



*“Rebel Not ye against the Lord, Neither Fear”*

## 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 Friday and Saturday.

### Podcast Episode Descriptions:

#### Part 1:

How does the Lord create a holy people? Dr. Kerry Muhlestein explores the Book of Numbers and the holiness code the Lord develops with his people as the Lord creates his people and leads them to the Promised Land.

#### Part 2:

Dr. Muhlestein returns to discuss how the Israelites travel in the spiritual and temporal wilderness yet learn to trust in the Lord for healing, restoration, and mercy.

### Timecodes:

## Part 1

- 00:00 Part 1–Dr. Kerry Muhlestein
- 00:58 Introduction of Dr. Muhlestein
- 02:23 Recap of the Hebrew Bible from Genesis to the Book of Numbers
- 12:29 The Book of Numbers features the Israelites outside the Promised Land
- 13:20 The Holiness Code
- 17:02 Israelites travel and take the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant
- 19:55 Cloud by day and fire by night
- 23:55 An archetypal journey
- 27:59 The Old Testament tells you the human side of the journey through life
- 31:06 They tire of manna and the Lord provides quail
- 36:34 Seventy elders are organized
- 39:40 A nation of prophets
- 44:16 Miriam and Aaron challenge Moses but the Israelites wait
- 54:52 An 11-day journey from Mt. Horeb
- 58:24 Caleb and Joshua’s report of the Promised Land
- 1:03:47 Do we believe God can exalt us?
- 1:08:39 End of Part I with Dr. Kerry Muhlestein
- 

## Part 2

- 00:00 Part II– Dr. Kerry Muhlestein
- 00:07 God wants to be merciful
- 02:13 *Believing Christ* and *Following Christ*
- 05:36 God is patient with the Israelites and loves to forgive
- 09:24 God can redeem His children
- 13:41 Violence in the Hebrew Bible
- 18:05 When we continue to repeat mistakes
- 25:20 Fiery serpents
- 28:54 Dr. Muhlestein shares personal story about Youth Conference and “fiery serpents”
- 31:24 Symbolism of a snake
- 35:30 Personal application of the fiery serpent story
- 38:10 Balaam and the Moabites
- 43:59 The Book of Numbers is an archetypal journey and family road trip
- 47:22 End of Part II

## References:

2022. *Abn.Churchofjesuschrist.Org*. <https://abn.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/come-follow-me-for-individuals-and-families-old-testament-2022/20?lang=eng>.
- Callister, Tad R., and Scott C. Esplin. 2022. "The New Home-Centered, Church-Supported Curriculum | Religious Studies Center". *Rsc.Byu.Edu*. <https://rsc.byu.edu/vol-20-no-1-2019/new-home-centered-church-supported-curriculum>.
- Francom, Kurt, and Kerry Muhlestein. 2022. "Leading Individuals With Concerns About The Book Of Abraham | An Interview With Kerry Muhlestein - Leading Saints". *Leading Saints*. [https://leadingsaints.org/leading-individuals-with-concerns-about-the-book-of-abraham-an-interview-with-kerry-muhlestein/?fbclid=IwAR0mr7LOIwuLoeQFmFIS1E9-HI\\_I3i7SbJ0eHriES5J47ih47MRGQNWqVI](https://leadingsaints.org/leading-individuals-with-concerns-about-the-book-of-abraham-an-interview-with-kerry-muhlestein/?fbclid=IwAR0mr7LOIwuLoeQFmFIS1E9-HI_I3i7SbJ0eHriES5J47ih47MRGQNWqVI).
- Hock, Adam P. 2022. "Narrating The Scriptures: Using A Literary Approach To Enhance Scripture Teaching | Religious Studies Center". *Rsc.Byu.Edu*. <https://rsc.byu.edu/vol-17-no-3-2016/narrating-scriptures-using-literary-approach-enhance-scripture-teaching>.
- Muhlestein, Kerry. 2022. *Amazon.Com*. [https://www.amazon.com/Learning-Love-Isaiah-Kerry-Muhlestein/dp/1524420441/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?crd=3KFCZB2HQQ26Q&keywords=kerry+muhlestein&qid=1651939427&prefix=kerry+muhlestein%2Caps%2C140&sr=8-3](https://www.amazon.com/Learning-Love-Isaiah-Kerry-Muhlestein/dp/1524420441/ref=sr_1_3?crd=3KFCZB2HQQ26Q&keywords=kerry+muhlestein&qid=1651939427&prefix=kerry+muhlestein%2Caps%2C140&sr=8-3).
- Muhlestein, Kerry. 2022. *Amazon.Com*. [https://www.amazon.com/God-Will-Prevail-Kerry-Muhlestein/dp/1524417858/ref=sr\\_1\\_5?crd=3KFCZB2HQQ26Q&keywords=kerry+muhlestein&qid=1651939427&prefix=kerry+muhlestein%2Caps%2C140&sr=8-5](https://www.amazon.com/God-Will-Prevail-Kerry-Muhlestein/dp/1524417858/ref=sr_1_5?crd=3KFCZB2HQQ26Q&keywords=kerry+muhlestein&qid=1651939427&prefix=kerry+muhlestein%2Caps%2C140&sr=8-5).
- Muhlestein, Kerry. 2022. *Amazon.Com*. [https://www.amazon.com/Return-unto-Me-Kerry-Muhlestein/dp/1621084973/ref=sr\\_1\\_8?crd=3KFCZB2HQQ26Q&keywords=kerry+muhlestein&qid=1651939427&prefix=kerry+muhlestein%2Caps%2C140&sr=8-8](https://www.amazon.com/Return-unto-Me-Kerry-Muhlestein/dp/1621084973/ref=sr_1_8?crd=3KFCZB2HQQ26Q&keywords=kerry+muhlestein&qid=1651939427&prefix=kerry+muhlestein%2Caps%2C140&sr=8-8).
- Muhlestein, Kerry. 2022. "Darkness, Light, And The Lord: Elements Of Israelite Theophanies | Religious Studies Center". *Rsc.Byu.Edu*. <https://rsc.byu.edu/ascending-mountain-lord/darkness-light-lord-elements-israelite-theophanies>.

- Muhlestein, Kerry. 2022. "Out Of The Dust – Aiming To Turn Our Ancient Roots Into Modern Edification". *Outofthedust.Org*. <https://www.outofthedust.org/>.
- Muhlestein, Kerry. 2022. "The Scriptures Are Real Podcast – Out Of The Dust". *Outofthedust.Org*. <https://www.outofthedust.org/opportunities/the-scriptures-are-real/>.
- Nelson, Russell M. 2022. *Abn.Churchofjesuschrist.Org*. <https://abn.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2018/04/revelation-for-the-church-revelation-for-our-lives.30,33?lang=eng#30>.
- Oaks, Dallin H. 2022. *Abn.Churchofjesuschrist.Org*. <https://abn.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2010/10/two-lines-of-communication?lang=eng>.
- Parry, Donald W. 2022. "Symbolic Action As Prophecy In The Old Testament | Religious Studies Center". *Rsc.Byu.Edu*. <https://rsc.byu.edu/sperry-symposium-classics-old-testament/symbolic-action-prophecy-old-testament>.
- Renlund, Dale G. 2022. *Abn.Churchofjesuschrist.Org*. <https://abn.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2019/04/41renlund?lang=eng>.
- Robinson, Stephen E. 2022. *Amazon.Com*. [https://www.amazon.com/Believing-Christ-Parable-Bicycle-Other/dp/1570089264/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crd=3DPYF7PIOVR7Y&keywords=believing+christ+by+stephen+robinson&qid=1651939533&sprefix=believing+christ+stephen%2Caps%2C117&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Believing-Christ-Parable-Bicycle-Other/dp/1570089264/ref=sr_1_1?crd=3DPYF7PIOVR7Y&keywords=believing+christ+by+stephen+robinson&qid=1651939533&sprefix=believing+christ+stephen%2Caps%2C117&sr=8-1).
- Robinson, Stephen E. 2022. *Amazon.Com*. [https://www.amazon.com/Following-Christ-Parable-Divers-More/dp/1590383230/ref=pd\\_bxgy\\_img\\_sccl\\_1/146-9835379-0973215?pd\\_rd\\_w=yIbkC&pf\\_rd\\_p=6b3eefea-7b16-43e9-bc45-2e332cbf99da&pf\\_rd\\_r=D3VJKAMB6MVHG3K8JJ31&pd\\_rd\\_r=b44cedf0-9a2d-45b7-8e4e-d4382e23747b&pd\\_rd\\_wg=5PTal&pd\\_rd\\_i=1590383230&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com/Following-Christ-Parable-Divers-More/dp/1590383230/ref=pd_bxgy_img_sccl_1/146-9835379-0973215?pd_rd_w=yIbkC&pf_rd_p=6b3eefea-7b16-43e9-bc45-2e332cbf99da&pf_rd_r=D3VJKAMB6MVHG3K8JJ31&pd_rd_r=b44cedf0-9a2d-45b7-8e4e-d4382e23747b&pd_rd_wg=5PTal&pd_rd_i=1590383230&psc=1).
- Wilcox, Brad. 2022. "His Grace Is Sufficient". *BYU Speeches*. <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/brad-wilcox/his-grace-is-sufficient/>.

## Biographical Information:



Kerry received his B.S. from BYU in Psychology with a Hebrew minor. As an undergraduate he spent time at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies in the intensive Hebrew program. He received an M.A. in Ancient Near Eastern Studies from BYU and his Ph.D. from UCLA in Egyptology, where in his final year he was named the UCLA Affiliates Graduate Student of the Year. He taught courses in Hebrew and Religion part time at BYU and the UVSC extension center, as well as in history at Cal Poly Pomona and UCLA. He also taught early morning seminary and at the Westwood (UCLA) Institute of Religion. His first full time appointment was a joint position in Religion and History at BYU-Hawaii. He is the director of the BYU Egypt Excavation Project. He was selected by the Princeton Review in 2012 as one of the best 300 professors in the nation (the top .02% of those considered). He was also a Visiting Fellow at the University of Oxford for the 2016-17 academic year. He has published 9 books, over 60 peer reviewed articles, and has done over 75 academic presentations. He and his wife, Julianne, are the parents of six children, and together they have lived in Jerusalem while Kerry has taught there on multiple occasions. He has served as the chairman of a national committee for the American Research Center in Egypt and serves on their Research Supporting Member Council. He has also served on a committee for the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities, and currently serves on their Board of Trustees and as a Vice President of the organization, and has served as president. He has been the co-chair for the Egyptian Archaeology Session of the American Schools of Oriental Research. He is also a Senior Fellow of the William F. Albright Institute for Archaeological Research. He is involved with the International

Association of Egyptologists, and has worked with Educational Testing Services on their AP World History exam.

Courses Taught: Old Testament, Teachings of Isaiah, Pearl of Great Price, Book of Mormon, New Testament, Ancient Near Eastern Texts, Foundations of Ancient Scripture, Egyptian History, Egyptian Historiography, History of Civilization, History of the Near Eastern Empires, Ancient Egypt and Foreign Relations, and Marriage and Family.

## **Fair Use Notice:**

The *Follow Him Podcast with Hank Smith and John Bytheway* may make use of copyrighted material, the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright holder. This constitutes a “fair use” and any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material on this podcast is offered publicly and without profit, to the public uses or the internet for comment and nonprofit educational and informational purposes. Copyright Disclaimer under Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976, allowance is made for “fair use” for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research. In such cases, fair use is permitted.

No copyright(s) is/are claimed.

The content is broadcasted for study, research, and educational purposes.

The broadcaster gains no profit from broadcasted content. This falls under “Fair Use” guidelines:

[www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html](http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html).

**Note:**

The *Follow Him Podcast with Hank Smith and John Bytheway* is not affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints nor Brigham Young University. The opinions expressed on episodes represent the views of the guest and podcasters alone. While the ideas presented may vary from traditional understandings or teachings, they in no way reflect criticism of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day leaders, policies, or practices.



Hank Smith:	00:00:01	Welcome to followHIM, a weekly podcast dedicated to helping individuals and families with their Come Follow Me study, I'm Hank Smith.
John Bytheway:	00:00:09	And I'm John Bytheway.
Hank Smith:	00:00:10	We love to learn.
John Bytheway:	00:00:11	We love to laugh.
Hank Smith:	00:00:13	We want to learn and laugh with you, as together we follow him. Hello, my friends welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith, I'm your host, I'm here with my numbered co-host John Bytheway. John, you are numbered today.
John Bytheway:	00:00:34	I stood on the scale, I guess that's what that means.
Hank Smith:	00:00:37	Yeah. That's what it was. That's what it was.
John Bytheway:	00:00:38	I was found wanting.
Hank Smith:	00:00:39	I numbered my co-host and I found one.
John Bytheway:	00:00:44	Just this one.
Hank Smith:	00:00:45	You are number one. You're number one in my book. John, we are going to be into the Book of Numbers today, and we have our first returning guest. I'm sure everyone's excited for you to introduce him, who's with us?
John Bytheway:	00:00:58	Yes. We've got Kerry Muhlestein back. And when I think of Dr. Muhlestein, I think of the word Egyptologist, but let me just review. He has a bachelor's from BYU in psychology and a Hebrew minor. As an undergraduate, he spent time at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies in the Intensive Hebrew program. He has a masters in Ancient Near Eastern Studies from BYU and a PhD from UCLA in Egyptology, where in

his final year he was named the UCLA affiliate graduate student of the year. He's taught courses in Hebrew and religion at BYU and UVSC, now known as Utah Valley University Extension Center, as well as history at Cal Poly Pomona and UCLA. What I just love is he goes to Egypt, he is an Egyptologist, and he's delightful, we're just really glad to have him back. Thanks for joining us again Kerry.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:01:53 It's good to be back. Thank you for having me back, it makes me question your judgment, but I'm happy to be here.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:58 Yes. We love having Kerry. He's our own personal Indiana Jones, right?
- John Bytheway: 00:02:02 Da, da, da, da. Yes, exactly. And there's a striking resemblance too, it's uncanny.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:02:08 Oh yeah. You can't lie on this without people knowing about it, just so you know.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:14 Only a portion of our guests are on YouTube, so they won't know. We'll let them picture whoever they want.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:02:19 In that case, I look exactly like Harrison Ford, that's exactly right.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:23 Kerry, we've been trying to do what you told us back in the very first episode of the year. So for those of you who are just joining us maybe in the middle of our Old Testament studies, go back and listen to episode one. Dr. Muhlestein walked us through how to study the Old Testament, and then we jumped into the Book of Moses, and we looked at the Book of Abraham and really had an incredible time. So we encourage anyone who hasn't listened to episode one, please go back and listen to episode one. Because we're going to try to pick up, let's try to bridge those two. If you guys don't mind, I want to start by bridging from where we started, back with Moses chapter one. And let's just do a quick review to the Book of Numbers, John, and we'll have Kerry comment on how we've done, on what we've learned so far, so it's like having the principal come.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:03:11 Yeah. Or the peanut gallery, I'll be the peanut gallery.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:12 The peanut gallery. So you guys walk with me here. If I was going to catch someone up along the way, we started in the Book of Moses in the Book of Genesis, talking about Adam and Eve. And we talked about the fall of man, and all the kind of the

wonderful yet disastrous things that came with it, then we talked about Cain and Abel.

- John Bytheway: 00:03:38 One of our guests, I love the way she said it, she said fall of man and redemption, the fall of a family and then redemption, and then it's the fall of a people and redemption, I just remembered that idea. This fall thing keeps happening, but there's a redemption that follows thankfully.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:55 As we walked through the Book of Genesis, I think I realized more than ever that this is Israel's family history, and the writer of these books wants Israel to know where they come from, who they are and where they come from. Kerry, have we done well so far?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:04:14 Yeah. And maybe I'll just add to that and so if we say, and I 733% agree that this is Israel's family history, but I want us to remember then that means it's our family history. And we read our history about great, great, great grandma Mildred and about great, great, great, great grandma, Sarah.
- Hank Smith: 00:04:32 One thing, John, if you remember, we noticed that our family history has some interesting, messy human stories in it. The Book of Genesis, we saw marriage problems, family problems, problems with children, problems with half brothers and you know who hasn't sold a brother, right? Who hasn't at least thought about it, I guess? At the end of Genesis, we ended up with the family of Israel in Egypt and Kerry that's your homeland. So we ended up with the entire family in Egypt and then hundreds of years go by, and they're a nation enslaved.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:05:10 I'll point out if we're doing family history for anyone who's descended from Joseph, then it is our homeland. We have some ancestry that goes back to Heliopolis where the airport is, so it's always welcome home, when you get back to Egypt.
- Hank Smith: 00:05:22 I think it was Dr. Chadwick, John, who said, "Do you know who my great-grandfather is? Come on. He was the prime minister of Egypt. I belong here."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:05:34 And on the other side, he was the high priest of On.
- Hank Smith: 00:05:38 So hundreds of years go by and Israel is now enslaved, they want out of bondage, they want out of slavery. And so the Lord raises up a deliverer. Moses, from their own midst, leaves Egypt, and then returns to Egypt to redeem them. We talked about the plagues of Egypt. We talked about the Passover. John

just mentioned the Passover, we talked about the Passover. We left Egypt, we come across the Red Sea. We talked with Dr. Skinner and Dr. Bowen about the plagues and the parting of the Red Sea. And one thing I loved there that I'd seen a little bit before, but I saw now more than ever was a parallel to the Atonement of Jesus Christ in the parting of the Red Sea. The promised land, the celestial kingdoms on the other side of this great gulf and God prepares a way across, that to me was a wonderful insight. Anything there, John or Kerry?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:06:32

I absolutely agree with that. And I think there's a number of symbols that are part of that. I also see creation in there because creation has all this watery chaos, and then you get dry land coming out of it. This is the creation of Israel as a nation, and at the same time symbolic of going through the veil into the promised land. So they're reborn as it were or recreated, which is something that has to happen for all of us.

Hank Smith: 00:06:56

One thing I want to hit that I thought was spectacular, I've thought about it ever since was with Dr. Skinner, if you remember, John, the Lord took down the Egyptian theology, each god, one by one. And the first thing he teaches them on that 10th plague, now that Egyptian theology has been dismantled, let's now construct Israelite theology. And the very first thing they're going to learn about is being saved by the blood of the lamb. Then they're going to take the leaven out of their house, then they're going to part the Red Sea, cross through the Red Sea and be led by a pillar of fire.

Hank Smith: 00:07:31

I remember telling my students at BYU this, and I said, "Do you see anything there?" And they immediately saw faith in the blood of the lamb, repentance in the leaven, third is baptism coming through the water, and fourth being led by a pillar of fire, being led by the Holy Ghost. So we had the first principles and ordinances of the gospel, and John I know you love that part.

John Bytheway: 00:07:52

I love first principles because if they're first principles then they're probably first principles. And I think we talked about to go way back to Doctrine and Covenants, we talked about Dr. Richard Bennett and his article in the Ensign about how Joseph Smith didn't just, "Let me see, let me pick some principles out of the air," but he experienced them. Faith in Christ, the first vision and losing the manuscript, repentance going through sore repentance, and then going back to translation and importance of baptism and that covenant, and then the Melchizedek priest, and being restored in the Holy Ghost. There are first principles

that are evident in the whole story, and here they are in the Old Testament story as well.

- Hank Smith: 00:08:32 Beautiful. I love that. So now we've come out of Egypt. And if I remember right, we've done a lot of murmuring, which is interesting that we have these incredible spiritual miracles happen in life and then we murmur, it's a human thing to do.
- John Bytheway: 00:08:50 It's consistent.
- Hank Smith: 00:08:51 Yeah. Kerry, our last few episodes, we've been talking about this sacred tabernacle that God says, "Okay, now that you've left Egypt-" Did they go straight to Sinai?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:09:04 That was their goal as they were leaving, like, "We're going to go worship God." And that's where they're going to worship God and establish a covenant, so Sinai was the first immediate goal and they get there.
- Hank Smith: 00:09:13 Oh, it was with Dr. Belnap if I remember they're given three days to prepare to see the face of God, and it kind of falls apart on them. And so God gives a series of laws, commandments, including the 10 commandments to them, to make them holy. Then with Dr. Matt Gray, we set up this tabernacle right in the middle of the camp, this sacred space for Israel to learn to become like God. And I think God is saying, "I want to make you a holy people. I want to make you absolutely different. And this tabernacle is going to teach you how to become holy, because I can't make you holy because that's not holiness, it has to be chosen." Am I hearing that right, is that the major purpose of the tabernacle?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:10:02 I'd say just in general, you have to choose to be holy, but then you're not going to be able to do it on your own. So God's going to have to change them, but he can't change them without them making the choice. And that's where covenants come in, so that, covenants are you making the choice and allowing God to change you. And I think there's an important element here that the focus at Mount Sinai, Mount Sinai serves as a temple. And they're supposed to all see God instead only some of them see God and we'll come back to that later, but the idea is they have to become truly holy in order to see God.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:10:31 And now they're going to leave Mount Sinai, so they need something else that can help them continue to become holy and continue to approach God. The point of holiness is to be able to become godly, so you can be with God and be like God.

And so if they're not going to be at Mount Sinai, where that initially happens for them, if they're not going to have that temple, they need something else that will continue to do that for them. So it's not a coincidence that it's at Sinai where God tells them and it's a huge focus of what God tells them at Sinai, "Here's what you need to do as you're leaving here, in order to continue your approach to me."

John Bytheway: 00:11:07 Now, I think it's significant that Sinai is a mountain and we get this symbol of the mountain of the Lord type of a thing. And then Jesus will come along and it will be the Mount of Beatitudes and so forth. And then when Jesus appears to the Nephites, he is at the temple, and so there's this mountain temple. I show my students three mountains, the premortal Christ at Sinai, and then the mortal Christ at the Mount of Beatitudes, and then the resurrected Christ to the righteous among the Nephites and Lamanites there in the Book of Mormon, which is interesting that they're all mountains or temples.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:11:43 And there's some important symbolism there because same thing with altars or steeples or anything else, it's the thing that connects heaven, which is up above and we're down on the earthly plane, and we need something that will connect us. Now it's Christ that connects us, it's the ordinances and covenants of the gospel that connect us. But symbolically it's the mountain, it's the temple with the steeple on it, it's an altar, those are all symbolic ways of saying we need something to connect us to God because we're disconnected without that help.

John Bytheway: 00:12:12 They're getting used to the idea of God being with them. God's presence is right there and behave as if God is right there, and his presence is there. He's close by, he's there in that tabernacle. And that's symbolically what that means, this is the house of God, this is a place where he can come and dwell.

Hank Smith: 00:12:29 Kerry, Dr. Muhlestein we now hit the Book of Numbers. We only have one day on this, so let's do a general overview and then maybe focus in on a couple of chapters and we'll turn it over to you. Now we're going to move from Sinai to the promised land, and I don't think things are going to go great.

John Bytheway: 00:12:47 Based on the recent past.

Hank Smith: 00:12:51 We're going to struggle a little bit in the Book of Numbers on this. We're going to move from Sinai to Moab, just outside the promise land. And you would think, "Hey, we've got this tabernacle now, things are going to go great." But it turns out, I

think we're going to have a lot more murmuring and a lot of problems in our nation, in our family.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:13:10

Yeah. It's a rough family road trip.

Hank Smith: 00:13:12

Yeah. Is that what you'd say is the Book of Numbers it's a big long family road trip? Let's let's turn it over to you, what do you want to say about numbers?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:13:20

Well, so Numbers begins where Exodus and Leviticus break off. I believe Dr. Belnap even said this when he was with you, that when you get to Mount Sinai, it's been a travel log up to that point, they were leaving Egypt and they went here, and they went here, and they went here. Then we get to Sinai and they're at Sinai for a long time, about a year, it's an incredibly important time for them. But you get this long break in the travel log that goes from Exodus 19 to Numbers 11. And so everything in between there is their covenant experience with God, the laws that God gives them. To speak to part of what you were talking about Hank, the instructions right after the 10 commandments and so on, the instructions they're given, the laws about how to behave is typically called the holiness code.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:14:06

It's instructions, how to be holy, how to act that's different than the way everyone else acts, that's more godly and this is help you going to choose to be holy, as you were saying. So you get all of that, the instructions of how to build the tabernacle and so on. So the first part, the first 10 chapters of numbers is the same thing, it gets its name because at the very beginning, Moses numbers the people. They want to know, "How many people do we have here. This is a big group here and we've been growing I'm sure while we've been at Mount Sinai," and so he numbers the people. But then you get information about some purity laws, how the priests are to behave, what the priests are going to do.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:14:40

So it's a little bit more about the rituals and the ordinances of the tabernacle, and how to make everything work if you're going to be a holy people. So that's what you get there in the first part of Numbers. And then in chapter 11, you're going to get back to the travel log. They're going to start to move again. And this tells the story of, let's say Exodus maybe 12 to 19 is the travel log getting from Egypt to Sinai. Numbers 11 to the end of Numbers is the travel log getting from Sinai to the promised land.

Hank Smith: 00:15:13 Okay. And it's a family road trip. When I go on a family road trip, I usually put on a John Bytheway talk, doesn't sound like they had a John Bytheway talk to listen with their kids.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:15:24 That's because you want them to sleep, is that why?

Hank Smith: 00:15:27 That's exactly why. Everyone falls asleep.

John Bytheway: 00:15:31 Audio melatonin or something.

Hank Smith: 00:15:34 They think John's funny, "Dad, you're not funny. Let's listen to John."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:15:38 Now, I have been told by one of my children, Hank, that had you for a class they're like, "Unlike dad, Hank Smith actually is funny. He doesn't just think he's funny, he actually is funny."

Hank Smith: 00:15:51 Well, I'm going to play this for my kids.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:15:53 That's right, good. And this may sound like I'm in sync with them, but the two people that I can get my kids to listen to on a family trip is John Bytheway and Hank Smith, those are the two that my kids request, they never request me by the way.

John Bytheway: 00:16:07 As long as you have a cassette player in your car because I'm getting a little old. What's funny about this is back in I think it was 2007, my wife said, "Hey, my sister and brother-in-law are going to Mount Rushmore, let's go with them." And so we rented a motor home, this was way outside of my comfort zone. This is true story, we got less than a half a mile away and one of my kids said, "How long is this going to take?" We were seriously, half a mile away. And so when you say family road trip, I'm like this is the "are we there yet" story of the house of Israel, "I've heard about this promised land, are we there yet? And is this all we brought to eat?" It's a perfect way to put it.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:16:54 Yep. The wheels came off. The septic tank on the motor home broke down and made a mess and everything else, that's the story.

Hank Smith: 00:17:02 They're taking the tabernacle with them, right Kerry-

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:17:04 Yes.

Hank Smith: 00:17:04 ... they're packing it up and they're going to take it with them. Oh, I shouldn't laugh so much at this. But man, this idea of a family road trip just makes me laugh because we've all been

there going, "Oh my word, sit down and be quiet. Just look out the window."

John Bytheway: 00:17:20

I'm up here doing all the work, driving this thing and you guys are back there complaining we ran out of barbecue chips.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:17:28

That's exactly what it is for Moses, it's like, "I'm trying to drive this bus, could you settle down back there." So to speak to your comment about the tabernacle, that's actually how numbers chapter 10 ends. And this is what signals we're back to the travel log, but it's a key difference now because they do have the tabernacle. So if we go to chapter 10, verse 33, "And they departed from the Mount of the Lord three days journey, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days journey, to search out a resting place for them." So the ark of the covenant, they didn't have that before, that's something that's been created, that's part of the tabernacle and it's at the lead. And I think that's key because it symbolizes God's presence, it symbolizes the covenant and the lid of the ark of the covenant is the mercy seat or the seat of atonement. So we've got God, covenant and atonement leading the way, which should lead the way in everything we do, that's key.

John Bytheway: 00:18:22

My kids think an ark is a boat, but what is an ark here?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:18:26

So I think that the Israelites, God gives them something to build that they're capable of building. So they've just come from Egypt and they have some artisans that were trained in Egypt. In Egypt the primary mode of travel is a boat. The chariot and wheels, they're not such a big deal in Egypt, they don't get invented there because they don't really need them because they travel mostly on boat. When they're going to have a structure on which one of their deities or one of their gods will travel, they create a boat and you find depictions of them all over the place. They have these big golden boats with staves or rods coming out of them that they carry, that have the statue of the deity will be placed on that boat.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:19:06

So what does God have the Israelites do? He has them build an ark and I don't know that it looks like a boat in this case, the directions he gives them doesn't really look like a boat. But I think that's going to be what's in their mind, and it's probably artisans who have built this for the Egyptians who are building this, they know how to do this. And so they're going to have these rods coming out and carry it along, and so it is kind of like a boat on which the presence of God can travel.

John Bytheway: 00:19:32 It's a vessel. I'm so glad I asked, that's a great explanation, so it's a way to carry that. And you said the mercy seat that's there, we're all thinking Indiana Jones when we think ark of the covenant.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:19:43 Yeah. Don't look inside there.

John Bytheway: 00:19:45 Yeah. And don't look in there, your eyes will melt.

Hank Smith: 00:19:49 I love this Kerry, Numbers 10:33, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:19:55 Yeah. Well, verse 34, "And the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day when they went out of the camp." And you highlighted so perfectly and beautifully that the point of the tabernacle is this is the place where they can meet God. And in fact, sometimes it's called the tent of meeting because that's where you can go to meet God. And I hope we think of our temples that way, but I hope we also create our homes as a temple to think of it that way, but this is the place where you can meet God and be with him. But the presence of God is symbolized by a cloud at day and a fire by night, which is so fantastic because not only does it symbolize the presence of God, but God's taking care of them while he does this. They're in a desert and it's incredibly hot by day and it's cold at night.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:20:35 And so he's a cloud to protect them from the sun by day, and he's the fire to warm them up and give them the light they need at night. So he is what they need them to be as he is designating that his presence is there. So it must have been daytime when they leave, the cloud goes upon them, so symbolically it's clear, "I am with you, it's time to go." The cloud moves. And this is how they know when it's time to go, the cloud or the fire leaves and they're like, "Oh, God is telling us it's time to go, we need to follow God so that we can be with him." So God is with them, but they have an obligation when God's ready for them to move, to follow God and there's just fantastic symbolism in there.

John Bytheway: 00:21:12 I want to go back to what Kerry was saying. And just because I think hopefully some of our listeners are going, "Hey, this is in a hymn somewhere." Redeemer of Israel, a shadow by day and a pillar by night, so that's that imagery. And I think that in our, correct me if I'm wrong, our Western culture, we might say a perfect day is not a cloud in the sky, but what if you live in Egypt? And so isn't a cloud, a comfort, it's some shade.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:21:41 I was just in Egypt last week and we had several 110 degree days, and the game you play is find the shade. We're going to work on the side of the pyramid that has some shade today, whatever time of day it is, we're going to be over in that shade.

John Bytheway: 00:21:55 I've heard this, I've never been able to verify it, but that the original Provo Temple design with a steeple that was made out of copper at first, or had the appearance of copper. And the round roundish part kind of a square with rounded edges part was the cloud, the shadow by day, and the steeple was the pillar by night in that original design, and it looks like it. And now they're going to redo the whole thing, but they've since made the steeple more white, but at one time it was orange if you look up the old pictures, and I've heard that was the shadow by day, the pillar by night, have you guys heard that?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:22:31 I have heard that. I can't verify it either, but if you look at it that makes sense. I always thought, "Why did they make it look that way?" And then when I heard that, I was like, "Oh, now I like how it looks."

Hank Smith: 00:22:42 Just in time for them to change it.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:22:43 That's exactly, right.

John Bytheway: 00:22:44 Yeah. Now they're going to change it. But that was kind of a cool thought that this was important, this was how they knew God was there, there was a shadow by day, a pillar by night. And now go back to what you were saying, Kerry, that when it left they followed it.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:22:57 God is going to keep us moving towards the promised land or him and the celestial kingdom. He's not going to let us stay anywhere for forever. I want to try and make this real, that's something that's really important to me is to try and make the scriptures real and picture it. So think of these guys, they came out of Egypt and they've been at Mount Sinai and they've been there for a year. So I've had a couple places where I lived there for one year or a couple times. I've lived at a place for one year, but one year is long enough for you to really settle in and get used to life there and what it's like. And then to be told, "Okay, you've figured out how to live here, you know how to eat and you've got water coming, pack up and take off into this most miserable of wildernesses, that really is inhospitable."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:23:43 It's really not a nice place to try and live, it's beautiful in it's harshness, but it's harsh and that's going to be tough, but that's

what God is going to do for us. He's not going to let us stay in our comfort zone, he's going to get us right when we're comfortable and we're good there, he's going to say, "It's time to take the next step towards becoming godly. You've got to follow me as I lead you through something that's going to be tough, but it's going to get you closer to me or the celestial kingdom," or however you want to phrase that. And that's one of the things I hope that we'll think of and we'll come back to this a number of times, I think today. The whole Exodus story and by that I don't just mean getting out of Egypt, but the story from Egypt going into the promised land is what we could call an archetypal journey.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:24:28

It is a journey that is symbolic of the journey that we go on to return to be in God's presence. As we do this, we want to keep looking for elements of what they're going through and how it applies to our life. And in those journeys, they're all over in the scriptures, the Nephites, the Jaredites, they're all over the place, but the Exodus is probably the great granddaddy of all of them, and it's partially because we have more details about it in here. And don't take me wrong, I'm not saying it's symbolic as in this journey didn't really happen. I think this is real. I think this really happened, but it happened in a way that's intentionally designed to teach us symbolically about our journey.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:25:03

And they usually start with the idea that you're turning your back on wickedness. You're turning your back on bondage. You're turning your back on the world. So whether that's leaving Jerusalem, or leaving the Tower of Babel or leaving Egypt, and you have a covenant making experience. In some ways you could say this is baptism or something like that, and then you get a wilderness that they have to go through, which usually ends up being symbolic of our mortal probation and the different phases of mortal probation. So I hope we'll look at this story with that overarching view in mind.

Hank Smith: 00:25:31

That's really great, Kerry, this idea of, oh, Babylon, oh, Babylon. We bid thee farewell, I'm going to the mountains of Ephraim to dwell. And this journey of turning my back on... perhaps like The Great Divorce with C.S. Lewis, I'm turning my back on sin and I'm heading towards God, but this is not going to be an easy journey. So often we think, oh, turning your back on sin and heading towards God is going to be, you're going to travel across Hawaii by hammock. When really this is the wilderness, this harsh wilderness is going to create a holiness in you, so we can watch them do this.

John Bytheway: 00:26:09 I love that in the Book of Mormon, Nephi uses this Moses deliverance story to talk about their own story. And then I love that in our day we have our great, great grandpas and grandmas crossing the plains in kind of another journey story out of Nauvoo. And I showed my kids the other week, we were watching the church movie Legacy and how there was this idea of, "Yay, Zion. We're going to Zion," but it just was really hard. There was always this ideal of someday we're going to get there, but the wilderness part was a hard part for them, and that's happening here.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:26:44 I think you're right that that's another archetypal journey and they had Wyoming to go through, right?

Hank Smith: 00:26:48 Yeah. Nebraska.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:26:51 It really is harsh territory where you might in the middle of the summer, get a snowstorm that kills a bunch of people. I like what you're saying that it's not intended to be easy. The RV's going to break down as it were, and this is going to be a tough trip. Let's just be clear, a fallen world is a tough trip. Having fallen natures and dealing with fallen people, that's a tough trip and that's by design because the question is, are we going to follow God through that? And I have to think as you're talking about The Great Divorce and so on, it makes me think of the things President Nelson has been telling us lately.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:27:25 Just think of him saying, "Let God prevail in your life, spend less time having the world influence you and more time having Christ influence you, and let's develop some momentum as we do that. Doing those things, letting God prevail and getting rid of the world a bit each day, and more time for Christ will create the momentum." I could picture Moses telling the Israelites the same thing and if they had fully listened, then this journey still would've been tough, but would've had a few less bumps. They may not have been these fiery serpents that we get to later, so it still would've been a hard place, but with a few less bumps.

Hank Smith: 00:27:59 I remember in your very first interview Kerry, you said the Old Testament gives it to you, the truth, it tells you the human side of this. And it seems that this could be a very comforting book for us in that we are trying to make this same journey, leaving the world, going to the promised land, and the people struggle along the way. There's times they want to go back to Egypt, there's times they complain. There's a little bit of comfort in that as we watch this journey, there's a human side to it that even though you complain and murmur and sometimes want to go back to Egypt, the Lord's not going to give up on you. He'll

give you the lessons you need to have, the promised land is ready for you, but you need to be ready for it.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:28:39

Oh, that's well said.

John Bytheway: 00:28:41

Hank that's great, that reminds me of, it was one thing for Moses to get children of Israel out of Egypt, then he needed to get the Egypt out of the children of Israel.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:28:52

And I think we sometimes underestimate that there are little hints of it in the Bible, but it's maybe not as clear as it could be. They've been in Egypt where idolatry is and this is it's apex, hundreds of gods, well, this is the norm everywhere, except for with Abraham's family. But if you want to talk about hundreds of gods and huge depictions of them on large scale, then that's Egypt. I am convinced that the Israelites partook of that. And part of the reason I'm convinced of that is because Joshua will eventually say, "Well, if you want to serve the gods, you are serving on the other side of the flood-" And he seems to be talking about the Nile and its flooding and so on, "If you want to serve the gods you were serving there, fine, but me and my house, we're not doing that."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:29:34

And so you get these little bits of evidence that they leave Egypt with idolatry, and they're going to struggle with that for hundreds of years, it's not that easy to get the Egypt or the world out of them. And I think that's exactly what President Nelson was talking about when he is saying, "If you get all your information from social and other media and not from God, you're going to have a problem. You need to stop listening to that so much and listen to Christ some more."

Hank Smith: 00:29:59

Leave Egypt.

John Bytheway: 00:30:00

I think we heard that with Elder Bednar too about, we will heed not, there's a lot of heeding going on of social media. I think what President Nelson, "If most of the information you get comes from social media, your ability to feel the spirit will be diminished."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:30:15

Yeah. And you'll be deceived. And it reminds me of Elder Maxwell who said, often we leave Babylon but we keep a summer cottage there. And I think that's true of all of us and we're going to see it's true for the ancient Israelites.

Hank Smith: 00:30:29

Yeah. And poor Moses. As I read through today's chapters in Numbers, I feel for Moses. I wonder if President Nelson, I bet he

does, I wonder if he's, "Lord, these people, these people." John, I loved how you said about your road trip. You went a whole half mile that looks at like Numbers, chapter 11, verse one, they hit the road in chapter 10, the very first thing that happens in 11:1, "The people complained."

- John Bytheway: 00:30:56 Yeah. Maybe Moses wanted, "Can I go back to be prince of Egypt again?"
- Hank Smith: 00:31:02 All right. Kerry, what do you want to do here? What stories do you want to hit in the Book of Numbers?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:31:06 Well, let's touch just a little bit on 11 and 12. There are some really key stories that we need to do there, but 13 and 14 are going to be our big focus at least for the first while, if that's all right. So 11, they start out, as we said, it's tough to suddenly move and they're in a place where it's hard to get food. They've got manna and we get this little kind of recap of what manna is, these teeny little BB sized things, it's almost like honey flavored couscous or something like that. But they're getting pretty tired of it, doesn't matter how good a meal is, if it's the only thing you've eaten for a year, you'll get pretty tired of it, so I can understand that. And they remember, I love this verse we're in chapter 11, verse five, "We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:31:54 So I have to tell you, like I said, I just came back from Egypt and the produce there is fantastic, and the fish is fantastic. And I think their strawberries are tastier than ours, their cucumbers and tomatoes are better than ours. I work on the farm and that's where most of the cucumbers and tomatoes come from. And in fact, every day we'd see huge trucks of garlic, it was garlic season, so huge trucks of garlic coming, and it's just good. So there's a part of me that's saying, "I remember the fish and the cucumbers and the leeks that were there." That's what Egypt had plenty of was food and a huge variety.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:32:26 And now they're eating manna every single day, so they want something different. And there's an interesting principle here because God is going to give them what they ask for. And that's going to happen a couple of times in this storyline, Alma tells us to be just a little bit careful what you ask for, because God might give it to you.
- Hank Smith: 00:32:42 Right. Right.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:32:43 And they want something different, so God says, "I'm going to give you meat until you are sick to death of it." He says, "Until it's coming out of your nostrils," and it's quail. So here's an interesting one of those little bits of reality, quail migrate. Now probably you don't think of quail as flying because mostly they don't fly. They can fly, but they don't fly very long, very well. And so what happens when they migrate is that they fly until they're exhausted and then they have to stop and they're not going to fly anymore, and they're just going to be kind of dead on the ground for a while.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:33:18 And that's exactly what happens here, and there's a wind that blows them, and they're not birds that can fight against the wind very well. So it tells us that the wind comes and it blows, so I can picture all these quail that are on their migratory path and the wind comes and they've been fighting and it blows them all to one place. All of the different migratory groups get blown to one place, and they are just done and they fall to the ground, and it's right where the Israelites are, and they can't run or anything else they're exhausted. And the Israelites can go and pick up all the quail they want, and they do until they're as sick of quail as they were of manna.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:33:50 And they're like, "Ah, dang, give us that manna again. I'm tired of this quail." So they kind of get what they want. If we're going to talk about this archetypal journey, and if this is symbolic of our journey to be with God again, then I think what we need to do is identify what are the common problems that Israel has. And if our Israelite ancestors had these problems, it's likely the same problems we're having on our mortal journey. So one of the problems we're going to see consistently is that when God asks them to do something that isn't easy or doesn't go perfectly, they're pretty unhappy. This whole murmuring when things don't go just right, is a really common trend for ancient Israel in this archetypal journey.
- Hank Smith: 00:34:36 That hits a little close to home Kerry.
- John Bytheway: 00:34:39 I love that the first paragraph in the church's Come Follow Me manual says, "Even on foot, it wouldn't normally take 40 years to travel from the wilderness of Sinai to the promised land in Canaan, but that's how long the children of Israel needed. Not to cover the geographical distance, but to cover the spiritual distance, the distance between who they were and who the Lord needed them to become as his covenant people." I love that line because that's again, you got to get the people out of Egypt, now you got to get the Egypt out of the people.

Hank Smith: 00:35:09 Kerry. I noticed when you talked about them remembering Egypt, there's no mention of being slaves, "We remember the fish and the melons, the leaks, the onions, the garlic," but they failed to mention the bondage they were in.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:35:23 Yeah. The taskmaster whips, they didn't bring that part up.

Hank Smith: 00:35:26 Right. So I think one of our guests called that misremembering. We misremember what Babylon was like, what Egypt was like, it wasn't as fun or as.... It's an interesting word they use in chapter 11, verse four, "They fell into lusting." If this is our journey, I miss my sins a little bit, I want to return to my sins.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:35:47 And you're right, we kind of selectively remember, so we remember the sins, we forget the emptiness and the pain, the emotional, spiritual pain that was part of that. We forget that part, and we remember the other part until you get back in and then you're like, "Oh man, this is really lousy what did I do this for?"

Hank Smith: 00:36:05 The people are complaining, what's Moses' reaction?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:36:09 The great thing about the Old Testament is you get to see everyone as they are. And you see Moses, he gets tired of this. I see Moses as the dad who's had enough every now and then in these stories. Like, "That's it, don't make me turn this car around. You want me to take you back to Egypt? I'll take you back to Egypt. Don't make me come back there." That's kind of what happens. But the Lord says, "Okay, don't worry. I'll take care of it. I'll just feed them until they're sick of it."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:36:34 I think it's important especially if we're going to keep going with this theme of what is a challenge for them in their mortal probation or on their journey in the wilderness, it starts with verse 16, where Moses is to gather 70 men of the elders of Israel. So this is where the idea of a 70 comes from, it starts here, maybe it started with Adam, I don't know, this is the first place we have record of it, where he is going to get 70 people. This seems to be a little bit of a follow up on the Exodus 18, so remember that was the last chapter before the Sinai interlude, this is the first chapter after the Sinai interlude.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:37:07 So he chose captains of 10s and 50s and so on to oversee what you might think of as their judicial things. Now he seems to be delegating some spiritual matters and he's going to do this with 70 different people. We look at verse 17, "I will come down and talk with thee there, and I will take of the spirit, which is upon

thee and will put it upon them. And they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone." So the spirit of prophecy, the ability to commune with God is going to rest, not just on Moses, but on a number of other people in the house of Israel, and that happens.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:37:43

But there are a couple of them, those 70 who don't come, so if we go to verse 24, "And Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord and gathered the 70 men of the elders, and of the people and set them round about the tabernacle. And the Lord came down in a cloud and spake unto them, and took of the spirit that was upon him and gave it to the 70 elders. And it came to pass that when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied and did not cease. But there remain two of the men in the camp, the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other was Medad, and the spirit rested upon them."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:38:14

So they weren't even there, but still they'd been chosen, so the spirit rests upon them, "They were of them that were written, but went not out into the tabernacle." And a young man runs to Moses and he says, "Whoa, hey, there are people that are prophesying." And so he seems to think, "Moses, that's your job, what should we do about these other guys that are doing it?" And we get this profound, profound answer in verse 29, "And Moses said unto him, 'Enviest thou for my sake, would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them.'" This is President Nelson telling us you better have the spirit with you if you're going to survive in the last days, we all need to commune with God, everybody needs to commune with God.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:38:58

And that's going to start to happen and it has to happen for us, but that is going to end up setting up this interesting tension that we'll see worked out here. And we saw this in the early days of the church as well. I think as God is establishing a covenant people, which he's just done here, which he's doing in the early days of the church, you get this tension between, "Okay, I want everyone to commune with God, but there's one who will represent me to the church as a whole." And it takes a little while to work that out, both for ancient Israel and in the early days of the church. And we've got the Hiram Page stone and Oliver Cowdery and others who were feeling like, "Hey, I'm the same place as Joseph and God's going to be clear "Not quite."

Hank Smith: 00:39:40

Kerry, I love this Numbers 11:29 Moses is saying, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets." There's a talk from Elder Dallin H. Oaks, October, 2010, where he talks about that

all of us have two lines of communication with God, we have our priesthood line through the church and we have our own personal line to God. And he said, "We must use both the personal line and the priesthood line in proper balance to achieve the growth, that is the purpose of this mortal life. If personal religious practices relies too much on the personal line, individualism erases the importance of divine authority. If personal religious practice relies too much on the priesthood line, individual growth suffers. The children of God need both lines to achieve their eternal destiny. The restored gospel teaches both and the restored church provides both." I feel like that's a great connection.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:40:37

He explains things so well, doesn't he?

John Bytheway: 00:40:38

So when Moses says, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets," now Moses is still going to be their leader perhaps could we say with keys, but the rest of them are going to need to learn to hear him as President Nelson might say.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:40:52

That's very well said, and that tension is going to come up immediately. It's not a coincidence that chapter 12 follows chapter 11, by that I don't mean just the numbers, but I mean the way the story happens. The next thing that happens is in chapter 12 Miriam and Aaron come to Moses, let's just read verse two and three, "And they said, 'Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses, hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it.'" So they're saying, "Wait, Moses, we get revelation, why do we all need to look to you?" Now they want to make sure that we understand this isn't because there's something wrong with Moses, so they throw in verse three, "Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men, which were upon the face of the earth." Moses is incredibly meek as the mouthpiece of the Lord, it's not because he is lording himself over them.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:41:43

I think it's because of this tension, "Hey, actually we do receive revelation. And since we receive revelation, we ought to be able to act on that." And individually they should, but they don't receive it for the whole church. Again, same from that Oliver Cowdery and Hiram Page and others had, and so God's going to teach them something here. If we look here, we get verse six, "And he said, 'Hear now my words, if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision and will speak to him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house, with him will I speak mouth to mouth even apparently, and not in dark speeches.'" Now let's parse

that out a little bit because we use the word prophet differently than it's used in the rest of scripture.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:42:27

In most of scripture, when it says prophet, it means someone who's inspired by God. In our day, we've come to use prophet to mean the presiding high priest. And I'm not saying we do it wrong, this is a fine way to use it, you just use the word to mean what you want it to mean. So when we hear the word prophet, we think President Nelson, the presiding high priest who has the authority to speak for God to everybody. But that's not how it's used here, what he's saying here is, "If there's someone who's inspired, then I'll inspire him in all sorts of different ways. But with the presiding person, I'm going to go really directly, he's not going to be confused trying to figure out-"

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:43:05

It's one of the great challenges we have as members of the church, like, "Okay, was that inspiration or not? And if it was inspiration, exactly what does that mean?" God wants us to work through that, that's part of this mortal probation is working our communication with God. I mean Alma used prophet the way we use it, his prophet the presiding high priest, he's going to make sure he knows. There's not going to be, "Oh, does this mean this or not?" He's going to know, that's what he's teaching them here when he talks to Moses and Miriam and Aaron.

John Bytheway: 00:43:37

It's a great distinction. It's kind of like when we say prophet, we kind of mean president of the church prophets, the way we use it now. But everybody can have the spirit of prophecy by the Book of Revelation definition, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. And if you have a testimony of Christ, where did you get it? It must have been by revelation.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:44:00

Yeah. And we get that spirit of revelation or spirit of prophecy in the early Doctrine & Covenants as well, and it's just the kind of inspiration we're all familiar with.

Hank Smith: 00:44:08

So Kerry is this Miriam and Aaron trying to figure out their personal revelation versus what's Moses' role in their life?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:44:16

I think it is a bit, and it's them just like so many of us having to contrast, "Okay, well, I've received revelation. What's the difference between me and my Bishop or my stake president or our member of the Quorum of the Twelve, or the president of the church." And in some ways there's not a difference, and in some ways there is, it comes back to those two lines of communication you were talking about Hank. But it seems to me that as Aaron and Miriam approach Moses with this, they're

looking for some other reasons to be upset with Moses. So it's the first thing they bring up, what they're really there to talk about is, "Hey, we get revelation too." But they're going to bring up something else to begin with. And verse one, you get this idea that, "They spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married, for he had married an Ethiopian woman."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:45:00

We have nothing else about that. Zero information. When did that happen, I don't know and so on. So if I'm just going to put on my speculation hat, which is all we can do with this verse. I'm going to guess that this is something that happened while Moses was still in Pharaoh's court, because the Egyptians had some really important relations with their neighbors to their south. For them, that was more important than what was going on to their north, their neighbors to their south, and they had a tradition of some political marriages.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:45:29

And so it would make sense if Moses is part of Pharaoh's heir, he's grown up in this part of the court, that he might have been part of a political marriage to strengthen ties with some of the Ethiopian leaders. We have no way of knowing if that's true or not, but it makes sense to me. And then Moses leaves all of that behind, and I have no idea what's happened to this woman, but did he get her when he went back and she's come with them or not? I don't know. There's a whole lot of question marks here that we don't know about.

Hank Smith: 00:46:00

I like what you said there Kerry, they're looking to be offended, they're looking to find fault in Moses.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:46:06

Yeah. So they have one issue that they don't like, but in order to justify it they've got to find some other reason to be upset as well.

Hank Smith: 00:46:12

Find something small, make it a big deal.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:46:15

Now the interesting thing is the Lord's response, it's not just that he teaches them. And this, this comes back to, if you remember, way back when we had our first interview with Moses one, I said, one of the keys to understanding the Old Testament is to recognize that God speaks to them through symbolic action. These are people who expect symbolic responses, so it's not enough for him to explain it the way he did where he says, "I'm going to speak to Moses differently than others." Because Aaron and Miriam coming to Moses and challenging him is an action, it's something they've said, but it's also an action. So if God just responds with speaking, that's

going to look like, "Okay, whatever, you can make up whatever you want, we want to see an action that responds." So God responds with an action and his action is Miriam's going to be struck with leprosy.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:46:58

And that seems really harsh to us, but that's because we just see the leprosy and we don't follow through to the end of the story. Let's follow through to the end of the story. Well, let's see it's verse 10, "And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle," now that's important. You guys, you've just lost God's presence. We have that happen in our lives, where we're going to challenge something that the prophets are teaching us, we're going to lose the spirit when that happens. It doesn't mean we will never have it back, you can certainly invite it back, but whenever you're in the mode of challenging the prophet, the Spirit's going to withdraw, that's how it works. So the Spirit withdraws, "And behold Miriam became leprous white as snow, and Aaron looked upon Miriam and behold she was leprous. And Aaron said unto Moses, 'Alas my Lord, I beseech thee lay not the sin upon us wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned.'"

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:47:42

Immediately they recognize this is an answer from God, and they're like, "Okay, we get it. We blew this." I don't know why Aaron gets off Scott free, he seems to do that a bit. And maybe it's because if he's leprous he can't officiate as high priest and they need him to keep doing that. But I love that it's Aaron, who is pleading on Miriam's behalf. Aaron's, he's complicit in this, he's aiding and abetting, however you want to say it. He's complicit in this thing, Miriam gets the curse and Aaron's like, "Okay, I want to plead on Miriam's behalf. We repent. We're sorry. Can we get rid of this?"

Hank Smith: 00:48:12

Yeah. We've sinned.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:48:14

And then Moses steps in and also pleads, "And Moses cried into the Lord saying, 'Heal her now, oh, God, I beseech thee.'" And remember this is his sister, he didn't really grow up with her, but it's his sister. Moses pleads on God's behalf, and then God says, "Okay, I'll heal her. But remember when you are a leper, you have a cleansing period." So she needs to go through the cleansing period and I love this verse 15, "And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days," so the minimum time, "and the people journeyed not until Miriam was brought in again." So think of this it sounds like such a harsh thing when God says, "Okay. I'm going to strike Miriam with leprosy." And we're like, "Whoa." But God immediately heals her, and then as she goes through the process of being able to be with Israel again, they

say, "We won't move on without you, we'll wait, and when you're ready then Israel will move on."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:49:09

To me, that's a story of incredible mercy, not a story of harsh judgment. God does what he needs to do to teach what he needs to teach, the lesson is learned, and then God says, "Okay, I'll make this as if it didn't happen and we'll wait until you're good and ready, and then we'll keep going." That's a very merciful God. And if we'll often look at that whole story like we do here, when we see it in other places where we see what seems like a harsh reaction, we'll see it's always followed by this mercy.

John Bytheway: 00:49:38

So often people hear, "Oh, the God of the Old Testament seems to be different than the God of the New Testament, he's so harsh." And so I love that, you can point it out... The way you're looking at it, see the love and see the mercy in there instead of seeing that as a harsh judgment. But I wanted to ask you, can you help us understand verse 14, a little better, "And the Lord said unto Moses, if her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days," is that some law of Moses thing?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:50:11

Yeah. Under the law of Moses there are a number of things that make you ritually impure. So it's not spiritually impure, it's ritually impure, but there's symbols there that are supposed to teach you. Body fluids being on you in a way that's not normal, that's not how they're supposed to be going, and so that can include if you have a wound that's oozing puss or things like that. So being spit upon this makes you ritually impure, and you have to go through the purification process. That's one of the beautiful things about the law of Moses. There are all sorts of things that make you impure and it's okay, everyone is going to be impure, everyone. And that's no big deal, it's built into the law how to overcome that and become pure again, which really, again, teaches us a tremendous amount about our own mortal probation.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:50:52

We're all going to cut ourselves off from God again and again and again, and I'm not saying don't worry about it, but don't worry about it too much, it's in the plan and God has prepared the way for us to overcome that. Don't beat yourself up and think it's the end of the world, say, "Okay, well, that's what I did. Here's the process for coming back." And so that's what he's saying here is if it had just been spit then she would have to go through a purification process. She's a leper, there's a purification process that has to go on here. And I love what you were saying John about some people see it like a God of mercy

in the New Testament and a God of justice in the Old Testament, I have to say that's one of my pet peeves that really, really bothers me.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:51:30 When I hear that, I think, "Okay. You didn't read either book very carefully." There's plenty of both in both, we just somehow decided that. But that's one of the keys is you have to look for it, you have to follow the whole story. And some of the stories being made a leper seems fairly harsh, but there are other stories that seem more harsh to us. So for example, again, in the story where we don't cover in Come Follow Me, but where Korah and a number of Levites come to challenge Moses, the ones who challenge Moses they end up being killed. And we're going to find that happens a number of times in the Old Testament, someone is killed, and we say, "Whoa, now that's harsh." And from our point of view it is, but that's because we have a fairly mortal perspective.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:52:13 From God's eternal perspective it's not that harsh, he just took them from one place and put them in another, it's almost like he sent them to their room, "Okay. Did what I could with you here. You're causing so much trouble with everyone, I got to get you out of this situation, send you to your room. And I'm going to let you stew for a while in your room, and when you've calmed down I'm going to come talk to you there." The other room is what we call the spirit world, and God comes and talks with them there. Just as kind of the prime example of that, the largest group that he had sent to the room because they were doing the worst is the people in the days of Noah.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:52:45 All of them die, they're all sent to the spirit world, but we know that's the group Christ goes to when he's in the spirit world, which means that as bad as they were, that wasn't the end of the story, God was still going to work with them. So from a mortal perspective, "They all died, that's terrible." From God's perspective, "I send them to their room and I let them cool down, and then I go talk to them later." And knowing that he always gives him another chance, he gives the people in the flood another chance. I think he's going to give Korah and his group another chance and so on, then we see it as a story of mercy rather than a story of wrath.

Hank Smith: 00:53:21 Kerry, I think there's going to come times in everybody's life where their Moses, President Nelson or another prophet or apostle is going to say things that they don't agree with, that they don't like. Chapter 12 is a great reminder to take those things to the Lord, maybe not go public with these problems that you have, Miriam and Aaron that's their first thing, "I'm

going to go public with this." Instead, go to the Lord and have that personal connection with him where you can work that out with him.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:53:52 Yeah. You compound the problems if you do it the other way.
- Hank Smith: 00:53:55 Yeah. If you struggle with something that the prophet has said, go to the Lord, he'll talk to you.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:54:01 Yeah. The Lord is willing to entertain questions and doubts, depends on how you do it. If you're belligerent, that's one thing. If you're going to the Lord and you say, "Here's where I'm struggling with." And we see Moses, he does that, "I'm tired of these people." And the Lord says, "Well, we're going to work with them a little longer."
- John Bytheway: 00:54:20 Welcome to my world.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:54:22 That's right. That's right. The Lord's willing to work with us if we are coming to him with honest sincere concerns, not with... He'll still work with us, it's just going to be in a much harder way, if we come to him and say, "Hey, this is being done wrong."
- Hank Smith: 00:54:39 Yeah.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:54:40 Then he has to treat us a little bit differently than if we come to him and say, "I don't get this and I'm uncomfortable with this. Can you help me with this?"
- Hank Smith: 00:54:46 Chapter 12, that's an important chapter to me now where I don't think I would've seen that before.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:54:52 But let's go to chapter 13 and 14, which are probably in my mind the greatest lesson we can learn from this reading. And as we get into chapter 13 and 14, I actually want to jump forward to Deuteronomy chapter one. And this will tie into what John was saying earlier, and we're going to read what I think is one of the most important verses in the Bible. But whenever I say that and I have my students read it, they just stare at me like, "You are from Mars," and you'll do the same thing when I read this to you. But this is Deuteronomy chapter one, verse two, incredibly important, it's all in parentheses just to make it seem less important, "There are 11 days journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir unto Kadesh Barnea." You see how important that is now, let me explain.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:55:34 Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai, Kadesh Barea is the place where they send out the spies. This is the place where from there they're supposed to go in and inherit the promised land. So we learn it's 11 days, even on foot as John said earlier, it's 11 days from Mount Sinai to the place where they're supposed to go in and inherit the promised land. It takes them 40 years to inherit the promised land, 40 years. So now we have to ask ourselves why, why did it take so long? Keeping in mind this whole archetypal journey thing. The idea that if we're on this same journey, then I have to ask myself, "In what ways am I making an 11 day journey, a 40 year journey?" And we all do. And if the problem is outlined in the scriptures then so is the answer. So let's look at the problem and we'll see it in chapter 13 and 14, and we don't have to read-

Hank Smith: 00:56:29 They take the long way, Kerry.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:56:31 Yeah. They take the long way.

John Bytheway: 00:56:33 This is the scenic route enjoy the wilderness.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:56:36 Yeah. That's exactly, enjoy the wilderness and its snakes. So let me just kind of summarize part of 13 and 14 if that's all right, and then we have a couple verses that we'll just focus on. They get to Kadesh Barnea and this is where they're supposed to go in, and so Moses says, "Well, let's do a reconnaissance mission. Let's get one person from each tribe and go in and let us know what the land is like, and what the challenges or obstacles to inheriting that land will be like."

Hank Smith: 00:57:02 So Kerry, just to clarify, this is the land that when Joseph brought his family out of Egypt, this is where they were before that.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:57:11 Kadesh Barea is on the border, even today, it's kind of on the border of Egypt, Israel in the Sinai wilderness. So it's the very Southern just before you leave desolation wilderness territory and start to get into Southern Canaan for them, and where you can have flocks and things that will grow. You're not going to grow grapes in the Sinai area, you are going to grow grapes in the Negev or the Southern part of Canaan, and there on that borderland between them is where they're at.

Hank Smith: 00:57:43 The house of Israel's been gone for a while.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:57:45 A long time, very, very long time, they don't remember what it's like. Well, and there were people who were there already.

Remember when Abraham was there, he was among all the Canaanites, he was a stranger there and so were Jacob and Isaac, they were strangers there. So this is an oasis where they can still survive, but they're not yet in the place where you can just have a whole bunch of people living easily. So they send people in to find out what's it like in that area, and they come back with a report and they say, "It is fantastic." And in fact, Caleb and Joshua come back carrying a big bunch of grapes that is so big, that it takes the two of them to carry it, they're carrying it on a stick between the two of them.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:58:24

It's the official logo for tourist department in Israel because Caleb and Joshua, they think of as the first tourist in the land, they went through and toured and saw how great it was. But they come back with proof, "This land is fantastic, stuff grows there." But there's also a report that they give, and it's the other 10 that give this report, 10 of the 12 spies, they say, "It's a great land, but I'm going to tell you what the guys that live there are big, and they have really big walls around their city. That's more than we can overcome, we can't overcome that. We won't be able to conquer these guys because they're tough and they have huge walls, and we can't get over those walls, there's no way we can do this."

Hank Smith: 00:59:07

Chapter 13, verse 31, "We be not able to go against the people, they are stronger than we." Then verse 33, "We saw the giants." And then they say, "And we were in our own sight grasshoppers."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 00:59:22

Yep. So they can see, this is tough. Now let's be clear, they've got a legitimate concern. If they are on their own, this is more than they can do, they can't do this. If they're on their own, these guys are too big and their cities are too strong. Now you're going to cover Joshua and the conquest a little bit later, but I want you to keep in mind these two concerns they have, the guys are big and the walls are big. And you'll see how the Lord deals with those, he can deal with big walls and big guys, he's got plans for this and he takes care of it. God can get rid of this problem and that's exactly the point, Caleb and Joshua are saying, "No, wait, let's do this. Let's go in. Yeah, the walls are big, yeah, the people are big, but God said we can do it, let's do it."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:00:09

If we look at verse six in chapter 14, "And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes and they speak into all the company of the children of Israel saying, 'The land which we pass through to search it is an exceeding good land. If the Lord

delight in us-" So note how they put this in the right perspective, "If the Lord delight in us," which he does because they're covenant keepers although they're about to not be, "and give it us, a land which flow with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land for they are bread for us."

- Hank Smith: 01:00:46 They're not giants, they're bread.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:00:49 "And the Lord is with us, fear them not." You see their point, "If God is with us, who can stand against us," is their question. "Yeah, they're big, but not when we have God. God is bigger than them." But verse 10, all the congregation bade stone them with stones.
- Hank Smith: 01:01:11 That's what we do to faithful people Kerry.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:01:13 Yeah. That's right, "Hey, wait, you're telling me, I need to follow the prophet when this sounds like craziness to me. Let's say bad stuff about you and try and get rid of you."
- Hank Smith: 01:01:21 Yeah. Stone you with stones.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:01:23 And then note the next thing, "And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel." So God says, "Okay, now I have something to say." And let's look at what he has to say, because I think it's incredibly powerful. And I want to tie this back into this archetypal journey we've been talking about. So verse 11 is where God has something to say, "And the Lord said unto Moses, how long will this people provoke me?" So we've talked about that provocation a couple of times on the program I think, "And how long will it be," this is the key line, "how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them." And he's saying, "Look, I showed you I can deliver, and you still don't believe that I can deliver."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:02:13 This is the reason they're going to wander 40 years. This is why that 11 day journey is a 40 year journey, because God's going to say, "Fine, if you don't believe me, we are going to let everyone who doesn't believe me die off. And we'll have a generation that wasn't raised in Egypt, that was raised in the wilderness, and the only way they ever survived was relying on me, then we'll have a generation that can believe me." So to kind of paraphrase Moroni, he says we have to strip ourselves of all unbelief, God is saying, "We're going to strip ourselves of all unbelievers." But if this is an archetypal journey, then really it is

talking about stripping ourselves of all unbelief, we have to ask, "How might this be us?" So if the archetypal journey is about going into the promised land and the promised land is symbolic of the celestial kingdom.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:03:00

And if Israel's real problem is that they don't believe that God can overcome the obstacles and get them there, then that must be saying that's one of our greatest struggles in being exalted. And if you think about it, there are some real obstacles to being exalted, death and hell are a couple of them, our fallen natures. And it's pretty natural for us to say... we can look at someone else and say, "John is such a good guy and he does so many good things," but I look at myself and I know my own problems. And one of the key things when we look at ourselves like, "Maybe John's done a couple wrong things, but I know he's a good guy who has good intents." I know some of the things I do were for bad intents. I have times where I don't have good intents and I know it and I know God knows it.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:03:47

And so we have a hard time believing that God can exalt me, we really struggle with that. In fact, I always remember when I lived in Los Angeles, the stake one time wanted to do a survey and they did it in Priesthood and Relief Society. So this is way back when we had three hours of church, so this is only among people who have lasted three hours and they did it right at the end. And one of the survey questions was, "Do you think that you'll be exalted?" And I don't remember the number, but it seems like there was more than 30% said, "No, I won't be exalted." If we were to do it with my students today, I think I get an even higher number that don't think they can be exalted. We don't believe Christ when he says, "I can change you."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:04:34

Let's go back even further to what you mentioned with Exodus 19 and 20, when God wants to bring the children of Israel into his presence at Mount Sinai. And they see his glory, they see how magnificent he is with the thunders and the lightnings and everything else, and they say to Moses, "You go talk to God and tell us what he says, because if we go talk to God, we'll die." Now they have a point. If God doesn't change their nature, they will die. Moses learned that in Moses chapter one to go back to when we talked before, he had to be transfigured in order to withstand God's presence. But the point was God could transfigure him and God told the children of Israel, "I will bring you into my presence." And then they say, basically, "We don't believe so. We just don't think you can do it."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:05:22

And it's the same problem they're having again. And that's why Joseph Smith tells us that's why they get the lower law. Here we

know this is why they wander for 40 years. So the two great difficulties, challenges that they get, are because they don't believe God when he says he can do something. And that suggests to me, again, that this is one of our biggest challenges. We think that God can't exalt us. We think our ability to sin can overpower the Atonement. Now when I say it that way, of course, it seems silly, but that's really what we think. We think our ability to be just ding-dongs, to just be silly, foolish people can overpower the Atonement, which is ridiculous when we say it that way, but that's how we feel. We need to believe him, that he truly can change us and bring us into his presence.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:06:09

No matter how silly you are, no matter how wicked you are, no matter how stupid you are, Christ can change you. And that's something we have to believe, no matter how inconsistent you are, no matter how often you do the same sin again, no matter how many times you don't do what you know you should do, Christ can change you and exalt you, and coming to believe that is one of the greatest things that we need to do in our mortal probation. So we can take it back to what John is saying, that's the first principle. It's not just faith that Christ exists, it's faith that Christ is our Savior, and so this is a temple recommend question, is our Savior and Redeemer, that he can save us from ourselves and our sins and redeem us and exalt us, that's what we have to believe, that's our greatest challenge in life, I believe.

Hank Smith: 01:07:04

He says himself, "I am mighty to save. I'm good at this. You can trust me."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 01:07:09

And he's shown them, he's shown them he can do it. I would guess most of us at some point in our life have felt something, some kind of spiritual thing that let us know that God could take care of us, or that we've been forgiven. So if God forgave me of whatever dumb thing I did when I was 10 and I felt forgiveness, then he can forgive me of whatever it is I'm doing. He's shown me before that he has the power. I just don't believe him.

John Bytheway: 01:07:39

Please join us for part two of this podcast.



- John Bytheway: 00:02 Welcome to part two of this week's podcast.
- John Bytheway: 00:07 This reminds me of Stephen Robinson's book. Just the title was Believing Christ. His thesis, as I recall was, "Well, a lot of us believe in Christ, but we don't believe him when he says he can change us, and cleanse us, and redeem us." There's a verse that I, for years, went right past it because I knew what Alma and Amulek were doing with the Zoramites. They were showing them after they heard the prayer on the Rameumptom thou has made it known unto us there will be no Christ. They started quoting all these verses that said, "No, God will have a son."
- John Bytheway: 00:44 So when I read Alma 33:16, all those times, it was, "Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son." I always read it in that context. See, he's showing them that God has a Son, but I missed the powerful message in there. How do you make the Lord angry? "Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies." What is the difference between "will not" and "cannot?"
- Hank Smith: 01:16 It's a choice.
- John Bytheway: 01:17 They refuse to understand how merciful he is. "They will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son," and that verse opened up to me. People refuse to understand his mercies.
- Hank Smith: 01:31 Despite all the evidence he shows them.
- John Bytheway: 01:33 Yeah, and so that just is a good one to stick in the margin there with verse 11, "How long will it be ere they believe me?"
- Hank Smith: 01:41 Notice, he doesn't say, "Believe in me."
- John Bytheway: 01:43 Believing Christ.

- Hank Smith: 01:44 Lehi speaks to Jacob in 2 Nephi 2. Very beginning his message to him, he says, "You are redeemed because of the righteousness of your Redeemer." He doesn't say, "Because of your righteousness." He says, "Because your Redeemer is this good." John, you brought up Believing Christ by Stephen Robinson. I actually brought a little of that talk to share today. If you won't mind, I'm going to give you guys two paragraphs from it. This is a BYU Devotional Believing Christ, but also became part of the book.
- Hank Smith: 02:13 "To have faith in Jesus Christ is not merely to believe that he is who he says he is, to believe in Christ. Sometimes to have faith in Christ is also to believe Christ, both as a Bishop and as a teacher in the church. I have learned there are many that believe Jesus is the Son of God, that he is the Savior of the world, but that he cannot save them. They believe in his identity, but not in his power to cleanse, and purify, and to save them. To have faith in his identity is only half the process. To have faith in his ability, in his power to cleanse and to save, that is the other half. We must not only believe in Christ, we must believe Christ when he says, 'I can cleanse you and make you celestial.'"
- Hank Smith: 02:53 "Spiritually, there are some of us who are petrified by the questions, 'Am I celestial? Am I going to make it? Was I good enough today?' We're so terrified of whether we're going to live or die, or whether we've made it to the kingdom or not that we cannot make any progress. It's at those times when the Savior grabs us, throws his arms around us and says, 'I've got you. I love you. I'm not going to let you die. Now, relax and trust me.' We can relax and trust him and believe him as well as believe in him. Then, together, we can begin to learn to live the gospel. He puts his arms around us, and we begin to make progress."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 03:28 That's now about 30 years old, and my feeling is we need it now more than ever. It's so hard to believe Christ, and I just want your audience, and I love that you have so many people that listen to you that maybe we can reach with this message because I just want people to know I don't care what's wrong with you. We all have something wrong with us, and we all focus on all the things wrong with us, and all the things we don't do, and all the things we do wrong, and whatever. I don't care what's wrong with you. It's not more than Christ can fix. It's not beyond His saving and redeeming power. All you have to do is keep coming back to Him.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 04:04 However many times you fall, you just have to keep coming back. He knows you're going to fall. He knows you're going to

mess up. He knows you're going to murmur. Whatever else. it's part of the plan. That's why God sent his Son. Just keep coming back to him because you are not more than what he can fix. If he can deliver Israel from the Egyptians, if he can create this world, he can exalt you, and I testify that he can exalt you.

- Hank Smith: 04:31 He's already in the process of exalting you. He has been since you were born knowing full well the mistakes you would make. Have we said this clear enough, you guys? I think this may be the most important thing we've said.
- John Bytheway: 04:43 After Stephen Robinson wrote *Believing Christ*, he wrote another book called *Following Christ*, and in that book, it was like, "Okay. We've come to Christ. Now, what do we do?" There was a line in there, which I love to share with my students where he said, "Really, the question is not, 'Am I going to make it?' The question is, 'Do I want to stay?'" We are in a covenant with Christ. He is very good at keeping his covenants, and He is mighty to save, and that changes the question. I love what you said, Kerry. We think our sins can overpower the Atonement. Well, we're in a covenant with Christ, and He invites us back every single week to renew that, and so the question isn't, "Am I going to make it?" It's, "Do I want to stay?" We are in the kingdom of God because we're in the kingdom of God on earth, and he's mighty to save. This is a great discussion, and I've got lots of footnotes now next to verse 11.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 05:36 I think that our answer is, again, in the story. So we've been sometimes saying, "Oh, silly Israelites. They complain so quickly and so on." So I'll just tell you this. I can remember one time taking my family across the border from Israel to Egypt, and it was 110 degree day, and we were standing out on this pavement. My thought was, "Wow. I am never going to wonder why Israel murmured again." Right? I get it. If I were there, I would be murmuring. I have no doubt. I'm not a murmuring kind of guy. I'm sure I would be murmuring. So I don't want to point the finger too much at them, but we do want to point out the good things.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 06:11 However many times they messed up, they kept coming back. They're a little bit silly in this case because God says, "Okay. You're going to go 40 years," and they say, "Okay. Nevermind. We'll go in right now." God says, "No. I said you're going to now take 40 years." "No, we're going in, and we're going to fight these guys like..." "Okay, but I'm not helping you, right, because I got a new plan." So they're a little bit silly about it, but they keep coming back. That's the story of the Old Testament, that

however many times Israel messes up, they keep coming back, and God is always there to accept them back.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 06:43

So that I believe is another way of seeing what you were saying, John. Are you going to follow Him? Are you going to stay? I don't care how many times you fall. That's never the question. The question is, how many times do you get back up and try again? I don't care how good you are at sinning. You're not good enough to mess up. I don't care how good you are at being a ding-dong. You're not good enough to mess up to the point where God is not going to be able to fix this. The question is, are you going to keep coming back?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 07:15

That's another thing that's worth bringing up, I think. One of Satan's favorite lies is that... Let's say that you promised God... You're repenting, and you said, "I'm not going to do this particular thing anymore." Right? Maybe it's murmuring, but whatever it is because the Israelites murmured 110 times in this story. But whatever it is, you promised God you're not going to do it anymore, and you maybe even go five years without doing it. Then, you do it again, and you know you need to repent and come to God in prayer. But as you're doing it, Satan has a lie he loves to tell you, and he says, "God doesn't want to hear from you anymore. You've told him so many times you wouldn't do this anymore, and you did it again. God doesn't want to hear from you anymore."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 07:49

That is a bold-faced lie because what God says is, "As often as my people repent will I forgive them of their sins." When you think about that, that's a high percentage. Right? That is 100% of the time that you repent. God will take you back. 100% of the time that you're a ding-dong and you forget to do this, or you don't do what you should, or whatever else, God will bring you back. So the question is, will you be like the house of Israel? It doesn't matter how punished you are, how scattered you are, how often you've done this, how many times you've messed up. Will you just keep coming back and let God gather you back to him? That's the question for us.

John Bytheway: 08:30

That verse you quoted, "As often as my people repent," I think that's Mosiah 26:30, isn't it, in the Book of Mormon? It's like Alma's got to set up his first church membership council ever, and the Lord is telling him, "Here's what I do." Look at verse 18 back in Numbers 14. The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy for giving inequity and transgression. Now, the next part of it talks about the justice area, but this first part, I underlined, "He's long-suffering and of great mercy." That doesn't sound

like an angry God of the Old Testament the way some people characterize him.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 09:06 Yeah, go on to verse 19. "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt even until now." Right? "We've messed up plenty of times already, and you've forgiven us. Can you keep doing it?" The answer is yes.
- Hank Smith: 09:24 As we've had this discussion about Believing Christ, I remember working this out on my own nine years ago, and I read the Book of Romans, and it was chapter three where Paul says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and here I was thinking, "Well, I'm not celestial material. I just don't know if I'm going to make it." It was almost a check on my pride as if Paul was saying to me, "Do you think you're some sort of special sinner that you somehow, your sins fall outside of the atonement of Christ, fall outside of his power?" I thought, "Well, no. I just feel like..." "What? Are you the worst? You're the vilest of all sinners? Is that what you think?"
- Hank Smith: 10:04 It really was a check on my pride to say, "You know what? I need to be submissive enough to realize I'm not a special sinner, that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and that the Savior will redeem me as he will redeem all those who have sinned." I hope our listeners are feeling the weight lifted off their shoulders and onto the Lord's because that's what he wants. "Come unto me, all ye that are heavy-laden. Give this burden to me. I am going to save you. You are not going to save you. I am going to save you. Trust me."
- John Bytheway: 10:38 Do you know what this reminds me of? It's one of my favorite verses in all of the Doctrine and Covenants last year. I think it's section 46. I want to say verse 15 that the Lord suits his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men. I mean, Satan has made it really easy to sin these days. Some of the worst things the world has to offer are easy to bring into our homes, and our smartphones, and everything else, but God knows that, and the Lord suits his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men. The 2022 conditions were different than the ones I had as a teenager in the '80s, but the Lord knows that. He knows exactly the world he sent us to. He knows exactly the world he sent our teenagers too, and his mercies know that, and they're suited to that. It gives me a lot of hope and comfort.

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 11:29 That's beautiful, and I like what you were saying, Hank. I think we all need to realize that we're all average garden-variety sinners.
- John Bytheway: 11:38 Yeah.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 11:39 Don't think you're so special. You're just like everyone else, and Christ's got this. Right? He sees us. He's like, "Ugh, I haven't done this before. That's nothing. I got this."
- Hank Smith: 11:50 It's got to be one of the major purposes of Alma the Younger getting so much page time in the Book of Mormon is that we've got a guy who goes from what Mormon calls the vilest of all sinners, the worst of the worst to a translated prophet saying, "I promise you, you fall within that spectrum." Right? If I can do that within him, I can change you. Now, Kerry, let's get you back on track where you were. You were in verse 19 of Numbers 14.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 12:15 Yeah. Well, and let's do 18 and 19 because as important as this is and to know that we can be forgiven, we also need to see the other side of this coin. Right? So verse 18 as John said, God is long-suffering, great mercy, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, but by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children under the third and fourth generation. Now, that seems weird to us, like why would he visit the iniquity? We get that kind of a phrase in a number of places. It's in the 10 Commandments. I think this is what he's saying. I could be wrong, but this is how I understand it. I think he is saying sometimes there are consequences to sins, and sometimes others pay those consequences.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 12:53 I always remember this talk by Elder Holland where he says, "There are some people who have their phase where they're not faithful, and they leave the church, and then they come back, and it works out well for them, but what about their children they were raising during the time they weren't faithful? Those children often pay a consequence that isn't really fully their fault." So I think God wants us to know we can be forgiven, but he's saying, "Okay. Don't think that that means you should just run out and sin all you want. Sin brings some stuff with it." But then, look how he immediately gets back to... So he's got to have that in the middle, but it starts with long-suffering and forgiving iniquity. Then, we get verse 19 where Moses pleads for the iniquity, and then we get verse 20.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 13:31 The Lord said, "I have pardoned according to thy word." It's that fast. "Okay. I've forgiven Israel, but..." Verse 21. "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." So

he is going to talk about the glory, but then he's still going to say, "But they're going to have to wander for 40 years." I don't know if it's exactly 40 years. That's a number that just means a long time. Right? But the point is, "Okay. I've pardoned them, but they've still demonstrated that they need a tutoring process," and that's really what it is. Punishments are tutoring processes.

Hank Smith: 14:06 Right, Kerry. Even if they went to the Promised Land right now, they're not ready to be the people they need to be.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 14:12 Yeah. Yeah. They need to become people who really do believe him. So he's going to put them through the process that will get them to be the kind of people who do believe him so they can inherit the Promised Land and go through everything that they will with Joshua. You're going to get a group of people who will do that because they've learned to do it. So he says, "That's fine. You're pardoned. We still need to do some learning here, and it's going to be a long learning process."

Hank Smith: 14:37 Yeah. Let's believe in the Lord. Let's believe he'll save us. Let's believe in the process he's going to take us through in order for us to be changed into the person I need to be. So if it's going to take 40 years in the wilderness for me to be changed by the Lord, I'm going to trust him and that process.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 14:58 Perfectly, beautifully said.

Hank Smith: 15:00 Kerry, this has been fantastic so far. I'm learning a lot here about the Book of Numbers, which... Come on. I can't remember the last time I thought, "I need a little inspiration. I got to read some Numbers." So, Kerry, where do you want to go next in our family road trip here?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 15:16 Let's jump. We're going to skip a couple chapters just because there are so many chapters. We can't cover them all in detail. Let's go to chapter 21, which is a pretty famous chapter and has a lot of things we can learn from it. We're going to get them murmuring again. If we go to chapter 21, verse 4, and they journeyed from Mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea to compass the Land of Edom. So let's do, I guess, just a little bit of itinerary here.

Hank Smith: 15:37 Okay.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 15:37 They went from Mount Sinai up to Kadesh Barnea. So straight up the Sinai region, right on that border to go into Southern

Canaan, and they're told, "Now, you have to wander." So they're going to go east from there into the modern day country of Jordan. Right? Petra area is where they're going to cut across into that area, and they'd like to go right through Edom, but they ask the Edomites if they can go through, and these are the descendants of Esau, and they're told no. The Edomites say, "No, you can't go through."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 16:08

Now, there have been other groups who've said, "You can't go through," and God says, "That's okay. We're supposed to destroy these people anyway, so let's just destroy them right now." As we keep that in mind, this is another really important thing, and I'm sure you'll touch on this more when you get to the conquest, but we have to remember a couple of things about the battles that the Israelites are fighting with different people. One, Nephi makes it clear, and we get this a little bit in the Genesis 12 account when God says, "Your descendants are going to be in Egypt for 400 years because the Canaanites aren't right for destruction yet." they get a long time to be told to repent.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 16:42

Two, remember that if someone is killed, they're just being put in the other room like we talked about, and three, it's really, really important that the Israelites get rid of everything that leads them to idolatry. Like we said, we're in the process of trying to get Egypt out of them, and it doesn't help if you're among a whole bunch of people who are also doing idol worship. It's a little bit like if you're a recovering alcoholic, you probably don't want to go spend Friday nights in bars. It's just a bad idea. So you also, if you're a recovering idolater, you don't want to go and hang out with a bunch of people who are practicing idolatry. It's just going to be a problem for you. You have to strip yourself of all unholiness.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 17:23

That's what God is trying to have happen here. But with the Edomites, when they say, "You can't go through here," God says, "Well, these are actually relatives, descendants of Abraham. We're not destroying the descendants of Abraham, so you're going to have to go around." So they're going to have to go all the way around, right? They can't cut through what's called the King's Highway, which is this ridge road where they can travel easily from north to south in the modern day country of Jordan. They got to go all the way out into the wilderness, again, past Petra, past all this stuff, and then head up north from there because the Edomites don't want them to go through, and God says, "Yeah. Well, we're going to work with the Edomites, so that's where you're going." This is what

happens when you decide you're going to have to wander instead of going straight in.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 18:05

So they're in some pretty tough territory, and if we go to verse four... We've already started their journey. Partway through verse four, "And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." This way is hard, right? Again, this is the way they have to go since they chose not to go straight up through. The way is hard, and the people spoke against God and against Moses. There's a surprise. It's this murmuring again, and there's a part of us that says to them, "Why didn't you learn your lesson? Really, you're murmuring again?" But here's the question I have for us. Is there anyone... and if we could see all of your giant, huge audience, then we'd ask by raise of hand, but I'm just going to assume I know what the answer is. Is there anyone here that doesn't have a sin that they've committed several times, and they want to quit doing it, and then they do it again?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 18:55

The answer is no. We all do that. We all do that, and so again, we see the children of Israel doing this. Don't ever ask yourself if you're doing what the children of Israel do. Ask yourself how you're doing it. You're always doing it in some way. You just have to figure out what the way is. Right? So we all have sins that we keep committing. By the way, I think this brings up another point that's worth thinking about. Sometimes we really beat ourselves up that we're continuing to struggle with a challenge. My question for you is, did you really think that you would be done with struggling before you got out of mortality? Because I don't think that's the plan. I think the plan is that you have some things that you struggle with all the way through mortality, and the question is, will you keep struggling? Not, will you get done with struggles?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 19:42

We're going to keep doing some things. You're going to keep doing it your whole life. You're going to struggle to the very end of your life to not lose your temper, or to not gossip, or to not covet or not have pride, or whatever it is. You're going to struggle with that your whole life, and that's part of the plan. God knew you would. He just wants to see if you're going to keep struggling. Eventually, Christ will fix that, but I don't think he fixes everything in this life, and so let's not beat ourselves up over that.

Hank Smith: 20:04

Yeah. Oh, Kerry, this is so important. Our good friend, Brad Wilcox, gave a talk at BYU called His Grace is Sufficient where he said, "Oftentimes, we go through the repentance process, and we think, 'Okay. I cannot make this same mistake again. If I do,

then all of that repentance was for not." He said, "That puts you in an impossible position." He talks about, "Teenagers do this. When they commit the same sin over and over. Even returned missionaries, married couples. This is such a discouraging thought." He said, "In all of these cases, there should never be just two options, perfection or give up." He said, "When learning the piano, are the only options performing at Carnegie Hall or quitting? No. Growth and development take time. Learning takes time."

- Hank Smith: 20:48 When we understand grace, we understand that God is long-suffering, that change is a process, and that repentance is a pattern in our lives. When we understand grace, we understand that the blessings of Christ's atonement are continuous and his strength is perfect in our weakness. When we understand grace, we can, as it says in the Doctrine and Covenants, continue in patience until we are perfected. What a crucial lesson because how discouraging it might be as a teenager. John, I know you've talked about this before that you thought sinning as a teenager, if you made a mistake, every single sin returns, and it's as if you never repented, and you were terrified. Right?
- John Bytheway: 21:27 Yeah. It's the misunderstanding of a verse. I love airplanes, and I appreciate Elder Uchtdorf for this analogy of... You know it. An airliner is off course something like 90% of the time, but you just keep course correcting. If you're going from New York to London, and you notice you're off course, you don't turn around, and go back to New York, and give up. You keep course correcting. You're off course most of the time, but you keep making tiny corrections until you touch down at Heathrow, and it works. You get there because you keep, as Kerry said, just keep struggling. Keep course correcting, and you'll get to your destination.
- John Bytheway: 22:09 I needed to hear that more because I thought one of the steps, forsake this sin and never do it again, that's my intent. I can be willing, but I'm not able. I love that the sacrament prayer says they're willing to take upon them the name of Christ. They're willing to keep his commandments, but we're not able. So we keep coming back to that sacrament table, and the Lord has arranged it so that every week, we can come back and course correct again.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 22:36 That's good, and so many of the temple recommend questions have been changed to say, "Are you striving? Are you trying?" That's what God is asking of us.
- John Bytheway: 22:43 Keep course correcting.

Hank Smith: 22:44 Kerry, it seems to me that God knows they're going to murmur again, and again, and again, and the wilderness experience has been designed for them because the Lord knows they're going to keep committing this sin. I just want to make sure that if there's a teenager listening who's struggling with pornography or something, that they don't say, "I give up. I've tried a hundred times, and I'm not winning this fight," maybe this is their wilderness experience, and the Lord knows. So to any of our listeners who struggle with the same sin over, and over, and over, please don't think that somehow you're not making any progress. They're making progress through the wilderness here, right, Kerry? Even though they're committing the same sin over and over, they're learning, and changing, and growing, and eventually, they're going to be ready for the Promised Land.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 23:29 That's exactly right. So let's keep in mind, we're using this as an archetypal journey. So their journey is similar to our mortal probation. They're taking the long way around, and we all do. Let's also be clear. We all take the long way around. Nobody gets translated in 11 days.

Hank Smith: 23:44 It was only Jesus who made an 11-day journey in 11 days.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 23:47 That's exactly right. He is the only one. That's well said. The rest of us are taking 40 years, but for the Israelites, the journey is designed to help them become a kind of people who rely on God and believe that he will deliver them. They don't rely on anything else because they've had to learn that nothing else works, and they've seen God deliver them enough times, and they remember it. That's one of the real key phrases throughout all of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy is to remember it.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 24:15 So, now, they actually believe that God will do them. That's what a wilderness probation is, and so we're all in the midst of that, and we're all going to have times we have forgotten, and we mess up again, and again, and again. That's part of the process. As long as you're still trying, then you're actually making progress. It doesn't matter if you have licked it already. It's that, are you still getting back up and trying? Because as you said, this does eventually get them to the Plains of Moab where they're going to come across, and hit the city of Jericho, and go in from there.

Hank Smith: 24:46 Yeah. So please don't be discouraged by what you think is a lack of repentance on your part. I think the Lord understands you. He understands where you came from. He understands what Egypt was like. He understands it's going to take a while for this process to do its thing, for this process to change you into who

you want to be as well. I'm sure they get frustrated with themselves, having to learn the same lesson over and over.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 25:12

Yeah. Absolutely. We need to keep in mind that this is a growing process for them and it's a growing process for us, but let's look at this specific instance in their growing process because this is a symbol that's going to get used a lot. Verse 5, they're sick again of the manna and so on. Verse 6, "And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much of Israel died." Now, I'm guessing the fiery has something to do with the way it feels when you get bitten. It's a burning, nasty venom that can kill you. There are plenty of snakes in that area that can kill you. Asps, and vipers, and all sorts of stuff. So we get verse 7. They realize, "Oh. Yep. Okay. This is a bad thing that happened because God is trying to humble us." Really, let's keep in mind, God, when he punishes, he punishes with a purpose, and the purpose is to get people to come back to him and trust in him, and that's exactly what this is designed to do, to get them to realize we need God.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 26:07

Verse 7. "Therefore, the people came to Moses and said, 'We have sinned for we have spoken against the Lord and against thee. Pray unto the Lord that he take away the serpents from us,' and Moses prayed for the people. The Lord said to Moses, 'Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass that everyone that was bitten when he looketh upon it shall live.' Moses made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." Let's be clear. This ends up being a symbol of Christ. John talks about that. Christ being lifted up on the cross is like this serpent being lifted up on the pole. Nephi will tell us that because it was so simple, some people just plain wouldn't do it. Now, I love to make the scriptures become as real as possible. I find I can get them to apply to my life more and draw more strength and power from them if they become real.

John Bytheway: 26:58

You have a podcast called The Scriptures Are Real. Is that right, that talks about this very thing?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 27:04

Yeah.

Hank Smith: 27:04

It's called The Scriptures Are Real. It is a followHIM friend. It's a followHIM partner. The Scriptures Are Real.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 27:13

There you go.

Hank Smith: 27:15 Is this something where you just go through the scriptures like you've done with us today?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 27:19 Yeah, and sometimes I have people on, and I just say, "Tell a story about a time where the scriptures became real to you. What made them become real? How did you use them in your life?" That kind of a thing because I think that we can apply them to ourselves more when we feel like these are real people.

Hank Smith: 27:33 Kerry, there's also a website you've told me about. What is that? What's that website?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 27:36 Oh, yeah, [outofthedust.org](http://outofthedust.org), where I put on all sorts of aids for understanding the Old Testament, and Abraham's covenant, and Book of Abraham, things like that.

Hank Smith: 27:46 Okay. So The Scriptures Are Real Podcast and [outofthedust.org](http://outofthedust.org). We want to make sure our listeners know about both of those.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 27:53 That website is dedicated towards helping people understand and have a good experience this year with the Old Testament.

Hank Smith: 27:59 Great.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 28:00 But there was a time. I just want to share a time when this story became more real to me and it helped me understand a little bit of why because I always thought, "Well, absolutely stupid that they wouldn't look at the serpent and what..."

Hank Smith: 28:13 Yeah.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 28:13 "Okay. I'm not looking. I'm going to look down at the ground. I don't want to..."

Hank Smith: 28:16 But you got to walk a couple hundred yards? I mean, how hard is this, right?

John Bytheway: 28:19 How hard is this to look up?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 28:21 So, it is the couple hundred yards that I realized here. So, this last summer, my ward, we did a youth conference, and we went down to Hole in the Rock down in Blanding, Utah. While we were there, this actually is a lot like the Moab-Edom area.

Hank Smith: 28:36 It's a long journey. I've been out there too. You got to go down to Escalante or "Escalante" as they call it [inaudible 00:28:43].

- John Bytheway: 28:42 Yeah. They don't put the "E" on the end if you've been there. It's "Escalante."
- Hank Smith: 28:46 Jacob and Audrey Sorensen live down there. I just got to give them a shout out. This is great. So tell us the story. You're down going to Hole in the Rock.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 28:54 It's like Moab or Edom, right? This is so much like if you're in that area biblically, and I thought, "Well, then we got to throw in some biblical stuff for..." These are the poor people in my... poor youth of my ward are always getting these Old Testament things from their bishop that can't avoid it. Hazard of having an Old Testament teacher for your bishop. Before we went down, I bought a whole bunch of rubber snakes, and then I got a big one, and I painted it gold. So when they woke up and were coming to breakfast one morning, they had to go through all these snakes that I'd thrown all around. Then, I had one on a pole there, right, to go through this story and teach the lesson. But as I was doing that and try to figure out, "Okay. How far out do I want to put these snakes towards their tents and stuff like that?" and I started to think about the numbers of the house of Israel.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 29:35 The numbers may be exaggerated, but we're given like 600,000 fighting men, and so that means that's like the men, say, between maybe 17 and 35 or something like that. So then, you're going to estimate like that means if you want the whole population, like three to five times that or something along those lines, and you start to get into the millions of people. Right? Now, that may be more than it actually is, and the Old Testament's more concerned with creating impressions and teaching than it is about giving accurate numbers, but still, I'm guessing you're at least in the many, many hundreds of thousands.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 30:04 Then, I started to think, "Well, if you have many, many hundreds of thousands of people with tents, most of them are not close to the center. Some of these guys may actually have to walk like half an hour on a leg that has been bitten by a fiery serpent, and it hurts to walk on that leg to go and see that pole. That changed the story a little bit for me. Right? So it's not the, "I'm intentionally avoiding looking at that pole." It's the, "Well, it might take a little bit of effort. Do you believe enough to put in that effort, even when it's painful?"
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 30:37 Again, let's go back to the symbolism of our life and our mortal probation. There are going to be times where life bites you, and it's going to take a little while to get to Christ healing you, and

you're going to have to walk on some pain and through some pain to get to where Christ is healing you, but you have to believe that there is something at the end of this that makes it possible for Christ to heal you. Suddenly, when that happened, this story became more real for me. I can apply it to my life more. Healing is possible, but it may not be instantaneous, and that's how it works for us often in our life.

- Hank Smith: 31:12 I love that, and I think it would help if you're sitting in your tent saying, "Oh, it's not going to work," and then someone comes by and says, "No, it does work. It happened to me," and you think, "Well, maybe I'll try."
- John Bytheway: 31:22 Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 31:22 Right?
- John Bytheway: 31:22 They call that a testimony meeting.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 31:24 Yeah, that has to be happening for them. That's right. That's right. Now, a lot of people wonder, "So, okay. Why a snake? That's a weird symbol, especially because we have the serpent representing Satan in the creation story." So it turns out that in almost every culture, there are a couple of symbols that symbolize both the good and the bad. One of them is water. Water is life-giving, and it also is destructive and drowns you. Right? So water is almost always a symbol of both good and bad, and the other are serpents. It's partially because some serpents... most are not venomous, but some are, and the venomous ones are not good for you. Let's be clear about that. Right?
- Hank Smith: 32:00 They're not.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 32:01 So they can be a symbol for something that's very, very bad.
- John Bytheway: 32:04 Question. You know how the pharaohs, a lot of them had the cobra on their head?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 32:09 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 32:09 Their head dress, whatever. Was that a symbol of, "Don't mess with me," or was it a symbol of power or...
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 32:15 So the idea is that it's a cobra that can spit. So it actually can spit fiery venom, right? That became symbolic of the ability to destroy bad forces. So this is one of the reasons that snakes

become a symbol for good. Anthropologically, we would put it this way, that you try and take that, which is dangerous, and tame it, and harness it, and make it something that works for you. Actually, you do that with snakes. You can milk their venom and use it for a number of good things, including becoming tolerant of venom and so on, but it does become a symbol for good in that way. But there's another reason that snakes become a symbol, a good symbol, and that's because they shed their skin.

- John Bytheway: 32:51 Oh, the Resurrection?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 32:52 Yeah. They become a symbol of rebirth in almost every culture because they see them leave behind the old and become new, and so they become a symbol of rebirth. Of course, that's exactly what Christ is all about is rebirth. You can look at this in two ways, and probably both ways are correct. Satan loves to take good things and make a Satanic imitation. So is it possible that he knew that serpents were going to symbolize Christ, and so he uses a serpent to be the imitation of the good symbol, he uses that serpent in the Garden of Eden? That's possible. It's also possible that Christ takes that, which is bad, and bitter, and dangerous, and turns it into that, which is good, which is exactly what Christ does, right? The fall is dangerous and terrible, but it's also good, and he takes it, and he turns it into something wonderful.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 33:39 Maybe both of those are intended. I don't know which is the chicken and which is the egg, but I think it's important to recognize this symbolism that both Nephi and John certainly point to that just like they raised this brass serpent up on a pole in the wilderness, and if you look to it and lived, so if we will look to Christ... and again, look how simple that is. It's the Believing Christ thing we've been talking about. If you will look to Christ, you will live. That's a fantastic symbol.
- Hank Smith: 34:08 John, can you do Harrison Ford? Why does it always have to be snakes?
- John Bytheway: 34:11 Yeah, see, because I'm more of the Harrison Ford school of snakes. I hate them. I hate snakes.
- Hank Smith: 34:18 Yeah. Snakes? Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 34:18 "Oh, that's my pet snake, Reggie. Show a little backbone or whatever," he says.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 34:22 Yeah. That's right. Yep.

John Bytheway: 34:24 I want to bring up a verse because I've read this in Helaman. This is chapter 8, verse 14. "Yea, did he not bear record that the Son of God should come? And as he lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, even so shall he be lifted up who should come." I'm going, "He's talking about Moses. Did not Moses bear record that the Son of God should come?" I'm looking for it in Numbers 21, and I'm not seeing Moses explicitly say, "This is a type of the Son of God." Do you know what I'm asking?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 34:56 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 34:56 Was this something that was a plain and precious thing that we don't have now?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 35:00 It could be. I don't know if it was ever in this record and it was taken out, or if this was an oral thing because we know that Moses taught lots of stuff orally that didn't get written down, but it was passed on. Oral traditions were a very important and real thing. I don't know exactly what it was and how it went missing, but clearly, Moses did teach that.

Hank Smith: 35:21 You can see Jesus in John 3, like you said, Kerry, clearly sees himself as the Messiah in this story.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 35:29 Yeah. Absolutely.

Hank Smith: 35:30 We talked about... or do you trust enough to walk through the pain? There's other little things that we probably need to do that we think, "Oh, it isn't going to make a difference if I do that little thing." If I read my scriptures just a little bit every day, what's the difference?

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 35:47 That's a huge one, Hank. I find so many people who have some kind of faith crisis or something like that, and for some reason, it's exactly when they stop reading the scriptures and stop praying when really, sometimes it is as simple as... This may take a long time. It may take you, I don't know, five years to get through your faith crisis. It may take you five months, five weeks. I don't know. The key is keep searching for God in the midst of that, and the way you do that is by reading your scriptures and praying. It may seem like such a simple thing, you're not going to do it, but it's not. It's exactly what you need to do. Don't give up on that. That's going on the walk to see the brass serpent. It's one of many possible analogies for that, but it's a key one. Keep reading your scriptures. Keep praying to

God through whatever kind of garbage you're going through. Keep doing that. That's one way that you walk to see the brass serpent.

- John Bytheway: 36:38 At the time that we're recording this, I had just finished a couple of my courses, and the advice I tried to leave with my wonderful students was the Doctrine and Covenants section 50, verse 24. "That which is of God is light, and he that receiveth light and continueth in God." Just those three words. Please continue in God, and if you have a time where you feel the light is getting darker or something is happening, well, you don't disconnect from God. You continue in God. If you want more light, you got to stay connected. So continue in God, and then you'll receive more light. You go through that faith crisis, but don't discontinue God.
- John Bytheway: 37:15 What's the story, Hank, of... I'm sure you both know that Elder Ballard tells about one of his missionaries calling and saying, "I'm struggling with my faith, and I have all these questions." Elder Ballard said, "Bring your questions in a week. But before that, have you been studying your Book of Mormon?" "No." "Have you been praying?" "No." He says, "I want you to do that" in a couple of days, the missionary calls President Ballard and says, "Nevermind. I'm good." He's like, "Too bad. I worked really hard on these questions."
- Hank Smith: 37:43 "And you're going to hear the answers."
- John Bytheway: 37:45 Yeah. They talked, and at the end of the interview, President Ballard said, "What have you learned?" He said, "Give God equal time," the missionary said. Give him more than equal time. Right? That's what I think.
- Hank Smith: 37:56 Yeah. Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 37:57 But continue in God because that's the source of light and truth. He is the source of light and truth. So you never unplug from God.
- Hank Smith: 38:05 Kerry, anything else in the book of Numbers you think we should see before we wrap up?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 38:10 Yeah, there's a story. It actually takes several chapters, but maybe we can just touch on it briefly, and it's a little bit of a famous story whereas the children of Israel are coming through, you have some of the Moabites who have heard what happened to the Egyptians. They've heard about the other

people that the Israelites are fighting. They know they've got a problem on their hands here.

Hank Smith: 38:28

They're scared.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 38:30

They are scared, and so they want to get someone who will prophesy and put a curse on the Israelites to help them defeat the Israelites. So they go to a guy named Balaam, and it seems like he's a Midianite. Now, remember that Midian is one of the children of Abraham through his wife, Keturah. Jethro was a Midianite. So these are people who know about Jehovah, and this seems to be a prophet of Jehovah. Balaam does. Balak, who's the king, the Moabite king. He says, "I'll pay you a ton if you can curse these Israelites," Balaam, being a good prophet of Jehovah, he says, "Well, I can only prophesy what Jehovah tells me to. I won't say more than that, and I won't say less. Whatever Jehovah tells me, that's what I'll do." But the interesting thing is that both Balak and Balaam would like for this to work out. Balak would like for the Israelis to be cursed, and Balaam would like to get the payment. Right?

Hank Smith: 39:24

Okay.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 39:24

So they go up on this mountain, and as they're heading up, there's an angel that's trying to stop Balaam from coming, and his donkey can see the angel. The donkey keeps trying to go around, and he's banging his leg up against the cliff wall or something like this. Finally, Balaam gets mad, and he's like, "What is wrong with you donkey?" The donkey dons back and said, "Well, I've always been a good donkey. Have I ever caused you problems? It's just there's someone here trying to kill you, and I'm trying to avoid that."

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 39:51

Then, Balaam is like, "Oh, sorry. Thanks for that," and the angel tells him, "You better only do what God tells you to do," right, and so on. So Balaam doesn't prophecy against Israel. So Balak wants to try again. They go from one mountaintop. Now, they'll go to another one just north of there, and he gives this prophecy about how Israel is going to be fantastic, and Balak is like, "This is not what I'm looking for."

Hank Smith: 40:12

Yeah.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 40:13

Right?

Hank Smith: 40:13

"You're not getting paid."

- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 40:15 Then, so they go to another mountain, and he gives a prophecy, that Messianic prophecy about the scepter, and the star, and so on. He's just blessing Israel instead of cursing Israel. So I guess he doesn't get the payment, and Balak is not happy with that, but I think it's a great story of a prophet who was true to what God wanted him to do no matter what.
- Hank Smith: 40:38 Yeah. There's the pressure.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 40:40 Yeah, that's exactly right. There are some other stuff that happens after this that it's hard to know what to make of, and I think we can read into it what happens, but I'm not 100% sure. It's not too long after this that the children of Israel are in the Plains of Moab, and it's from there that they'll go across into the Promised Land. Midianites and Moabites are coming in and inundating them with sexual things and with idolatry. Somehow this Balaam character is involved with that and ends up being slain by the Israelites on the Lord's behalf with that, and it almost seems like Balaam is still trying to say, "Okay. Well, I'd still like to get that payment. Maybe the way to get it is to get the Israelites to sin so much that then God will allow me to curse them, and then I can get paid."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 41:29 Now, I don't know. I might be reading too much into this story, but he's involved in this somehow. Probably the reason I see this is because I'm exceptionally good at this where I... There's a part of me that wants to do things exactly how God wants, and there's a part of me that wants to follow my fallen nature and follow my favorite sins. So if I can just find a way to rationalize it, right, if I can find a way to say, "Well, if it works this way and we do this, then that sin is actually okay."
- Hank Smith: 41:56 "I can do both."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 41:57 Yeah. "I'm still doing God's will, and I'm getting this handy dandy little sin." Right? So I may be reading Balaam wrong, but I think that's what's happening is that he did follow the Lord, but the lure of the money was still there, and so he didn't stay as true as he should have and was just trying to find a way to make it okay. I don't know. I'm probably reading too much into it, but I think there's a valuable lesson for us one way or the other. There is always the lure of the world. Always, always the lure of the world.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 42:31 When we're rationalizing, there's always somewhere at the back of our minds that we know we're rationalizing. When you catch that little tickle in the back of your mind that you're rationalizing, it's a good time to stop and say, "Am I doing this

because of the lure of the world? Am I about to try and make this happen in a wrong way, trying to pretend like it's right, and then in the end, I'll be slain like Balaam?" We can be good at rationalizing, and in the end, it doesn't work.

- Hank Smith: 42:55 Kerry, I can't remember if it was you or in a different episode where we talked about the Lord inviting Moses into his presence, but he says, "Take the shoes off your feet. Meaning, I want you to come into my presence, but your sins cannot come with you."
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 43:09 Yeah, yeah. You're leaving the world behind, right, because that's what's on your feet.
- Hank Smith: 43:13 Right.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 43:13 What's on your shoes is the world.
- Hank Smith: 43:14 Yeah. This is a great idea here with Balaam that you cannot have both. You cannot have both. You've got to leave your sins behind, even though they call to you. Even in the children of Israel. Let's just go back to Egypt. Let's just go back to Egypt.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 43:28 Yeah. Yep. You can't keep the summer cottage in Babylon. Right?
- Hank Smith: 43:32 Kerry, this has just been a fantastic day in the Book of Numbers.
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 43:35 Who knew?
- Hank Smith: 43:37 Yeah. Who knew you could have a great day in the Book of Numbers? We'll very likely have you back this year, unless you are like Indiana Jones and get stuck somewhere in the Middle East and Egypt in some great adventure bitten by an asp.
- John Bytheway: 43:50 Be careful of bad dates.
- Hank Smith: 43:52 Yeah, that's right. So where do you want to leave our listeners on this great family road trip?
- Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 43:59 I think that's a perfect way to think of it. Right? Numbers really is the itinerary from Sinai to the Promised Land. So from making temple covenants to getting into the celestial kingdom, and as we've said, it's this archetypal journey. It is a family road trip. Right? We go on this journey. That's who we do it with, with our family. Whether we like it or not, whether we think that's how the plan should be or not, that's how it works. We're on this

family road trip, and it's not just my siblings. It's our covenant family as well. Right? We've become a covenant family. I've made a covenant. You've made a covenant. We're in this. We're a covenant community or covenant family as well.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 44:36

So all of us together, our most immediate covenant group, which is our family, our larger covenant group, our ward, and so on, but we're all on this road trip where we've made covenants, and we're in that hard slog through the wilderness. It's harder than it should be because we've done some stupid things, but the children of Israel do get to the Jordan River, which is that veil to go into the Promised Land, and then they're going to get through there. That's the Joshua story, right? But as bumpy as the ride is and as much as the wheels came off the RV, and this really did happen to me one time where I was draining the potty, and there were holes in the tube, and it made a mess. Right? As much as that kind of stuff happens, we get there if we'll just keep coming back and we'll just keep trying.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 45:20

So what I would hope is that everyone who is listening, as they read Numbers, and some of it, they'll have to go into more in depth than we had time here because, again, it's this huge reading chunk. Think of it as your journey, and think of the prophet as your guide, but Christ is the one who makes it possible and will deliver you, and see how you can apply that to your life, and your journey, and the journey of your family, and your covenant community.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 45:46

I believe that if we will read this with that in mind, that the spirit will whisper to us about things we need to learn from this will just make us more successful in the journey and help us get through the pain of the serpents, help us quit murmuring against God's prophets, and help us get where we're trying to go by believing in Christ. The Lord through the Holy Ghost will let you know exactly how that happens in your life if you're asking him while you do this reading, and I really believe that.

Hank Smith: 46:17

We won't say goodbye to you, Dr. Muhlestein. We'll just say see you soon.

Dr. Kerry Muhlestein: 46:21

Ah, sounds good.

Hank Smith: 46:22

Yep. We want to thank Dr. Kerry Muhlestein for being with us today. We want to thank you for listening. We want to thank our executive producers, Steve and Shannon Sorensen, and our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. We hope all of you will join us on our next episode of FollowHIM.

## HOW DO I FIND VALUE IN MYSELF?



Hank Smith:	00:05	Hello, everyone. Welcome to FollowHIM Favorites. My name is Hank Smith, and I'm here with the amazing John Bytheway. Hello, John.
John Bytheway:	00:11	Hi, Hank.
Hank Smith:	00:12	It is FollowHIM Favorites time. This week, the lesson is in the Book of Numbers. You might not think, John, that you can get a lot out of the Book of Numbers, but you'd be surprised.
John Bytheway:	00:23	The original math book, the Book of Numbers.
Hank Smith:	00:25	The original-
John Bytheway:	00:25	Right.
Hank Smith:	00:26	Don't say that, John. People are not going to ...
John Bytheway:	00:27	Nobody will listen.
Hank Smith:	00:29	Yeah. So in the Book of Numbers, I wanted to focus in on one question. It comes from a verse, Numbers 13:33. Israelites are supposed to go in and take the Promised Land. And so, Moses sends 12 spies in there and 10 of them come back, and they're scared to death. They don't think they can do it. So I want to show you what they say about how they see themselves, because our question is going to be how do I see myself the way the Lord sees me? How do I see the value that he sees?
Hank Smith:	00:57	They come back and they say to Moses, "Moses, we can't do it. The people over there are giants." Then they say in verse 33, "And we were in our own sight grasshoppers." Now that's an

interesting thing to see yourself as, that you look in the mirror and you see a grasshopper.

- Hank Smith: 01:13 But I wrote down in my scriptures, how do you see yourself? That can be different oftentimes than what the Lord sees. If you were talking to a young adult, a teenager, John, and they said, "I don't see what the Lord sees," what advice would you offer them?
- John Bytheway: 01:27 Oh, do you know what? I'm so glad you asked that question. I remember something that Stephen Covey did once with a group of young adults or teenagers that ... I've never met Stephen Covey. I wish I would've.
- John Bytheway: 01:38 But he had people take a piece of paper, fold it in half. That was just to make it into columns. Then in column one, write at the top, "How I see myself," write, "How others see me." He said he was a little surprised at how negative kids could be about themselves. "I'm this, I'm that. I'm weird. I'm strange. I'm not attractive. I'm whatever." They would put all these things in there.
- John Bytheway: 02:04 Then he said, "On the other side, I want you to write down how God sees me," and started to go through scriptural references. What is the worth of the soul? What has he done for you? What has he said about you in your patriarchal blessing, which is amazing, your talents, your gifts, your capacities. They wrote all those things down on the right-hand column, how does God see you? Then he just asked the best question, Hank. He just said, "Who are you going to believe?"
- Hank Smith: 02:32 That's great. Who are you going to believe?
- John Bytheway: 02:34 Who are you going to believe? Look at that on the right side. I think God sees us better than we see ourselves, which is one of the reasons we love Him is because He sees the best in us and He lets us repent. So that has helped me a lot. Who are you going to believe?
- John Bytheway: 02:50 I love that the gospel that we love and embrace is always saying the most wonderful things about our capacity and our potential. No matter how we see ourself, it's always telling us you're of great worth and you have great capacity.
- Hank Smith: 03:04 Yeah. This is a conscious choice that you have to make. There are so many subtle messages out there on social media and television everywhere. The social media is you're not enough.

You're not pretty enough. You're not attractive enough. You're not smart enough. You'll never be happy because you don't look this way or have this much money or live in this house or drive this car.

- Hank Smith: 03:22 They're very subtle messages. They're just underneath the surface picking at you. But, man, after a while that can create quite a canyon in your mind about the way you feel. It can hurt your self-image and your self-esteem so much that pretty soon all you see in the mirror are faults and flaws.
- Hank Smith: 03:38 But I like what you said, who are you going to believe? Because in Numbers 14, the Lord asks that exact question. He says, "Moses, how long until the people believe me? I see something in them and they don't believe me." Now notice He doesn't say, "They don't believe in me." They believe in Him. They just don't believe Him. "I know that you've said all these wonderful things about me, but I just don't know if I believe you."
- Hank Smith: 04:02 The more we can distance ourselves from those messages, the more we'll be able to hear what the Lord has to say about us. I go back to my patriarchal blessing. I can go to those in my family who I trust and love, those who are my friends who I trust and love, and I can start to pick up on what they see. I think it was Elder Wirthlin who once said the Lord doesn't see you just you. He sees the glorious being you're going to become. That's who He sees.
- Hank Smith: 04:27 There's a self-confidence that comes when you tap into that that will come in no other way. The world can't take away God-given self-confidence. He gave it to you. The world can't take away what it didn't give.
- John Bytheway: 04:39 I like to draw a graph with different words: self-worth and self-esteem. Esteem sounds like estimation. It's how I estimate my worth. It can be up and down on life circumstances, or I didn't get asked to prom or I did get asked to prom I'm on cloud nine, whatever. We hand the remote control to our feelings over to somebody else and let them decide. That esteem is estimated up and down. But our self-worth, here's the problem. How can you put on a graph something that is infinite? You can't put it there.
- John Bytheway: 05:15 One of the really wonderful examples of this idea of esteeming things and how much in error we can be is the Messianic chapter of Isaiah, is Isaiah 53. So you all know who Abinadi is. Abinadi goes in, the wicked priest, "What are you teaching?"

"We teach the law of Moses." He's like, "The law of Moses doesn't save. Jesus saves."

- John Bytheway: 05:36 Then he reads Isaiah 53, which is Mosiah 14. Listen to this. Here's how people esteemed Jesus. Imagine how wrong you could be. "He is despised, rejected, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. We hid as it were our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not." Verse four, "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."
- John Bytheway: 06:04 That's how wrong other people's estimations can be, even of Jesus. Who am I going to believe? I'm going to go to God. I'm going to go to His gospel. That's a foundation on which you can build your life. You'll have ups and downs. Everybody does. But when you come back to the gospel, you're building on a firm rock.
- Hank Smith: 06:26 I love it. I love it. I remember one time you told me, you said, "My wife wanted to marry someone tall, dark, and handsome, and she didn't get any of those." Kim said to you, "Oh, come on. You're not short." I laughed and you laughed because we don't get our self-esteem from the way we look. We don't get our self-esteem from any of those things. We get our confidence from the Lord.
- Hank Smith: 06:51 And Joshua and Caleb do. In this next chapter, in Numbers 14, they say, "We can do this. Let's not rebel against the Lord. Let's not fear. The Lord is with us."
- John Bytheway: 07:00 That's the song, (singing). That's the song. It's where this comes from. We don't love our grandmas because they're supermodels. Why do we love our grandmas?
- Hank Smith: 07:10 Yeah, because of our relationship.
- John Bytheway: 07:11 There's such goodness and such faith and devotion, and we love them. What a gift to be able to see ourselves the way the Lord sees us. We have evidence of how He feels about us in the scriptures, in our patriarchal blessings.
- Hank Smith: 07:24 Yeah. We want our listeners to be Joshuas and Calebs in this world of grasshoppers. In a world of grasshopper, be a Joshua and a Caleb and say, "No, I know who I am. I know the Lord sees greatness in me. So I'm going to live up to that. I want to be that being that He sees."

John Bytheway:	07:41	Who are you going to believe?
Hank Smith:	07:43	So take a look in the mirror, distance yourself from those subtle messages, and go back to your patriarchal blessing. When you start to get a taste of it, I think you're going to like it. When you start to see what the Lord sees in you, and you're going to feel that confidence coming, you're going to act differently. You're going to make different choices. You're going to have different boundaries for yourself and others, just because of the way you see yourself. It's going to be beautiful, because you are. You're beautiful inside and out, completely.
Hank Smith:	08:09	When the Lord sees you, I can't imagine the feelings that well up in His heart, how He feels about you. It'd be like asking John to describe one of his daughters, one of his children. He overflows with love. He doesn't look at them and go, "Wow, she's a little tall," and, "Oh, she's got big feet." All he sees is pretty much perfection, right, John?
John Bytheway:	08:28	Thank you for pointing that out, Hank. We saw ourselves as grasshoppers. Okay, fine. How does God see you? What a wonderful way to look at it, and then to have the Lord tell Him, "I got you. I'm going to be with you."
Hank Smith:	08:39	We can trust Him. I believe in me because He believes in me. Thanks, John. Thanks for helping me boost my self-confidence today. I'm not short either. That's the only thing I ...
John Bytheway:	08:52	There will be a resurrection.
Hank Smith:	08:55	I'm going to have that hair in the resurrection. Well, we hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called FollowHIM. Join us this week. We're in the book of Numbers with Dr. Kerry Muhlestein, a modern-day Indiana Jones. You want to come over and visit us. Join us next week for another FollowHIM Favorites.