



*“The Word of God Grew and Multiplied”*

## **Show Notes & Transcripts**

### **Podcast General Description:**

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

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

### **Podcast Episode Descriptions:**

#### **Part 1:**

How does understanding God's nature help us understand missionary work and priesthood authority? Dr. Michael Goodman explores the expanding Church, Peter's growth, and God's prophetic pattern for teaching His children.

#### **Part 2:**

Dr. Goodman examines Paul’s missionary struggles, journeys, and the power we obtain through challenges when relying on the Lord.

# Timecodes:

## Part 1

- 00:00 Part 1–Dr. Michael Goodman
- 01:11 Introduction of Dr. Michael Goodman
- 03:12 Background and context
- 04:49 God’s plan involves everyone
- 07:56 Teaching Jews and then Gentiles
- 08:55 Understanding the nature of God
- 10:17 Cornelius’s vision and conversion
- 13:25 Peter’s vision of clean animals and missionary work
- 17:03 Policy, programs, and progress
- 19:03 Edmund from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
- 20:11 Is it salvific?
- 22:30 The Cornelius story continues
- 25:20 God is no respecter of persons
- 30:04 God is biased toward His children
- 31:58 Elder Bednar teaches how God teaches
- 34:08 The prophetic pattern
- 36:13 Acts 10 and Article of Faith 9
- 37:41 Converting to Christianity questions
- 40:30 The Holy Ghost and the power to remember
- 42:05 The persecution of Stephen
- 46:48 Learning to accept Saints
- 50:29 Herod Agrippa, James, and Peter imprisoned
- 55:20 Trusting God and His timing
- 59:42 Emily Watts’ story of a pioneer girl
- 1:02:18 Elder Foster shares a story about a girl that drowned
- 1:05:25 John Mark is introduced
- 1:08:04 Paul and Barnabas and a sorcerer
- 1:13:15 The History of Israel in Acts
- 1:15:50 Paul’s success
- 1:19:49 End of Part 1–Dr. Michael Goodman

## Part 2

- 00:00 Part II–Dr. Michael Goodman
- 00:07 Paul goes to southern Galatian cities and heal
- 03:47 The Lord’s work will go forward through opposition
- 05:52 Faith that things will “work out”
- 08:40 Today’s challenges vs early Saints’
- 10:45 The Lord is interested in our eternal welfare, not daily comfort

- 12:03 The Lord walks with us through trials
- 14:40 Dr. Goodman shares his experience with cancer
- 18:11 Acts 15 Paul and Barnabas in Antioch
- 24:22 The majority never rules
- 29:55 The Lord allows the Saints to struggle to understand revelation
- 32:14 The Saints today and in the primitive church should be Spirit-led
- 34:10 President Packer shares story about a young mom attending church
- 36:42 Cultural expectations vs the Lord's expectations
- 39:19 President Hinckley and how the First Presidency deliberate
- 42:04 Dr. Goodman shares a story about fulfilling a calling and teaching at a prison
- 49:24 Inspiration needs information
- 52:32 Self-doubt when callings and policy change
- 55:44 Women need to participate in councils
- 59:26 Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark and member retention
- 1:02:40 Dr. Goodman shares his thoughts on Acts 10-15
- 1:07:45 End of Part II—Dr. Michael Goodman

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Michael A. Goodman is the RSC's associate publications director. He has worked for the Church Educational System since 1989 and was the manager of CES College Curriculum before joining the Department of Church History and Doctrine in 2007. He holds a bachelor's degree in journalism with a public relations, a master's degree in information technology, and a PhD in marriage, family, and human development. He is a co-investigator on the Family Foundations of Youth Development longitudinal research project. His research focus is on adolescent and family faith development and mental health outcomes with a special emphasis on suicidality. He has been married to Tiina Anita Goodman from Lahti, Finland, since 1985.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:03	Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name's Hank Smith. I'm here with the amazing John Bytheway. Welcome, John.
John Bytheway:	00:00:09	Thank you. Good to be here.
Hank Smith:	00:00:11	John, last week we looked at our little Christian church growing and meeting serious persecution with Stephen being martyred, but we saw Philip have some success. And then the major event of that lesson was the conversion of Paul. Paul is now in the church and, I think, has added an incredible amount of fuel to the fire. John, what do you see coming next for our church?
John Bytheway:	00:00:34	Well, this is huge. The Lord has to get them to think of things and think of the world in a whole new way and their work in a whole new way. So some pretty pivotal chapters.
Hank Smith:	00:00:47	I think there's some bigger things on the horizon than maybe they saw. We're joined this week by Dr. Mike Goodman. Mike, what do you think is on the docket for our little Christian church here?
Dr. Michael Goodman:	00:00:57	I think it's going to experience some very major growing and growing pains as it's learning how to see things a little bit more as heavenly Father sees them.
Hank Smith:	00:01:07	Beautiful. John, why don't you introduce Mike to our audience. He's been here before, hasn't he?
John Bytheway:	00:01:11	Yes, he has. We're so glad to have him back too. This is Dr. Michael A. Goodman, and he is the RSCs. Now, we know what that means, Hank. That's the Religious Studies Center's associate publications director. <a href="http://Rsc.byu.edu">Rsc.byu.edu</a> , if they want to see some of those excellent publications they do. Dr. Goodman has worked for the church educational system since 1989, was the manager of CES College Curriculum before joining the Department of Church History and Doctrine in 2007.

00:01:43 He holds a bachelor's degree in journalism with a public relations emphasis, a master's degree in IT. Everybody loves the IT guy in the office and a PhD in marriage, family and human development. He is a co-investigator on the Family Foundations of Youth Development longitudinal research project.

00:02:03 His research focus is on adolescent and family faith development and mental health outcomes with a special emphasis on suicidality. He has been married to Tina Anita Goodman from Lahti, Finland since 1985. And personal note, he serves in a branch presidency in the MTC and was there when my son, Matthew, was on his mission. So that means a lot to me because he texted me and said, "I saw Matthew today. He looks great." And so I have a personal debt of gratitude to you, Dr. Goodman. So thank you for being with us today.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:02:39 Happy to be here.

Hank Smith: 00:02:41 We love having you, Mike. On a personal note, Mike has dealt with some serious trials over the years. How many times have you dealt with cancer, Mike?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:02:49 I'm on my fourth right now.

Hank Smith: 00:02:52 Okay.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:02:53 So it's all good.

Hank Smith: 00:02:53 And how are you doing?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:02:54 I'm alive. I'm doing great. I've gotten three of them down. I got one that doesn't want to go away right now, but we're working on it.

Hank Smith: 00:03:03 I think it's inspiring for people to know that our guests are not just supermen or superwomen that don't have to experience life.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:03:11 We definitely get life. We all experience mortality.

Hank Smith: 00:03:15 Mike, looking at this week's lesson, here's what the Come, Follow Me manual says. It says, "During his mortal ministry, Jesus Christ often challenged people's long held traditions and beliefs. This didn't stop after he ascended into heaven as he continued to guide his church by revelation." So that seems to be the opening right to what we're going to look at today. The

name of the lesson is The Word of God Grew and Multiplied. Is that what we're looking at?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:03:39

That's what we're looking at. Acts chapters 10 through 15.

Hank Smith: 00:03:42

Where do you want to start us out? Should we do a little background or should we just jump into chapter 10?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:03:47

Well, if you'll let me be rebellious a little bit, I'd actually like to start before the background.

Hank Smith: 00:03:52

Oh, okay. Wow. The background.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:03:54

The background of the background. So you've brought Paul into the picture, and that's going to become a very important part of what we do, especially basically from chapters 13 on.

00:04:03

Having said that, Acts chapter 10 is a beautiful chapter that to be very frank, many people don't think very much of. It's where we go from the church being specifically Jewish-centric to the first conversion of a Gentile and then beginning to become a more worldwide church.

00:04:22

To be very frank, many of us, if you've been raised in the Christian faith, that's just part of the story. You just don't think about it. But especially today, especially with Gen Z and some of our younger members and others, it's hard to fathom a God who would limit the church to a specific people, especially in today's world where basically acceptance and tolerance is seen as that's almost the prime directive.

00:04:50

And I wanted to start out by making sure that we were clear from the days of Adam forward, the plan has always involved everyone. But how that's worked has differed depending on the circumstances of the people. But I think you really have to start what we're looking at today by taking a look at the Abrahamic covenant, and I'm not going to do a half hour on the Abrahamic covenant, I promise.

00:05:15

But think about the words in Abraham chapter 2. Let me just read a little bit to you. "My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning. Therefore, my hand shall be over thee." And then listen to this wording for Abraham, "And I will make thee Abraham a great nation. I will bless thee above measure. I will make thy name great among all nations. Thou shall be a blessing unto thy seed after thee." And now, listen to this, "That

in their hands, they shall bear this ministry and priesthood unto all nations."

00:05:54 From the beginning, from Adam all the way through to Abraham, and then from Abraham forward, the goal, heavenly Father's goal has always been to save all of his children. You think about the Savior's last words to his disciples, right? "Go ye therefore, and teach some nations." No, teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost.

00:06:16 I want to make sure we have that big picture vision, but we also have to acknowledge reality. There have been a dozen times in scriptural history where God or his prophets have limited who they've worked with. Think about the brother of Jared and the people around the Tower of Babel. Think about Adam and Cain's descendants. Think about Enoch in Canaan. Think about Abraham, the Chaldeans.

00:06:42 Think about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They didn't go teaching amongst the Palestinians. Moses the Egyptians, and I can go on and on and on, but you go right down to this story, and this is Christ who set up his church in the meridian of time.

00:06:57 But think of what he said in Matthew chapter 10, verse 5. He explicitly commanded the 12, "Don't go to the Gentiles." Then in Matthew 15, he says, "I wasn't sent to the Gentiles. I was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

00:07:14 So you've got this situation where we know if you know the nature of God, and I hope we do. We know he loves all of his children. He doesn't play favorites. And yet we have times when it has been limited in how it's been approached. And I would simply have a start today with the understanding that limitation is never because God doesn't want to save all of his children. He always, always, always does. But there are times when it's not the right thing at that time to go to all people. So I'm not a preacher. I'm a teacher. So can I ask you two a couple questions?

Hank Smith: 00:07:57 Please, do. John will answer them.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:07:58 Wonderful. Why might Christ have told the apostles, "Don't go to the Gentiles, and I'm not going to the Gentiles"? Why do you think that might have been?

John Bytheway: 00:08:07 One of the thoughts I had was he's preparing them to do that. They're not done with their MTC yet.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:08:14 Okay. Excellent.

John Bytheway: 00:08:17 They're going to bear the ministry. It's a burden. The burden is to take the gospel. It's a blessing, but it's also part of the Abrahamic covenant. Your job is to take the gospel to everyone. So everyone's always been part of it, but maybe they're not ready yet. That's a guess.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:08:32 Okay. There's a shot. Excellent. Hank, what do you think?

Hank Smith: 00:08:34 It reminds me a little bit of the laborers in the vineyard, that there's some called in at six in the morning, some at nine, some at noon, some at three, some at four. Everybody finishes the same. And I remember Elder Oaks saying something to the effect of those who are maybe not laboring formally in the vineyard are being prepared in other ways-

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:08:53 There we go.

Hank Smith: 00:08:54 ... by the Lord.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:08:55 Yeah. Excellent. I would simply want those listening to understand, we always have to start with what we understand about the nature of God. God loves all of his children, and the fact that, at certain times it may be limited isn't an implication that heavenly Father doesn't love. We know he wants to save all, but sometimes, there might be preparation that's needed.

00:09:18 Sometimes, there might be a people not ready for the gospel. Sometimes, his covenant people may not be ready to share. We've kind of seen that a lot in the Old Testament in the beginning here. I would have as our theme song for today, 2 Nephi 26, where the Savior teaches well, where we hear, and he invited them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness.

00:09:40 And he deny none that come unto him, Black and white, bond and free, male and female. And he remembereth the heathen and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile. So there's our foundation. There's our little piece that helps us to begin to make better sense of what we see in chapters 10 through 15.

Hank Smith: 00:10:02 Excellent. That's really helpful because Peter's going to struggle, even the... We would say the president of the church or the

prophet of the church at the time. He's even going to, "What is this about?"

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:10:13

That's right. So with that, shall we jump into 10?

Hank Smith: 00:10:17

Let's go.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:10:18

All right. Verse 1. You always have to start with the beginning, right? There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band. And I would simply give us a little bit of a staging there. There's two places called Caesarea, one Caesarea Maritima and one Caesarea Philippi.

00:10:37

They're different places. This is the one that's on the coast. It was largely a Gentile city, north of Jerusalem, and it was the head of the Roman government in Judea. So it was an important place. And you've got Cornelius, who is a centurion, which is one who we generally think of centurion, someone who's in charge of a hundred, by this time, is usually a couple hundred at least. But it was a soldier with quite a bit of authority, and he's called of the Italian band.

00:11:08

The normal translation of that is the Italian cohort, which means it might have been a group of soldiers that were largely from Italy. There's some challenge with timing on that because the Italian cohort, or the Italian band actually was probably a little later than this date. So we don't know the details there. We simply know we've got Cornelius in a very big city that got great authority and is a really good man.

Hank Smith: 00:11:38

Yeah. Devout man.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:11:39

Yes. Verse 2, a devout man, one who feared God with all his house. So Cornelius is going to have a visionary experience, and it says in verse 3, "He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour" that the Greek there is definitively, "he saw a vision, and he saw an angel come to him." And I love the angel kind of soft pedals to start with, "Cornelius, it's okay. Don't be afraid. I'm here. You've done good. God knows you've done good. Now I need you to send to Joppa and call for one Simon whose surname is Peter." He's lodging with a tanner. And then I love this.

00:12:22

He, meaning Peter, shall tell thee what thou ought to do. Now, think about that for a sec. You've got an angel who certainly knows the job description and knows what Cornelius needs to

do, but he says, "No. I need you to go to Peter because Peter's the one who's got to direct you in what you're doing."

00:12:43 And I think there's great power in that. Joseph Smith actually added a really fun thought to that. He said this, "No wonder the angel told good old Cornelius that he must send for Peter to learn how to be saved. Peter could baptize, and the angel could not, so long as there was a legal officer in the flesh holding the keys of the kingdom or the authority of the priesthood."

00:13:06 So there was a reason why that authorized servant, i.e. Peter had to be the one that was going to share the story with him.

Hank Smith: 00:13:14 That's fantastic. Yeah.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:13:15 So Cornelius is obedient. He tells his servants... And by the way, you can tell by what he says and how he says it, his servants seem to be believers also unto their master. They were devout. We'll just put it that way.

00:13:30 And so, they send for Peter. Well, while they're traveling, Peter's having his own visionary experience on the next day, sixth hour, which would be about noon. Verse 10 says, "He fell into a trance." I know that has a strange sound to it, but basically, he began a visionary experience.

00:13:49 This vision, I think, many people who know the Bible aren't familiar with it. The thing that looked like a sheet is lowered down from heaven, and it's got all these animals on it, some that would be quote-unquote, "clean," some that would be not clean based on Israeli law and Jewish custom.

00:14:08 And the voice says to Peter, "Rise, Peter. Kill and eat." But Peter said, "Whoa, no way. Not so, Lord." Now by the way, that takes guts to tell God no for the servant, whoever it is, right? Not so, Lord, for I've never eaten anything that is common or unclean. But listen to what the voice says here, and the voice spake unto him, again, the second time what God has cleansed that call thou not common.

00:14:42 Now if you look into the Greek, that common is often translated as unholy.

Hank Smith: 00:14:49 Yeah. Profane.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:14:50 Profane, exactly. And so you've got this situation. And by the way, it happens three times. The Lord seems to like things in

threes that way, Joseph Smith and others. And so it's interesting. He did not say to Peter, "Hey, this is clean. Don't naysay what I say is clean." Look what he said, what God has cleansed, that call thou not common. Now, not wanting to split hairs, but I do think it's really, really important that we recognize that prior to this vision, if Peter would've thought to himself, "I think I'm going to go eat some lobster and some other things that are contrary to the law of Moses, some pork, time for a little bacon," he would not have been justified in that, not because the pork was evil. Pork has never been evil. Ask anyone who eats bacon, right?

Hank Smith: 00:15:44

Yeah, sure. Smells great.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:15:46

Yeah. But it was unclean for them because God had said so. When we talk about things like that, we're often talking about what we call policies or procedures. The violation, if someone would've eaten kashruts, something that was not kosher, it's not because the food itself was evil. But it was something the Lord asked ancient Israel to do to separate them kind of what we were talking about earlier and to help them to be a holy people.

00:16:22

And so, you have a policy in place. It's not eternal. We have no evidence that Adam ate kosher. So we've got this policy that, by the way, the policy came from God. You can't just say it was a dumb policy.

Hank Smith: 00:16:37

Yeah.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:16:38

Came from God through Moses. God can and does adjust policies, procedures based on the needs of people. In other words, what we're seeing here in this vision, just if you stayed with food and we're about to see that it's not about food, but just if you stayed with food, you begin to see quickly that this isn't the changing of an eternal doctrine.

00:17:03

This is the changing of a current policy that God had put in place. And so God can say, "It has been cleansed. I have declared these things clean. Therefore, don't call it unholy. Don't call it common."

00:17:20

It actually reminded me of a statement from President Uchtdorf, and this is one of dozens that say basically the same thing. "Procedures, programs, policies, and patterns of organization are helpful for our spiritual progress here on earth. But let's not forget that they are subject change."



00:17:39 In contrast, the core of the gospel, the doctrine and the principles will never change. In a world today where we're seeing prophets like President Nelson, he's a change artist. How many things has he done? And to be very frank, some people get a little bit uncomfortable with that. I think it's crucial that we learn to differentiate between eternal doctrine, that which is based on eternal principles that can't and won't change.

00:18:10 The Atonement isn't one day going to become less central to our faith, separating that from principles and policies such as eating kosher which can and, in this case, are about to change. Not yet though. We're going to get to chapter 15 before we do that.

Hank Smith: 00:18:26 Fantastic. Mike, I just want to do a quick tangent off of this verse if it's okay with both of you. I like that statement. I'm taking it out of context here. So I need everybody to understand that this isn't a great way to read scripture, to just find a statement. But sometimes, you can find one, John calls them a sermon in a sentence, and it's this statement, "What God hath cleansed call not thou common." I think we can do that with people that when people have repented, when they have done their best to make a change, let them change.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:18:59 Yes.

Hank Smith: 00:19:00 Let people change. Move on. Forgive. I can see that in the Chronicles of Narnia, when Edmund comes back and repents. And Aslan says something to the effect of, "He and I have talked about it. There is no need to speak of it again," probably taking that statement out of context, but I like it.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:19:18 Oh, I think it's such an important principle though, Hank. And by the way, I just read that statement from Aslan to Edmund yesterday. So your timing is really-

Hank Smith: 00:19:25 Oh, you did?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:19:29 I did. I did. But I think it is crucial that we allow the Lord to do his work. In fact, that's going to be a major theme throughout these five chapters, is God's continuing to do his work, and his continuing to do his work doesn't have to create anxiety of, "Oh my goodness, what's going to change next?"

00:19:46 Again, what are the eternal truths that will not change? I actually wrote a little article. It was a big long article, and that was published in BYU studies last year that looked at this issue.

And I don't want to go into great detail, but in the last 30, 40 years, the brethren have basically repeatedly used three criteria to determine whether you can look at something and say, "This is not going to change."

00:20:11 One is eternity. In other words, look back from Adam forward. Have you ever seen it different? Look at what prophets are saying. Do they say it's eternal? So the very fact that it has stayed the same is one of the ways that we can know that. Two, look at the united voice of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, not an individual member, but the united voice. And three, does it have to do with salvation for all people at all times?

00:20:39 So kosher was absolutely crucial for Peter up until these chapters that we're hitting here, but kosher wasn't crucial for Adam, and it's not crucial for us. And so understanding those three things, eternity, united voice of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, and salvific. Is it salvific? Then you can say, "Okay. I know Jesus is going to stay the Christ." Heavenly Father is our heavenly Father. We know the truths that aren't going to change. Then it becomes what Elder Maxwell says. It becomes high adventure as we watch the Lord do his work. So are we ready to go on?

Hank Smith: 00:21:18 Yup. I call this the pigs in a blanket vision just because the pig keeps getting wrapped up in the blanket, and comes back down and keeps getting wrapped up. It happens over and over. And fascinating that Peter doesn't seem to get it the first time.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:21:31 No.

Hank Smith: 00:21:32 He's like, "No. I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to eat that."

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:21:34 And even by the third time, he hasn't gotten it. Look at verse 17. Now, while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, so in other words, I don't get it. I'm at a loss. That's when all of a sudden, you hear a knock on the door, so to speak, and you've got Cornelius's servants coming to get him.

John Bytheway: 00:21:54 It's not just Peter's lifetime. It's what he's been taught in history. This is centuries. This is millennia of practicing the law of Moses about clean and unclean animals. So one vision going, "Okay. Change that." I can see that.

Hank Smith: 00:22:10 Yeah, I can see why he'd-

John Bytheway: 00:22:12 And Peter might be going, "Oh, give me a minute. Give me a minute."

Hank Smith: 00:22:15 Little hesitant. Yeah.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:22:17 And we're going to see going forward, it's not just Peter, obviously. You've got others who... We've got to learn to give the benefit of the doubt to folks instead of villainizing them. Others who are doing their best holding onto truth that they believe is central.

00:22:33 They're also going to have to work through this process of, "Okay. Wait, maybe the Lord can do something different." And we are talking millennia here. This isn't a 50-year policy. This has been in place since Moses.

00:22:47 Well, okay, we have this group come and they say, "Hey Peter, come talk to our master, Cornelius." They say, "Cornelius was warned by an angel to call for you." And so Peter goes with them. And when he got there, he found that Cornelius had gathered his family and those of his household together. And go to verse 28 with me, if you would.

00:23:12 And he said unto them, "Ye know how that it is unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or to come into one of another nation." That's possibly a little bit of an overstatement because they had interactions. But there were certain interactions that weren't legal by the Mosaic law. But then look at this, but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

00:23:40 So you can see Peter's beginning to... His eyes are beginning to open. He's going, "Oh wait, this wasn't necessarily just about food." He's making the connection to where in the past, to be very frank, there were some not kind feelings between Jews and Gentiles, and the Lord's saying, "Hey, what I have cleansed call thou not common."

Hank Smith: 00:24:05 It's time to move on from-

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:24:06 Time to move, which, by the way is again, go back to how we started today. It's the Lord moving them to where he always wanted them to be, but he needed both groups of people ready to be there.

- 00:24:20 He then shares that he had had this vision. This is Cornelius's vision, "I sent to thee, Peter, and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore, are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."
- 00:24:39 We all have Corneliuses in our life, good people that are not members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, people that are like this, that are just salt of the earth goodness that the Lord's waiting for us to see as he sees and be ready to invite as Peter's about to invite Cornelius. Cornelius not only was pious himself, but he'd clearly taught his household because they were there with him waiting to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.
- 00:25:16 This is where Peter's going to continue this eye-opening experience. Verse 34, "Then, Peter opened his mouth and said, 'Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him and work a righteousness is accepted with him. The word which God sent him to the children of Israel and preaching peace by Jesus Christ.'"
- 00:25:44 And then he's going to pivot and bring in the Savior. But before we go to the pivot, think of what Peter's saying here. He's saying that, "Listen, I, in the past, had thought being chosen meant that we were the uncommon or we were the clean ones. We were the holy ones. But now, I'm beginning to see actually that... or isn't the way heavenly Father sees his children." I love this term, God is no respecter of persons. Now, think about this with me for a minute.
- 00:26:16 Sometimes, especially in this world that we live in, that is, to be very frank, often quite... What's the right word? Doesn't necessarily believe in standards, doesn't necessarily believe in objective truth, in eternal law.
- 00:26:31 Many times, people take a statement like this, "God is no respecter of persons." And basically, take that to mean. Therefore, no matter what you do, no matter what you think, no matter what you say, you're pleasing to God and there should only be acceptance for no matter what it is a person thinks or feels. But I want you to look back at verse 35. That's not what the Lord's saying here. I don't think God wants us to be afraid of him, that the root to that is generally to respect him. Those who respect see God for who God is and that work righteousness, you can see that that clearly fits Cornelius.
- 00:27:10 And so the concept of God is no respecter of persons, doesn't mean God doesn't still have a plan for his children to help them

become like him. And it's not that we should simply accept anyone and everything for what they say, what they do, what they believe. I believe what he's, what Peter seems to be learning here and what the Lord's trying to teach is that all of God's children, there's nobody that by virtue of who they are is not loved. Is not a child of God, is not wanted, is not part of God's plan. What God is desperately trying to do as Elder Holland so clearly teaches is he will take you exactly where you are. Just don't plan on staying where you are because he's going to continue to ask us to grow. He's going to ask us to honor him, to respect him, to fear him, to use this language, and he's going to ask us to work righteousness. And you see that with Cornelius.

John Bytheway: 00:28:10

That phrase was a kind of stumbling block for me as a teenager. It confused me. God is no respecter of persons because it sounds like what it's saying is God doesn't respect people. What it really means is, how would you phrase that? He doesn't treat you differently with respect to you, I have this, but with respect to you, I don't have. Do you know what I mean? What is a better phrase for that? I wonder, another Bible translation might help us or something because that always required explanation for me as a teenager, God is no re- He doesn't respect people because then in the next verse, nations that fear him, that respect God, we all should respect God. So how do you explain that when you teach what that phrase means?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:28:58

God does not play favorites. So you've got no one by virtue of who they are is disqualified from exaltation. Every person we ever meet is a child of God that God is seeking to save. He can't save us if we don't come to him. And so he's going to require us to come to him and to work works of righteousness. In other words, to become like him. But we start all of us on the reality that God loves all of us. We all belong. God wants to save all of his children.

John Bytheway: 00:29:35

Okay. So King James says, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." New American Standard says, "I most certainly now understand God does not want to show partiality." NIV, then Peter began to speak, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism. New Living Translation, "I see very clearly that God doesn't show partiality." Okay. Thank you for letting me do that. I just thought that might be helpful to some.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:30:04

One of the things I teach my students in my classes at BYU, this is going to sound wrong, but work with me for a sec. I teach them that God is very biased. What I mean by that is God is purposefully trying to save. Sometimes, we mistake God for

justice. Justice as you hold, that scale up. If you're saved, you're saved. If you're damned, you're damned.

00:30:26 Oh, well, God's not lady justice. God is purposefully trying to save us. He's doing, I mean, he gave his only-begotten son to save us. And so God is very biased, but he's equally biased. He doesn't play favorites. He's trying to save all of his children.

Hank Smith: 00:30:44 I think I said this earlier, that we have record of God speaking to the Jews. That's our record that we have, and we all sometimes assume he's not talking to anybody else when he very much is directing and preparing other people.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:30:59 Yes. Absolutely. Well, Peter's eyes are opening. He's beginning to see things that he hadn't seen before. One of the things that I hope those who listen get out of this chapter, and it's going to continue as we go through the next three or four chapters. This is a line upon line process for Peter as our own spiritual learning is a line upon line process. He starts out. He sees this vision of animals and he goes, "I don't really know what this means."

00:31:32 And then he comes down a little bit and goes, "Mmm, God might be not talking about animals and food but people. And then he comes down here and he's going, "Oh wow." No, God is completely trying to save all of us. And so Peter is learning line upon line. You and I are learning line upon line. I hope we can find peace in realizing well, "It's okay."

00:31:58 It's okay to continue to seek to learn. Elder Bednar put it this way, "Many of us typically assume that we'll receive an answer or prompting to earnest prayers and pleadings." We also frequently expect that such an answer or prompting will come immediately and all at once. Thus, we tend to believe the Lord will give us a big answer quickly and all at one time. However, the pattern repeatedly described in the scriptures suggest that we receive line upon line, precept upon precept, or in other words, many small answers over a period of time.

00:32:31 You can see that in chapter 10 explicitly recognizing and understanding this pattern is an important key to obtaining inspiration and help from the Holy Ghost. So I think Peter's modeling pretty nicely how you and I can learn to gain personal revelation ourselves.

Hank Smith: 00:32:49 In the Come, Follow Me manual, I think it's one of the first headings. God is no respecter of persons. For generations, the Jews had believed that being of the seed of Abraham or a literal

descendant of Abraham meant that a person was accepted and chosen by God. They considered anyone else an unclean Gentile who was not accepted by God.

- 00:33:09 But in Acts chapter 10, "What did the Lord teach Peter about who is accepted with him? What evidence do you find in this chapter that Cornelius's life was acceptable to the Lord?" And then the next paragraph, "Like the Jews who looked down on those who were not of the seed of Abraham, do you ever catch yourself making unkind or uninformed assumptions about someone who is different from you?" How can you overcome this tendency?
- 00:33:33 And it gives an activity that you might do. It says, it might be interesting to try a simple activity for the next few days. Whenever you interact with someone, try to think to yourself, "This person is a child of God." As you do this, what changes do you notice in the way you interact with others? Great little insight there.
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:33:50 Beautiful.
- John Bytheway: 00:33:51 Isn't it true that by the Book of Mormon definition, the three of us are Gentiles on this podcast?
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:33:57 Gentiles?
- Hank Smith: 00:33:58 Yeah.
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:33:58 And that's right.
- John Bytheway: 00:34:01 Gentiles means the nations, and it was kind of the others and-
- Hank Smith: 00:34:06 The not us-
- John Bytheway: 00:34:07 Not us.
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:34:08 We're part of that. Once Peter comes to this understanding, then he begins to share with Cornelius in his household about Christ and him crucified. One of the things I love in these chapters is as Peter, as Paul, as Barnabas and others go out, they always, and we're going to talk about this a little bit later, they always start where the people are and then they always move them to Christ.
- 00:34:31 And that's what you see here, verses 38 through 43, we won't read them. But if I could leave a thought on them, this is a

pattern that we see the Lord use constantly. You've got 38 where it's the good news. In other words, as Jesus Christ, 39, God called witnesses. And then 41, not everyone gets that witness, but some of us do. Verse 42, then God commands those of us who got that witness to go out and teach, and hence you can see what I call the prophetic pattern.

00:35:05 It is the way the Lord works. It's this sensationalism. It's the reality that heavenly Father works through prophets to help bring truth and power and authority to all of his children in an attempt to save them.

00:35:18 And as Peters speaking, "Well, they begin to feel the Holy Spirit." Look at verse 44, "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them, which heard the word, and they of the circumcision," because Peter... We didn't mention this. Peter brought six friends with him, six people from Jerusalem. They of the circumcision, which believed were astonished as many as came with Peter because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. Oh my goodness.

Hank Smith: 00:35:49 They didn't see that coming.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:35:49 They did not see that coming. Right? That's where Peter says, "Okay. They've gotten the Holy Spirit." Just like us, who can deny them the chance to make a covenant with God, to be baptized. And so it's a powerful chapter.

Hank Smith: 00:36:03 It seems like maybe some had the thought, you've got to be a Jew before you can convert to Christianity or something.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:36:09 We're going to see that. Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:36:10 Okay.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:36:11 That's next chapter. Yep.

Hank Smith: 00:36:14 This chapter, Acts chapter 10, always brings to mind Article of Faith number nine. We believe all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal, and we believe he will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God. I frequently tell my students, "I don't think that's been rescinded."

00:36:34 I don't think that the Lord has said, "Well, all the great and important things are out. It's done from here on out." We're doing small and trivial, seems that being part of the Latter-day



Church means being prepared for new, great and important things.

- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:36:49 As President Nelson says, "Take your vitamins. We've got work to do." This is why I think it becomes so important that we learn to recognize what prophets, seers, and revelators are saying are eternal truths that won't change because we've got a lot of these kind of things, policies and procedures that are about to change and have changed and must change so that the Lord can do his work.
- Hank Smith: 00:37:12 I think a modern-day application of this can be something like the presentation of the endowment. The endowment itself doesn't change. It's the spiritual power that comes from God. But the presentation of the endowment, this is something I've learned from my friend, Anthony Sweat, the presentation of the endowment can change. But that doesn't change the endowment, the power.
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:37:31 Yes. It's a great example. And by the way, Anthony's books are great. I strongly recommend them. So very good. Chapter 11.
- Hank Smith: 00:37:40 Okay. Let's keep going. Yeah.
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:37:41 Chapter 11, we can do fairly quickly, but I think it hearkens to a little something that John said earlier. There were some members of the church who believed that in order to come unto Christ, you had to start by coming unto Judaism. If you look at verse one, the apostles and the brethren that were in Judea heard the Gentiles had also received the word of God. So word came back. Peter just had this amazing experience with Cornelius, verse two. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision, contended with him. Now-
- Hank Smith: 00:38:16 Here we go. Yeah.
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:38:19 And that they that are of the circumcision can be one of two things. One, anyone who's Jewish is of the circumcision. So in other words, it could be Jewish, Christian converts. It also could be a specific group within the Jewish Christian converts who were holding more tightly to what they'd held to before.
- Hank Smith: 00:38:42 Their own policy.
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:38:42 That's right. I would have us be a little more gentle with them, not that what they were wanting and saying was right, but can

we give them the benefit of the doubt that they were simply trying to help all people stay covenant connected to Christ? And they believed that in order to do that, you had to fulfill the law of Moses, the Jewish law, before... They didn't want to stop them there. They wanted them to come to Christ. These were believers, but they were believers who thought you still had to come through the door of Judaism.

00:39:14 But it's interesting, if you go to verse three, and maybe it's just a lack of information in the scriptures, it doesn't look like they're overly worried about them receiving the word of God. They're more worried that Peter ate with them. Verse three saying, "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them."

00:39:33 And remember we talked about this earlier, there were kosher laws, and those kosher laws partially separated Israel from their neighbors. And so this comment would not have been out of line a week before because that requirement was still in place.

00:39:53 And so these are members. These are believers in Christ who are saying, "Wait. You can't do this." And now Peter is going to have to... And that's why we can go through this chapter pretty quickly. Peter is going to rehearse them. Everything that just-

Hank Smith: 00:40:08 The vision he had.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:40:09 The vision he had. So we don't need to necessarily read all of that, though I do think, go to verse 16, this is kind of a neat little tidbit in the middle of it. He says in verse 15, the Holy Ghost fell on them.

00:40:20 Verse 16, "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he, Christ, said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." When I read that, I thought, "Oh, interesting."

00:40:37 When Christ said that, it didn't necessarily click anything in Peter's head, but Peter goes, and he has this revelatory experience, and he goes, and he meets with Cornelius who had a revelatory experiences. He sees Cornelius's household receive the Holy Ghost. And all of a sudden something that was said earlier, clicks, and he goes, "Oh, wait, didn't Christ say something about this?"

00:41:01 And it's to me another great example of we're learning line upon line. Sometimes, life experience is what it takes to help us

to go, "Oh, that's what the Lord meant by this." And so I thought that was just kind of a sweet little line upon line experience that he's having there.

Hank Smith: 00:41:18 Yeah, that is great. And you don't get that in the other chapter.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:41:20 That's right.

Hank Smith: 00:41:21 You don't get that little insight.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:41:22 Yeah. Reminded me of John 14:26 that God will bring all things back to our remembrance. That's one of the ways the Holy Spirit works with us is to bring things back to our remembrance.

Hank Smith: 00:41:32 And I love what Peter says in 17. He says, "God gave us the Holy Ghost, and he's giving them the Holy Ghost." What am I supposed to do?" Stop him? You want me to stop God from giving them this gift that he gives?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:41:48 That's right. If you look at verse 18, like, "Oh, everyone's figured it out." When they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God saying, "Then, hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." So I go, "Oh."

Hank Smith: 00:42:03 Oh, it's everybody. Yeah. We're good.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:42:05 We're going to see going forward, "We're still working on it." Then, we get this little switch going on where we're going to stop talking about Cornelius, and we're going to prepare ourselves to move a little bit towards Paul, but not yet because we've got chapter 12, and that's still Peter.

00:42:21 But we do have this interesting thing where based on the persecutions that happened to Stephen, that's verse 19, different believers went out, and they began to preach the word, but they generally tried, or at that point, this is pre the Acts 10 that they were teaching only unto the Jews. But then, verse 20 comes and says, "And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, speak unto the Grecians preaching the Lord Jesus. Now the word Grecian, I'm not a Greek expert, but I depend on those who are, in the earliest manuscripts, it's translated two ways.

00:43:02 One, as Hellenist evidently referring to Jewish individuals who spoke Greek. And in other places, it's translated as Grecians, Greeks, meaning Gentiles. It almost looks like right here, you begin to see the fruit of Peter's vision, though I don't know if we

can go there at this point because the text isn't clear enough for us to know one way or the other.

00:43:28 But it sets the stage for these missions that are about to begin, chapter 13, actually, with Paul and Barnabas. We are actually introduced a little bit more to Barnabas. Barnabas came onto the scene earlier in Acts, and you got to love Barnabas.

00:43:44 Well, look at verse 24. He was a good man full of the Holy Ghost and the faith. And then, Barnabas goes and he says, "Hey, I got to meet up with Saul." And so it says they went. He went, verse 26, and he found him. And he brought him. He brought Saul unto Antioch, and it came to pass at a whole year, they assembled themselves with the church and taught much people.

00:44:10 And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. So you've got the beginning of this missionary work where the Lords... What did he say? Go forth teaching all nations. This is really the beginning of that fulfillment where Paul and Barnabas begin to teach clearly both Jew and non-Jew or Jew and Gentile.

00:44:36 And they ultimately begin to be called Christians, which we think was probably a derogatory at that point. It's basically partisans of Christ, those who believe in Christ. You've got the beginning of the story.

00:44:47 Now, one of the challenges we have, this is one of the joys of an ancient text. This area as we're going to see in chapters 13 and 14 is basically southern Galatia. And for most of history, the scholars have believed that it's these people, and people in 13 and 14 that we're about to see that Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians.

00:45:10 That may or may not be true. We don't know. There's an upper Galatia, and there's a lower Galatia. Upper Galatia is talked about in Acts chapter 16. Lower Galatia is chapter 14. One way or the other, this area begins to be the very first mission field for non-Jewish converts to Christianity.

John Bytheway: 00:45:31 So I recall that in Acts chapter 9, they refer to this movement as the way. Now, they're calling themselves Christians, And that's going to stick through the rest of the Book of Acts, isn't it? I underlined when it says... By the way, in the scriptures, did you underline when it says he was a good man just because that's your name?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:45:55 I did. I did. But I had not made that connection.

John Bytheway: 00:46:02 Oh, wow. I thought maybe you'd say, "That's my cousin, Barnabas, right there." Barnabas Goodman.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:46:05 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:46:05 Barnabas Goodman.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:46:08 Well, John, I've never done it before, but from this point forward, I will.

John Bytheway: 00:46:13 I thought you must be related to him because you're a Goodman too. What do we know about this, Agabus? I remember one of my mission companions talking about the Prophet Agabus because it refers to him that way.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:46:26 Yeah. There was evidently some people that came up from Jerusalem that were prophets, that were basically those who were believers in Christ, and we don't get a lot of information on them. We learn a little bit more in Acts chapter 21 about Agabus, but we don't really learn a lot more.

John Bytheway: 00:46:47 Interesting.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:46:48 If you think through this, what we've got is a situation where members of the church are having to learn to accept people that they haven't necessarily accepted before. All of us are going to have that experience in life, that wonderful person who comes and sits on the bench next to us and smell the cigarette smoke and you just realize they're not from here, and it's not the same thing.

00:47:10 I experienced a little bit of it myself when I was an investigator, which was when I was 17, 18 years old. I was definitely very non-LDS in my appearance and basic life. I had hair down to about here, and I had a full mustache. And I will simply say this, no one ever confused me for being a Latter-day Saint before."

00:47:32 And I remember when I walked into church the first time, eyes getting like this big, like, "Oh my goodness, what is he doing here?" And no one was mean to me. No one was rude to me. I had a sweet and loving. But for the next little bit because life started to change and, yes, even my appearance changed, my hair went to here to...

00:47:55 I remember when I cut it to about here, I thought, "I'm downright respectable now." And it started to change, and I began to look a little bit more of the part, but I was so grateful that people allowed me from a very rough background with a loving alcoholic family, with drug and alcohol addictions throughout our whole background.

00:48:16 They loved me for me, and they allowed me to begin to make the changes that I needed to make to come to the Savior. And I needed to make changes. It wasn't just my hair. But what would've happened if they would've not? What would've happened if they would've said, "Oh no. We know him. He does not fit here. He does not belong."

00:48:36 And so I think there's great power in us realizing that God loves us all and he's trying desperately to bring us all in. Hence, everyone needs to be loved and welcomed to come unto the Savior.

John Bytheway: 00:48:51 Perfect. Have either of you seen this new movie called the Jesus Revolution?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:48:57 Yeah. No. It's good. And it's exactly this.

John Bytheway: 00:49:01 Pastor had to decide if he wanted to let those who were described as hippies into his congregation. He had first said he just wanted them to take a bath, but it's a true story. And we enjoyed watching that great message of take people where they're at and let the Savior take them where they're not at.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:49:25 It's Jonathan Roumie, the one who plays Jesus in The Chosen is the hippie.

John Bytheway: 00:49:30 Yeah.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:49:30 Hippie preacher. So it's good. It's good. Okay. Chapter 12 is our little segue here. This is our last major chapter where we get Peter as the primary protagonist, if you want to call it that. It's a sad, happy chapter.

00:49:47 In fact, I think that's part of the message here. If you look at the chapter heading, the chapter starts with the martyrdom of James, the brother of John who's killed by Herod. Go to verse 1. Now, about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church, and he killed James, the brother of John with the sword.

- 00:50:07 It's a very sad reality that for the next three, 400 years, Christians are going to be largely persecuted, first amongst their own people, amongst the Jews, but also amongst the Romans. But James is killed. Herod's an interesting character. It's Herod Agrippa I. He was a grandson of Herod the Great, and he's an interesting character.
- 00:50:29 You read this chapter and you're going to think, "He is one bad dude," and that's probably somewhat true. Having said that, if you actually look in Jewish writings, they portray Herod Agrippa very favorably, very fair, and say he's very religiously observant. But as you're going to see, it's not going to work out well for him.
- 00:50:50 He's going to end up dying a horrible death at the end of the chapter. And we know that he does kill James. You've got the beginning of this is a really sad story, and then you're going to see that's taken and they're going to say... And he saw that pleased the Jews, which maybe there was a good relationship with the Jews, but not with the Christians.
- 00:51:08 And so, he took Peter, and he put Peter in jail, so to speak, in prison and guarded him with four quaternions, four squads of four soldiers, which sounds like a tremendous overkill, I think.
- 00:51:22 But he kept Peter in prison, verse 5. But prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him, the people of God, the members of the church realize Peter's now been captured. He's being held. And they know that James has just been killed. And so they're praying. They're exercising faith on his behalf. And the story of Peter's escape is just fun.
- 00:51:49 I don't know how else you'd put this. You've got an angel that comes, and Peter's sleeping between two soldiers bound with two chains, and there's people outside the door, guarding the door. They were very nervous that Peter was going to get out.
- 00:52:03 But then the angel comes and Peter's sleeping. The angel smacks him. Peter, wake up. And as soon as Peter kind of wakes up, his chains fall off, and Peter's like, "Oh my goodness." But clearly, he doesn't fully get it yet.
- 00:52:19 Verse 8, angel said unto him, "Gird thyself and bind on thy sandals." So he did. And he said, "Cast thy garment about thee." Peter's thinking as you're going to see in the next verse, he's thinking he's having a dream, but this is a reality that the angel is come to free him. Verse 9, he went out and followed him and

wist, not that it was true, which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision.

00:52:46 So Peter didn't even realize he was actually making an escape. He dreamed he was escaping or he thought he dreamed he was escaping. And so you've got Peter coming out, and the angel walks him out past the gate. And as soon as he gets past the gate, the angel goes away.

00:53:04 And Peter's like, "Oh, wow. What do I do now?" And so verse 12, he heads to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark. We're going to talk about John Mark in just a moment, but a faithful family. And then you've got this almost hilarious situation. 13, as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken named Rhoda, and when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood before the gate. Can you just envision this?

00:53:36 The iron gate that holds him in prison is no obstacle. The angel opens it up. But he can't get his friends to open the door. So I can go in. But they finally say, "Oh, wow. Wait. He's really out there. We hear someone banging, right?"

00:53:54 Verse 17, but he beckoning unto them. He, Peter, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace and declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of prison. And he said, "Go, shew these things unto James." James, we think would be the brother of Christ, the head of the church in Jerusalem, and the brethren, the other apostles, and he departed.

00:54:18 And so you've got, I think, this really powerful juxtaposition of two very disparate outcomes. You've got James, who I think we can safely say is no less righteous and good and valiant than Peter. And he's killed.

00:54:38 And you have Peter who goes through a comedy of errors is he's saved by this angel and brought back and delivered. I think I'm not the only one who looks at them and says, "Why is it that some people seem to receive miracles and others may not?" Why the disparate outcomes? What are your two thoughts on that?

Hank Smith:

00:55:04 It reminds me of, oh, you put Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego against Abinadi. And you think, "Why do some people get saved and some people not?"



John Bytheway: 00:55:14 The daughters of Onitah that got burned when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were saved.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:55:20 It made me think back to Elder Christofferson's conference address where he taught this principle. And I think it's really, really important that we understand what he was saying, which was, "Don't treat God like he's a vending machine." It's not put in your coins of righteousness and then you get out whatever you want.

00:55:40 But if it's okay, I'd like to read just a couple things from his conference talk. He said this. "God will indeed honor his covenants and promises to each of us. We need not worry about that. The atoning power of Jesus Christ who descended below all things and then ascended on high and who possesses all power in heaven and on earth ensures that God can and will fulfill his promises, no questions asked. It is essential that we honor and obey his laws, but not every blessing predicated on obedience to law is shaped, designed and timed according to our expectations.

00:56:20 We do our best, but must leave to him, God, the management of the blessings, both the temporal and the spiritual. President Brigham Young, explained that his faith was not built on certain outcomes or blessings, but on his witness of and relationship with Jesus Christ."

00:56:40 I think these are powerful principles because it's one of the age-old questions. If there's an all knowing, all loving, all powerful God, how can bad things keep happening? And why don't good people always get whatever they pray for? It's one of those situations where learning to trust, as Elder Maxwell said, in God's timing as well as his love becomes very important.

00:57:08 I know personally working through my fourth cancer right now, I would love to have my cancer removed, and I've had several priesthood blessings, but I've had two priesthood blessings that have been profoundly moving. I was blessed by a stake president who's one of the most righteous men I know. He is so good. And by a member of the 70 that both promised me that I would be healed. I still hold to that promise, but I still have cancer.

00:57:41 I would love to know what and how the Lord's going to do what and how he's going to do, but is my faith in God dependent on do I get what it is I think I want at a given time or as Brigham Young said, "It's not based on that. It's based on my relationship with and love of God."

00:58:05 And I think these two stories juxtaposed next to each other are kind of important reminders. We can trust God. You don't have to question whether his promises will be fulfilled, but he does not promise us a carefree problem-free mortality.

John Bytheway: 00:58:21 Yeah. Events in my own family, just really being taught that faith is not the first principle of the gospel. It's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:58:31 In Christ. Yes.

John Bytheway: 00:58:32 His outcomes or his methods of doing things and his timing are sometimes not what we want or expect. So we're backed up to the wall of faith in Christ, sometimes, as Elder Maxwell might say, which is a great lesson to learn. It doesn't make life easy, but it's nice to know that we can trust him and trust his love for us as you have said over and over today.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:58:56 That he'll walk with us. I don't always get what it is I'm asking, but I always get Him. He's the one who said it. He's the one who invited us, "Abide in me and I in you. Therefore, walk with me." That's what the Lord is asking us; to stay covenant connected to him. Come what may, no matter what life brings, mortality brings. Mortality is not fair. Life is not fair, but God is always fair. He will always give us fair plus. But it comes back to is my faith in outcomes or is my faith in Christ?

John Bytheway: 00:59:42 I have a friend and this poor soul was the person who edited most of my books at Deseret Book, and her name's Emily Watts. And I remember one time in a timeout for women, she told a story of a little girl, walking along the Pioneer Trail and very, very cold. And somebody in a wagon came by and said, "Do you want to ride?"

01:00:08 And she said, "Yes." And this man reached over and grabbed the little girl's hand with one hand and with his other hand said, "Yeah," and got the horses to start to trot or gallop or something. This little girl was running with everything she had, holding this man's hand and she thought, "This is the meanest man I've ever met."

01:00:31 Just about the time she was so exhausted, he lifted her up next to him, wrapped her in a blanket and seated her, and next to him as they continued to ride. And she said, "It took me, I can't remember how long, maybe years, to realize he had just saved my feet by making me run and warm up her body and get her

blood circulating so that... Because if he just grabbed her, she might have been frostbitten or something.

01:01:03 I can't remember the story. I just remember that he saved my feet. But at the time, it seemed like, "What are you doing?" That story sound familiar to both of you?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:01:13 Yeah, I remember that story.

John Bytheway: 01:01:15 That's a great one. President Boyd K. Packer, I guess when he was Elder Boyd K. Packer told a story in a book called That All May Be Edified about a young couple who came to meet with him who were recently informed that they would not be able to have children of their own.

01:01:31 And as he counseled with them, this is the one thing they wanted, and they were tearful and everything, and he said as they were leaving. He said, "You're a very fortunate young couple."

01:01:41 And the young man turned around, "How can you say that when you just learned that we're not going to be able to have children the thing that we want?" And President Packer said, "Because you want them." And in the eternal scheme of things, that will make a much greater difference than you suppose, which is, "Whoa, what a story," because their desires were in the right place, and he wanted them to know they were blessed for having a righteous desire.

01:02:09 I mean, that's how I felt when I spent a long time being single, that was a desire I had. It wasn't coming out the way I thought it should according to all the stories I'd heard.

Hank Smith: 01:02:21 This discussion we've had about the loss of James reminds me of a talk. This is Elder Bradley Foster, March of 2014, so almost 10 years ago. He talks about trials, tribulations, and trust in the Lord. He talks about a little girl, 18-month-old Presley, bright and energetic, blonde hair, piercing blue eyes, loves necklaces, but her turn on Earth was short.

01:02:49 On a warm night in July, little Presley was with relatives while her parents, Pat and Ashley, went on a date. A few hours later, her parents received a phone call telling them that Presley had fallen into a canal, and they needed to go straight to the hospital.

- 01:03:02 They had found the little girl in the canal and began CPR. Many months before the accident, Presley's mother had created a blog on which she shared happy stories and photos as Presley grew and experienced life. After the accident, the blog became a way for the family to update concerned family and friends on Presley's fight for life at the hospital.
- 01:03:21 She's in the hospital for six days, and then her mother writes, "Presley's condition has turned down a different path, and her little spirit is torn between two worlds. From one day to the next, it's as if her valiant little spirit is just staying long enough for us to realize that this is not the end.
- 01:03:40 Little Presley has been a strong fighter, but we don't know if she'll be fighting much longer." And after Presley passes away, Ashley, her mother, writes, "She was an angel, sent here for us, an angel that has taught us about miracles around us each and every day.
- 01:03:56 When we think of what she's accomplished in just one week, because all the people gathering around her blog, we begin to cry. She rebuilt testimonies. She introduced people to the gospel. She even saved a complete stranger's marriage. We, like many of you, wonder why things had to turn out this way. With the hundreds and thousands of prayers offered up in her behalf and the complete faith we had for her to receive a miracle."
- 01:04:22 And then, Elder Foster goes on and says, "Look at the courageous and faithful way Pat and Ashley responded to the loss." And then he goes through. "So often in the scriptures, we read about loss, after loss, after loss. When sorrow, misfortune or tragedy strike, how will we respond?
- 01:04:42 How will we respond? If we trust in the Lord and if our testimony of the Savior's gospel and the resurrection is strong, we will be able to respond with the faith of Pat and Ashley." I know there's so many listeners out there who just want the miracle, right Mike? Right John? Please, give me the miracle, please. And yet so often, miracles come, but they come much different way than we had prayed for.
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:05:08 Takes great faith. To trust the Lord truly loves us and knows us. And I think it's important that we not twist that the wrong way and say, "Therefore, every bad thing that happens to us is what God wants to happen to us."

- 01:05:21 Mortal life is mortal life. It's not fair, and hard things are going to happen. Again, God's promise isn't that hard things won't happen. It's that he'll walk that path with us, and that ultimately all things shall be for our good.
- 01:05:38 All right. So when we get to the end of this chapter, we're given a little bit more information on this new character, which is going to play a large part, we think, in early Christian history, if you go down to verse 24, but the word of God grew and multiplied. So the beginnings of the success and the growth of the church.
- 01:05:56 Verse 25 and Barnabas and Saul return from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry and took with them John whose surname was Mark. Now there's been historical arguments about who this character is, John Mark.
- 01:06:14 Many scholars have come to the conclusion that this is John Mark, the author of the gospel of Mark, the interpreter, so to speak, for Peter, a close friend of Peter's. If it's the same person, he's also Barnabas's cousin. John Mark is going to be in and out of the saga as we go. We're going to see him walk out of a mission, and then we'll see him come back in.
- 01:06:39 Ultimately, he's going to play quite an important role in the early Christian Church. So 13 and 14 are the first missionary journey of Paul, and it's to the area that we're going to call Galatia. Again, as we talked about earlier, you've got Northern Galatia and Southern Galatia, and we're going to be talking about Southern Galatia in chapters 13 and 14, specifically 14.
- 01:07:04 But you've got Barnabas and Paul continuing to do missionary work in Antioch, north of Israel just on the coast there. And while they're there, verse 2, as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me, Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them.
- 01:07:27 Now, I don't know exactly how the Holy Spirit did what the Holy Spirit did. But clearly, Luke and those who are writing these stories see God's hand in this mission call.
- 01:07:40 And just to give you a matter of timing, one of our friends, he's actually a member of my ward, Wilfred Griggs, one of the great ancient scripture scholar, Egyptologist. He said that this is about nine, 10 years after Paul's conversion. So Paul's been learning. He's been growing. He's been building the church.

- 01:07:58 And now, the Lord's saying, "Okay. It's time for you and Barnabas to head out on this mission." Verse 3, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, which would seem to tell you that there was some human connection here, it wasn't just the Holy Spirit doing a whisper thing because someone's laying their hands on Paul and Barnabas. They send them away.
- 01:08:21 Verse 4, so they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost departed and then starts to talk about their journey. And they're going to do... It's kind of fun because they've been told, and we know of Paul's work largely amongst the Gentiles.
- 01:08:37 You're going to see that in these two chapters, but they still start each place they go in the synagogue. They still start with the covenant people, they give those who are within the covenant a chance. And as we're going to see, it doesn't often go well for them, though they do have some converts amongst those of the synagogue, those of the Jewish people.
- 01:09:00 But look at verse 5. When they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues, plural, of the Jews, and they had also John to their minister. And so they go forth and they begin to teach. They are opposed by this Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, not Jesus Christ, son of Joshua, son of Jesus.
- 01:09:26 Jesus is the Greek. Joshua is the Hebrew, who's a sorcerer. He's someone who has beguiled the people. And he's going to start to push back on the success that Paul and Barnabas are having, and it's not going to go well for him, verse 9. Then, Saul, who is also called Paul. So we're going to begin to move towards the Gentile name, the Roman named Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost set his eyes on him and said, "O full of all subtilty, and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord.
- 01:10:04 And now behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season." So this doesn't seem to be a permanent injunction against him, but it was a very effective way of getting by Bar-Jesus to cease his opposition.
- 01:10:24 And it's one of the very few times where you see the power of God used in a way that isn't necessarily what you would consider to build or to lift, but to enforce and to show the Lord's power to do his own work. So when they begin to teach amongst the Jews, they're going to do what I hope you and I do.

- 01:10:47 Go to verse 16 with me. So we've got Bar-Jesus. He's quiet now. He's no longer part of this picture. Verse 16, then, Paul stood up and beckoned with his hand and said, "Men of Israel and ye that fear God give audience. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt and with a high arm brought he them out of it.
- 01:11:16 So what he does is exactly what we teach our missionaries to do. He begins to build on common beliefs, and you're going to see him do this whether he's working with Jewish people or Gentile people. He starts where they are. He values what they value. He shows them that he understands them, and then he pivots to try and help bring them to Christ.
- 01:11:43 In verse 23 is where he ultimately pivots from the story of ancient Israel, verse 23. And this man's seed, meaning David's seed hath God according to his promise, raised unto Israel a savior Jesus. And then, he begins to share the good news. And one of the things I hope those that are listening here, whenever they're teaching Christ, they're teaching the resurrected Christ.
- 01:12:10 And so that's what you see in verses 30 verse 37, 38, 39. You see this emphasis verse 30, but God raised him from the dead, and he was seen many days of them, which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto this people.
- 01:12:27 On verse 37, but he whom God raised again saw no corruption. Be it known unto you, therefore men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. For you and I preaching Christ in him resurrected is just second nature.
- 01:12:46 This would not have been easily accepted or understood by those he was teaching. But it's interesting because Paul doesn't get lost in either relationship building because he starts out trying to build that relationship or in tangential aspects of what the Savior does or did. He always brings it to Christ, the living God, not the crucified only God, but the living God and Christ as our Savior.
- 01:13:17 I think there's great power in what he does there. And you'll see that in 14 and 15 actually as you go throughout the rest of the book of Acts. Is there anything you'd add with that?

John Bytheway: 01:13:26 I just love how quickly Paul gave the history of Israel. I've heard Hank do the history of the house of Israel in an hour, and I see in verse 17, oh, the Exodus verse 18, the wandering verse 20. After that, he gave unto them judges for 450 years. And then verse 21, after that, they wanted a king. So here's the period of kings. And then David, one of those kings, there's a Davidic line for a promised Messiah.

01:13:54 Oh, that's verse 23. And then John the Baptist comes along verse 25, Jesus died. Verse 28, Jesus is raised from the dead. Verse 30 and 37 just kind of gave this whole quick history of the House of Israel. And what I love about Paul, he doesn't do that to the Greeks. They wouldn't know what he's talking about. But Paul's able to do that. He goes to other places and preaches to them about God in a totally different way. But in the synagogue, this is exactly what they need to hear. I think it's a great little speech.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:14:27 The entire history of Israel in few verses.

John Bytheway: 01:14:29 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 01:14:32 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 01:14:32 That's great.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:14:33 And again, he's helping those. He's teaching understand a connection, a foundation that he's then going to build off of. And isn't that what we need to do as we lovingly share the gospel with our family and friends, start where they are, start where they are, and show that we value and honor where they are, taking sincere interests. We're not pretending to be interested in what they're doing so that they'll listen to us, but sincerely being interested in their goodness and what they believe, and what they see and what they value so that we have that foundation of trust that a true friendship is built off of.

01:15:13 Once that friendship's there, then there's possibilities for what you're going to see where he is going to say, "Okay. Now, let's talk about some of the things that you may not be so familiar with, such as the resurrection of Christ."

John Bytheway: 01:15:25 Beautiful. He sure knows his stuff, doesn't he?

Hank Smith: 01:15:27 Yeah.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:15:28 Yeah. He's a Pharisee, so it makes sense.



John Bytheway: 01:15:30 He's a Pharisee. He studied it. So I mean, I just think it's, wow, that's pretty cool, how he just did this whole history of the House of Israel and said, "You know that Messiah, we've all been waiting for. Well, it was Jesus-"

Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:15:44 Who led right up to him.

John Bytheway: 01:15:44 And he died and God raised him again, and he offers forgiveness of sins and-

Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:15:52 That's right. And they're going to have pretty amazing success, verse 42. When the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought, that the word might be preached to them next Sabbath.

01:16:01 Now, when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious prophets followed Paul and Barnabas, who's speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of Christ. So they're doing good stuff. They're having good success. And then in verse 45, we start to have problems again.

01:16:15 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul contradicting and blaspheming. And it looks like in verse 46 that there's going to be a change in direction here. Look at what Paul and Barnabas say.

01:16:31 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you, covenant Israel, but seeing ye put it from you and judge yourself unworthy of everlasting life lo, we turn to the Gentiles. And it looks like, okay, from this point forward, we're just going to go and teach the Gentiles. But as you're going to see in chapter 14 verse 1, they're still going to continue in the different cities they go to usually start.

John Bytheway: 01:17:01 Always start in the synagogue.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:17:03 Start in the synagogue.

John Bytheway: 01:17:05 So isn't one of Paul's titles the apostle of the Gentiles that I see that in the book title or something? Yeah, Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:17:11 That's right.

John Bytheway: 01:17:12 But he always started in the synagogue. And once they kick him out, it's okay. And what's fun is to see how differently he speaks to them.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:17:22 It's just a great example. Again, it's teaching us how we can be effective disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, because that's all Paul's doing.

Hank Smith: 01:17:30 I've noticed that Paul, and I think he does this often, is instead of walking in and talking right about Jesus, he starts with some common ground, things we both agree on this story. And I wonder if we could do that better in our own teaching trying to persuade is, let's start with something we agree on. It seems that Ammon and Lamoni do that. Do you believe in God? I don't know what you're talking about. Great spirit. Oh, well, that's God, right? Let's start from common ground.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:17:59 Yeah. That's exactly what I was saying earlier. We teach our missionaries, and we must learn to do that. And again, I would want to emphasize we don't do it so people will listen to us. This isn't a sales pitch. We do it because we're human beings, and they're our brothers and sisters and we love them, and we want to have that kind of relationship. If we don't have that relationship, it's very hard for us to be a influence for good or ill in their lives by sincerely being interested in them as human beings and the goodness that's in their life and the challenges that they have. That builds a relationship, which then enables us to begin to share truths and other things they may or may not understand.

John Bytheway: 01:18:39 Please join us for part two of this podcast.



- John Bytheway: 00:00:01 Welcome to part two with Dr. Mike Goodman. Acts chapter 10 through 15.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:06 All right, let's move on to 14. What are we going to do next?
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:00:10 14. Well, we're going different cities. We're going to start to see the different cities, and these are all Southern Galatians cities. Iconium is one of the first ones. What's he going to do? He's going to start in the synagogues again, and he's going to begin to teach to them. And he spake that a great multitude, both Jews and also Greeks believed. So again, wherever they're going, they're having pretty great success. But again, in verse two; but the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and made their minds evil affected against their brethren. And so you instantly begin to see that they're going to have some challenges. They'll teach for a little bit there. Then they're going to go to Laconia, Lystra, Derbe, cities of Laconia. Verse six, they're going to preach the gospel there.
- 00:00:56 They're going to do an amazing healing. Verses 8-10; there sat a certain man at Lystra impotent in his feet being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked. The same heard Paul speak, who steadfastly beholding him and perceived that he had faith to be healed. Said unto him with a loud voice, "Stand upright on thy feet!" And he leaped and walked. This caused no small stir amongst the people, and they kind of got a little excited with Paul and Barnabas. Verse 12. They called Barnabas Jupiter, which is basically Zeus. It's the chief God. And Paul Mercurius, who was the spokesman of Jupiter, and would've done obeisance, would've done sacrifice to him. But of course, Paul and Barnabas stopped them barely, just barely from doing that.
- 00:01:54 And it's kind of fun, going back to what we were talking about in the last chapter, they're going to speak to the people where they are. So look at verses 16 and 17, it's kind of a fun explanation of the apostasy. You've got God, who in times past, suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. So in other words, everyone had their own beliefs, right? Verse 17,

nevertheless, He left not Himself without witnesses, in that he did good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. You notice he's not talking about ancient Israelite history here. He's teaching in a way that they could understand and in a way that they could begin, "Oh yeah, God, we believe God gives rain and we believe God gives fruitful seasons and fills our hearts with gladness." And so he's trying to help these good people understand the nature of God. It's exactly what you're talking about with Lamoni and Ammon.

00:02:52 Start where they are.

Hank Smith: 00:02:53 I love the humility too when they come running.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:02:56 "We are men like you. We're not Gods." That's right. Well, but of course there's still the opposition and the opposition's going to get physical here. Verse 19; there came thither, certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people. Now this is interesting. I don't know if they're the same people, the same ones that almost just offered sacrifice to them, persuaded the people in having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city supposing he had been dead. So this was not I hit you in the head with a rock and didn't that hurt? He was unconscious. They thought he was dead. Verse 20, albeit as the disciples stood roundabout him, he rose up and continued doing the work. Said, "Okay, let's go to Derbe. We're done here." It one, shows a little bit of the fickleness of the people if they are really the same crowd.

00:03:49 One moment going to worship you, the next moment, we're going to stone you. But one way or the other, what it does show to me and makes me think of it is the reality that the Lord's work is going to go forward through opposition. Even with this horrible experience happening, the reality is you don't stop God from doing His work. It instantly brought to my mind the standard of truth. President Joseph Smith, Prophet Joseph Smith said, "The standard of truth has been erected. No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing. Persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clan, swept every country and sounded in every ear till the purposes of God should be accomplished, and the great Jehovah shall say, "The work is done."

00:04:44 We never have to fear that the Lord's work is going to be frustrated. Even though our work, our efforts might be. One of

the sweet experiences I've had over the last 25 years plus that I've had opportunities to serve on several committees with members of the first presidency quorum of the twelve 15 out of the last 20 years. And one of the things that has just almost blown my mind is no matter what is happening, no matter how bad it seems out there, it's like President Hinckley exemplifies this. It's okay. Yeah, let the mobs combine. God's work is not going to fail. And it's not just a blind positivity. I know who the master is. It's this tremendous faith that God is in charge, and we don't have to fear that somehow the world is going to frustrate God's work that it's not going to be able to brought to pass. The first presidency of the Quorum of the Twelve were simply not afraid. They're bold. They know.

- Hank Smith: 00:05:52 It reminds me of when President Hinckley was on 60 Minutes, they interviewed President Monson as well, and Mike Wallace said, "How is he so positive? How does he maintain with all the weight that's on his shoulders? How is he so optimistic?" And President Monson said, "I think he knows how it all works."
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:06:10 That's perfect.
- Hank Smith: 00:06:11 Yeah. They're not afraid.
- John Bytheway: 00:06:13 And Sheri Dew said that if you had spent a lot of time with President Hinckley and she did. She was his biographer. That one of the phrases you would hear him say a lot is, "Things will work out." And I even remember clipping from the church news when he said, "I say that to myself every morning; things will work out." Wow.
- Hank Smith: 00:06:34 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 00:06:35 He knows how it all works out.
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:06:37 That's right. And troubles will come. This is the last times we're going to experience opposition. There are going to be folks who are not pleased with what we are doing. Definitely not pleased with our doctrine. Definitely not pleased with how we approach issues of morality. And it's not overly common for us to be portrayed well in the media. You might get the thought that, oh my goodness, the world is just going to close in and how are we ever going to do this? Well, we're going to do this because God Almighty is doing His work. And it's not us, it's the Lord. And just as in this case, things didn't go real well in that city for Paul. That he was unconscious. They thought he was dead, but literally he stands up, shakes it off, I'm sure hopefully got a meal

in him and departed with Barnabas to Derbe to begin teaching the gospel in the next place. And succeeding. 21.

00:07:35 And when they had preached the word to that city and had taught many, they returned to Lystra and Iconium and to Antioch, the places that he had just had been chased out of and been stoned, they're going to go back and teach those who are willing to receive. Verse 22; confirming the souls of the disciples and exerting them to continue in the faith. They're not interested in simply getting people wet. It's not just a baptismal fest. They're seeking to bring people to Christ. And that becomes very important for us in our efforts, our labors, we're not simply interested in numbers, as President Oaks once said. It's not simply whether the church will grow or not. We're seeking to bring people to Jesus Christ so he can save and exalt them. What we call retention, which I get it. It's a good technical definition. What we are really trying to do is help people stay covenant connected, which is that not the message of President Nelson and the first presidency and Quorum of the Twelve right now?

Hank Smith: 00:08:40 Two things I wanted to add. One from Elder Ballard. He says, "Our challenges are different today, but they are no less demanding. Instead of angry mobs, we face those who constantly try to defame, like you said, Mike. Instead of extreme exposure and hardship, we face alcohol, drug abuse, pornography, filth, sleaze, greed, dishonesty, spiritual apathy. Instead of families being uprooted and torn from their homes, we see the institution of the family, including the divine institution of marriage under attack. He said, "This is not to suggest that our challenges today are more severe than the challenges faced by those who have gone before us. They're just different.

00:09:17 The Lord isn't asking us to load up a handcart. He's asking us to fortify our faith. He isn't asking us to walk across the continent. He's asking us to walk across the street to visit our neighbor. He isn't asking us to give all of our worldly possessions to build a temple. He's asking us to give our means and our time, despite the pressures of modern living, to continue to build temples and then attend them regularly. He isn't asking us to die a martyr's death. He's asking us to live a disciple's life." Isn't that great?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:09:44 It's so good. Such a beautiful way to look at what we're seeing here. This beautiful story. And it's important that we often or usually start to figure out what does it mean in the context here? Hence, we're taking a look at what's happening in Galatia, what's happening with Paul, but it doesn't matter a whole lot if

we don't ultimately bring it to what you just read, Hank. What does it mean for us? How does it apply to us?

Hank Smith: 00:10:11 And then I wanted to ask you about a phrase and see what you both thought. In Acts 14:22, it says, "They're confirming their souls." All you talked about there, Mike. And then it said, "And that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." So they're not promising these converts, "Once you get baptized, life is going to be great. Once you get baptized, all your problems are going to go away." I mean, that seems to be the first thing they teach them is now that you're ready to be a disciple, it's through much tribulation that you are going to continue on.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:10:44 If we misunderstand, that goes right back to the concept that we talked about from the Todd Christofferson, Elder Christofferson: the Lord's interested in our eternal welfare, not our daily comfort. And life is going to have challenges. And we sometimes look at those challenges and say, "Oh my goodness, what's wrong with God? Or what's wrong with the plan? What's going wrong?" Probably nothing. Well, nothing wrong with God for sure, but the reality is this is the only plan, the only way by which we could actually become as our heavenly parents and ultimately go forward to become like God. You can't do that. You can't work through your own salvation, so to speak, without the challenges that come with life. So, much tribulation is what we are wont to go through, as Joseph said.

Hank Smith: 00:11:36 Yeah. Joseph said that same thing. It reminds me of Elder Holland told we could make it baptism. It was about marriage, but this is about baptism. When someone says on their baptismal day, "I'm at the end of all my troubles," and the person responds, "Yes, you are. Which end? Which end?" Yeah, which end are you at?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:11:56 I would not want those who are listening to think, "Well, therefore I guess I could just have to grin and bear it."

Hank Smith: 00:12:01 Right, that it's going to be miserable. Yeah.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:12:03 The Lord wants us to come to Him. He wants us to seek help. He wants us to seek guidance. He sometimes removes the barrier, so He sends an angel who whacks Peter awake and opens doors and drops chains. Sometimes He removes the challenge. Sometimes like He did in the Book of Mormon, He strengthens the people so that they can endure the challenge a little longer. And sometimes the reality is life is hard and He says, "I'll walk with you." So whether he is going to remove the challenge,

whether he is going to strengthen us, tender the challenge, or whether he is just going to sit with us or walk with us, He promises always relief. Relief doesn't always mean that all problems go away, but that the Lord is on our side and that He'll always help us if we'll simply learn to turn to him, learn to stay covenant-connected. Don't let our challenges pull us away from the love that God is offering.

Hank Smith: 00:13:10

That's great. This is from the gospel topics on the app. You can look up under adversity. And it just says, "When we face adversity, we may complain and become bitter. Ask questions like, why does this have to happen to me? Why do I have to suffer this? Now? What have I done to deserve this? But these questions have the power to dominate our thoughts. Such questions can overtake our vision, absorb our energy, and deprive us of the experiences the Lord wants us to receive." Rather than responding in this way, and this is hard, I mean, if there's anybody listening who's like, "it's so much easier said than done," and we need to acknowledge that, that just say, "Hey, change your questions. You'll be fine."

00:13:52

That there are people who are really suffering. That goes on to say, "Rather than responding in this way, people should consider asking questions like this; Well, what am I to do? What am I to learn from this experience? What am I to change? Who am I to help? How can I remember my many blessings in times of trial?" And you're right, Mike, it doesn't take it away, but it can draw us closer to the Lord just changing our outlook just as much as we can.

John Bytheway: 00:14:21

Those paragraphs are cut and pasted from a talk of Elder Richard G. Scott in 1995. I remember that. And I loved that correlation with the Nephi Noah style, the condescension of God. And Nephi says, "I know He loves His children." And knowing that question and answering that question can help us with the rest of everything else. Well, I know he loves me. I don't know why I'm going through this, but I know he loves me. So therefore, what should I learn? What should I do? And sometimes I think that once we've gone through something like that, I mean the Lord sometimes puts us in spots where we can talk to others who are also going through it. I mean, I think of you, Mike, and what you're going through, and I'll bet that you have been helping others who are also going through what you are going through in a way that I couldn't.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:15:13

An interesting thing on that, I've been going through cancer for 16 or 17 years now.



John Bytheway: 00:15:20 Wow.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:15:21 For the first five years, I never spoke of it. I didn't speak of it to my BYU classes. I didn't speak about it in church. I didn't even speak about it with my friends unless they knew. But I had an interesting experience with a stake president and a member of the 70 Again, who actually called me on the carpet and said, "You are meant to be a witness of the goodness of God. And by not sharing, you are robbing God of that opportunity to share His love and help others see His love." And I was kind of taken aback. I just never thought of sharing my cancer journey. But since then, I have to admit, it often feels kind of awkward, but I share it with my classes.

00:16:13 And I was a mission president in Thailand 1997, 27 years ago, and I still have a relationship in Thailand. I still translate for general conference and do things like that. But when my friends and loved ones in Thailand learned about my cancer, I found out that they called a fast throughout the church in Thailand, and I would've never asked for that. But I have found that it's not me, nothing about me. I'm smiling and staying alive. That's all I'm doing. But the Lord is able to take these experiences, these hard experiences, which I'd still... mind you, if I can get rid of these cancers, I would. But he still is taking that and witnessing of his love. And so I do think that the Lord has a way of helping us to deal with our own challenges in a way that then helps us to be able to help others work through their challenges and their difficulties.

Hank Smith: 00:17:24 Mike, thanks so much for that. I think our listeners... I don't know, John, what'd you call it? Same boat therapy.

John Bytheway: 00:17:32 Same boat therapy. It's powerful. If someone can say, "I've been there." Oh, totally changes the way you listen to them. And it's like, wow, thank you heavenly Father for putting me in the same spot where somebody who has been through this can talk to me. That companionship is huge.

Hank Smith: 00:17:52 And Mike, I mean those people in Thailand, they got a chance to mourn with you and they never would've been able to had you not shared.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:18:00 That was what I was called on the carpet for, was not giving people an opportunity to exercise faith. So yeah, now I talk about it a little more.

Hank Smith: 00:18:10 Yeah. A little more. Let's move on to our last chapter of the day. Chapter 15. What happens?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:18:17 Oh, this is such an important chapter. You would think through the experiences of chapters 10 and 11, that everyone got it and they've all moved forward and they all now know the church is going to the Gentiles. And then you've just seen this beautiful ministry of Paul and Barnabas and John Mark in Galatia. But clearly we still have some challenges going on. Paul and Barnabas go back to Antioch, and while they're there, verse one of chapter 15, certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren and said, "Except you be circumcised after the matter of Moses, you cannot be saved." So this goes back, John, to what you had mentioned earlier. These weren't people who were denying Christ. These weren't people who were trying to dissuade people from coming to Christ. They believed that to come to Christ, you had to obey the law of circumcision, part of the law of Moses.

00:19:13 Right? Well, Paul and Barnabas disagreed verse two, when therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and Elders about this question. And so they troop from Antioch down to Jerusalem, and while they're there, this is interesting, go to verse five; but there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees, which believed... I don't remember if we talked about this earlier, but in the gospels, the Pharisees are usually portrayed as pretty bad. In the Book of Acts, they're almost always portrayed as good. And that there were Pharisees who were believers, but they were Pharisees who were believers who, as it should not be surprising to us, believed in the beauty and the majesty of the law that they had been taught for over 1,000 years.

00:20:13 So they rose up and they said that it was needful to circumcise them and to command them to keep the law of Moses. So yes, come to Christ, but you do that through coming through the law of Moses, and that begins what's called the Apostles Council in the church. We often call it the Jerusalem Conference, but it's the period in which the prophets, the apostles, the church leaders are going to have to grapple with; okay, how are we going to deal with this? And to be very frank, this is one of the most clear, I think and powerful examples of how God directs His church through councils. It's such a good example. So if I could kind of walk us through just an overview, after the issue is raised, you got the... sometimes we call them the Judaizers, but they're those who believed in Christ.

00:21:05 Some of them were Pharisees, but thought you had to go through the law of Moses. After they spoke, then you have the leaders speak. You have Peter who we see as the church president. So he's going to stand up and he's going to talk about his experience with Cornelius. So he's going to rehearse the experience with Cornelius. As soon as he's done, verse 12, Barnabas and Paul are going to declare the miracles and wonders they've had. So you've got different leaders that are counseling saying, "Hey, let me tell you about this and let me tell you this thought." And then you get down to James verse 13, and James seems to summarize. Some of our commentators have said James is basically taking what Peter has said and Paul have said, and bringing it down to the nitty-gritty. Now it's probably important for those who are listening to realize that James was, we believe the brother of Jesus Christ.

John Bytheway: 00:22:04 So not the James we just lost.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:22:05 Not the James we just lost. That would be very difficult. So this is the brother of Christ, and James, the brother of Christ, seems to be the local leader. He seems to be the leader of the Christians in Jerusalem. And Paul is going to refer to him later as an apostle. We don't know if that is the office of an apostle or whether that is the work of an apostle, but one way or the other, James then gives verbiage to what I guess you might say is a compromised position. Though I'm a little hesitant to use the word compromises, you're going to see, because I'm going to share a couple quotes on this. But this is what he says. Go down to verse 19: Wherefore, my sentence is that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.

00:22:53 So we don't ask them to do everything in the law of Moses, but that we write unto them that they one, abstain from pollutions to idols, two, from fornication and three, from things strangled, meaning those that haven't been ritually killed and drained of blood. So he says there are three things we're going to ask of them. We're not going to ask the whole... they don't have to be circumcised. We don't ask them to live all of the law of Moses. But the three things we ask is abstain from those things that are offered to idols. So in other words, avoid any conflation between the God of Israel and Zeus and the other gods that are out there. Two, live a moral life, be free from fornication, sexual relations outside of what God has dictated. And three, in those first two, you can kind of see big picture issues, things about idolatry and things about obedience to the law of chastity.

00:23:51 This last one from things strangled or from blood, seems to be a way of allowing Jewish and Christian converts to do what Peter

did. Remember Peter went in unto Cornelius and slept there and ate there, and that was one of the reasons why in chapter 11, they were so, "Oh my goodness, what were you doing?" It allowed the social discourse to happen between members of the church who came from a Jewish background and those who came from a gentile background. A gentile.

Hank Smith: 00:24:20

So is it kind of a compromise or just an avenue?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:24:23

Yeah, I wouldn't even call it a compromise. I would say that what it really is James going through all of the possibilities and saying, these things are necessary. They're necessary to allow us to continue to grow, but you're not going to have to do all of the law of Moses. I would avoid the word compromise, because he wasn't simply taking two positions and meshing them together. He was saying, what is it that we need to do? And as you're going to see in just a moment, this wasn't just a, "Hey, we think this is a good idea." This is going to come down to a unified decision by the leaders, Peter, Paul, Barnabas, James, all of the leaders, and it is going to be confirmed by the Holy Spirit. Go down to verse 28: for it seemeth good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.

00:25:25

The reason I've been so hesitant to use the word compromise is because our prophets have tried to make clear that when the first presidency and Quorum of the Twelve were making decisions and putting forth policies and practices and things like that, they're not simply trying to compromise. They're seeking to know what the Lord's will is. And this is one where if it's okay, I really think there'd be value in reading a few statements from our first presidency and Quorum of Twelve on this exact event. So you have Elder Christofferson, who used the Apostles Council or the Jerusalem Council as an example, to try and help people understand how God governs His church today.

00:26:09

He said this. This is Elder Christofferson's words: "Our record of this council is certainly incomplete, but we are told that after "much disputing, Peter, the senior apostle rose up and declared what the Spirit Holy Spirit had confirmed to him." After Paul and Barnabas and perhaps other spoken support of Peter's declaration, James moved that the decision be implemented by letter to the church and the council was united with one accord. In the letter announcing the decision, the apostle said, it seems good to the Holy Ghost and to us, or in other words, this decision came by divine revelation through the Holy Spirit." And this is Elder Christofferson's words. "These same patterns are followed today in the restored church of Jesus Christ.

00:27:00 The president of the Church may announce or interpret doctrine based on revelation to him. All Exposition may also come through the combined council of the first presidency and Quorum of the Twelve council's deliberations will often include a weighing of canonized scripture teachings to church leaders past practices. But in the end, just as in the New Testament church, the objective is not simply consensus among council members, but revelation from God. It is a process involving both reason and faith for obtaining the mind and will of God."

00:27:42 And he's not the only one who has spoken on this. President Hinckley made the exact same statement that no decision comes that isn't by the united voice of the first presidency and Quorum of the Twelve based on the whisperings of the Spirit. And then President Nelson was probably more clear than anyone on this issue. President Nelson said this: "when we convene as a council of the first presidency and Quorum of Twelve, our meeting rooms become rooms of revelation. The spirit is palpably present. As we wrestle with complex matters, a thrilling process unfolds as each apostle freely expresses his thoughts and point of view. Though we may differ in our initial perspectives, the love we feel for each other is constant. Our unity helps us to discern the Lord's will for His church. In our meetings, the majority never rules. We listen prayerfully to one another and talk with each other until we are united. Then when we have reached complete accord, the unifying influence of the Holy Ghost is spine-tingling."

00:28:58 I think this pattern in Acts chapter 15, which Elder Christofferson used as a model and President Nelson is trying to help members realize this isn't just 15 nice, kind, old Christian men who are doing their best with their own reasoning and logic. They're not trying to come to simple consensus. This is a process of revelation. And pick your issue. Whatever our challenge is, whatever it is that we quote, don't agree with or we see differently, I think if we realize the first presidency and Quorum of Twelve are not acting out of their best, simply their best understanding. But when it comes to that which is given to the church, they act based on revelation and they don't act until there is a complete unanimity and the witness of the spirit. So I think there's just such power in this chapter.

Hank Smith: 00:29:55 This is a lot of fun to see this church working this out. Interesting, Mike, isn't it, that the Lord gave the revelation and then lets them kind of grapple for a while, instead of saying, here's how you're going to do every little part of this.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:30:09 That's right. Again, it comes down to what are eternal truths? So doctrines and principles are based on eternal truths. Practices and policies change. And so how they're implemented. So for instance, at this point in the church's history, no eating anything offered to idols, no fornication, no eating that which still has blood in it. Well, nowadays, we're not worried about idols and we're not worried about blood, but we are dealing with the law of chastity because the law of chastity was and is an eternal doctrine, where kosher eating and food to idols was an issue that was specifically pertinent to this population and this group. And so by understanding what is eternal and realizing that the first presidency and Quorum of Twelve always base their decisions on what is eternal, it can give us much greater trust as we work through the policies and practices which sometimes do change based on the needs of the people.

John Bytheway: 00:31:19 I love verse 28 there, and I love the sequence of it. It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us. I put in my margin, that this was not by debate, not by compromise, not by rhetorical skills. I mean it convince you of my way, but by the Holy Ghost. And then it says to lay upon you no greater burden. I go back to verse 10: now therefore, why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? And Hank, you-

Hank Smith: 00:31:51 What a great verse.

John Bytheway: 00:31:52 Yeah, we remember an earlier podcast about the yoke of the law. This is what the Savior has given us is something higher and inner and better. And those two verses together I thought were really nice. It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.

Hank Smith: 00:32:12 Yeah, that is really great.

John Bytheway: 00:32:14 Yeah. As I read the New for the Strength of Youth, a Guide for Making Choices, so many of those come down to the Holy Ghost, the way you dress, the way you talk, the media that you use. Do what is good to the Holy Ghost. Don't just look for minimums of behavior, but look what the Spirit is teaching you about how to govern your life. So I like that. Seemed good to the Holy Ghost. Well, and to us too.

Hank Smith: 00:32:41 Mike, don't you see a principle here? At least in this story I see, let's not burden people with more than they need to be burdened with in order to thrive.

John Bytheway: 00:32:52 The yoke of the law.

Hank Smith: 00:32:54 Right. Yeah, why put more on them than is needed? We sometimes do that. I think we like to add more instead of take away, we like to, let's add another activity, let's add another meeting, let's add another. And instead of taking away, instead of lightening people's burdens. Now don't get me wrong, some of these activities are amazing and meetings are useful, but what is it with our tendency to keep adding on to people's burden?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:33:21 Those of us who have lived a few years remember when the church went through a simplification reduction mode. And we're seeing similar things nowadays where we go from a three-hour church to a two-hour church. And you see the prophets seeking to say, how can we best help our members come unto Christ in a way that fits where we are right now? It may have been back 20 years ago that going to church five to seven hours on Sunday was just the norm and it was expected. Not so much now. The beauty of the Lord saying, let's pull as much of the cultural acute treatments out as we can and bring it down to the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I think that's what the direction that the first presidency and 12 are trying to bring us.

Hank Smith: 00:34:11 I think so too. You guys can respond to this. This is from President Packer. He said, "I recently saw a woman respond when it was said of another, since she had a new baby, she really isn't doing anything in the church. You could almost see the baby in her arms protesting with emotion. She is doing something in the church. She gave that baby life. She nurtures it and teaches it. She's doing the most important thing that can be done in the church. Have you ever heard a woman say, "My husband is a very good father, but he's never been a bishop or a stake president or done anything important in the church?" And Elder Packer responds, "What is more important in the church than being a good father?" He says, I don't want anyone to use what I'm saying to excuse them in turning down an inspired call from the Lord."

00:34:57 He says, "I do want to encourage leaders to carefully consider the home, unless they issue calls or schedule activities which place an unnecessary burden on parents and families." He says, "I read a letter recently from a young couple whose callings required them to hire a babysitter for them to attend all their meetings. It was very difficult for both of them to be home with the children at the same time." And Elder Packer says, "Can you see something out of balance there? Every time you schedule a youngster, you schedule a family, particularly the mother." And he goes on and talks more about that. And it just reminded me of verse 10: why are we tempted to yoke the neck of the

disciples? And what was that verse, John, you added? 28: why place a greater burden than is necessary? What do you both think about that?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:35:47 It's remembering what God's work is. Remember, behold, this is my work and my glory to bring to pass immortality and eternal life of us. And the entire purpose of the plan is to help us to learn and become as they are now. President Packer's point of, "Hey, listen, don't use what I'm saying to turn down callings and this that, and the other," I think is important. But I think what President Packer's primary point is that we need to remember what truly is part of God's work, and specifically when it comes to parents and children is not the very work that God is asking us to do. And so a willingness to sacrifice, a willingness to work through difficult times, but a remembrance of what's most important.

Hank Smith: 00:36:36 And just watch out for that, right? That temptation to yoke the neck of a disciple.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:36:42 And part of that I think is learning to avoid again, putting cultural expectations where God is putting doctrinal expectations. And I don't want culture to always have a bad feel. I love Thai culture. I love Polynesian culture. There's goodness that is in all cultures, but when that becomes a burden instead of a blessing, then we have to say, "Okay, do what the church is doing," and saying, "Okay, what is absolutely necessary? Is this necessary? Nope. Then this one can go." It's not bad. We're not saying it's a bad thing. It's simply not necessary at this point.

Hank Smith: 00:37:21 Elder Packer says, "Most families try very hard, but some when burdened with problems of health and finance simply become exhausted trying to keep up, and eventually they withdraw into inactivity. They do not see that they're moving from the one best source of light and truth of help with their family into the shadows where danger and heartbreak await." You're right, Mike. This chapter can be such a teaching chapter for a lot of the things we're dealing with in our day. This is from Robert J. Matthews. He says, "The resolution of this problem between the Gentiles and the Jews in the Book of Acts, gives our present generation a very informative model as to how to react when Revelation confronts tradition and longstanding custom. Only living prophets could correctly handle this situation. Only living prophets can do so in our day."

00:38:14 So it's great to see them dealing with a problem here. I would love the book of Acts to be, oh, it all worked out, and they had



no problems whatsoever. But you can see revelation coming, then grappling and working and personalities clashing with each other. I mean, that's going to happen at the end of this chapter. A little bit of a personality clash.

- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:38:34 It's this continual line upon line process. You said it earlier, Hank. The Lord gives a commandment or gives a doctrine, but he doesn't often tell you now this is exactly how you implement that. He lets us grapple and lets us work. And it's through that grappling and through that work that we often grow closer to him, grow closer to each other, and sometimes rub up against each other as we're going to see with Barnabas and Paul.
- Hank Smith: 00:39:00 They didn't come to this council with all the exact same opinion. That's an important thing. I think sometimes we want to say to in a ward council or in a stake council or even a family council, well, I don't want to disagree.
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:39:14 No.
- Hank Smith: 00:39:14 I don't want to disagree because that creates hard feelings. Well, you can come in with your opinions.
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:39:19 The first presidency and Quorum of the Twelve are not wallflowers. Here's President Hinckley: No decision emanates from the deliberations of the first presidency and the 12 without total unanimity among those concerned. At the outset in considering matters, there may be differences of opinions. These are to be expected. These are men coming from different backgrounds. They're men who think for themselves, but before a final decision is reached, there comes a unanimity of mind and voice.
- Hank Smith: 00:39:53 John, did you want to talk about this at all as bishop?
- John Bytheway: 00:39:56 Oh, man, I've had a ton of thoughts here. That's a challenge. I hope that people listening know that here's some same boat therapy. This is a challenge. When I was called to be a bishop, I had six children from 11 to two. I mentioned this to my stake president. I had more children than anyone else in the ward. And they were all young. It was necessary for me to figure out what was necessary and what was not a burden. That was a challenge. And I had a motto that I heard came from high places and that it takes a really good meeting to be better than no meeting at all.
- Hank Smith: 00:40:39 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:40:44 We called it Virtual Ward Council. We were communicating all week, using technology and texting and everything to try to do those nuts and bolts things virtually. And then when we met, we could talk about individuals and people and how to help and how to minister. And instead of calendaring and administering, we wanted to minister at that time. But I just hope people listening know it's an ongoing challenge. And I was very concerned about how my wife felt about... And I used to jokingly say, "Bye kids, I'm going to go tell others how to have eternal families."

Hank Smith: 00:41:26 I leave my family.

John Bytheway: 00:41:29 And tried to make a rule that bishopric ended at 10, and I was going to be home on my knees with family prayer. And that was a juggle. And you'll have to ask my wife. Sometimes I did okay, sometimes I didn't. I hope all of us out there will just do the best we can, but maybe take this spirit of this chapter in mind is what's really necessary? Are we creating burdens? And it was helpful to ask that. Is this a cultural thing? Why are we doing this? Is this really going to help? And to wrestle with those questions and try to get the Holy Ghost to help us?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:42:04 All of us are going to be asked to sacrifice and be asked to do things, which sometimes to be very frank don't make a lot of sense, and it's going to take the spirit of God to help us. I had two experiences that have played a big role in my life. My sweetheart and I had just moved into a ward in Oregon. And the bishop came and he helped us move in. But on the first Sunday of church, he called us both in and he said, "Brother Goodman, I'm calling you to serve as a Young Men's president." And I said, "Okay, wow." I said, "Okay, what's that?" He said, "What's that?" He didn't realize I was a convert. I joined the church after Young Men's. I went to a country that didn't have much Young Men's on my mission. And I came back as a young adult.

00:42:50 I had never been to Young Men's. And he said, "Oh, well," and he explained it, "Every Wednesday night, you're going to go to Mutual. And he started talking about responsibilities with priests and others." And I said, "Oh, Bishop, Wednesday nights I can't be there." He said, "What do you mean, you..." And by the way, I love my bishop. He was probably 6'2", 350 pounds, auto-mechanic, big and gruff. And he said-

John Bytheway: 00:43:17 Big hands.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:43:18 Yeah. Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness. Swallow you. But I said, "Listen, I just got hired by the church educational system,

and on Wednesday nights I teach at the Oregon State Penitentiary. I've gone through FBI background checks. I can't get out of this. This is a commitment." And he looked at me and he said, "Tough. Deal with it." And I said, "What do you..." This is my bishop. He said, "Tough. Deal with it."

00:43:45 I said, "What do you mean what you want me to do?" He said, "Listen, I'm not calling you as Young Men's president. That came from God. I'm not telling you, you have to be there on Wednesday. I'm telling you that God has called you as Young Men's president and you deal with it. Have a good day." And he kicked us out. That was it. I mean, this is our first Sunday in church. And so I was a Young Men's president for two years that never attended Mutual, but we worked with the young men. Our young men began going to on missions where they hadn't been going on missions before. Activity rates rose, I saw the Lord's hand, and it was one of those situations where the call didn't make any sense. But if it comes from the Lord, the Lord's going to help you. It's kind of like what you were saying, John. If the Lord is going to call you as a bishop, he's going to help you know what to do.

00:44:34 When I was called as a BYU bishop, I said, "President, do you realize that I work full-time and I'm doing my PhD program full-time?" And he said, "Yes, but we prayed about it and it's right. And here's the letter from the first presidency saying it's right." And so for four years, I was a BYU bishop who was a full-time PhD student and a full-time professor. I was teaching at the time. But it's what you said, John, the Lord made possible... that not only didn't hurt my family, it helped my family. I brought my three-year-old and my six-year-old, and we did activation work and they were part of all of our meetings. It was just a wonderful opportunity to be together.

John Bytheway: 00:45:22 Yeah, that's one thing, because I did say to the stake president, "You're calling the guy with more kids than anybody else in the ward." And so my wrestle was, did you call me? Is this logical or was this revelation?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:45:37 When the stake president called me as a bishop, I did let him know that I was also full-time student PhD student, and I was also teaching full-time, 40, 50 hours a week at BYU and the religion faculty. And he expressed that he understood both of those and that he had prayed and received this as revelation and gone through the first presidency. And that call was extended. And what my family and I found throughout this experience was that the Lord was able to do with me in that calling what I couldn't have done myself without that calling. It

helped my family and I to prioritize what was most important to us. And to make sure that me as a dad and as a husband, that I put first what should have been put first. By no means am I trying to claim that I did it right all the time.

00:46:31 I'm positive I didn't. But I learned lessons and I involved my family in amazing ways. My three-year-old daughter helped me activate several members of my ward, because I'd take her with me on my visits. And my children were given the responsibility of choosing which nights I would do interviews. So I had to interview two, three nights a week. They would choose which ones, and they'd say, "Okay, this week, daddy, I've got a soccer game, so you can't do it on this day." And so my children always knew that they were first, and I still had to do my work. I still had to do my calling, but they knew that I loved them, and they knew that I put our family in that kind of a priorities position. And as a result, my children gained the amazing experience of interacting with 1,000 BYU students for four years.

00:47:19 And the faith and the love and the power, they received primary lessons from BYU students. They were taught deacons quorum lessons. My son was... it was one of those situations where the Lord knew what was going to be best. And it didn't make a lot of logical sense to me at the time, but it was one of those situations where it was trust the Lord. And that doesn't always happen that way. One final quick story, I was serving as Elder's Quorum president. I was serving in the Sunday school, and I was in the middle at this time of my bachelor's degree. And the member of the bishopric came and said, "We feel inspired to call you to serve in the choir." And I said, "inspired to call me to serve in the choir?"

Hank Smith: 00:48:06 I'm pretty sure that's voluntary.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:48:08 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:48:08 Invite me to participate.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:48:11 But wasn't what he said. And I said, "is that what the Bishop said?" And he looked at me and said, "I think." I said, "Would you go back and ask the bishop?" I said, "I'm the Elders quorum president. I'm a Sunday school teacher. I'm a full-time student and a dad." I said, "if you and the bishop feel inspired, I'll do it. But I'd like to know that this was inspiration and not simply desperation." And so he went and talked to the bishop. He came back and the bishop said, "You're officially not called to the choir." It's important that we share concerns with the Lord's servants with the Lord, but that also that we trust that he'll help

us to put first things first. He'll help us to keep our priorities straight.

- Hank Smith: 00:48:57 And in that sharing, Mike, we need not be embarrassed. Sometimes we just want to keep up on the appearance of, hey, everything's fine of, I can take on any calling, but say someone's struggling with a deep mental illness and the bishop might not know that. And if you put on a really good face, if you're able to act your way, which isn't a bad thing, right? It's not a bad thing to keep your problems to yourself, but let the bishop know.
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:49:24 Inspiration needs information. Absolutely. I had a really cool experience with President Eyring once. It was kind of embarrassing. I was in Hong Kong. I was serving as a mission president of Thailand, and all the mission presidents had got together. And he and a couple other members of the 12 and the 70 were training us. And Elder Eyring looked at us, and when he is starting to feel the spirit, he kind of gets quiet and kind of wags his finger a little bit. And he looked at us and he said, "if you knew the price the first presidency and the Quorum of Twelve paid to receive the revelation we receive, you all would be embarrassed by how little you do."
- 00:50:10 And he was talking to 15 mission presidents. And his point was, "Listen, the first presidency and Quorum of Twelve, we do massive amounts of research. We get all the information we can. We speak with experts, we pay the price, and then we seek that revelatory confirmation." And he said, "You mission presidents sometimes expect it to come just because you asked." And he said, "There's a certain lesson in Doctrine and Covenants to Oliver Cowdery about that, and that's not the way it works."
- John Bytheway: 00:50:45 Usually the person extending a call has little mercy for us when we say we're busy because they're probably busier than we are.
- Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:50:52 More busy.
- John Bytheway: 00:50:53 So when the president's calling me to be a bishop, he's probably busier than I am. And I'm trying to tell him, "Oh, you don't know how busy I am." But I like verse 28 because I think this idea of it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things. Can you imagine the wrestle they had with figuring that out? What are those necessary things, and what is more of a burden? We should figure that out. I mean, they would have to wrestle with those ideas to try to get that right. And I feel like that's what you were just expressing. They wrestled with that. Mike, how old were

you? I'm trying to do the math. Were you in your thirties as a mission president?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:51:47

When I was a mission, I was 33.

John Bytheway: 00:51:49

Wow.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:51:51

Elder David B. Haight, he used to call us his babies because we were so young. When President Monson called me, he was the one who officially gave the call. He said, "I'm calling you from the same desk that I was called as a mission president when I was 31." So I thought, okay.

John Bytheway: 00:52:11

So you can't argue with me.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:52:13

What do you do? You smile and say, okay, I'll go and do. So one of the things that a lot of the scholarly research talks about when it came to what the three things that they chose were that these were things that came from Leviticus Chapter 17 that were pertinent to both Gentile and Jew. Gentiles who lived amongst the Jews were expected to do these back then. It also has pertinent to what's called the Noachian precepts, which are the precepts that Noah basically put upon the people. And so they weren't shooting from the hip. They were doing what Elder D. Todd Christofferson said. They were referring to canonic scripture. They were referring to the teachings of prophets, and then they were seeking inspiration to know what was necessary.

John Bytheway: 00:53:00

Awesome. I feel to repent a little bit when I say I looked at the stake president said, "You called the guy with more kids than anybody else has," because that was the wrestle I had. Just as you have articulated, did you call me or did you really get this from God? If God asked me to, I guess maybe I can do it, but I sure don't feel like I can. And it was that sort of a wrestle that wasn't resolved day one. It took me some years to figure out if the Lord called me, or if somebody just thought it was logical for whatever reason. Do you know what I mean? And I think a lot of us will go through that and wonder, and because of our own self-doubt, I can't imagine why the Lord would call me. But what does Elder Holland say? All the Lord has ever had to work with is imperfect people.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:53:58

Imperfect people.

John Bytheway: 00:53:58

It must be terribly frustrating to Him, but He deals with it. So I figured I was one of those frustrating people.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:54:06 It comes to the same concept of, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief. I don't understand how this is going to work, but yeah, I'll trust you.

Hank Smith: 00:54:16 Yeah. And give those church leaders that information. Don't be embarrassed or ashamed. Let them know what is really on your plate. Let them know. You still may move forward with the calling in so many times, but they might hold back and say, well, let's give you some time to work that out first, which is-

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:54:34 You're officially not called. Yes.

Hank Smith: 00:54:35 Yeah. No shame in that.

John Bytheway: 00:54:37 My beloved mission president, Menlo Smith, counseled me when I went home from my mission. He said, "Get a job and take a full-time load in school. You will accomplish more." And it was such counterintuitive advice. And the thing he didn't realize is I had to get a job. It was not an option. I had to. But I did. I had to budget my time. And then I got a pretty demanding calling in my ward as well. And so I schooled half the day and calling half the day. Full-time job half the day, and I ran out of half the days. There's not that many halves in a day. And so we all go through that. I just hope people can feel a little same boat therapy from all of us that struggle to do what the Lord's asked us. But I hope we feel the joy and the growth that comes from it. We said it earlier, I think God is more interested in our growth than he is in our comfort. And a lot of people are going, amen. Sometimes it's not comfortable.

Hank Smith: 00:55:44 Since we've been talking about Ward Councils here, this chapter doesn't specifically address this issue. But I wanted to bring this up from Elder Scott. He says, "I have observed particularly in international areas, although it often occurs domestically, that sisters do not participate openly in ward council meetings." Elder Scott says, "This is most unfortunate because they have perspectives and experiences that are of immense value. When they can be encouraged to take part freely in Ward council meetings, their ideas are always helpful and inspirational. This challenge," he says, "Can be resolved easily in the following way: as the Ward Council meeting unfolds and specific suggestions are made, the presiding officer can call on individual sisters present by name, asking them to express their feelings regarding the matter. They will always respond to such an invitation as they gain more experience in the environment of the Ward Council, they will learn to participate actively without the need for such an invitation."

00:56:45 He goes on later and says, "There is sometimes a complimentary blessing that comes to the home of priesthood leaders who observe the benefits that result from sister participation in ward counsel. These men can become more appreciative of the sacred role of their wives in their own home. This is particularly true where local cultures tend to minimize or ignore the contribution of women in the home." So I know this chapter doesn't talk about that, but I thought it would be a good addition there from Elder Scott.

John Bytheway: 00:57:17 I felt like young families. How many stake conferences had I been to where I didn't hear a thing? I was in the back trying to manage children and Cheerios, and even almost went down that slippery slope of maybe I just don't come to these, because I'm not getting anything. And many days during three-hour Church, I was in the gym walking around with a fussy... not hearing a lesson or anything, but boy, I hope those young families listening, you just hang in there because I think the Lord... they're not taking roll, but the Lord sees you there, and He knows where devotion is.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:58:02 Those young parents are doing the work of the Lord. Is there any more important work?

John Bytheway: 00:58:08 And those single mothers who round up kids and take them, what a message that sends to the Lord that you're willing to come and be there, when sometimes you don't get much as far as learning from the meeting, but you came to worship and you came to take the sacrament. That's got to mean something very, very strong to the Lord. So I just... thanks for being where you're supposed to be, even when that's a wrestle.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:58:36 I've got a married daughter with three sons under the age of four. I don't know how much she ever gets from sacrament meeting, but I just look at her with adoration and honor her because she's showing these boys, this is where we're supposed to be and this is where I'm going to be. Even though, as you said, John, I'm positive she's not getting a whole lot of spiritual food as she's wrestling three little guys that way.

Hank Smith: 00:59:08 Beautiful. Mike, we don't want to let you go just yet. There's one more event that happens in chapter 15, which is pretty interesting.

John Bytheway: 00:59:18 It's a hard one to end on. [inaudible 00:59:21] talking about verse 39.



Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:59:21      Yeah, it is. I was thinking I don't know if I want to end on this one.

Hank Smith:                              00:59:22      An interesting ending. Yeah.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 00:59:26      So you've got this situation where Paul and Barnabas have decided again, it's time to go and do some work with those that we have already taught, specifically word for word. And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they do." So it's this concept of retention. We're doing this to bring people to Christ. Barnabas, determined to take with them John whose surname was Mark, and remember, to the best of our understanding, John Mark is Barnabas' nephew. So there's a family connection here. Verse 38. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And we don't know the background to why John Mark left. We don't know if there was a legitimate reason, a less legitimate reason. But one way or the other, at least according to this, Paul did not think John Mark had done what he needed to do.

Hank Smith:                              01:00:27      In my research of this, that's quite a journey where they're going. They've got to go through some serious mountains. And so obviously, I don't know, but I can see Mark looking located at that going... sometimes we picture Paul just walking along roads. I mean, if you're going to go from Israel to Turkey, you've got to cross some serious mountains.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:00:50      Yeah.

    01:00:51      Well, it's not strange for there to be disagreements amongst church leaders. As we've talked about already today, it's part of the process. It's part of being a human. But this one ended up being a little bit sharper maybe. Verse 39. And the tension was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from another. So Barnabas took Mark and sailed into Cyprus, and Paul chose Silas sometimes referred to as Sylvanus, and departed being recommended by the brethren under the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the church. And so it's kind of interesting. They didn't come to agreement on John Mark. That stayed a disagreement. What they did come to agreement on was; we're going to go do the Lord's work.

    01:01:43      Barnabas took John Mark and they went to one part of the vineyard. And Paul took Silas, they went to another part of the

vineyard and they work together. Now, can I give you some good news? Whatever the problem was, it was reconciled because Paul speaks with affection about Mark later in the epistles. And so whatever the issue was, it was resolved and the church leaders did exactly what they had to, which was to make sure that the church was taken care of while they were working through their personal issues.

John Bytheway: 01:02:14

You can't just say, "I'll text him later." I mean, these guys, if they're going over mountains, "Well, the last time I saw him, this is what happened." That's tough.

Hank Smith: 01:02:27

Yeah. That is tough. What a real story. These are human beings. So Mike, you've walked us through Cornelius, our first Gentile convert. You've walked us through James being martyred, but Peter being delivered from prison, Saul and Barnabas going on these missions and then the disagreement in the church over how to deal with Gentiles and Jews coming together into this new movement, this new church. Do you have any hopes for our listeners as we wrap this up? What do you hope they walk away with?

Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:02:58

Thank you. That's a such an important question, especially with such disparate chapters. So many different issues. To me, there are two overarching messages that come out of all of these six chapters that they come again and again and again. And I'd say the first one is this; God is at the helm with all of our weakness, with all of the challenges out there, with all of the difficulties, with the need to mesh together such different and disparate people and concepts and personalities and everything. God is at the helm. You watch the entire process and you watch how the Lord guided Peter and how the Lord guided Cornelius and how the Lord guided the leaders in Jerusalem.

01:03:46

The Lord is able to do his work is I guess what I would say. You don't have to fear that because he is leading and guiding his work, his church, his kingdom on earth. And then the second thing that I think is just crucial, throughout all of these chapters, it always comes back and refunnels to Christ, him crucified and him resurrected. No matter what the saga was, whether we're talking about the difficulties with Gentiles and Jews, whether we're talking about the prison time or James's situation or no matter what the story was. If you look in those chapters, you look at what the message is that the prophets, the missionaries, the disciples are giving, it's always come to Christ. And so as I look at these chapters and I think through, okay, what's the take home?

01:04:41 If I can remember that God is at the helm that I don't have to fear. And at the helm isn't just of the church, at the helm of my life. If I'm willing to lay my heart on the altar, He'll do with me what needs to be done. I don't have to fear, I don't have to worry. And two, he's going to do that as I come to the Savior and allow the Savior to do for me what I otherwise couldn't do myself.

Hank Smith: 01:05:09 Dr. Mike Goodman, thank you. John, what a fantastic day. I've never really done this kind of depth into the Book of Acts before and I'm really enjoying it.

John Bytheway: 01:05:19 Yeah, and what you just said is what it said in a manual lesson or two ago. This book could have been called The Acts of Jesus Christ through his Apostles.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:05:29 Apostles. Yeah. That's good.

John Bytheway: 01:05:32 Like you said, the Lord is at the helm. Yeah.

Hank Smith: 01:05:34 Yeah. We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved. Acts 15:11. We want to thank Dr. Mike Goodman for being with us today. It's been wonderful to have you, Mike. I'm sure we'll see you again.

Dr. Michael Goodman: 01:05:47 Yeah, thank you. Happy to be here.

Hank Smith: 01:05:50 We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen. We want to thank our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. We always remember our founder, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We have more of the book of Acts coming up on Follow Him.

01:06:04 Today's transcripts, show notes, and additional references are available on our website. [followHim.co](http://followHim.co). And you can watch the podcast on YouTube with additional videos on Facebook and Instagram. All of this is absolutely free, so be sure to share with your family and friends. To reach those who are searching for help with their Come, Follow Me study, please subscribe, rate, review, or comment on the podcast, which makes the podcast easier to find. Thank you. We want to thank our incredible production crew, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts and Ariel Cuadra. We also love hearing from you, our listeners.

Lindsay: 01:06:44 Hi, my name is Lindsay and I wanted to share why I love the Come Follow Me curriculum. I am a mother of four young

children and I feel like this added resource has been so helpful to our family in giving structure and direction in our family scripture study. I feel on a personal note, that learning the historical context of the scriptures really has expanded my knowledge and increased my understanding of the scriptures. And in general, I just feel like my testimony of the scriptures and of my Savior have increased immensely, and I'm so grateful for this program in my life.

## WHAT DOES "LIVING CHURCH" MEAN?



- Hank Smith: 00:02 Hello my friends. Welcome to another Follow Him Favorites. My name is Hank Smith. I'm here with the wonderful John Bytheway. Hi John.
- John Bytheway: 00:09 Hi Hank.
- Hank Smith: 00:09 John, you know the drill, Follow Him Favorites. We take a question from this week's Come, Follow Me lesson and attempt to answer it. The question for this week, John, comes from the story of Peter in Acts chapter 10, where Peter changes what you would say a policy in the church, that you can't teach Gentiles. And then he receives Revelation and he says, "We're going to change that policy." What do you think that means for our church for the idea of a prophet continuing revelation? Another way to ask this might be what does the Lord mean when he calls this church a living church?
- John Bytheway: 00:46 Oh yeah. I like that question because the world changes dramatically. I like to show teenagers... I have a 1965 For the Strength of Youth, much shorter, lots of pictures. And then I have the latest one and it's thick and it has lots of pictures, a lot thicker. And I say, "I thought standards don't change." Yeah. What changed? The world changed dramatically. A living church can adapt to those changes. The first one I have doesn't even mention movies and television, because they were so clean back then. It wasn't a thing, and so what changed? The world did, and we adjusted. The Lord adjusted it through his prophets.
- Hank Smith: 01:24 Yeah. We've coined that phrase, "The church is true", John. We have taken that and run with it and it's ours, right? The church is true, but I think that comes from Doctrine and Covenants section 1, where the Lord says, "The church is true and living."
- John Bytheway: 01:36 And living.
- Hank Smith: 01:37 I think we leave that part out maybe to our detriment. Article of Faith number 9 says, "We believe in all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal. We believe He will yet reveal many great and important things." And as far as I know, that article of

faith hasn't been rescinded. Right? I haven't heard any... President Nelson saying, "Well, it's the great and important things are out, and it's now going to be good and trivial." It seems like we still have more to come.

- John Bytheway: 02:03 And that phrase, "Continuous restoration", is another evidence of that, yeah.
- Hank Smith: 02:07 Yeah, absolutely. There's a sense of excitement about that, that the Lord is going to continue to roll this out, this plan, this building of his Kingdom. He's still continuing to roll this out and I can be open. I need to be open to that idea that living things adjust. They change, they evolve, they grow.
- John Bytheway: 02:27 Yeah. The church is the same way. There's more Spanish speakers in the church now than English speakers, I think. That requires some adjustment and who knows what else could happen. It's fun. It's exciting.
- Hank Smith: 02:37 Yeah. It's exciting to be part of this living thing that is growing and learning and changing. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called, Follow Him. You can get it wherever you get your podcast. Come join us over there. I think you'll love the discussion this week. And then come back here next week for another Follow Him Favorites.