contrast by obedience to laws and ordinances, and as the debate that goes on, are we saved by our faith? Are we saved by the grace of Christ alone? Are we saved by our works? And there's this balance that comes into here with this by obedience to laws and ordinances of the gospel. We're saved by the Savior. We're saved by the Savior. We can't earn our salvation. We know that. But the Savior asked us to do certain things, and so that's kind of there. And I love what C.S. Lewis said that he had been asked about whether we're saved by ... I think he used faith or good works. And he said, "I really have ..." This is CS Lewis, "I really have no right to speak on such an important topic." But it does seem a little like asking which blade in a pair of scissors is most necessary.

John Bytheway: 00:21:29 Which is ... What a brilliant way to put it. We're trying to become like the Savior, but our striving to become isn't what saves us. But he asked us to become like Him. There's been a lot of talk about that. I just think that it's interesting that Article of Faith 3 has that idea, all mankind may be saved by obedience to laws and ordinances of the gospel. And then 4 tells us what they are.

Hank Smith: 00:21:58 That's exactly right, John. "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved. ..." You could put a period right there. We do believe that, that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved. And what has he asked us to do? To be obedient to the laws and ordinance of the gospel, which are ... And then we ...

John Bytheway: 00:22:16 And it comes into it. Yeah. A man must be born of water and of the Spirit. So yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:22:21 But you're right. Obedience doesn't save us. It is through the ... All mankind may be saved through the Atonement of Christ, period. We don't believe our works save us. But our works do take us closer to him. Do you remember Brad's analogy, our friend Brad Wilcox, said, "The Savior has paid the entire price for your piano lessons. He doesn't want to be paid back. He wants you to practice."

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:22:47 Yeah. Oh, that's great.

Hank Smith: 00:22:47 That's what he asks. Just like any parent.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:22:49 That's a great analogy.

Hank Smith: 00:22:50 He just wants you to practice. And that's what obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel are, are us saying, "Yes, thank you for paying this price. I will practice.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:22:59 Yeah. And King Benjamin says, "He wants us to be steadfast, always abounding in good works." Why? That Christ the Lord omnipotent may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, through the wisdom and power and justice and mercy of him who created all things. So it's he who will do the saving, and the bringing to heaven. Our role, and responsibility, and duty, and opportunity, and privilege are to embrace him. He lifts us, but we have to embrace Him. And we embrace Him by the laws and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

Hank Smith: 00:23:42 That's beautiful. The Savior brings me to heaven. Faith, repentance, my baptismal covenants, my baptism, and the Holy Ghost make it so I want to be there. That they can make me the person that I need to be in order to want to be in heaven. Does that make sense, John? The idea of it's open to me because of the Atonement, but do I want it? Well, that's where these come in. They'll change what I want.

John Bytheway: 00:24:13 President Dallin H Oaks, I just loved that. Yeah, I think it was October of 2000, the talk he gave was called, "The Challenge to Become." I'll try to paraphrase it. It's not just what we know and it's not even what we do, but when we know what to do, we do what we know, we begin to become something different. And when the Savior works in our lives, we become different. And like you said Hank, we begin to lose desire to sin. And so clean hands, pure heart. We can be cleansed from our sins, but with pure heart, we were trying to lose our desire to sin like King Benjamin's people did.

John Bytheway: 00:24:47 And I've always wondered, is that permanent? Is there an order form in the Book of Mormon I can pull out and sign up for that, where I get that permanently? But then King Benjamin says, "I'm going to give you a name," and I don't think it was permanent. I think all have felt that. We've listened to an inspiring talk or something and just been so fired up, then we have to go back to work, back to school, back to the world, and so we need to keep coming back where the spirit is to get that same feeling again. To lose our desire to sin.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:25:15 These people made a covenant. And as John said, he gave them a name, and said that the covenant you've made is a righteous covenant. Obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, and of course ordinances accompany covenants, and covenants accompany ordinances.

Hank Smith: 00:25:34 Joseph Smith is how old in '18 ?... He is laying out the gospel in such a simple way.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:25:43 Yeah. He's 36.

Hank Smith: 00:25:43 I just don't know if I could have done this. Yeah. At 36 I don't know if I could have said, "What do you believe? Well, let me start at the beginning, let me lay the foundation and make it simple and beautiful and powerful all at the same time. Why don't I just go ahead and write this up for you?"

Hank Smith: 00:25:57 These four principles and ordinances. Faith, repentance, baptism, and the Holy Ghost. How many times in the Book of Mormon do we come back to these four principles and ordinances? You've got 2 Nephi 31. Savior does it in 3 Nephi 11. He does it again in 3 Nephi 27. Come back to these over and over. This is the basis of everything we do.

John Bytheway: 00:26:25 I had a friend in my ward that stopped me once. "Wait, you've taught Book of Mormon?" And, "Yeah, I have." He said, "Well, what's the one thing you've learned over all these years?" And thought about it, and I said, "The prevalence of first principles in the Book of Mormon. Faith in Christ and repentance, over and over again. And sometimes the ordinances too. But faith, repent, faith, repent." And I want to emphasize, faith could be just what we want to happen, but it's not faith in what we want. It's not just hope the sun will come out tomorrow. It's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in what He wants.

John Bytheway: 00:27:04 And I remember my story, Hank, of donating a kidney to my brother. And I thought we were so blessed. David was doing a project for the Church, and they needed this thing urgently. It was to help with the translation of General Conference and sending it out to the world. And he had invented this thing that separated volume levels. It's a long story. Just thought it up. And Elder Rex Pineagar gave him a blessing, and I thought, "He's going to heal him." And we all had faith. He's going to heal him, and he didn't. And what he said was, "Your body will not reject the new element." That new element was in me.

John Bytheway: 00:27:45 So I got to donate that kidney, but we learned such a wonderful lesson. Faith isn't faith in what you want, it's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And he had a better plan. And sometimes that implies a real reliance on him, that he knows better than maybe faith in what we want to happen. No, the first principle is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hank Smith: 00:28:11 That's awesome, John. I think Elder Maxwell added, "Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ includes faith in the Lord's timing."

John Bytheway: 00:28:17 In His timing.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:28:19 I think faith in the Lord Jesus Christ includes faith in the Savior's ability to use us as well. So there's some self confidence in there, as we walk with Him, that we can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth us, as Paul said.

John Bytheway: 00:28:36 Boy, that's a good way to think of it. You get a calling that you don't think you can do, but if you have faith in Christ, then you have faith that He called you. Wow, that's a good way to ... I love that.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:28:48 *Preach My Gospel* says includes in faith in Christ, trusting Christ, and also trusting that he will keep his promises. And so part of the promise of being called and ordained and set apart, or whatever happens with us in our calling, is that the Lord, by calling us, the 1 Nephi 3:7, he has essentially declared that you can do this. And in fact, that goes right into number five. I don't mean to get ahead of us, but, "We believe that a man must be called of God by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands of those who are in authority to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof." What does, "Called by prophecy mean?" It suggests to me, a foreknowledge of the person who's called. That she or he can do this calling. Very similar to what Alma teaches in Alma 13 about the foreknowledge of God.

John Bytheway: 00:29:53 It's important because I think this Article of Faith may have been a response to the idea of the priesthood of all believers. That if you believe and love the Bible, then you have priesthood. And I think we may be a little closer to our in our theology than to our Catholic friends, who believe, no there really is priesthood, there really is keys. And we believe a man must be called by prophecy by those in authority. There's an idea of some that have authority and have keys to do that. I think it's huge, really.

Hank Smith: 00:30:29 Man, this idea that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ includes faith in what he sees in me. That I believe in me because he does, and that's part of believing in him. I've never thought of it that way, but I really like that. Because we so often, especially in the world today, our teenagers don't think they have any value. I'm a worthless person. I'm a waste of space. And faith in the Lord Jesus Christ includes now faith that you are important because he has declared you to be. So if you really believe in Him, you believe in you.

John Bytheway: 00:31:05 I love the beginning of the new Aaronic priesthood theme. Relatively new. "I'm a beloved son of God, and He has a work for me to do." And faith in that.

Hank Smith: 00:31:19 And Brother Corbitt.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:31:21 Yeah.

- Hank Smith: 00:31:21 I liked what you did with verse five, that you said, "She or he." So when Joseph Smith writes, "We believe that a man must be called of God," we could easily just add right there, we believe that a man or woman called of God ..." That men and women are both used by the Lord in this work.
- Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:31:38 Yes. And think of sister missionaries. Think of a counselor in a Relief Society presidency, or the Primary president, or whomever. The Brethren are very clear that these sisters lead, teach, administer the gospel by the power of the priesthood.
- John Bytheway: 00:32:01 President Oaks gave that talk and said, "When a woman is set apart to serve in her calling, she's serving with priesthood authority." Then he said, "What other authority could it be?" We're doing the work of God on earth. What other authority would that be? Or what other power could that possibly be?
- Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:32:18 When John and I train, John being a member of the Young Men General Presidency Council, when we train others on the Children and Youth Program, we use a statement from President Nelson, who implores the adult leaders to let the youth lead. He says, "Priesthood authority will have been delegated to them." That's the quote. And then I'm paraphrasing the rest, but to lead in their quorums--quorum and class presidencies. He definitely includes the Young Women in that, and in saying that priesthood authority will have been delegated to them. And so we need to let them lead and exercise that authority.
- Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:33:01 That, by prophecy, takes me back too to the 138th Section, Joseph F. Smith says, "I observe that they were," and they will become apparent in a minute, "That they were also among the noble and great ones who were chosen in the beginning, to be rulers in the Church of God." And he's talking about particular people. But then he goes on and says, "Even before they were born, they, with many others ..." And it's the, "With many others," that describe our youth, our children, and many others in the Church today, and not yet in the Church. "They, with many others, receive their first lessons in the world of Spirits, and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men." And so, gosh, being called by prophecy. Did the Lord foreknow that I received first lesson-
- Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:34:03 Did the Lord foreknow that I received my first lessons and that I was prepared? Of course he did.

Hank Smith: 00:34:06 Yep. It reminds me of Jacob 5, Lord of the vineyard seemingly doesn't know what to do, but they call the servants, right? This foreordained group. Come help us. And the vineyard is saved. I think this all ties together really well.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:34:22 But a young person who's being called to something, or anyone who's being called to something, ask yourself am I being called by prophecy? Has the Lord foreknown? And Joseph Smith taught that the callings we receive in this life were foreknown to the Lord.

John Bytheway: 00:34:38 It reminds me of Steven Robinson's thesis in his book, *Believing Christ*. And he chose the title, *Believing Christ*, my understanding is, a lot of people believe in Christ, but they don't believe Him.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:34:53 That's exactly right.

John Bytheway: 00:34:54 I don't believe it applies to me, and I like that. No, you can believe Him. You can believe what he said about you, which some of us are like, "Oh, I know it was everybody else, but I don't know about me."

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:35:08 Right.

John Bytheway: 00:35:09 But having faith in Christ? Yeah. That's a beautiful thought.

Hank Smith: 00:35:13 He made the analogy of you don't believe in electricity unless you use it, right? You can believe in electricity and be like, wouldn't it be great if it all applied to me? But I'll just sit here, dark in my house. He said, "Use it, use it. If you believe in it, use it."

John Bytheway: 00:35:29 And I think sometimes also in our trainings Brother Corbitt would talk about the importance of setting these young people apart to serve in their class presidencies, have them listen to what the Lord wants to say to them during that time.

Hank Smith: 00:35:45 I'm interested in Article of Faith 6, because both of you have had an increased, I'm sure in the last few years, an increased amount of interaction with apostles and prophets. So, I'm interested in what you have to say about this verse, "We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, apostles and prophets and pastors," which I would say is bishops, teachers, evangelists. Wouldn't we say that we're looking at patriarchs there?

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:36:15 Right?

Hank Smith: 00:36:15 As evangelists?

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:36:17 Yeah. That's what Joseph Smith taught.

Hank Smith: 00:36:19 I think our listening audience would love to hear from both of you about the Primitive Church and your experiences with the apostles and prophets.

John Bytheway: 00:36:27 Take it away, Brother Corbitt. I don't have nearly as much as you do.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:36:32 It is a great privilege and a powerful experience. Can I start, though, as a 17-year-old? There I was, just graduated high school in Philadelphia as you know, and my family had moved over to southern New Jersey, which was kind of a suburb of Philadelphia across the Delaware River. Missionaries came, they're teaching our family, and I distinctly remember the lesson about apostles. They opened a flip chart and there was President Kimball, President Tanner, and President Romney, and then Twelve Apostles under them, and they said that there were Twelve Apostles on the earth again. And I said, "Really? Where are they?" And they said, "Oh, they are in Utah at Church headquarters." And I remember, this is so weird to try to explain, but it was as if they answered a question that I didn't know I had. I thought, this is a 17-year-old kid who's thinking that that's an important point, that the Restored Church has that office and those leaders again on the earth. And now it's such a privilege John and I have to be guided by them, to be led by them, to meet with them periodically and hear their direct counsel. They love the members of the Church, the children, the youth. It is wonderful to feel that love.

John Bytheway: 00:38:16 I've heard it said by a couple of people who said every interaction that I've had with these prophets and apostles today confirms that they are the people you hope they are when they're not around. I remember a friend of mine told me that he once had to make a presentation for the First Presidency, and he was very nervous and they could tell he was nervous. He looked up and President Uchtdorf gave him two thumbs up. "You're doing great," right? He said, "It just confirmed to me that they are the people I hope they are." They really are. Not that they're perfect, but that they do have the character we hope they have.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:38:54

Apart from seeing them periodically and being in occasional meetings with them, I have a friend, he was living in Texas at the time and getting his MBA, and he and his family attended a multi-stake meeting where Elder Oaks spoke. This was many years ago. Elder Oaks told a story, and my friend recognized that there was a piece of the story that wasn't there. So afterwards he went up to Elder Oaks and said, "I noticed you left this part out of the story." It was just the two of them, and for context, this becomes important later, my friend is white. So he asked Elder Oaks this, and it was just the two of them, and Elder Oaks said, "I left that part of the story out because I consider it to be racist, and I didn't want to repeat it." My friend tells me later on. There was no person present who... There wasn't a minority present or someone overhearing this. That's just who Elder Oaks is. That's just the man, President Dallin H. Oaks. I have so many stories, and I'm sure you two have others, where they are just shown to be who they present to be and whom the Lord calls.

Hank Smith: 00:40:25

Absolutely. I know that probably wasn't the purpose of Article of Faith 6, but I was excited to ask.

John Bytheway: 00:40:33

I look at the order of the Articles of Faith and remember they're coming perhaps crafted, like these are often asked questions, but let's put the most important things first. So, look, like you said, Hank: Creation, Fall, Atonement. What is God, and who am I, and who is the Savior? I think it's significant that the Church doesn't come down until number 6. It's not Article of Faith number 1, you have to be in our Church. There's nothing like that. God is real and the Savior is real, the Holy Ghost is real. And men will be punished for their own sins, not Adam's transgression. What's my state? Through the Atonement of Christ we can be saved. We do need those ordinances. Where do we go to get those? It's all the way down to 6, where we have the first mention of the Church.

John Bytheway: 00:41:24

I wish that was an original thought for me. But Stephen R Covey, wrote this book called *The Six Events of the Restoration*. You know about the seven habits. Well, the six events of the Restoration Brother Covey suggested the order of the events of the restoration are a formula for solving life's problems, and you always start with who is God and who am I? And then who is the Savior? What is the gospel? Where do I go to accept the Savior? And that they unfold that way. I'd never thought of that before. I think I heard Brother Covey once at an Education Week also say if you look at the order of the Articles of Faith you see the order in which things fell apart as the Apostasy began, that started with the nature of God, and then with original sin and

things like that. I'd never seen it that way before, but I thought that was a fun thought to interject when you see the Church is not showing up until number 6.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:42:25

How insightful is that? Yeah. As you said, with ordinances being mentioned in 3, 4, and 5, and then the church showing up to administer those ordinances in 6.

John Bytheway: 00:42:37

During this pandemic, why don't we just stay home for Church? Well, we go because that's where there are ordinances like partaking of the sacrament. That's important. The Lord wants us there to renew covenants and partake of the sacrament. It's another reason why the Church... Elder Christofferson gave a talk in, I want to say 2015, called "Why the Church?" It's fun to take that apart, and you can just make bullet points of all of the reasons why we gather, we strengthen one another, we mourn with those who mourn, comfort those who stand in need of comfort. It's important, but I do think it's interesting that these fundamental things are mentioned first before the organization of the Church is mentioned in number 6.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:43:30

That's so great. Another couple why the Church, President Oaks just spoke on that-

John Bytheway: 00:43:36

Just more recently.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:43:38

In just this past conference. Uh-huh (affirmative). A couple other points he made, one of course is the sacrament to help us in the process of repentance and renewing our covenants, that being an ordinance, one of the main ones that we're talking about here in these Articles of Faith, but another is, I love his phrase that, "We associate with people who test us and whom we test."

John Bytheway: 00:44:17

Yeah.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:44:17

And you do. You find yourself... Church brings people together who are disparate and different and diverse, and invites us all to come unto Christ and walk the same path, and we learn patience and we teach others patience with ourselves.

John Bytheway: 00:44:40

Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:44:41

I need to tell the Mapleton 6th Ward that I have helped them quite a bit with testing them, my neighbors, and my, oh, my goodness. That's so funny.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:44:51 "People test us and whom we test."

Hank Smith: 00:44:54 Yes. It's true.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:44:55 I may or may not be quoting him exactly, but that was his concept. I just love, Hank, that you are the gift of God to the Mapleton, which ward?

Hank Smith: 00:45:06 The sixth ward. Yeah, the Mapleton 6th Ward.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:45:06 The Mapleton 6th Ward.

Hank Smith: 00:45:08 I have learned they are very patient people, and that's because I've been a part of their ward for 11 years.

John Bytheway: 00:45:15 It requires a lot of faith.

Hank Smith: 00:45:17 Yes. They have endured all things.

John Bytheway: 00:45:21 Yeah. And Elder Christofferson, he said it gives us a place to experience the application of divine doctrine, and he talks about idiosyncrasies, and then he said, or as President Packer used to say, idiot-syncrasies.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:45:41 In my case, anyway,

John Bytheway: 00:45:43 No.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:45:45 What I inflict on my members.

John Bytheway: 00:45:46 What was the... I think it was Eugene England who said, "The Church is as true as the gospel, because he meant this is a place for us to experience all of these things and faith and repentance and everything, and to test, be tested, and to test others."

Hank Smith: 00:46:05 Yep. Occasionally at BYU I teach the New Testament. I get a student who says, "Well, I love Jesus. I'm not so sure about organized religion." I'm like, "Listen, if you love Jesus, He loves organized religion. Jesus wants this. This is something that's clear in the Bible, clear in the Book of Mormon, clear in the Doctrine and Covenants. He wants us in an organized religion." I think this is why we're talking about it. John, you wrote that book on Moroni. I mean, that full chapter is to get together often, sing, pray.

John Bytheway: 00:46:36 Gather. People say, "Yeah, I don't believe in organized religion." I say, "Go to the nursery. It's not that organized." But when you look at... And I just defended a bunch of nursery leaders.

Hank Smith: 00:46:48 Yeah, sorry.

John Bytheway: 00:46:50 When you look at Moroni, and thank you, Hank, for bringing that up. Moroni takes over for his father. What should I do? I have no home, I have no plates, I don't know how long I'm going to live, I know naught. Then he's like Mormon 9. Listen, believe in Christ. Fundamental, right? I'm going to give you an example of what happens to nations when they don't believe in Christ, and give us the Book of Ether. Then he comes back. I've got a few more things to say, and it's not until Moroni 6 that he starts mentioning the Church. It's very similar. He talks about priesthood and ordinances and prayers on the sacrament and how we gave the Holy Ghost, and then Moroni 6, here's how we operated the Church. Thanks for mentioning that, because it's a similar order of events than the Articles of Faith.

Hank Smith: 00:47:40 I think it might be a good time, John, just for us. We don't do this very often on followHIM, but to just anyone listening, the invitation, please go to church. Please, please. I know some people just, "Oh, it's not for me. Oh, I like everything about the gospel, but I just... Someone offended me," whatever it is. Please, please, come join with us on Sunday. Come be tested and be-

John Bytheway: 00:48:04 Yeah. And be... Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:48:06 And test others. Come and be tested and test others.

John Bytheway: 00:48:09 We need you there. We need you there. I think sometimes we emphasize that you need the Church, but I think sometimes we should emphasize that the Church needs you. We need all of us. We need all of us to help each other and maybe even to test each other.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:48:22 And Jesus certainly in the New Testament organized religion.

Hank Smith: 00:48:27 Yeah.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:48:27 He organized His Church himself.

Hank Smith: 00:48:30 It's very clear. It's very clear how the Savior feels about us being organized.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:48:36 It's a great theme to come together and worship the Lord. I love verse seven. "We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth." That's all right out of the New Testament. It seems to flow very naturally from verse 6. Verse 6 being offices, and then verse 7 being operations.

John Bytheway: 00:49:05 Being gifts.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:49:05 Of the Holy Ghost. Gifts.

John Bytheway: 00:49:07 I wonder if they got questions about that a lot, because we read in the cultural backdrop in Joseph Smith's day there were the shaking Quakers and there was even... What was the section of the Doctrine and Covenants, Hank, where the Lord warned people, because there were two people falling down and-

Hank Smith: 00:49:24 Right.

John Bytheway: 00:49:25 One jumping around the sections.

Hank Smith: 00:49:27 In those earlier sections, yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:49:27 Yeah. And it was like, no, that's not, you're going too far, or that's not of God. And this is a statement of, "We believe in the same things in the New Testament". And I love that they added interpretation of tongues. If somebody's just speaking in tongues and nobody's there to understand, that doesn't sound like a house of order. Somebody will be there to interpret it.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:49:50 And the prophet Joseph Smith encountered that at one point when he went to Ohio. In Sections 39, 40, 41, we're right around that time in Church History where he was speaking to those issues.

Hank Smith: 00:50:06 There's a book, a wonderful book that was recommended to me called *Mormonism in Transition*. It's definitely scholarship. It's not an easy read. It took me a while to get through it. But Thomas Alexander wrote the book and he talks about how we go from the Church of the 1870s, 1880s, kind of these polygamists out in Utah, to the 1920s, 1930s, where we have Latter-day Saints throughout the country and they're serving in the Senate. He says that 50 years right there, *Mormonism in Transition*. He talks about the gift of tongues becoming a fast and testimony meeting. He said that was a transition where they stopped speaking in tongues and started this tradition of coming up to the pulpit and bearing your testimony. It was a

fascinating thing that he talked about that they said, okay... There was never an official like, hey, we're not speaking in tongues anymore. It just kind of m-

- Hank Smith: 00:51:03 ... there was never an official like, hey, we're not speaking in tongues anymore. It just made this gradual transition from, "Come up and offer us your testimony versus this idea of speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues. Because people might wonder, where did that go? What happened there? And it was a really fascinating book. If you both want to read it, it's a slog to get through. It really is. It is so well researched. He basically takes those 50 years and he says here's what's happened to young men. Here's what happened to young women. Here's what happened to Primary. Here's what happened to Sunday School. Here's what happened to Correlation. He just goes through the entire Church over that 50-year period and how it transitioned from what it was to what we have today.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:48 Anyway, a fascinating read. It's called *Mormonism in Transition*. The only reason I read it is because Alex Baugh told me it was in his top five books he'd ever read on the history of the Church. And so I said, well, I'll pick it up. And it is, I mean, it is definitely not, it was a hundred pages on Primary, I mean, I was like, wow, you really did your research here. It's fascinating.
- Hank Smith: 00:52:12 And I do remember him saying, where did the gift of tongues go? It really turned into a fast and testimony meeting.
- Hank Smith: 00:52:18 Well, let's keep going Brother Corbitt, you lead us out and take us through 8 through the rest here.
- Hank Smith: 00:52:25 8 says, "We believe the Bible to be the word of God, as far as is translated correctly. We also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God." Love these two basic pillars of our canon, which of course the Lord and his wisdom added to.
- John Bytheway: 00:52:43 And I think that was important to take a stand on the Bible, that we love the Bible, we want to make sure it's translated correctly, interpreted correctly so forth.
- Hank Smith: 00:52:53 Two basic pillars of our canon.
- Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:52:56 Yeah, don't you think so?
- Hank Smith: 00:52:58 Yeah.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:52:58 Of course, he added to them obviously in his wisdom and we are enriched for it.

Hank Smith: 00:53:06 And he also guided Joseph Smith to conduct the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible. And I consider how much scripture we have as a result of that exercise alone. Look, think of section 76, as he's translating John 5 and other scripture. Yeah.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:53:28 That's interesting. So yeah, we've got the Church now and we have the Bible. Joseph Smith makes it ... it's almost as if, I don't know, John, what did you say? This is how the gospel came about. We've got the First Vision.

John Bytheway: 00:53:41 Yeah, it's unfolding.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:53:43 Yeah. And then we get to the Bible, oh, and the John Smith Translation, and the Book of Mormon that was, as we talked this year, those were his two big, what did you call it, John? You called it Gospel 101: Translating the Book of Mormon and then-

John Bytheway: 00:53:55 Right. And the graduate school, that was Joseph Fielding McConkie, was the JST. Because the Book of Mormon, as we've said, is a very much faith, repentance, faith in Christ, repentance, baptism, gift to the Holy Ghost, endure to the end. And boy, but then the JST. Wow. And all the things that came from that and the Doctrine and Covenants. And that leads us right into, boy, number 9, doesn't it?

Hank Smith: 00:54:20 It does. What do you say about that, brother?

John Bytheway: 00:54:25 The canon is not closed.

Hank Smith: 00:54:27 John, read 9 for us, this is an important Article of Faith, that is yet to be fulfilled, right? When people tell me, "Oh, what about this, what about this, what about this?" I say, "As far as I know, Article of Faith 9 is still in effect, there's still many great and important things that are going to be revealed. We have a Continuous Restoration."

John Bytheway: 00:54:48 "We believe all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal. And we believe that he will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God." So there's a past, present and future there.

John Bytheway: 00:55:01 And I think that maybe in contrast to the idea that God has spoken, we have his word, now we just govern our life according to this. But it's a God who is continuing to speak.

John Bytheway: 00:55:14 And I think I shared before that experience that our friend, Dr. Robert Millet, had as a biblical studies student at Florida State. Have I told you that? He said that he was the only member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the class. And the professor knew it. And he kept saying, the canon of scripture is closed, set, fixed and established. And he wrote that on the board. And then he'd talk about it some more and walk around the room and come back. The canon is closed, set, fixed, established, and he'd walk around the room some more, getting more animated. The canon is closed, set, fixed and established. And finally turned and said, "Mr. Millet, will you please tell us the Latter Day Saint view of the canon." And he's totally on the spot. And he stood up and said, "Well, I guess we'd say the canon is open, flexible and expanding."

Hank Smith: 00:56:08 Wow.

John Bytheway: 00:56:09 He said. And then we had a really interesting discussion. And that's number 9. Where does it say, Hank, "That man could put forth his puny arm and stop the Missouri in its course than to stop the Lord from pouring out truth?"

Hank Smith: 00:56:25 Section 121. Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:56:26 Yeah. And no, the canons, we love what we have, but the Lord can keep talking as long as he wants to.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:56:36 As I recall, "As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river or to turn it in its decreed course or to turn it upstream as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge out of heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints."

John Bytheway: 00:56:53 Yeah, you nailed it. And that's number 9, it's continuous.

Hank Smith: 00:56:58 That's it. That's it.

Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: 00:57:00 And it's alive. To me, this hearkens back to Section 1, "The only true and living Church upon the face of the earth." This thing's alive, it's moving, it's growing, it's adapting, it's evolving. It's going to continue to grow. Not that other churches aren't true, they teach the Bible, they teach Jesus. I mean, these are true principles. True and living Church upon the face of the whole earth. This is alive and it's growing. Which is going to lead later on to our discussion in the Official Declarations.

Hank Smith: 00:57:27 I was just going to say, Official Declarations 1 and 2 are two of the many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God that were revealed.

John Bytheway: 00:57:37 Relates right to 9, yeah, that is a really good tie in there.

Hank Smith: 00:57:41 Right to 9. And it also speaks to the importance of following the current prophets and apostles. Of course, we recite and research and follow and esteem and revere things said by all of the past prophets and apostles and other Church leaders. And yet the living prophet and the living First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve is where we should focus our attention most as we navigate the issues of these latter days.

Hank Smith: 00:58:20 And I've always told my students, "If you could talk to any of these former prophets, any of them in the past who have passed away, they would all tell you the same thing. Listen to the current prophet." I don't care if it's Isaiah or Noah or President Kimball or Gordon B. Hinckley, they'd say that's your prophet, President Nelson is your prophet, you listen to him. You can hear them all saying that same thing. They would tell us, "Listen to President Nelson."

Hank Smith: 00:58:46 So sometimes we say, "Oh, I really liked President Hinckley." Or, "I really liked President McKay." My mom used to say, even when she'd bear testimony, she'd say, "I know President McKay is a true prophet." Even though it was two or three presidents of the Church ago, she'd still talk about President McKay. But I think President McKay would say, "Cindy, you listen to your current prophet."

John Bytheway: 00:59:08 Hank, I just quickly remember President Benson saying, "The living prophet has TNT." Do you remember that?

Hank Smith: 00:59:15 At BYU, right?

John Bytheway: 00:59:17 Yeah. Today's news today. And that was the point. What is he saying today, find the one who's speaking today. Which is exactly right. And what a blessing. I mean, just yesterday I was teaching and we were looking at something President Hinckley had said, and I just thought, wow, I wonder if President Hinckley can see what's going on now with the pandemic.

John Bytheway: 00:59:42 And when I got my mission call, this'll date me, it was over the signature of President Spencer W. Kimball, the Church had about three million members. I mean, it's an entirely different church. What are we, 16 ... 17 million?

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|------------------------|----------|---|
| Hank Smith: | 01:00:00 | After John came back, there were six million. He was so successful. |
| Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt: | 01:00:05 | He single-handedly doubled the size of the Church in the Philippines. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:00:08 | No, things really picked up after I left. Yeah. No, in the Philippines, there were four missions when I was there, now there's 22. As soon as I left, things really got a lot better. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:00:20 | Yeah. Oh, I was going to say, Joseph Smith taught this is the basis of the kingdom of heaven. Revelation adapted to circumstance. Not revelation from the past, which is always beneficial to read and to study and to learn these doctrines that have been set. I mean, if they've already been set, we don't need to restate them. But revelation adapted to circumstance. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:00:46 | In my mind, there is no coincidence that a global pandemic hits and the president of the Church is a doctor. In my mind, it was a revelation adapted to circumstance. The Lord saw this coming long ago and lined those two up. We are in very safe and capable hands. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:01:07 | I think we might need to point that out. I think that people of all faiths can be inspired. We are talking about a leader of the entire Church having continuous revelation and being ordained, how would you say it? It's going back to number 5. There's a person on earth called to be the President of the Church. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:01:32 | Yes. Yeah, an oracle, a mouthpiece, a spokesperson. And it says, "All that he does now reveal." We tend to think institutionally through the prophets, but that of course includes what he reveals to all of us. President Nelson himself said, "In coming days," you remember, "That in coming days it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting and constant influence of the Holy Ghost." And plead for all of us to do whatever we can, do the work necessary to increase the revelation in our lives. So, I think that fits right into 9 as well. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:02:21 | Yeah, isn't that true? And I feel like he says it with such love in his eyes and in his countenance. But some of the things he says are like, "Whoa, write that down." Will not be possible to survive spiritually unless you've got the guidance of the Holy Ghost." I mean, those are "whoa-type" statements. |

Hank Smith: 01:02:38 Right. John, I liked what you said about others receiving revelation as well, that this isn't just about one person. This is a February 15th, 1978 First Presidency Statement. We don't have to read the entire thing, but it says, quote, "The great religious leaders of the world, such as Mohammed, Confucius and the Reformers, as well as philosophers, including Socrates and Plato and others, received God's light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals."

Hank Smith: 01:03:15 And listen to this, it reads almost like an Article of Faith. "We believe that God has given and will give to all people sufficient knowledge to help them on their way to eternal salvation." All people.

Hank Smith: 01:03:32 And then I wanted to read one more for you. And it comes from Hugh B. Brown, who is just an incredible mind in the history of the church. He says, quote, "Revelation may come in the laboratory out of the test tube, out of the thinking mind and the inquiring soul, out of search and research and prayer and inspiration. We must be unafraid to contend for what we are thinking and to combat error with truth in this divided imperiled world. And we must do it with the unfaltering faith that God is still in his heaven, even though all is not well in the world." He calls it, "A dauntless pursuit of truth."

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: Have to share a story with you guys. Oh, those are great quotes. And they set up this story really well. And we didn't even know that we were going to go down this road. So, there I was, about 10 or 11. Our family was practicing in the nation of Islam. We were living in North Philly in a deeply inner-city community. My older brother, who was 17 or 18 at the time, wanted to go to a house party down the street with his friend across the street named Eric, and mom said, "No, I have a bad feeling about it." Not members of the church. Mom said, "I have a bad feeling about it." "Mom, mom, come on. It's just right down the street. What can happen?" And he really, really, he got upset. Mom said, "No." And she said, and I quote, "The whole Holy Ghost told me you should not go to that meeting. You should not go to that party."

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: And he was upset and just storming around and tantrums and so on, but she would not let him go. And he knew well enough not to go. The next morning we get the news that Eric had been shot and paralyzed. They would've gone together they would've come back together. Probably something would've happened to Tony, my older brother. This was the same mom who, six or seven years later, would feel the rightness and goodness of the

missionaries and what they were sharing with our family when we all moved to New Jersey. I have an absolute testimony that the Lord reveals light and truth and knowledge to all of his children everywhere to give them sufficient, as you just said, Hank, to give them sufficient knowledge to carry on.

Hank Smith:

Yeah. So, I like that because I think what we're seeing here, we're talking about, as you put it, Brother Corbitt, God has a prophet an oracle, right? And this church wasn't just another take on the Bible, but it was restored by God. So, we're talking about in Article of Faith five, a man called by prophecy, called of God, but this continuous revelation that there could be more revelation come that is canonized. Am I saying this right? But individuals of all faiths, I think God loves his children and he helps them and blesses them, and your mom for your family. Isn't that a beautiful story?

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt:

Yeah. Well, we're up to article 10. One of my favorites, the gathering of Israel. Can we come back to this one?

Hank Smith:

Absolutely.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt:

We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may. For many years, I was part of a team that represented the church to the United Nations and the international community generally in New York. Just think of it as an international platform for organizations to become better known globally. So, it was perfect for us to expose to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the restored church. And this will was one of our key messages that God wants all people to have the right of religious freedom essentially. So important.

Hank Smith:

I think this is a unique Article of Faith in that it starts, we claim, instead of we believe. I don't know if that's important, but I just think it's interesting that it was kind of maybe growing out of early persecutions. We're not trying to force our beliefs. We're not trying to take over the country. We claim the privilege of worshiping. We want all others to have the same privilege.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt:

Yeah. And it does insert a little bit of more of a force there doesn't it John? We believe, we believe, we believe. We claim this right because it's ours.

John Bytheway:

Yeah. This is a constitutional right.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: Yeah. I can claim something because it's mine.

John Bytheway: And that goes to the next one too, because 12, we're subject to laws into governments. The Nabu charter's not a threat to the...

Hank Smith: Yeah, we're not above the law, but the law says we can claim our right.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: And, that was another key message to other nations and leaders of other nations that members of the church in your nation will be subject to their leaders, kings, presidents, rulers, magistrates in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law. That was so key to help these ambassadors from all over the world, heads of state, and so on that we interacted with, understand that this is not just a belief or a tenet that we have, but one of our articles of faith.

John Bytheway: Yes. 150 years earlier, you can show this and say, "Oh, no, this is." I had never thought of how important that statement could become when the church starts to go so international.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: Yeah. To tell leaders of other nations, members of our church, of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in your country, you can expect to be among your best citizens.

John Bytheway: This is part of what we teach them. Yeah.

Hank Smith: I can see this in Joseph Smith's mind, that all the lies that had been spread that he's above the law, he wants to take over America. All these things that people are saying about him, and he's clearing it up exactly in just one sentence. We obey the law. We are subject to the law, and we obey it.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: And in section 58, the Lord said, let no man break the laws of the land. You remember that comment. For he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land. Right? Wherefore be subject to the powers that be until He reigns whose right it is to reign. And just another statement embedded in scripture, directly from the Lord, apart from this article of faith that supports the article of faith. They mutually support each other.

John Bytheway: That had some prophetic vision to it. Didn't it? Both of those. Yeah.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: And this also reminds me of President Oak's talk on the constitution, that landmark talk where he calls on all of us to

defend the constitution. And of course, the Lord says that in section 98, that He justifies us in befriending the constitution. That law, which is the constitutional law of the land here in the US. And so, that's another highlight of this same principle that it's important in his mind.

Hank Smith: I remember just the name of the talk was a talk. Defend our divinely inspired constitution. Right. That right there, just the name of the talk, is a message to defend our divinely inspired constitution.

John Bytheway: And there's another instance, Hank, where here's somebody who's in the highest councils of the church whose background is in what?

Hank Smith: Right.

John Bytheway: A former Utah State Supreme Court judge.

Hank Smith: Yeah. It's almost as if God saw this coming.

John Bytheway: Yeah. The talk he gave called, Judge Not and Judging, I referred it to my students just yesterday, the law and love he has given some wonderful, insightful talks about things that he knows about he's in there. Right man, at the right time.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: And having clerked for the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court once upon a time. You can just see and feel how the Lord's hand has been upon him, preparing him for what he's now doing.

Hank Smith: So, let's move to 13, John, did you have a song you wanted to sing about this one? I swear you had a song about 13 for a while didn't you?

John Bytheway: In spite of popular demand, I'd like to sing this song. No, no.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: As I used to say in the Dominican Republic, brothers and sisters, actually I'd say [foreign language 00:08:46] thank you for having us here in a state conference or whatever. And this is [Armana 00:08:55] Corbitt. She's my Article of Faith 13 wife.

Hank Smith: Ah, she's lovely. She's virtuous.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: She is. Yep. Virtuous and lovely and of good report and praiseworthy, honest, chaste, benevolent, et cetera.

Hank Smith: I like that a lot. I've always thought section 13 could guide me in my media choices. Right? If I'm picking up a show on Netflix or if I'm picking a show on Amazon or something with me and the family, is it good? Right? Is it virtuous? Lovely, good rapport, praiseworthy. There's so much good media out there that fits this category that you don't really need to go into the other categories. You wouldn't have enough time. There's so much good media. So, I just feel like it's a good test of our media.

John Bytheway: And along with section 50, that which doth not edify is not of God and is darkness. Whoa. But what I love about 13 is it could have said, we believe in honesty, truth, chastity, benevolence, but it says, we believe in being honest, true, it's a becoming thing to quote President Oaks again. We don't just believe in the idea. Well, of course, I believe in the idea, but do I have to do it? We believe in becoming that. And I love how the Stripling Warriors, it doesn't say they were men who knew the truth. It says they were men who were true. Our aspiration is to become what we believe. We believe in being honest, true, and chaste, and benevolent, and virtuous, not just in saying, yeah, that's a great principle, I kind of like it from a distance.

Hank Smith: It's something that other people should do. I really feel strongly about that.

John Bytheway: Did you all hear what I just said? Everybody do this. Yeah. But that idea of becoming is, I think, in there.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: Not the sum total of our acts, but what we've become. I hadn't put those together. John, thank you.

Hank Smith: And it really is the gospel creates something, right? All of this that we've talked about this far creates this kind of being in 13. This is what we're after.

John Bytheway: And I think that if you started with 13, it just sounds like basic ethics. So, you don't start with 13, you start with number one. With God, the Father, with His Son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost. And with number three, with the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved. And so, what is a Christ-like life like? Well, it's like 13. But we don't start with 13. We start with God, with the Savior, with the atonement.

Hank Smith: What's that statement for President Packer, John? True doctrine understood.

John Bytheway: Yeah. Changes attitudes and behavior. And the study of the doctrines of the gospel will change behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior.

Hank Smith: Doesn't that kind of feel like the articles of faith there. Here's our doctrines, which lead to this behavior.

John Bytheway: You've all heard the unofficial 14th Article of Faith, right? We believe in meetings. We hope for meetings. We have endured many meetings. We hope to be able to endure more meetings. There's any justification for holding a meeting we seek after these things. You probably heard that one.

Hank Smith: Yeah. We believe in having meetings about meetings.

John Bytheway: And if you're offended, we'll call a meeting and talk about that. It's not original with me. It's somebody else that will probably want to call me and have a meeting.

John Bytheway: Please join us for part two of this podcast.

EPISODE 50 • PART II



Bro. Ahmad S. Corbitt

*The Articles of Faith &
Official Declarations 1&2*

- Intro: 00:03 Welcome to Part II of this week's podcast.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 00:08 These Official Declarations are powerful. The fact that they were made part of scripture and inserted in the canon just shows, it really confirms and validates the revelatory nature of these revelations. You know, I was talking to my brother, who's a member of a Stake Presidency in the Chesterfield, Virginia Stake, Jamil Corbitt, and he was saying that he loves to respond to questions about the gospel with the Articles of Faith. And it's such a natural response, oh, it even starts with, "We believe." So these are powerful tools and guides for us to not only live our lives as the Savior would have us do, but to be able to share as Peter said, "To have a reason for the hope that is in us."
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 01:07 In law school we studied a case called *Reynolds vs United States*, and it was about polygamy and related to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the practice of plural marriage. And it's a religious liberty case. One of the, sort of the first, the seminal case on religious liberty of the Supreme Court. And of course, just 11 years later, the Lord makes this revelation known to the prophet Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president of the Church at the time, fourth president of the Church. And here it is, and we get to read it. "It was moved by President Lorenzo Snow, recognizing Wilford Woodruff as the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the only man on the earth at the present time who holds the keys of the sealing ordinances. We consider him fully authorized by virtue of his position to issue the Manifesto, which has been read in our hearing and which is dated September 24, 1890. And that as a Church in General Conference assembled, we accept his declaration concerning plural marriages as authoritative and binding," closed quote. And the vote to sustain the foregoing motion was unanimous.
- John Bytheway: 02:35 Well, and like we said, this is number 9. Do you believe that? Yeah.

- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 02:41 Yeah, and the same with the Official Declaration 2. I joined the Church two years after this, but I have kind of a personal story about this. Actually, a couple of them. I was 15-years-old, I was finishing my sophomore year. It was getting toward the summer and I had this spiritual experience in the form of a dream that remains one of my most spiritual experiences ever in my life. And I got up the next morning, it was a Sunday, put on a nice shirt and some slacks and I felt so summoned by the Lord that I walked to the nearest church, which turned out to be a Catholic church. I think it was Our Lady of the Sacrament, just at 56th and Chester Avenue in West Philadelphia and I lived at 57th and Greenway, just a couple blocks away, and walked to that and worshiped.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 03:46 Went to church as a 17-, as a 15-, rather, year old kid feeling like God was calling me. Everyone else was home in bed. It turned out that that was the year and the summer of this revelation. I didn't know at the time, I didn't even know what a Latter-day Saint was at the time, but isn't that interesting that 2,500 miles away, prophets and apostles were receiving this revelation and somehow the Lord was preparing people elsewhere, not just here in the US, but around the world.
- John Bytheway: 04:26 Brother Corbitt, do you know that the night Joseph Smith got the plates, Brigham Young had a vision. He had no idea who Joseph Smith was, he'd never heard of anything like that, but he and Heber C. Kimball both, on September 21, right, John? September 21, 1827 went outside and they both saw visions of angels. So this is the Lord's pattern.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 04:51 He prepares his people. I was asked to write an essay of just, as kind of a sidebar essay to the main essay on the priesthood, race in the priesthood. So I wrote a personal essay. The Church leaders wanted me to put my voice in it. And while I'm writing this essay in June of 2012, I am, my wife and I and our daughter, the only remaining child in the home, were out in Boise, picking up our son, Marcus, from his mission. And so they had gone out, we had gotten Marcus, I was going to release him that afternoon, but they went out to do some shopping and I was alone at the hotel, when suddenly my phone rings and I'm working on this essay at the time. My phone rings and it's the only time I'd ever been called by an apostle or prophet.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 05:56 Hello. Brother Corbitt. Yes, this is Ahmad Corbitt. Elder Perry. And I said, oh, I was flustered, I said, "Elder L. Tom Perry?" And no, the other Elder Perry, but he just ignored that. He was so gracious. He said, "Yeah, that's right. I'm coming out to New York." And at that time I was directing the New York Office,

Public International Affairs. Said, "I'm coming out to New York," and he was the Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee. "And I'd like to get a report and kind of see what's going on, et cetera." And I said, "Happy to," and we talked about it. And I said, "By the way Elder Perry, I happen to be, I'm going to release my son here in a few minutes when he returns. I'm here in Boise on vacation." I was the Stake President at the time, and he gave me some counsel to give him which, and I told him I would, and that I'd give it to every missionary that I'd release after that. And so I've given it dozens of times. I said, but then it occurred to me, it occurred to me, John and Hank, that Elder Perry participated in the revelation. And I thought, oh my. Right. So I said, "Elder Perry, you may not know this, you'd have no reason to know this, but I was asked to write an essay on race in the priesthood. And it just occurred to me that you participated in the revelation."

- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 07:26 He then proceeds to tell me his experience, which according to his son, Lee Perry, is nowhere else written. And so I incorporate it with Elder Perry's permission. I first of all wrote it in my journal and then incorporated a piece of my journal, a portion of my journal into the essay. So it's Part Four of that four-part essay. Brethren, I don't know how the priesthood restriction began. I don't know that. I don't have the answer for that, but I know how it ended. The Lord spoke to those. I bear witness in the name of the Lord that Jesus Christ revealed himself to those, his will to those apostles and prophets. In fact, Elder Perry said, and I put this in the essay. "We were not alone." And the Holy Ghost bore witness to me, head to toe, that this was an apostle and that he and others received a revelation. This revelation that we call Official Declaration 2.
- John Bytheway: 08:47 The Lord wanted to help you with your essay, it sounds like.
- John Bytheway: 08:50 It was like, "Hey, you want a firsthand account here? Why don't I, why don't I help you? I'll have him call you right now."
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 08:57 It was amazing. Just amazing. That said, I ...
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 09:03 ... just amazing. That said, I believe The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and this is going to sound like a bold statement and it is bold. I believe that our Church is the best positioned. And with all due respect to other religions and organizations throughout the world, and you know that we respect them deeply, but our Church is the most empowered and best positioned to bring to pass racial unity and harmony

throughout the family of God, among all the international organizations in the world. And for many reasons, we just talked about apostles and prophets. They are the chief gatherers. Again, back to Article of Faith 10, "We believe in the literal gathering of Israel." They're the chief gatherers. Therefore, they are the chief unifiers. They have the power and the keys to unify all of God's children throughout the world of whatever background who are willing to become the one in Christ.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 10:24

Secondly, back to Article of Faith 10, the Church is destined to gather Israel. President Nelson, as you know, said that's the most important thing taking place on earth today. It has to happen, be in preparation for the Second Coming of the Savior. And our Church is authorized, empowered, and positioned to affect that gathering, to bring it to pass. And that gathering will be from all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. And I'm sure you, brother, are familiar with this scripture in Section 45 where the Lord says, "And it shall come to pass, that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy."

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 11:15

Imagine the family of God from all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people looking like the whole spectrum of races and ethnicities and so on. And he will gather all of the willing into one in Christ into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. So we have a wonderful destiny and all of the members of the Church are invited to help prepare an environment for everyone to come into the church and feel like they belong and feel loved.

John Bytheway: 11:54

Brother Corbitt, we have a lot of seminary teachers and institute teachers and Sunday school teachers who listen to the podcast. How would you help them explain Official Declaration to its history? How would you help them explain that to their young students? I know you spoke to the seminary and institute teachers in Salt Lake Valley once about this. So I'd love to see if we can glean a little bit of that for those who weren't there.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 12:24

And they were a great group, a great group of consecrated souls. And I would say essentially what I would keep it simple and I don't know why the priesthood restriction began or how it began. I don't know to whom to attribute it. I would say that I think we get in trouble theorizing and speculating. And a lot of that's been done in the Church. And in President Oak's words, "Some people have been spectacularly wrong with some of those speculations," and trying to give reasons. So I would say, let's not get ahead of when... The Lord can reveal why that happened or how it happened if He wanted to. And when He wants to.

- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 13:20 I would say young brothers and sisters, we don't know when that happened or why it happened. But if we together look forward with one eye having one faith and one baptism, having our hearts knit together in unity and love one toward another, we will, as the Book of Mormon teaches, we can create a culture of total unity and inclusivity in the Lord's Church in preparation for the Second Coming.
- John Bytheway: 13:56 Look forward.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 13:57 Look forward, look forward with an eye of faith and see it. It's prophesied. And it's promised, so it's a promise of the Lord. He does not lie. Therefore, it's a future reality that we can look forward to and see, and then do the things that lead to that kind of outcome. It doesn't get to that outcome to criticize each other, to judge each other, to look in the past and say you were this, or you were that, or whatever, that's not the way to do it.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 14:28 I would warn our students to be careful of a lot of online stuff, which can be very strident and bitter and purport to be sort of carrying the banner of unity and racial harmony, but kind of go about it in the world's way, rather than in the Savior's way. I would also say to the students that unity among God's children. Look, think of 4 Nephi, think of Moses 7, and the City of Enoch and so on. That's God's work. And the Lord said in Section 12 to Joseph Knight, Sr, "Now, as you have asked, behold, I say, until you keep my commandments and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion." What is Zion? The pure in heart. It's where they lived together, dwelt together in righteousness of one heart, one mind, there was no poor among them.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 15:31 And so, seek to bring forth and establish that cause. "Behold, I speak unto you and also to all those who have desires to bring forth and establish this work." And here's the key. "And no one can assist in this work, except he shall be humble." Or she, "humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate or moderate, not extreme or strident in all things whatsoever shall be entrusted to his or her care."
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 16:06 And so, we can bring about unity in the Church and we can help the Lord create the miracle of Zion, this utopia of Zion, where there are no ites among us. Where we're all one in Christ, and surely there could not be happier people among all the people created by the hand of God. We can do that if we do it in the Lord's way. It must be the Lord's way. The world's way won't work. I feel like I'm talking too much, but President Oak said, "Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can unite people of different races in unity." And President Nelson said in April that, "The

Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ is exactly what this weary contentious world needs."

- John Bytheway: 17:04 Brother Corbitt, my friend, Steve Rose told me to ask you about what the Book of Mormon teaches about using race to start conflict.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 17:14 The head note to Official Declaration 2 actually refers to the Book of Mormon. It says, "The Book of Mormon teaches that all are alike unto God, including black and white, bond and free, male and female." It's the popular scripture from 2 Nephi 26, verse 33. The Book of Mormon is another... And I mentioned two reasons the Church is uniquely positioned to bring to pass unity and harmony among God's children of all backgrounds. The Book of Mormon is a third. It's a key reason. First of all, President Nelson says that the gathering of Israel would not occur without the Book of Mormon. It's the only book scripture where God explicitly tells-
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 18:03 A book of scripture where God explicitly tells people of one color and culture to reach across color barriers to another people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Interestingly, in the Book of Mormon, the righteous, those who are converted to the gospel, always referred to the other as our brethren.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 18:26 So the sons of Mosiah when they were going to go and preach to the Lamanites, the Lord himself said, "Go unto thy brethren." So the Lord validated the practice. And then Samuel the Lamanite when he is sent to wicked Nephites to call them to repentance and heal them in 13, 14, 15, 16, he refers to them as his brethren.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 18:51 So a telltale sign of a truly converted person who really is seeking the mind of Christ is that they will see people of different backgrounds, different appearances as their brothers and sisters, and they will refer to them as such.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 19:08 Another thing about the Book of Mormon is that it... and I understand there are theories and some speculation about whether change in skin color, skin of blackness that it's referred to in the Book of Mormon is metaphorical or literal.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 19:26 Here's what I would say and have said to my children. That skin of blackness phenomenon happened within a family. It happened in the family of Lehi and Sariah and Ishmael, it happened among them. That blackness has no reference or connection whatsoever to black people today.

- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 19:51 And so it's a family matter, it's not a racial matter. It's a family matter. It's a family issue within that ancient Hebrew family. And the Lord did it I think for a larger loving purpose.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 20:06 The Book of Mormon helps us see that the point I just made is that those who follow Christ love all people. It's sort of a different take on charity seeketh not her own. But it also warns us about Satan's tactics.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 20:29 So for example, here we have in Alma 43, I personally read the Book of Mormon this way. Alma 43 toward the beginning, verse four, "For behold it came to pass that the Zoramites," these were Nephite-type dissidents. So these are lighter people that the Zoramites became Lamanites, which at that time was becoming more of a philosophy.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 21:07 Start with verse six. "And now as the Amalekites," who were Nephite dissidents, "were of a more wicked and murderous disposition than the Lamanites were in and of themselves, therefore, Zerahemnah," and this is a Nephite dissident, "appointed chief captains over the Lamanites and they were all Amalekites and Zoramites."
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 21:26 And here's the key, "Now this he did that he might preserve their hatred towards the Nephites, that he might bring them into subjection to the accomplishment of his designs." And what were his designs? They were to stir up the Lamanites to anger against the Nephites.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 21:46 That tells me as a black person in the latter days for which the book was written, to be on the lookout for this tactic by Lucifer to stir up people against people of a different color or culture.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 22:07 And this is throughout the Book of Mormon. Look at Alma 48:1, "It came to pass that as soon as Amalickiah," a Nephite dissident rejected the Church, tried to get authority, had obtained the kingdom, "he began to inspire the hearts of the Lamanites against the people of Nephi."
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 22:27 And note this, "Ye, he did appoint men to speak unto the Lamanites from their towers against the Nephites." So today, whether I'm black or white or whatever I am, as a reader of the Book of Mormon, I'm on the lookout for dissidents who seek to turn people against others of a different color or culture, and who maybe even use technology to do it, what are today's towers or platforms. Just a couple of others, in Alma 35:8, "Now the people of Zoramites were angry with the people of

Ammon." You remember that the people of Ammon were Lamanites. They were people of color, the Zoramites were not. "And the chief ruler of the Zoramites being a very wicked man sent over unto the people of Ammon, desiring them that they should cast out of their land all who came over from them into their land. And he breathed out many threatenings against them, and now the people of Ammon did not fear their words, therefore they did not cast them out, but they did receive all the poor of the Zoramites." In verse 10, "Now this did stir up the Zoramites to anger against the people of Ammon."

- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 23:54 So here you have all of the variations of this. You have people of dissidents stirring up people of color against others. You have dissidents stirring up their own people against the people of color. In various places, you have Lamanite leaders, I'm thinking of Mosiah 10 where King Laman stirs up his people against the Nephites.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 24:24 And so you have every variation of this throughout the Book of Mormon, all of it to warn us in the last days to not be stirred up to anger against people of other colors and cultures by those who are seeking power.
- John Bytheway: 24:45 And I love what you said about this as a family matter. I always tell my classes that this was true for these people in this time, whatever gave us the idea we could apply this to the whole world? The Book of Mormon doesn't tell us to do that. I love when I could see something new in there. How did you say that? Be on the lookout for those who stir up conflict among people of another culture or race to gain power. That's so good.
- John Bytheway: 25:19 That is a message of the book. If you want to look at it ... purposes.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 25:22 It's a recurring theme.
- John Bytheway: 25:26 Throughout Mosiah and Alma, especially it's these... if I can just get people hating each other. And then you've got, who is it that refuses to do it, John? Lehonti. Like, "I refuse to do this." But then
- John Bytheway: 25:40 I'm not coming down from my mountain, but then he does. And I loved equating towers with modern platforms. So good.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 25:52 Right? As I recall, other than the tower of Babel, I may be wrong, but I think that's the first time towers were used for wicked purposes.

John Bytheway: 26:06 Because a couple of chapters before, Captain Moroni caused the Title of Liberty to be hoisted upon every tower, that's Alma 46. And then you get to 48. Well yeah, we can use towers too. So they go up to their towers.

John Bytheway: 26:20 Kind of like the internet.

John Bytheway: 26:23 Yeah, preach hatred against the Nephites. One tower says, love God. One says hate Nephites. And they gear up for a war. Very wonderful.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 26:32 Man, that is powerful insight. It really is. I can see seminary teachers all over and institute teachers saying "Oh thank you for that."

John Bytheway: 26:42 I'm scribbling notes right now.

Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 26:45 Because it's scary to teach these things in a class where you feel like, "Do I even have a right to talk about this?"

John Bytheway: 26:53 But there's such positivity, thank you Brother Corbitt. Was it Lynn Wilson who said that there's this language that is climbing the charts like crazy?

John Bytheway: 27:03 It's this language that is climbing the charts like crazy, as far as the membership of the Church, and it is French. And the reason why, is because of-

John Bytheway: 27:10 Africa.

John Bytheway: 27:10 ... converts in Africa. And how exciting that is. Especially, since my daughter and son-in-law speak French.

John Bytheway: 27:18 Oh, do they?

John Bytheway: 27:20 Because of their missions.

John Bytheway: 27:22 I've heard Dr. Dan Judd talk about the work in Africa, and he says it's 1820, 1830, the miracles are...

John Bytheway: 27:29 Right. Oh Hank, you said that before. "It's always 1820 somewhere." That's Elder Holland, right? And I hope our listeners might really be inspired by going to speeches.byu.edu and find E. Dale LeBaron who gave a talk called... I think it was called "African Converts Without Baptism." And then he wrote a book called *All Are Alike Under God* using that 2 Nephi 26:33. He was the mission president in South Africa after Official

Declaration 2. And his experiences going in are so fun to read about finding people that the Lord had prepared just like you walking down the street. Brother Corbitt, what a cool story.

- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 28:24 And our leaders are so clear. They're so unequivocal on this, on denouncing racism, inviting people to repent for racism or racist feelings or things like that, prejudice generally. But they do it in the Lord's way. They set an example for how to do it. And we all have. Growing up as I did, when we first came to Church, the very first time we visited a ward building in 1980, it was overwhelmingly white. We weren't used to that obviously with the nation of Islam and the black church, but there was such undeniable love in the eyes and hearts of the people that it was actually more powerful that they were white showing that love to a black family. It was more powerful to us because it was more stark. I think that's what the First Presidency and the Twelve envision as they look forward and see the Church gathering all of us into one family of God in design.
- John Bytheway: 29:38 Yes. And no more... You quoted 4 Nephi and they were one as the children of Christ. No more -ites. It was our identity comes from Article of Faith number 1, we are sons and daughters of God. Yeah. Well, Brother Corbitt, absolutely beautiful. I'm just feeling that it's good for us to be here today, but I think our listeners would love to hear some more about you. Exactly how old were you when you came in contact with the Church, when you joined the church, when you went on a mission? And then maybe you could close with your feelings about the restored gospel?
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 30:16 Sure, sure. I was 17 years old. Missionaries came by our home. My parents had moved over to Southern New Jersey. I remained in Philadelphia to graduate high school. They let me do that. The missionaries came by and tracked into our family. We later found out that they had fasted and prayed for a family that was prepared for the gospel. So that was a very validating experience, but we, mom and four younger siblings, they're 10 of us children were baptized a month later in June of around late June or so of 1980. My older sister and I were baptized two months later on my 18th birthday in August. And then my dad about a year later, a little less. And then my older brother who was already out of the home and had his own family, he was baptized 14 years later.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 31:14 So both parents and all 10 children joined the church and it changed our lives. And by living the gospel, we became much better. Now, testimony wise, the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are much more than things that make

people better. Yes, they make bad men good, and bad men good, and good men better as Brigham Young said, but I testify that this church is the kingdom of God on earth, that it is the Church of Jesus Christ. It's the one he organized when he was upon the earth, but restored after a period of falling away with, as we said in the Articles of Faith, apostles and prophets and pastors and evangelists and so on.

- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 32:15 I bear witness that those who hold the keys in this church hold the keys of the kingdom, delegated from heaven and have the power to unlock opportunity for God's children to receive the doctrine of Christ, including its ordinances and covenants, and its laws, and to come under Christ and be saved by his grace and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 32:50 I bear witness that the Book of Mormon and the Bible and the other scriptures are the word of God. And I love them. And as we seek to guide our lives by them and through them and with them, we will be happier, whatever our circumstances. I know that to be true and have experienced it. I know that I love my family, my wife, Jane, our children, our wonderful six children, our 12 grandchildren, more to come. And Jane and I are together forever. We will be exalted in the celestial kingdom, in the presence of God. And we will have our family with us. And that promise is to all the faithful, regardless of whether we're married now or not. And so I bear witness of these truths of the joy and peace and happiness of the gospel, even amidst trying times. And I do so in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.
- John Bytheway: 34:01 Amen. John, I'm really glad you're friends with Brother Corbitt. This was such a wonderful, wonderful day.
- John Bytheway: 34:14 Oh, I just hope people feel the wonderful spirit that we felt and are blessed by this.
- Bro. Ahmad Corbitt: 34:21 I'm glad to be friends with you.
- John Bytheway: 34:22 Oh, I mean, John was right. It is good for us to be here.
- John Bytheway: 34:28 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 34:29 And we hope everyone who listened feels that same way. Thank you for taking time for our podcast. We're grateful for your support. We couldn't do anything without our executive producer, Steve and Shannon Sorenson and their wonderful children and grandchildren. We love you. And to our production crew, Lisa Spice, Jamie Nelson, David Perry, Kyle Nelson, Will

Stoughton, and Scott Houston. We love you. Thank you. And we hope all of you will join us on our next episode of followHIM.