

Follow Him

Episode 4

Guest: Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat

Doctrine and Covenants 3-5

“My Work Shall Go Forth”

Show Notes

Podcast General Description

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

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

Podcast Episode Description

Episode 4

Part 1:

Have you made a mistake that takes 2400+ years to repair? How did the stolen 116 pages affect the relationship between Joseph Smith, Lucy Mack Smith, Lucy Harris, and Martin Harris? Join us for Episode 4 as Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat dramatically shares details about Emma's brush with death, Joseph and Emma's first baby's passing, and why the pages were stolen and not lost--stolen!

Part 2:

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat is as exciting a storyteller as his name is difficult to spell! He tells us about the Redemption of Martin Harris, explains how one of the smartest men in the Church gets from Manchester to Pennsylvania, and why we no longer have the plates. Join us for Part II for one of our most dramatic episodes yet.

Bonus Episode:

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat explains how historians use various sources, how audiences should examine them, and why this matters. If you have ever encountered some disturbing piece of historical information from a friend, foe, or the internet, this episode is for you.

Timecode:

Part 1

- *(00:02) Intro*
- *(00:55) Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat Introduction*
- *(02:08) Background about Martin Harris*
- *(03:07) Farming Competency*
- *(07:01) Lucy Harris Shows Interest in the Plates*
- *(08:48) Joseph and Emma have Eloped and Move Back to Pennsylvania*
- *(09:51) Why the Lost 116 Pages Should Be Called the Stolen Pages*
- *(12:00) Why Joseph Lends the 116 Pages*
- *(18:36) Emma Delivers Their First Baby--Who Dies.*
- *(25:26) Martin Reports the Stolen Pages to Smith Family in Palmyra*
- *(29:35) The Plates are Returned*
- *(34:18) The Lord Forgives Joseph*
- *(35:47) The Second Coming Cannot Be Thwarted by Man*
- *(37:27) Section 3 and Section 10 Should Be Read Together*
- *(42:47) Lessons from D&C 3*

Part 2

- *(00:05) Intro*
- *(00:12) Joseph Trusts His Father*
- *(05:03) The Smith Family Affected by Alvin's Funeral Address*
- *(08:41) Oliver Cowdery Moves in with the Smith Family*
- *(11:18) D&C 4 Didn't Start as Missionary Section*
- *(14:42) Joseph Prays for a New Scribe*
- *(20:15) Martin Continues to Help but Joseph Accused of Fraud*
- *(26:02) Martin's Marriage Troubles*
- *(30:02) The Nature of Miracles and Belief*
- *(34:45) Why the Lord Speaks in Parables*
- *(39:39) Why the Lord has Us Try Difficult Things*
- *(42:50) Awkward Moments in the Scriptures*
- *(46:32) How Martin, Joseph, and Emma Persevere Through Tragedy*
- *(55:12) The Redemption of Martin Harris*

- (1:00:13) *Dr. Dirkmaat's Testimony*

Bonus Episode

- (00:28) Sources are Not All Created Equal
- (01:30) A Non-Historian's Guide to Evaluating Sources
- (03:23) Religious Truth Claims (of Every Religion) Can't Be Proven or Disproven
- (06:39) Historians and Multiple Versions of an Event
- (08:37) Who is Qualified to Make Historical Arguments
- (11:35) Saints Fall Victim to Pseudo-Scholarship
- (13:25) Evaluating Sources

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Gerrit J. Dirkmaat is an associate professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University. He received his PhD from the University of Colorado in 2010, where he studied nineteenth-century American expansionism and foreign relations. His dissertation was titled “Enemies Foreign and Domestic: US Relations with Mormons in the US Empire in North America, 1844–1854.” He worked as a historian and writer for the Church History Department from 2010 to 2014 with the Joseph Smith Papers Project and served as a volume coeditor/historian for *Documents* volume 1, the lead volume editor on *Documents* volume 3, and has continued to work as a volunteer editor for the Joseph Smith Papers project on *Administrative Records, Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 1844–January 1846* and *Documents* volume 8. He is the coauthor, along with Michael Hubbard MacKay, of the award-winning book *From Darkness unto Light: Joseph Smith’s Translation and Publication of the Book of Mormon*, published by the BYU Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book in 2015. He is also the author of dozens of academic articles as well. In 2015 he published a groundbreaking analysis of the differences between the originally recorded Utah-era sermons of Brigham Young and other Church leaders and those later published in the *Journal of Discourses*. This article, “The Prophets Have Spoken, But What Did They Say?: Examining the Differences Between George D. Watt’s Original Shorthand Notes and the Sermons Published in the Journal of Discourses,” won the 2016 Article of Excellence Award from the Mormon History Association. Before his work at the Church History Department, he served as the senior assistant editor of *Diplomatic History* from 2003 to 2009. He currently serves as editor of the academic journal *Mormon Historical Studies*, published by the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, and on the Church History editorial board for *BYU Studies*. He and his wife, Angela, have four children.



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

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

Hank Smith: 00:11 We love to learn.

John Bytheway: 00:12 We love to laugh.

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

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

Hank Smith: 00:21 Hello my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM, a podcast created to help individuals and families with their *Come, Follow Me* study. I'm here with my cohost, John Bytheway.

John Bytheway: 00:32 Hi Hank.

Hank Smith: 00:33 We, of course, are your hosts each week, but we also invite an expert, a guest, to help us. And this week, we have an amazing man, really, a scholar, historian, just an outright great guy. His name is Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat. Welcome, Gerrit.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 00:53 Thanks for having me. I'm glad to be here.

John Bytheway: 00:55 Brother Gerrit J. Dirkmaat is an Associate Professor of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Colorado in 2010. He's worked as a historian and writer for the Church History Department from 2010 to 2014. He's been involved with the Joseph Smith Papers project, which has been wonderful. He is the co-author with Michael MacKay, who we've had on the program before, of the award-winning book, *From Darkness unto Light: Joseph Smith's Translation and Publication of the Book of Mormon*. He and his wife, Angela, have four children. And we're so glad to have him here today. Thanks, Gerrit.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 01:32 Thank you.

Hank Smith: 01:33 Yeah, this is going to be exciting. One gift that Gerrit has is that he can speak to scholars. He can write the articles the way they need to be written to be in that conversation, but then he can speak to ordinary people like us, John. If I'm a first-time reader in the Doctrine and Covenants, I run into the name of Martin

Harris. Now, if I don't know my Church History, this is the first time I'm really going to hear from this guy, except for a little bit in Joseph Smith History. So Gerrit, tell us before we get into the meat of the section, tell us about Martin Harris and how he met Joseph Smith.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 02:08

Martin Harris is a prominent farmer in the Palmyra area. It would be overselling it to say that he's wealthy. He's well-off, right. He has considerable acreage. He's well-respected in the community. In fact, he's so well-respected that even when people are antagonized to him, when they're angry with him, for instance, the local newspaper editor in Palmyra, he attacks Joseph Smith and attacks the Book of Mormon. And then when he comes to Martin Harris' support, this is in 1829. He says that Martin Harris was duped, even though he was an honest and an industrious farmer living in this town. So, even people who were looking to castigate the work generally held Martin Harris in high esteem, and they see him as being totally fooled by Joseph Smith and they see him as being totally fooled by Joseph Smith.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 03:07

And this is probably the most boring part of your entire podcast so let me just get this out of the way. There's this idea that people had that was known as competency. Okay. So what is competency? Well, today, when you use the word competent, it usually means--I'm looking for a way to not be mean. You know what I mean? Like, "Oh, is she a good surgeon?" "Well, she's competent." I mean, thank you for the resounding applause, right? I mean, in our terminology today, we use the term competent as, it's kind of like, "Yes, they're good enough." Right. Competent as, it's kind of like, "Yes, they're good enough." Right.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 03:41

In the 19th century, there was a term known as competency that what it meant was for you to really have made it, for you to be considered a real contributing member of your society, you needed to be a competent farmer. And that doesn't mean that you could make the pumpkins grow bigger than other people could. What it meant was that you had the ability with the land that you had under tillage, with the things you did on your farm, whether it's fruit trees or whatever you're doing, that you could support your own family, and your family would not have to work outside of the farm. So yes, they would work all kinds of stuff on the farm. But if you had to hire your sons out, then you were not a competent farmer. You were not able to take care of your family on your own. The average American in Joseph Smith's time makes around \$300, maybe \$350 a year. And so the Smiths are poor. They are hiring out their labor. And there's

lots of reasons behind that, right? The crop failures and the business ventures that the Smith family had.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 04:49 But for our purposes, what it meant is that Martin Harris was on the higher rung of Palmyra society, a long-time resident, well-landed, well-respected. The Smiths were newcomers. They were Johnny-come-latelies, who also came without a lot of property, who were on the lower end. Now, it doesn't mean everyone hated them. It meant that they were among the least respected in terms of their property.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 05:19 So, I don't know exactly how they met. Almost all of our information from this era all comes from reminiscent accounts. What I mean is people decades, decades later saying, "Oh yeah, yeah. I remember when Martin Harris met Joseph Smith." Well, they're saying it in 1880. I don't even remember when I met Hank, actually, right? And that was only like a few years ago. If you asked me 60 years from now the exact circumstances of our meeting, I'll say, "I'm sure it involved Diet Coke." Right? But I won't know, maybe, the precise nature of it.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 05:53 So, apparently, their families are acquainted somehow, and it's a small community. So, it's very easy. But the first inklings, according to Lucy Mack Smith, who gives us most of our history from this time period, is that Preserved Harris, which is not a jam, but Martin Harris's brother, he actually comes to Palmyra because . . . Preserved, yes, is his name. Yeah, that's very Calvinist. Preserved Harris comes to Palmyra investigating these reports that he's heard that Joseph Smith has found some kind of ancient plates, right? Martin Harris probably has already heard the same things at the same time, but at least according to these later accounts, Preserved Harris seems to be the one who kind of brings it to Martin and says, "Hey, I'm interested in finding out about this." His wife, Lucy Harris, is also similarly interested. Joseph will actually, according to Lucy Mack Smith... This is going to be very confusing because there's two Lucy's. Lucy Harris, Martin Harris's wife, and Lucy Smith, Joseph Smith's mother.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 07:01 Joseph Smith, according to his mother, sends his mother, Lucy Smith, to the Martin Harris home to see about getting some kind of support for aid in this publication of this translation work that they are going to, at some point, undertake very early on. And at first, Lucy Harris is incredibly interested in what Lucy Smith has to say. At least again, all of this is coming from Lucy Smith. So, you have to always put a little bit of . . . she's reflecting on this. And at least as she tells it, Lucy Harris was very interested, even said herself, "I'll help pay some money for

it to bring this forth." And then eventually, she'll meet with Martin, and they agree that they're going to go back to the Smith's home in a few days to go meet Joseph and to discuss it. Lucy Harris comes with her, and they actually have this experience. Lucy Harris comes with Martin Harris, and they have this experience of lifting the box that the plates are in. They're heavy. In fact, Martin Harris's daughter also lifts the box that the plates are in.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 08:07 So there's these three different people who all lift this. And Harris's daughter says, "Oh, I can barely lift it." And they can hear the metal inside. They can feel the weight on it. So they have this kind of physical witness of the plates very early on. That really piques Martin Harris's interest, but it actually kind of drives Lucy Harris's interest to want to see more. While she's an early proponent of Joseph and the plates, she's actually very quickly going to become a very big antagonist, in part because she's never allowed to actually see the plates. That's in 1827 that all that is going on.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 08:48 At the end of 1827, the Smiths are going to make the determination to move down to Harmony that's where Emma's from--her family's down there. I can't imagine what the reunion was like, given the fact that the reason why they left in the first place was Joseph had eloped with Emma against Isaac Hale's wishes. Joseph will buy a property, a 14-acre farm that has an existing home already on it. It apparently also already has a barn. He buys it from his father-in-law, Isaac Hale. He buys it all for \$200. And that kind of gives you an idea of what money is worth, right? He buys a 14-acre farm with a house on it, and it's already got improvements on it for \$200. Now, when I say he buys it, I mean the same way I own my house. I mean, he makes an agreement that he will make payments on it, and it's actually well beyond his means. He's going to struggle to make those payments on it. But they do have this home that they'll be living in.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 09:51 Martin Harris will come down and serve as a scribe for part of this early translation process. The primary scribe of this early translation, this 1828 translation process, is actually Emma herself. She serves as the scribe for most of what we today call either the Lost 116 pages or the Book of Lehi. I don't even know why we call it the Lost 116 pages. I even had someone the other day ask me like, "Well, where did they lose it at?" It wasn't. It was stolen. I mean, if I went outside to get in my car today and it wasn't there, I wouldn't say, "I've lost my car. My car is lost. Where is my car?" It was stolen. And we know that they were stolen because the Lord tells us they were stolen. So, we really

should call them the Stolen 116 pages. But Emma serves as a scribe for the first part of that. She, according to Martin Harris, actually writes more of that early translation portion than Martin does.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 10:54

There are other people who help out. It's always hard to know exactly how many scribes there were on the Book of Mormon translation, in part because most of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon doesn't exist anymore. It was destroyed. And so, with the remaining a little bit less than a third that we have, we only have so many handwriting samples of them. David Whitmer gives a much bigger list of people who participated in the writing.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 11:22

Martin Harris has a really important role for Joseph Smith. And I think that really informs Doctrine and Covenants, Section 3. Martin Harris is essentially in 1827, the only person that's not a Joseph Smith family member that believes Joseph Smith. Lucy, for a little bit of time, right? And even Martin's kind of like-- sometimes. I mean, the reality is Joseph's been told that it is God's requirement of him that he not only translates this book but that he brings it forth to the world. Now, think about what I said earlier, about how much Joseph Smith's farm-

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 12:00

Now, think about what I said earlier, about how much Joseph Smith's farm cost. A 14-acre farm. If Joseph sold everything that he had, which he didn't even own, so he wouldn't have got any money out of it, but let's say that he did. Let's say that he owned it outright. The cost of printing the Book of Mormon was fifteen times Joseph Smith's entire value that he had. There was no possible way in Joseph's mind that he could ever pay for the printing of the Book of Mormon. I think that's part of the reason why Martin Harris, not only is he one of the first people who believes, so Joseph has that kind of connection with him because only Martin has been willing to say, "Yeah, this is real." But also, in Joseph's mind, how in the world could this ever actually be accomplished? This could actually be printed. And from the beginning, Martin Harris has said, "I'll pay for that. I will pay for it. I'll give whatever money I have to do. I'll pay for it to be printed." And so I think that's why when Martin, who is now facing a very antagonistic wife, when he makes a request of Joseph, "Joseph, I know I can't show the plates to anybody. What if I just showed them the manuscript? If I showed them the pages, they would know that this is obviously something beyond your abilities. They would know that this is not something I'm making up. They won't see the plates, but they'll see the pages. They might even read the pages. They'll know this is from God. And of course, this is a very familiar story to

Latter-day Saints, right? That Joseph asks the question, and he's told no, but Martin Harris is unwilling to accept the answer no.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 13:43 "Just ask again, I really need this. My family needs to know." And he asked again, and he's again told no. And then again, after further inquiries from Martin Harrison, that's the third time, and this time finally, he's told, " Okay, you can do this." But on the very strictest of conditions that Martin Harris would not only covenant to protect the manuscript, which kind of seems like a no brainer, but that he would only show it to certain individuals that were already named.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 14:17 He made a covenant. Yes, he's going to show it to his wife, he's going to show it to his brother preserved, he's going to show it to several other family members, and that's it. D&C 3 actually has a longer history than we think because of this history with Harris, but also because Joseph already knew that there was a problem by the summer of 1828, because after he asks that third time, he gets the affirmative answer, "Okay, you can do this."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 14:50 But he also knows that he's under the censure of the Lord because the angel returns to him and demands the plates and the Urim and Thummim . . . stones . . . the interpreters, whatever we want to call them. He demands them back from Joseph, and so Joseph is left knowing that his request to get Martin Harris these pages has cost him the plates, has cost him at least temporarily the Urim and Thummim seer stones and that he can't be in very good standing with God at that moment.
- John Bytheway: 15:23 This is really wonderful for our listeners to kind of get a sense of a social standing of Joseph as opposed to Martin. I was just going to mention in the *Come, Follow Me* manual, it says, "Early in Joseph Smith's ministry, good friends were hard to come by, especially friends like Martin Harris, a respected prosperous man who was in a position to provide valuable support, and Martin willingly supported Joseph, even though it cost him the respect of his peers and required financial sacrifice. So it's easy to see why Joseph wanted to honor Martin's request to take the first portion of the Book of Mormon translation to show his wife." And I love that you said it wasn't lost, it was stolen. Of course it was, that's right.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 16:04 Joseph has had essentially no one outside of his family except Emma, right? But no one else has accepted what he's been saying. Imagine the pressure of knowing that this person has sacrificed all kinds of things to be the only person to believe you, and now they want just a little something in return. And

they seem to be trying to do it the right way. Right. "I'm not asking you to show me the plates, Joseph. I'm not asking to take the plate, just the pages. The angel didn't tell you that you couldn't take the pages to show people, so couldn't you just kind of?" Right.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 16:43

But the problem is when they got their initial response from God, as the revelation points out, "Both Joseph and Martin feared man more than they feared God." Martin's on the edge here. His wife's putting a lot of pressure on him. "If I don't give him something, I might lose him entirely. Martin's on the edge of my entire social structure. My family life is falling apart because of this. I need to be able to show something."

John Bytheway: 17:15

And that's no small trip, right? Going from Palmyra to Harmony, we think. . . .

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 17:19

It's very extensive. I mean, it's probably a two- to three-day journey. He's going to go back down to Joseph to talk to him about what it is, and Lucy demands to go with him. She comes down. She really wants to see the plates. She's still not allowed to see the plates. Martin Harris isn't allowed to see the plates. And she will, according to Lucy Smith, turn over every single thing she can, and she's even out surrounding the house looking for moved places of dirt where it might've been buried outside.

John Bytheway: 17:49

My goodness.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 17:50

In fact, it was buried outside. Joseph had already kind of taken it off and hid it, but she wasn't able to find it. And so you kind of get the sense of, this is not just a foreign kind of concept to Joseph by summer of 1828. He knows that Lucy Harris is adamantly opposed to what they're doing--that Martin Harris is coming down to talk to him because he really needs this. Joseph's under a great deal of personal stress. His wife is nearing the end of her pregnancy for their first child, and so she will actually deliver the day after Harris takes the pages up to Palmyra.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 18:36

So Harris gets the pages, he takes them up, and then Emma, we have two different accounts, either the baby was stillborn or it was born and died very shortly after . . . and it was devastating to Joseph and Emma. All the more so because Emma nearly dies. She is hovering near death for three weeks. Joseph is worried that when he does go back up to Palmyra to find Harris, he's actually worried that when he comes back, he might come back and she won't be alive anymore because it was such a traumatic delivery.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 19:18 Death in childbirth was the leading cause of death of women her age in the United States. It's a bad time for him. All the while, they've heard nothing from Martin Harris, no letter from Harris saying, "Hey, I showed the pages to people." I mean, the understanding appears to be that Harris was going to take those pages up, show the five people he was allowed to show, and bring them right back. Well, he's caring for Emma for three weeks, so clearly that's not going on.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 19:51 And in fact, according to Lucy Smith, it's actually Emma, who eventually says, "Joseph, you got to go up there and find out." As sick as she is, she's really invested in this too. She is the primary scribe for most of those pages that were gone.
- John Bytheway: 20:10 --that's a lot of work.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 20:10 She has spent months on it, it matters a lot to her too.
- John Bytheway: 20:14 Do we have any information about what was there? Is there a story about Lehi we don't know? Is there any source of this is what was in. . . . Anything about those 116 stolen pages?
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 20:28 Yeah, thank you--stolen pages. Unfortunately, nothing outside of like conjecture, actually Doctrine and Covenants, Section 3. The text of it provides you some insight of that. They haven't yet retranslated the small plates of Nephi, right?. This is just the Lost 116 pages, and what does Doctrine Covenant, Section 3 talk about? It talks about the Josephites and the Zoramites. It lists off many of the -ites, right? That apparently were part of that record. Our best source, of course, is Mormon himself, telling us that what was on those plates was a broader history as opposed to what was on the smaller plates of Nephi that he finds and then, rather than editing, places them with the other record. Nephi's history is certainly written later, and it's because God commands him to do it, and that actually is really important, right? Because when people are looking back on their life, they tend to focus on moments of crisis and moments of success. Right.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 21:34 I'm probably not going to look back on the peanut butter sandwich I ate yesterday, right--unless that sandwich kills me. Right (or brings me to the hospital). Then, well, I guess that sandwich, I never should have eaten.
- John Bytheway: 21:46 This was a pivotal moment.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 21:47 This was a pivotal moment. And so I think sometimes when people read Nephi's words, they, they kind of . . . some of these people will criticize that like, "Well, I feel like he's just going from miracle to miracle." Yeah, because he's reflecting back on 30 years of his life, and he's not saying, "On August 12th, yeah we had a fine day of uncooked meat that we had around the fire we didn't build."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 22:13 Usually, when people look back, they're looking back for key events and especially key controversies, and so that tends to highlight the problems with Laman and Lemuel, right? Mormon--I love Mormon because he's really like our first historian, right? I mean, he takes thousands of records--I don't know how many records--he takes all of these different records, and like any historian, creates a narrative of what happened by using those records. And so what you would have with the Book of Lehi is a third-person omniscient narrator perspective, and you get such great insights from Mormon . . .
- John Bytheway: 22:55 Oh, yeah.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 22:55 When he's talking about Alma, right? You can only imagine he's doing the same thing in what was the Book of Lehi because he already knows the end from the beginning. It's not going to be as stark a difference because Nephi also knows the end from the beginning because he's writing his book after they're already in the New World, right? And so obviously, the greatest thing in the history of ever would be when we have those 116 pages to read again.
- John Bytheway: 23:23 I know I tell my students when we get those and we get the brass plates back, you're going to have a lot more classes that you have to take.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 23:28 So many more required classes. It'll just be more things for you to complain about to not finish.
- John Bytheway: 23:33 I'm going to BPL, Brass Plates of Laban class, you know? Yeah.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 23:36 Yeah, that's exactly right. But yeah, I mean, so there are some insights that scholars have tried to show. I mean, so, for instance, Emma talks about the very famous instance of Joseph not knowing that Jerusalem had walls around it, right? Well, she's only serving as a scribe for the portion of the pages that are lost.

John Bytheway: 23:54 When Martin does take the pages, what happens? He gets to Palmyra, do we know anything about what happens when he gets there because ...?

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 24:02 Yeah, it's a lot of ...

John Bytheway: 24:00 What happens when he gets there because-

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 24:02 Yeah, it's a lot of conjecture and mainly from Lucy Smith, right? So apparently, Martin will not only show the people that he has covenanted that he will show. He also begins showing it to other people. He made a covenant with God that he will only show the pages to these five people and also these other people he starts showing the pages to, right? So he's already broken that. Now, at least according to Lucy Smith, Harris at first locks the pages in his wife's drawer for safekeeping. But at one point, a visitor shows up, and Lucy's not there, and she has the key to the drawer. And he's so desperate to show this guy these pages that he actually breaks the lock on the drawer, busts it open so he can get in there, and grab the pages to show this person who he was never supposed to show in the first place.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 25:02 So, I don't know if, after that, they continue to reside in the unlocked broken drawer. There are all kinds of theories that circulate about what happened to the pages. All we know is that eventually, Martin Harris goes back, and those pages are gone. And he searches the house up and down, and he can't find them. And probably he's hoping that somehow they'll turn up, that he'll get a lead on them before Joseph comes calling.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 25:26 When Joseph shows up, and the Smiths send word to Martin to come to breakfast the next morning, it is a traumatic event, according to Lucy Smith. First of all, they're all sitting there waiting to eat breakfast together, and there's already got a ton of tension. Joseph is so worried about this--he feels such a knot that he actually pays the money that it cost to take the stage most of the way to Palmyra.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 25:54 And he's actually so distraught that one of the passengers on that stage is so worried about Joseph that he actually walks several miles with Joseph to make sure Joseph gets his way to his destination because he can tell how upset Joseph is. The stage is really expensive, but it's also really fast. So if they ever take the stage somewhere, that's how you know that this is a big deal. They are really worried.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 26:19 So, Joseph has spent all kinds of money just to get back to Palmyra as fast as he could only to have Martin Harris not come over that night. And then the next morning, when they're waiting for breakfast, still no Martin Harris. Imagine the tension in that home as you're sitting around the breakfast table. First of all, I want to eat. But second of all, you're still waiting for the answer. Everyone's sitting around waiting, waiting.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 26:45 Eventually, they see him walking down the lane to their house. Now, he lives clear on the other side of the township from them, right? So he finally gets to their front gate. And instead of coming in, he just sits down on the fence. He pulls a hat over his eyes and stays there for some time, is what the source says. You have to think that every person in that Smith house is just ready to bust right out the house and go out there. "Where are the pages?" But they don't. They're trying to maintain the proper decorum.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 27:15 Eventually, Harris comes in, and he sits down to the table like they're all going to have breakfast. I can't imagine how deafening the silence was with the tension until eventually, Harris breaks down and just says, "I have lost my soul. I have lost my soul." I'm sure Joseph knew that there was something wrong. That's why he was there in the first place. But like all of us when we're in a terrible situation, there's always that little bit of, "Maybe it's not as bad. Maybe he only lost one page, right? Maybe he can't find one of the pages."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 27:51 I don't know what Joseph thought, but Joseph's reaction is he's both angry and crushed all at the same time. "Have you brought down condemnation upon your own head as well as my own? Have you broken the oath that you made?" And Lucy says that there is just tears all over the house. We talk about Liberty Jail, but I almost can't imagine a lower time in Joseph's life. He has lost the plates and the interpreters only to have his son die in childbirth--his wife nearly die. The only thing he has left is Martin Harris and those pages.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 28:37 And when he comes up, he doesn't have those pages. He is clearly outside of the favor of God. And look, in the modern world, when horrible things happen to us, many of us erroneously begin to start saying, "Well, what did I do that God is punishing me like this?" I can't imagine that Joseph and Emma didn't at least one time think, "I wonder if our baby died because we were violating the covenant we made with God."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 29:10 I don't know that they ever did, but I'll tell you what, in the 19th century in America, if something bad happened to you, it was

always attributed to the will of God. And so it certainly would have been the culture that he would have been taught. He didn't know about the Plan of Salvation yet. He hadn't translated the Book of Mormon yet, right? So it would have been a very crushing experience, and obviously, he's desperate to make sure Emma is okay.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 29:35

He leaves the next day and comes home. And a short time is what he says in his history after he arrives home, he's out walking in the field, I'm sure wrestling with God, praying, thinking, meditating. He has the angel appear to him and give him back the interpreters that were taken from him, the Urim and Thummim stones that were taken from him, in order for him to receive a revelation. That revelation is Doctrine and Covenants, Section 3 that is highly condemnatory of Joseph's actions and certainly of Martin Harris.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 30:11

And the revelation, as you read it, focuses very much on both of them fearing man instead of God, right? Instead of saying, "I don't know how God is going to make this work out, but I did see Jesus, so I'm pretty sure he can make it work out," Joseph is instead the same way I would be. "I need to actually have a plan. I know that God says he's going to help, but I need to actually have a plan." And he allowed that pressure of how difficult the translation and publication was going to be to kind of overwhelm what he knew God wanted him to do.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 30:47

It's very much a chastisement, but it also has some hope in it. The level of pressure that he must have felt would have been incredible because it took him four years and eight visits with Moroni basically to get the plates in the first place, right? And even then, he was prevented from getting them at first because he didn't have the purest of intentions. And so now, he's losing the plates because he isn't following what God is telling him to do.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 31:17

And I don't think Joseph is being evil in any way in this sense, right? He's not got some kind of negative like, "Ah, we've got to find a way to make money off the Book of Mormon." He is simply trying to be practical in a world where he has nothing, his family has nothing, they have no prospects of ever having anything. And Martin Harris is literally the only lead that he has on doing what God has commanded him to do.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 31:44

In many ways, we're asking Joseph to be like the Israelites fighting the Midianites, right? Just, "Yeah, we'll take a dozen, and I'm sure they'll take out 10,000. Whatever. They can do it." We're asking Joseph to have the kind of faith that, even though

there is literally no possible way for him to do what God has told him to do, that he should just still expect that he can. I don't have that ability. I don't know why sometimes people are a little bit harsh about that. To me, the most understandable thing in the world is that Joseph let him take the pages.

- John Bytheway: [32:19](#) I want to throw something in from Elder Holland. He was talking about that breakfast that you just mentioned, Garrett. And he tells the story of the breakfast with Martin breaking down, "I've lost my soul." Joseph standing up, "Oh my God, what have you done? What have you done?" Everybody's crying. And then he makes the point, everybody at this breakfast already believes him. So why do this unless this is actually real?
- John Bytheway: [32:43](#) And this is what he says. He says, "Well, my goodness, that's an elaborate little side story, which makes absolutely no sense at all unless, of course, there really were plates and there really was a translation process going on, and there really had been a solemn covenant made with the Lord, and there really was an enemy who did not want the book to come forth in this generation. Talk about a literary flare and a gift for fiction. Lucy Mack Smith gets an A right along with her son if this is all an imaginary venture, to say nothing of the terrific performances by Mr. And Mrs. Harris and the entire first generation of the Church."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [33:15](#) As we go over the text, the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 3, it certainly is harsh. It is condemning Joseph for what he did.
- John Bytheway: [33:21](#) Right. He's probably excited to get him back, only to find out, "Oh, you got them back because you need to hear something."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [33:27](#) At the same time. If we take what Lucy Smith says that Joseph says when Martin Harris says "I've lost my soul," Joseph at that point believes that he is totally condemned by God. It's over. You have brought condemnation upon me and upon you. If you have that in your mind, that Joseph returns home believing that he has lost his soul forever because of what Martin Harris said, then when you read Doctrine and Covenants 3, it's not as condemnatory as you thought it was. Like the teenage kid who comes home after wrecking his dad's car, he knows it's going to be bad. But the Lord still lets him know that he still loves him, right? There's still a way forward.
- John Bytheway: [34:18](#) I think that this is where we can take the story for Joseph, but apply it to us and say, "Look," in verse nine, "Behold, thou art Joseph." And okay, I still know who you are, that was chosen to do the work of the Lord. But because of transgression, if thou

art not aware, thou wilt fall. It sounds like there's a glimmer of, you still have a couple of strikes left or something.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [34:43](#) And then the next verse tells him, "Remember that God is merciful." Right? It's almost as if Joseph has forgotten, with all of the fear that he has of the impending doom of what's going on because of the breaking of the covenant, because of the loss of the pages, because of this 10-year odyssey to get to where he's at now that's now gone, that God is still merciful, that God's still willing to forgive.
- John Bytheway: [35:10](#) I think one of the beautiful things about the Doctrine and Covenants for all of us to apply is how many times Joseph gets in trouble and is told, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." And we can all go, "Whew, he messed up from time to time too."
- Hank Smith: [35:25](#) Let's get into the meat of the section here. The Lord starts out by saying, "The works and the designs and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated. Neither can they come to naught." That's got to be an interesting opening for Joseph, right? Like, "I know you're devastated, but really it doesn't ride on you."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [35:47](#) Yeah. "I think an understanding that you think that the whole Book of Mormon project is over because of what happened, but I hate to break it to you. I'm God, and that's not how things work. That in fact, yes, people with their agency do evil things, but no one, no matter how much agency they apply, will ever be able to prevent the Second Coming of our Messiah." The reality is that's happening. That's going to happen. And so I think that's what the Lord is presenting to him here.
- Hank Smith: [36:21](#) Yeah. The work of God cannot be frustrated. Right?
- John Bytheway: [36:24](#) Yeah. He already had a plan in place, which we read about in the Book of Mormon. There was already, "This is going to happen."
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [36:31](#) For a wise purpose that Nephi doesn't know, "I've already done all this. Now, I've got to do another thing." Okay. And then Mormon feeling the same impression that, "Well, I've already done with my work, but then I found these and I'm going to put them with these other plates." A lot of steps going on there.
- Hank Smith: [36:47](#) Yeah. We're talking what, 2,400 years in advance, the Lord says, "Yeah, well, I knew you were going to do this." It's almost as if Joseph's going to go, "You knew?!"

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 36:57 “Why didn't you tell me?” I think it's important when people study Doctrine and Covenants, Section 3, that they should also concurrently study Doctrine and Covenants, Section 10. Early portions of it, are received in 1828, as part of the response, to the loss of the pages. As they're asking, what's going to happen, that will help give some of the answer. But in this initial answer, you have the Lord assuring him, that don't worry. The work's going to go forward without this.
- John Bytheway: 37:23 This is one of those places where they're not exactly in sequence. Doesn't 10 come right after three?
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 37:27 Our earliest written copy of D&C 10, also suggests that there's some 1829 portions of it. And so one of the things that we dealt with the Joseph Smith Papers, is that there are some revelations that are, what we might call, composite revelations. Where they received one part of it in 1829, and then another part of it in 1830. And then they eventually published it together because they were the same topic, essentially, right?
- Hank Smith: 37:54 There's a part of Section 3 that I love and I think the Lord must get somewhat tired of telling us the same thing of, "You should not have feared man, more than God." I can't tell you how many times in Isaiah . . . Isaiah says the same thing. “Don't trust in the arm of the flesh.” God frequently tells Old Testament prophets, why do they trust in people that will die? When they've got someone who won't die, right? Why is it constantly this fight? “You should not have feared man, more than God. You should have been faithful,” in verse eight. “And I would have been there for you.” How do we as parents and teachers help the people in our stewardship, whether they be adult children or young children, not fear man, more than God, or in other words, not give in to peer pressure or not worry so much about what other people think?
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 38:47 I am not an expert on parenting, as my teenage sons would let you know, but I can say that really the question, it's about Christianity in and of itself. The reality is that as Christians, we of course, hope that God will bless us as we try to do the things that are right. But fundamentally, as a Christian is believing that the real reward is not on this earth, right? That some of the greatest people who've ever lived have suffered all kinds of horrible difficulties in their life, even to the end of their life. That we are, laying not up for yourselves, treasures on earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and thieves break through to steal: but lay up for yourselves, treasures in heaven.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 39:36 This is really a question of all mortality, right? There is the immediate pleasure, power, fame that comes from our mortal flesh and our mortal experiences that we can be engaged in, and having to stop and say that there is something else. Trusting that there is a God that is going to make things work out somehow, even if it's only eternally. Over what my friends have to say tomorrow. For me and my sons, I try to help them reorient themselves.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 40:09 I try to help them remember who we really are. Who we really are . . . are sons of a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother. Who we really are, is someone who has an eternal existence. And however important that relationship with that friend of yours, who was just a jerk you was, today. Not only in 10 years, will it not matter? Certainly in the eternity, it won't right. That we have to focus on what our value is.
- Hank Smith: 40:36 John, what do you think? How do you help young people, and even old people, fear God more than man? And I don't know if I want to use the word fear here, but to care more about what God thinks than what so-and-so thinks.
- John Bytheway: 40:52 Well, I think this section, and many others, provide a model. Joseph just learned a choice and a consequence and try to help our kids. "What have you learned? Did you see this choice and did you see this consequence? What happened? What did you learn? And are you discovering, that not only is it better to follow God, it's probably easier because the consequences of not following him are so bad, that when it comes to the standards." I love to teach that. The Gospel is the easiest way to live because the consequences of not living it are so bad, that you eventually learn--and the Lord lets us learn--and this is one of those. Connect choices and consequences, and then notice that he's saying, "Okay, you can be forgiven and let's move forward."
- Hank Smith: 41:42 And Gerrit, you could speak to this better than I could, but it seems to me that the Joseph of 1828, and the Joseph of the 1840s, is someone who trusts in God. By the end of his life, I think he has this lesson.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 41:57 One of the things that we get with the 2013 Edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, is a redating of many of the sections and a reorienting of them. By getting back to the earliest manuscript, and revelation books, some of the Section Headings provided an entirely different context than what we once thought it meant. This was due to no fault of anyone in the past, the reality was the *Book of Commandments and Revelations*,

which was this giant manuscript revelation book, it had been lost for years and years and years. It was only rediscovered at the beginning of the 20th century. Right? And so you can't fault people, from before, for not knowing the sources. As a historian, you get very used to knowing that, whatever you think today might change based upon a source that's found tomorrow. For other people, it's really hard thing. "No, no. It's always been. . . ." because we didn't have the best source. Right?

Hank Smith: 42:46 I just think, Doctrine and Covenants 3 can be such an excellent lesson. One, that God is merciful. He says in verse 10, "God is merciful." And two, "Let's be like Joseph and learn the lesson." Remember the pain, like John said, of being disobedient. Remember the pain of what you went through when you made that choice to fear man, more than God, and don't do it again. Or at least really, keep your drive up, to not do it again. Because to me, one, I love the story. Two, I just loved Joseph for adding it in the Doctrine and Covenants.

[crosstalk 00:43:23]

John Bytheway: 43:22 Why would you want to put that in there, if it was about this big mistake that you made?

Hank Smith: 43:26 Now, let's take that out.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 43:28 We'll edit it down. One thing I think is really interesting as verse four, "For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet, if he boasts his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels, of God and follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires. . . ." So earthly desires, right? "He must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him." That's already part of what we've been talking about, about this choosing God over man, which is really the choice of mortality, right? To continually, choose God rather than this earth. We in the Church today have had a lot more discussions about priesthood power, and "the power and authority to act in God's name" and the difference between priesthood office and priesthood power.

Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 44:10 And I want to just point out for your listeners, that Joseph Smith receives more than a dozen revelations. He translates the entirety of the Book of Mormon. He sees multiple visions, multiple powerful manifestations--and he's not a Deacon yet. Okay. All of this is going on, prior to Joseph Smith, having been given one ounce of priesthood authority associated with an office. Of course, it's by the power of the priesthood, that

Joseph Smith is translating the Book of Mormon--that he is receiving these revelations from God. He's literally a prophet and a seer, even though he has not been ordained to those positions, yet. And so I think that's helpful for Church members to understand when they say, "Well, why don't have the ability to perform a miracle because I'm not an Elder or I'm not a man, I'm not ordained to a priesthood office."

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [45:12](#) I think as our prophets and apostles have been trying to say, "We all have the ability, if it is God's will, to tap into that power of God, to perform mighty miracles in His name--to receive revelations, for ourselves and our families in His name . . .to have enlightening things given to us and to perform miracles.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: [45:34](#) And Joseph Smith is the perfect example of that. He has performed dozens of miracles at this point, and it's not because he was ordained to a formal priesthood office yet. They hadn't been restored yet. He couldn't have been.
- Narrator: [45:51](#) Please join us for Part 2 of this podcast.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:31:25](#)

And what you get from D&C 5 is a statement from the Lord that that's just not how belief comes. This is in verse seven, "Behold, if they will not believe my words, they would not believe you my servant, Joseph, if it were possible that you should show them all these things which I've committed unto you." There are a lot of people who believe that if they saw the gold plates, then they'd believe. The reality is the same part of you that can't feel the Spirit of God when you read the Book of Mormon or the revelations of Joseph Smith, the same part of you that reads that and says, "Nope, that's not from God," is the same thing that would make you reject it even if you did see the gold plates.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:32:15](#)

You'd probably spend your time instead [of] trying to argue about what the alloy of it was or, "You know what, I'm not entirely sure that that's how an Egyptian character would be. Okay, sure, he has played, but they can't really be from God." One of the great aspects of the Witnesses' experience is that it is both physical and spiritual. What's the easiest way to dismiss the Witnesses' experience? You simply say, "I guess you guys maybe got drunk or maybe you didn't get any good sleep. I'm sure you thought that you saw an angel who showed you these things." And that's how people would dismiss it.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:32:53](#)

You don't have to be a liar. You just have to be confused to think that you saw plates when of course, you didn't. And yet, the Eight Witnesses have an experience that's completely physical. It's not miraculous at all, except for that plates exist, but how would you dismiss the Eight Witnesses' experience? You'd dismiss it by saying, "Well, okay, fine, Joseph has something." Even the most ardent antagonists of Joseph Smith today admit--there's just too many sources of people who hate Joseph Smith saying that he had something--to claim that he hadn't. "Maybe he had a bunch of lead that he put together and told people was plates.

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:33:30](#)

Or maybe he found copper printing plates out in the woods," or whatever the excuse is, the Eight Witnesses' experience demonstrates that Joseph has a physical item--plates exist. And so antagonists could say, "Well, yes, they exist, but they're not what you think they are." The Three Witness experience says, "These plates are from God, miraculously, they're from God." And so they really work together to refute both aspects of those people who'd want to reject it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:55:28](#)

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

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:56:02](#)

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

Hank Smith: [00:56:56](#)

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

Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat: [00:57:20](#)

Well, they'd have to add a whole another book to the canon for mine, but yeah.

Hank Smith: [00:57:26](#)

It would just be mortifying every year people are going, "Oh, who's this Martin Harris?"

John Bytheway: [00:57:31](#)

This is one of those cases where if we want to have a merciful judgment, let's extend one to our brother, Martin Harris. I had a

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

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

Oh yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"--A man with an opinion."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Using Credible Sources with Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat

Hank Smith:	<u>00:02</u>	Welcome to Follow Him, a weekly podcast dedicated to helping individuals and families with their Come Follow Me study. I'm Hank Smith.
John Bytheway:	<u>00:10</u>	And I'm John Bytheway.
Hank Smith:	<u>00:11</u>	We love to learn.
John Bytheway:	<u>00:12</u>	We love to laugh.
Hank Smith:	<u>00:13</u>	We want to learn and laugh with you.
John Bytheway:	<u>00:15</u>	As together, we follow Him.
John Bytheway:	<u>00:21</u>	Welcome to this week's bonus episode on using credible sources in studying church history, and avoiding pseudo scholarship.
Dr. Gerrit Dirk...:	<u>00:28</u>	Whenever you're looking at events from the past, not all sources are created equal. There's a different between me writing in my journal as soon as we finish this podcast, "I can't stand that Hank Smith. I will never give him Coke again." That captures what I feel in the moment. Well, let's say you ask me 10 years from now, and in that intervening 10 years you become an apostate, and you burn my house down. That might color my impression, not because I'm deliberately trying to lie about what I thought about our first meeting, but because that's what happens.
Dr. Gerrit Dirk...:	<u>01:07</u>	An even better way to think about it is most Latter Day Saints have had their patriarchal blessing. Try to remember exactly what you thought about each individual line in that blessing, as the patriarch was giving it to you. It was a powerful experience, I certainly felt the Spirit very strongly, I remembered some of the things. A couple days later, I got the transcript back from the patriarch. Reading through it the first time, there were things where I was like, "I don't remember him saying that. Oh." And then, I went throughout the remainder of my life thinking well, I think this is what that means. And then, life happened. "This obviously means something to do with going on my mission." After that, I got married. "Oh, I can't believe I ever thought it meant this, I actually think it means this." Even when

we're dealing with our own history, our thoughts about what happened, they change over the course of time.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 02:02 So historians prize, first and foremost, firsthand accounts. It's much better if I'm telling you what I think than someone else saying, "Oh yeah, that Gerrit, he thinks that." But, they also want contemporary accounts, written at the time. Not, "Oh yes, I remember on my mission X." Again, that doesn't mean that you're being deliberately dishonest, but it certainly means that you have the benefit of hindsight, looking back. You now know that that day on your mission, when that door was slammed in your face, wasn't the worst day of your life. But, it might have been up to that point, in your life. Perspective changes things.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 02:40 It's really hard especially, when people are looking back, when they already know the end from the beginning. I mean, how many times do you hear people say things like, "Oh, I should have known that he was a criminal, because that one time we had a conversation and he was a little shady about it. I could tell." Well, you couldn't tell enough to tell any of the authorities, so obviously it wasn't actually as big a deal as you thought at the time.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 03:04 This is even more important to be careful with the sources you use when we're dealing with religion. Because fundamentally, religious truth claims are things that cannot be proven or disproven by historical sources. This is not just true of Latter Day Saints, this is true of all believers. The Bible tells us that Jesus walked on water. How would you prove, scientifically, that Jesus actually walked on water? We could do an experiment. We could just take John and Hank down to Utah Lake, and walk them out into the lake. And, even with as much carp in Utah Lake, you still would eventually sink. But, you could have the whole world do that experiment, where the whole world walks out into the nearest body of water, and not one of them would walk on water. Would that prove that Jesus didn't walk on water? It wouldn't, because Jesus walked on water, he walked on water because it was a miracle, it was by the power of God.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 04:07 So one of the things that historians don't have access to, however wonderful they think they are, they don't have access to the power of God. They can't replicate. There's no hypothesis you can do to demonstrate whether or not an angel appeared to somebody. What can historians do? Historians can say, "This is what that person said. They really seem to believe it." Historians don't try to disprove the religious truth claims of people.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 04:37 You know, often times what people are saying about ... Let's take Joseph Smith, for instance. What they're really saying is, "Well, I find it pretty hard to believe that an angel appeared to him." It's more than hard to believe, it's impossible outside of the intervention of God. You can't prove whether or not Joseph saw an angel. What can you do? You can certainly demonstrate, historically, that Joseph really believed that he did. That he acted like he did, that he lived his life as if he did, and that is the best you can come as a historian.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 05:13 Often times, antagonists of not only our faith, but of any faith, they want to attack the miraculous truth claims of that faith. The reality is the very thing they're attacking is something that is not actually academic anymore. If you want to have a conversation about whether or not Joseph Smith should have instituted the high priests when he did, okay well that can be a conversation. But fundamentally, you actually can't have a conversation about whether or not God and Jesus appeared to Joseph Smith. Anyone who was making that claim is no longer doing academic work. If someone says, "Well, this proves that Joseph Smith was lying and he never saw God." First of all, that can't be proven. And second of all, that's just thank you for your opinion. It's duly noted, there's lots of people who don't like Joseph Smith. Thank you for joining the chorus, but that proves essentially nothing.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 06:12 I would urge your listeners that antagonists of religion often try to use historical statements for their shock value, to try to rattle people. To say, "I bet you haven't heard this." Well, no one's heard everything from history. I've been doing history for my whole life, I hear things all the time. "Oh, I had no idea." I just pretend that I still know. But, the reality is that nobody knows everything, which means that always someone's going to be able to bring something up. Sometimes, that can really rattle people because they'll say, "I had no idea Joseph Smith was using a seer stone and a hat." Sometimes that discomfort of not knowing is used against believers.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 06:52 You'll hear people make non sequiturs all the time. "If Joseph Smith didn't tell the exact same story in every account of the first vision, that proves that he's a liar." First of all, no historian makes that argument. You already know someone who makes that argument isn't qualified to make the argument they're making. Historians understand that people tell stories different ways multiple different times, and that in no way demonstrates that someone's being dishonest. But also, fundamentally they understand if Joseph Smith changed every single word of the

first vision, that would not demonstrate in any way whether or not Joseph actually saw God.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 07:32 Miracles are outside of the realm of historical inquiry, and that's the reason why we say that you have to have faith to believe. As desperately as we want to be able to prove every single aspect of the Gospel, and as cool as those insights might be, fundamentally as a Christian, you believe something that is utterly fantastic. Entirely unprovable. Forgive my triteness, but you believe that a carpenter who lived 2000 years ago was murdered by the Romans and came back to life. And, that because he came back to life, you're going to come back to life. That is not logical, it's not provable, no one else has done that, and it's absolutely true. We don't believe it because we can prove it, we believe it because it's true.
- John Bytheway: 08:24 I've had these conversations with you before, personally. I wanted everyone to hear this.
- John Bytheway: 08:28 I remember one time, you and I discussing pseudo scholarship, that sometimes Latter Day Saints fall victim to what you call pseudo scholarship.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 08:37 Sometimes people mistake having read about something as being an expert on that thing. There are things that I love to read about. I love to read about the creation of the universe, and all kinds of astrophysics. I'm certain that I couldn't do better than a D minus in any actual astrophysics class, because it involves math and I don't have that ability. But, sometimes people start to believe that because they're passionate about something, that that's the same thing as being an expert in that thing.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 09:11 If you were going in for a major surgery, and you're nervous. You say to your doctor, "So, where'd you get your medical degree?" "Medical degree? I don't have a medical degree. But, you know what I have? I've seen 1000 episodes of the TV show ER." It might even be, "I've watched 1000 surgeries." Now, that person probably will have more information, and have a better understanding. But, my guess is you're still going to want someone whose actually been certified by someone else as an expert in that. Not a self-appointed one.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 09:41 If someone feels the need to be an expert on some aspect of church history, well then maybe they need to go in and do the work to go get that PhD so that they can talk about it. Because half of the arguments they make, would be demonstrated as ahistorical, non-academic arguments their first year in graduate

school. Look, you can't make the argument that X proves that Joseph Smith is a liar about the gold plates, that's not an argument that can be proven.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 10:13 Pseudo academic research is when someone uses, in some ways, the tools of academia. Here's a source, but almost always lifted from a larger source with very little context given on the background of it, with no explanation to what the other sources are surrounding it, or mitigating it. Simply, here's a source.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 10:31 A great example of that, with Martin Harris. In 1838, a member of the church who apostatizes, and he attempts to persuade other members of the church to leave. The way he does it, he writes a letter to his friend and says, "Martin Harris told me that he never actually saw the plates. And in fact, the eight witnesses all never actually saw the plates." He just goes all down the line. He's writing to his friends saying, "None of these people actually ever saw the plates." Okay, well that is a source. It exists, it's a letter that exists from history. Is that the kind of evidence that should be destroying our faith and belief in whether or not the gold plates existed? Because Martin Harris reiterates dozens of times in his life that he saw the plates, Oliver Cowdery reiterates he saw the plates. David Whitmer, all throughout his life, as antagonistic as he was toward the church after his apostasy, reiterates that he actually saw the plates and actually saw the angel.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 11:35 Sometimes, people confuse the fact that there is a source about something from the past for that source actually being a credible one. Or even more so, one that should affect our faith. Yes, many people claim that Joseph Smith was a liar in the past, and many people claim that Jesus was too. I think a lot of times, it's simply because it's a shock to people. I was told none of the witnesses ever denied it. Well, according to the witnesses they never denied it. But, just because someone says that someone says something, in a conversation that I don't even know whether or not it existed, is not proof. I don't actually know, as a historian, whether or not it happened.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 12:15 As a historian, I footnote that and I say, "There was one apostate member of the church who once said they heard Martin Harris say ..." But, that would never trump Martin Harris' own statements. He's the one who had the miracle where he saw the angel. Only he is going to be able to tell you whether or not that happened, not some guy who claims he had a conversation, that's not good history. It's shock value of being able to say, "See? I bet you didn't know about this."

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 12:44 Again, the reality is there are lots of things that everyone doesn't know about church history, that your average Latter Day Saint, they're studying the scriptures, they're studying the publications of the church. My guess is, most of them aren't combing through the letter archives of the church history department. That means that it allows for people to make arguments, and to take things truly out of context, but especially out of historical context, out of the realm of what other sources exist that either mitigate that document, shed some kind of different light on it.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 13:16 Early detractors of Joseph Smith, many of them in Palmyra, would later sign affidavits to the effect that, "Oh yeah, Joseph told me that the whole thing was just made up, and that he was lying about it." Okay. Well first of all, that wouldn't stand up in any court of law, someone saying that someone told them years earlier that they'd made up ... That's not how that works. So, are there detractors? Absolutely. Does the fact that there are detractors prove that Joseph didn't see God? By definition, it can't.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 13:52 If you're ever making that connection, if you're every saying, "Well, this person says this negative thing about Joseph," you're not doing history anymore. You're allowing emotion and opinion to determine it, but you're not making a historical judgment. A historical judgment can't determine whether or not a miracle happened.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 14:09 One of the more effective things to do, if you have a fairly antagonistic person talking to you about things or quotes that they've read, is to demonstrate their own lack of time that they've spent on the thing that they claim matters. "Well you know, Brigham Young said this, and this, and this." And the response can be okay, what sermon did he say that in?
- John Bytheway: 14:32 Yeah.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 14:32 When did he say it? What else did he say? "Well, I haven't read the whole thing." I know you haven't, actually, that's the whole point of the conversation, is you haven't read the whole thing.
- John Bytheway: 14:43 I do that all the time. When did he say it? Who was recording it? Was that his own monograph, or did somebody else write that in their journal?
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 14:51 Brigham Young did say some things that, to modern ears, are going to be odious. There's no question about that. But at the

same time, even those things that are recorded that way that he did say, because he was a product of his time the way we're products of ours, they are not who that person is. Brigham Young has, what, 1600 sermons that are available that people could read. There are literally millions of words that people could study to learn about Brigham Young. So when someone presents something like that, "Well, he said this," my guess is you haven't even read that sermon. So you're making a judgment about something, that you're saying has all kinds of import, that this is going to drive who I am, but without actually coming to a full understanding at all.

- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 15:42 Every person we study from the past is going to have aspects of their character, and especially their culture, that are reprehensible to us. If you want to feel better about yourself, if you want to be able to slap yourself on the back about what a great boy or girl you are, then you can study history that way and you'll come away, "Ah, I'm just so much smarter and better than people in the past." But, you won't actually understand why they did what they did, or who they really were. 100 years from now, people are going to be looking at you saying, "What a terrible, odious person. I can't believe they did this, that they said this, that they ... "
- John Bytheway: 16:20 If they're talking about you, at all.
- Dr. Gerrit Dirk...: 16:22 Which they won't be.
- John Bytheway: 16:23 That's what I love about this whole Joseph Smith story. That Moroni tells him, "Your name's going to be had for good and evil in 200 years." Any teenager says that to you today you'd be like, "Oh, sure." Look at what we're doing today, it's amazing.