



"I Can Do All Things Through Christ Which Strengtheneth Me"

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:

What does it mean to be a Christian? As Paul writes from prison to the Philippians and Colossians, Professor Lori Denning explores rejoicing despite trials and grace and learning to lean on the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Part 2:

Through trials and faith, Professor Lori Denning explores the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and its capacity to make people more like the Savior.

Timecodes:

Part 1

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- 14:55 Lydia and selling purple
- 18:47 Philippians 1:1
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- 21:44 Philippians 1:3-4, 11
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Part 2

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- 51:31 End of Part II– Professor Lori Denning

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Biographical Information:



Lori L. Denning is a scripture nerd. She is also a devoted scholar and educator. Currently pursuing her Ph.D. at Claremont Graduate University in Religion, with a focus on ancient scripture, Lori holds a Master's Degree in Theology from Gonzaga University. There, she earned Alpha Sigma Nu, the highest honor awarded at a Jesuit University. Her undergraduate studies in Biblical Studies and Hebrew at Multnomah further reflect her passion for the subject.

Lori is the acclaimed author of three books, including the “Real Heroes Series.” Her teaching experience spans various platforms like CES, FSY, and Church Education Week, and she currently teaches students at BYU, a role she cherishes. As a frequent podcast guest, Lori shares her wisdom through a video series *The Bible Brief*.

She is such a nerd that she has even learned to sing Biblical Hebrew, for fun. If you ask nicely, she may sing a few verses.

Lori, hailing from San Diego, has an adventurous spirit, reflected in her love for dirt bikes, karaoke, and chocolate. She's blessed with an identical twin (though she insists the twin's the cute one) and has served a mission in Barcelona, Spain. Her vivacious personality shines through in her diverse interests and dedication to her faith.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:01	Hello my friends, welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name's Hank Smith. I'm here with the extraordinary John Bytheway. Hi, John.
John Bytheway:	00:00:11	Hi, Hank. How are you?
Hank Smith:	00:00:13	Yep. Good. We are back for another week of followHIM. John, the lesson this week is entitled, I Can Do All Things Through Christ Which Strengtheneth Me. When you hear that phrase from Paul, what do you think of?
John Bytheway:	00:00:27	Yeah, I love the title of that, and I think that sometimes in the self-help world, they might say, "I can do all things" and stop right there. And this is, I can do all things through Christ. A lot of things that we really can't do by ourselves, and we're confronted with that in the Gospel, but with Christ we can do things we normally couldn't do. So that's what it makes me think about.
Hank Smith:	00:00:50	Yeah, my experience tells me when I'm left to myself, it usually doesn't go all that well.
John Bytheway:	00:00:55	Yeah, exactly. I can't do anything.
Hank Smith:	00:00:59	John, we are joined by a Bible expert this week. I call her almost Dr. Lori Denning, because she's still in school for religious studies in Claremont, which we can talk about here in a second. Lori, what are we looking forward to in these lessons?
Lori Denning:	00:01:13	Thanks for asking, these are some of the best lessons. We are going to do Philippians and Colossians. You can pronounce those any way you want. And we're going to highlight what it's like to be a young member, or how to live within a community that is not all your own. If you are a member of the church and you're saying, "I don't feel like I belong," how do I live as a Christian? How do I live in that community and how do I fit in, and how does Christ reflect back through me? We're going to really say, this sounds like something we probably do a lot of today. How do I fit in? How am I supposed to be a light to those

people? And how do I learn about Christ and then reflect that back? We're going to land this for two different communities that live pretty far apart, but the Philippians and the Colossians, the people that live in Philippi and Colossae. We're going to learn about what it was like for them and how they were supposed to mediate that crazy jungle that they lived in.

- Hank Smith: 00:02:05 Wow. I'm already getting excited about this. I'm looking forward to it more than I was.
- Lori Denning: 00:02:09 Okay. Well, and just a little teaser, still listen, we're actually going to do some songs. Actually, both of these actually have some songs and poetry in them. I know you're thinking it's just letters, but these would be the musicals, the West Side Story/Hamilton of the ancient world.
- John Bytheway: 00:02:26 Wow.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:27 Now I'm even more excited.
- John Bytheway: 00:02:28 This is going to be great.
- Lori Denning: 00:02:29 I know, it doesn't need more prompting. Of course, you guys, the main focus is going to be the Savior. We're going to learn some of the deepest doctrines, some of the key items about what it means to be Christ and what Christ does for us in the redemption and the Atonement. Some really key things are in the letters we're going to read today.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:49 Awesome. John, Lori is new to the podcast. Why don't you let our listeners know who she is, where she's from? Give us a bio.
- John Bytheway: 00:02:58 This is one of the funnest bios I've ever read, and I'll just read it the way it is. I don't even have to add fun to my voice or anything. Lori L. Denning is a scholar and scripture enthusiast pursuing her PhD in ancient scripture at Claremont Graduate University, with a master's degree in theology from Gonzaga University. She's written three books, including the Real Hero series, and teaches at BYU. Lori also appears as a frequent podcast guest, and hosts the video series The Bible Brief. "Such a dedicated nerd," I'm quoting here, "Lori even sings biblical Hebrew for fun." I think that's a preview of what's coming, A native of San Diego, her adventurous spirit is seen in her love for dirt bikes, karaoke, and chocolate. With an identical twin, the cute one she claims, and a mission in Barcelona, Spain, Lori's vibrant personality and diverse interest shine in everything she does. That's a fun bio, Hank. I haven't had one that fun.

Hank Smith: 00:03:58 Yeah, that's exciting.

John Bytheway: 00:03:58 A dedicated nerd, a scripture nerd who sings biblical Hebrew on her dirt bike while eating chocolate, so this is going to be great.

Lori Denning: 00:04:06 I didn't say I did them all at once. That would be the triathlon of nerdism. Instead, I just like all of those things, not all at once.

John Bytheway: 00:04:15 We thought maybe we'd get more people watching on YouTube instead of just listening.

Hank Smith: 00:04:19 Yeah, if they could see that-

John Bytheway: 00:04:20 If we promised that, yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:04:22 We like Bible nerds at FollowHIM.

John Bytheway: 00:04:24 We do.

Hank Smith: 00:04:25 Yeah, we've had many of them on. We won't name them by name, but we've had many of them on the show. Lori, let's jump right in. The manual has us start in Philippians and then moving to Colossians. Do we need some background before we come into this, do you feel like? Or should we just jump right in?

Lori Denning: 00:04:41 I think we do. I think we're going to need some background. And I think it helps, because I think if we set up what's going on, we can imagine ourselves in the story. Let's do two things, you guys. Let's start with Philippians, and then let's set what's going to happen, because it's a letter. The first thing we know when we get these letters, is I always try to think it's like we're reading someone's mail. You're like, I'm only getting one side of the story, so we're going to do a little bit on what we think they were like, and what we know about them. And we hear some in Acts about them.

00:05:07 But I also want to think Paul tells us about what's happening. He's in prison, we're going into this period of the letters that he's in prison. Some people think Rome, I actually think he's in Ephesus. But he's in prison and he is really suffering at a certain point. He's like, I'm about done. I'm not sure if I'm going to be able to survive. We think he was in prison for a number of years. He hears about this community that he had started. A visitor comes and they send a donation to him. Prisons weren't like they were here, you don't get three hot's and a cot. Anciently, you are in prison and you were stuck forever, and so your friends or family had to bring food, bring money. One of

the churches that he had started in a city, Philippi, we'll talk about that in a second, sends him a donation of food and they bring it to him.

00:05:54 It's like his old branch, as a missionary, sends him this donation that he writes them a letter. He knows them, he loves them. He started the church there. If you can just put yourself in and imagine, we are the Philippians, we're living there. And our old missionary, the one that we loved and brought us to the Savior, we find out is in trouble. So, we gather a donation, we send it, and we send this letter. And then you're like, I have this little tiny piece of paper or papyrus, whatever, and I'm going to just pack it. So, it's going to be this super jam packed, dense letter of, what can I tell them? Not only what can I tell them about how much I love them, but what can I tell them that's going to help them the most about being members of the church, being Christians, and about the Savior.

Hank Smith: 00:06:40 Okay, this is exciting. I like the idea of reading someone else's mail, although I know today it's a very serious crime. I think it's a felony. Just so everybody knows, we're reading someone else's mail here, but don't do that in general.

Lori Denning: 00:06:52 Don't do that.

Hank Smith: 00:06:54 Don't do that. Don't try this at home.

John Bytheway: 00:06:56 I'm intrigued with the idea that he's writing from prison. And I think if I were writing a letter from prison, that kind of a prison, I think I would say, "Dear Philippians, get me out of here." I don't know how you're going to do it, but help me escape.

Lori Denning: 00:07:11 Can you send a file in a cake next time, and not just a snack?

John Bytheway: 00:07:15 And instead, he wants to edify them, he wants to teach them, he wants to encourage them. And gives us an insight into Paul a little bit.

Hank Smith: 00:07:24 I'm glad both of you are bringing this up that Paul was in prison. Just at the opening of the Come, Follow Me manual it says, "Paul wrote his Epistles to the Philippians and the Colossians while he was a prisoner in Rome." And then John, you mentioned this, but these letters don't have the tone you might expect from someone in prison. Paul spoke more about joy, rejoicing and thanksgiving, than he did about afflictions and trials. "Christ is preached," he said, "and I therein do rejoice and will rejoice." Wow. That just shows us a lot about Paul and his

attitude in great difficulty. I wish I could have that attitude in great difficulty.

- Lori Denning: 00:08:04 But don't you think that's unique? If you're the Philippians and you're like, we just joined this little nascent baby church and our leader is in jail. And not only that, but our Savior was just crucified. Culturally, this would be really tough. It reminds me of the Restoration. Joseph Smith, he's writing from jail, and he's writing some of the most inspired, the most uplifting documents even while he's suffering. It seems like we're always having to really live in the world, but not of the world. Very similar to Joseph.
- John Bytheway: 00:08:38 I'm glad you said that, because I was thinking of the last couple of verses of section 123. Let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power and then may we stand still cheerful in Liberty Jail. That's a good comparison.
- Hank Smith: 00:08:52 I know from my study of the Doctrine & Covenants in church history that Joseph Smith was a big fan of Paul. Them having parallel moments here is-
- Lori Denning: 00:09:01 Yeah, I think it gives you the empathy that you don't really want, is that you're living through similar experiences and you're like, I'd rather miss those but I can appreciate them, but how profound that there are these times of struggle. Now here's something interesting, is that Paul isn't like, this is great and how wonderful, and it's terrible. He talks about it, especially in Galatians. He talks about how bad it was where he was nearly at the point of breaking. He even writes at the end of this letter to the Philippians that he's like, I'm going to send Timothy... We will talk about him in a second, but I'm going to send Tim to you. Well, I'm hoping to make it, but I might die, and it might be really soon. If you were in prison in the Roman system, chances are you weren't getting out, and the only way out is death.
- 00:09:45 You're waiting, not because they hold you there, you're waiting for trial. And then it's trial and execution, typically. So, he's thinking, this might be it for me. He's living with this really real burden of suffering and maybe death, and just knowing that. I love what you said there, John, with the end of section 123, because it's that diversity. Even then I can rejoice in the Savior, I can rejoice in the Gospel. And that just permeates the letter. But if you don't remember that then we don't see, how is he going to do that? And here we can see an application right out of the gate. Don't we all have times that life's going to be pretty tough? And if we don't, wait a minute, because it's coming.

00:10:25 And so we say, wow, here's a letter that could be written today, to me, when I'm having a tough time, when my family's struggling. When I don't know where my next meal's coming from, when my job is at risk. Or I am feeling stress and anxiety and illness, or whatever it is. Paul's like, oh, that's a letter for me, because Paul was doing the same thing. We think this is a 2000-year-old letter, could be written to me today.

Hank Smith: 00:10:49 Excellent.

John Bytheway: 00:10:50 What's interesting too, Hank, is we have received not a few comments from people who are literally in prison that listen and find some hope and some healing. And thinking of you today, and hoping this will help you and you have something in a way common with Paul perhaps of looking for some hope and some help from your circumstance. I just think that's fascinating.

Lori Denning: 00:11:13 Christ was sent to liberate the captives, and not always physically, but we can be liberated in our souls. If you don't realize that oppression and sadness that they were living under, especially Paul here, then I think you don't understand the joy that he's going to talk about.

Hank Smith: 00:11:28 Lori, I'm glad we're talking about this, because one of our major goals with our podcast is not only do we want people to be more competent, we want to inform people and teach them, but we also hope to heal and help those who are struggling. Was it President Eyring who said, "If you treat everyone as though they're going through the hardest time of their life, half the time you'll be right," or something like that. Those of you are out there who are struggling, I love that Lori is speaking to you. I hope you'll listen here today. Lori, what do we do next?

Lori Denning: 00:11:59 That was setting us up emotionally. Let's take a step back and let's talk about who these people were in a little bit of context. For those of you who are watching on video, I actually have a prop so that you can remember Philippi. I'm putting on my Roman centurion's helmet. For those of you listening, you can just imagine a shockingly beautiful woman, that's me, and I am wearing an literal 16 gauge steel Roman helmet with the red thing on the top and everything.

Hank Smith: 00:12:26 It looks great, Lori. Those of you watching on YouTube will agree with me, this looks fantastic.

Lori Denning: 00:12:32 Yeah, it's pretty impressive. It actually is really hard on my neck, it's so heavy. But that's just to remind you that these were

Romans. Here's the thing I didn't know when I was growing up. I didn't know when it put an N on the end, that it's the people that lived there. So instead of Philippites, we would say like the Lamanites. The Phillipites, they're the Philippians. But I get it when they do Rome, Romans. Philippi, Philippians. Colossae, Colossians. Ephesians, they lived in Ephesus.

Hank Smith: 00:13:02

Ephesia.

Lori Denning: 00:13:03

I guess I didn't put that together. Yeah, because I was like, they weren't the Jerusalemses. I didn't get it. But they're just the people that live there. Philippi is actually in northern Greece. It's named after Alexander the Great's dad, Philip, so it's the Philippians. And it was actually a place that there was a little civil war that went on after Julius Caesar. If you come up from Turkey and you have Constantinople and that middle area, Istanbul today, whichever time period you're in. Then up along that edge is the city Philippi, and there's another one, Minneapolis, Berea, and Thessalonica. You're going to hear the Thessalonian. That's all up in this little chain. And then you would go across a little narrow neck of land and it jumps over and then just you're almost across the Adriatic from Rome.

00:13:49

It's this little thoroughfare that people would go through, so it was a very popular little area that they would go to go to Rome. But it was popular with Romans because of this civil war. So, here's everybody just pause, if you don't want to know nerd stuff. For those of you who want nerds, just zoom in for about two more minutes. Julius, Caesar, Marc Antony, Cleopatra, that whole story. And they had a battle even right here in the city. And they're in Philippi though. They're like, well, what do we do with all these soldiers, these retired Roman soldiers? They get a plot of land when they retire. What should we do with them? Well, we don't want them back in Rome, because then if there's another uprising they would just have a whole army of men ready to go.

00:14:27

They put them out somewhere far. So, this kind of far from Rome, and they would settle. It was this Roman colony, and it was super patriotic Roman. They were super Roman, so they don't even really have a synagogue. Everywhere else has a synagogue where the Jews had spread out over time. They don't even have one. But if you think super patriotic Romans, that's what you would've found here.

00:14:50

The church was actually started by a woman. I know we talked about that story about another little highlight on Lydia. We read about them in the end of Acts. Lydia was the seller of purple,

she's the business woman. I love that. Even her whole house, she seems to be like the founding funding patroness of the church. On his second missionary journey, first one's close, second one's far, third one's far. Paul had looped up there and started the church with these super Roman converts. They are super powerhouses in the Gospel. They love the Gospel, and they always are giving money back to the poorer saints in Jerusalem. They are people that just seem to get it. And Paul loves them. You're going to see that. You're not very Jewish and you're not very these other people, but wow, do you guys get it! I love the Philippians. I'm always like, yay. He's always so happy. And in fact he yells at some of the other guys like, "You should be more like the Philippians, because they give a gift and you guys aren't even donating or anything to the poor saints."

- John Bytheway: 00:15:49 I just want to say, that for somebody who geographically may be hearing Philippi, they may be thinking, I thought Jesus was in Caesarea Philippi. There's a couple of, Caesareas mentioned, and it's hard without a map sometimes. This is the northern Greece Philippi.
- Lori Denning: 00:16:05 Yeah, think Greece. And think it's like a hand, a dangly hand, and it's up on your wrist of the hand. It's north, and they called it Macedonia at the time. So, it's up there, northern, and that's actually where Philip grew up in that area. Everybody's named after the same two things. There's 2,000 cities called Alexandria, and then this one they just named after his dad. That's where you get all these Philips, and the names repeating.
- Hank Smith: 00:16:30 In my old paper scriptures, I'm looking at the map called The Missionary Journeys of the Apostle Paul. And I can see these cities that you're talking about. And once again it hit me, this guy was all over the place. I think I've done a cruise of that region, but I've never walked it.
- Lori Denning: 00:16:46 Never walked it with my sandals. Yeah, can you imagine? Really, really far. Really far. In fact, this was one of my favorite stories where Paul was with a couple of missionary companions and he was on the other side. He is over in what we would call Turkey. He was far, he's on the other side. He is way east. He has a dream where a man says... They keep going to cities and he doesn't know, this is in Acts. And he doesn't know where he's supposed to teach and they're like, no, not here. No, not here. No, not here. So they keep hiking to these next cities, and then he has a dream of a man comes to him and says, "We need you. Come over here." That's where he goes. And then he goes to Philippi and starts the church there. And he doesn't meet a man, by the way, he meets a woman.

00:17:24 Pretty cool that the Lord was preparing these people. But he passed a bunch of big cities on the way to Philippi. The Lord hears you, the Lord hears the people that are crying out and want him to find them. And he sent an apostle on foot to find them. And now they're going to return the favor and bless him with a gift, money and things to support him in prison, and he's going to write them this letter. So, all of that to set up, you're going to see this richness of how much they love each other. Would be like us living really far afield and one of the apostles comes for a conference talk, or sends us a letter in our little town. And I just think, well, you can feel that. You can feel that's exactly what they do. Even today, is they love all of us saints wherever we are sprinkled throughout the world, and they're going to send us a special message. But the Lord hears you and he sends his messengers to them, and to us.

Hank Smith: 00:18:18 John, you might be the only one here who remembers getting letters in the mail. There is an excitement there when you're far away in the Philippines. What was it like getting mail? And I'm just kidding by the way, I also receive mail.

John Bytheway: 00:18:30 No, it took two weeks. And we didn't call home every week, so if there was roughly two weeks and it would take two weeks to respond. It was great to get a letter. It was very renewing. Change your whole day. And you come home and read it again.

Hank Smith: 00:18:45 Yeah, I can see that happening here.

Lori Denning: 00:18:46 Renewing, right?

John Bytheway: 00:18:46 Good point.

Lori Denning: 00:18:46 Yeah, a little boost. Let's read the first, let's call it paragraph. Let's do Philippians 1, and I just want to do one through 11.

John Bytheway: 00:18:57 Philippians chapter one, starting in verse one. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons. Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

00:19:35 Even as it is for me to think this of you all because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record. How greatly I long after you in all the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. That ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offense until the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."

Hank Smith: 00:20:16 Wow, that's a way to start a letter.

Lori Denning: 00:20:18 One thing we remember about Paul is that it's dense. If you think about letters today, we're not quite so dense the way we write. Like we do now, we're just chatting. But they're not like that. It was hard to write. Usually had to pay somebody that was really good at it, and they could make it fit on a little tiny document. He's going to just pack it full. One of the things that we always going to remember with Paul is that it's maybe not supposed to be understood the first time you read it. It's going to be something that you might want to sit with. It's a gift that he's giving to them that they can keep reading and reading and reading and get text from. When we just read that, if you found a few things, fantastic. If you didn't, fantastic, it just means you get to read it again.

00:20:56 He starts, "Hey, it's Paul and Timotheus, we know him later as Timothy. Paul and Tim, servants of Jesus Christ, saints to all the saints. Now saints was just a word that meant holy ones, the sacred, just like we do today. So, all those who have committed their lives to Christ, all of those, I'm writing to you. And you're like, yep. And also those who are bishops and deacons. Remember the church is just starting, so it's probably people who are serving. They're the overseer, the guy who's in charge there, the bishop. And also the deacon, the one that's the service guy. Right out of the gate we're like, hmm, service. People who are helping the saints, people who are helping the new members, people who are helping the new little branch in Philippi.

00:21:35 Then we get our first theme, grace be unto you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. He's sending you grace. And I am going to thank God, and always in my prayer. Verse three and verse four, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, and always in every prayer of mine. So, he is thanking and praying for them. And then the rest of the verses he is thanking and praying and he is thanking and

praying. And not just a prayer of, hey, hoping. He is thanking the Lord for them and he is praying actively for them. An apostle. So there's just love. If you ever want to see a difference, read Galatians, it's pretty much a scolding. But to the Philippians, he's like, I just love you guys, and I've just been praying for you. And I love that idea that the Lord is using that.

00:22:26 And so you're going to see that theme. And then jump down to verse 11, and he's going to come back to an interesting word. That the people are going to be filled with the fruits of righteousness. So, he's praying for them and he's thankful for them so that they can have something, be filled with the fruits of righteousness. Which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. This is our theme, you guys. This is it. Underline that, 11, and the apostle of the Lord, I am praying and thankful for you so that you can have something. You're going to be filled with the fruits of righteousness.

Hank Smith: 00:23:03 When I read that, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, I think almost that your life is full of all these good things that you're doing and that other people are doing by living the Gospel. You don't have time to sin because there's just so many good things happening.

Lori Denning: 00:23:20 If you were a Christian tree and you had fruits growing, what would they be? If I was an apple tree, I would have an apple. If I was a pear tree, I would grow a pear. If I were a Christian tree, I would have a fruit of righteousness. I think, Hank, that's what you're saying. Is something just pours out of us that shows that we have become that. What do you think, John? What kind of fruits of righteousness have you either seen in your life or you think about with people who are really following the Savior?

John Bytheway: 00:23:49 I went back to Galatians. Because the other day in Galatians 5:22 it said the fruit of the Spirit, capital S Spirit, is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Those are all fruits of righteousness. And I love that the idea of the very best things you could possibly want or imagine are a result of Christ in your life. On the opposite, the Book of Mormon says the devil rewardeth you no good thing, but in Christ comes every good thing. So that's a good list.

Lori Denning: 00:24:23 That's exactly where my mind went to is that Galatians fruits of the Spirit. That I think when we become changed... So remember, if we're Philippians in this example, we're just in our own lives. When we really embrace the Savior, it starts to change us. Things just come out of us that are better. We're a little more patient than we were. We're a little kinder. I don't

cut off the guy on the freeway like I used to. I start to be more like him. Those things like a fruit grow from me, and the righteousness. Now, righteousness is a weird word. We use it a lot in churchy words. It's one of those weird church words that we use. We all use it all the time, but we don't use it anywhere else. On Old Testament terms, the idea of righteousness is justice, and it's that you're making things just. You're setting things right.

00:25:09 You're putting how the world is tough, it's not always fair, and someone's struggling, and you are setting it right. That's righteousness. It might be someone who's having a bad day. You are setting it right by helping them have a better day. It might be giving them money, because they are poor, but by no fault of their own. You're setting that right. You are putting them in right relationship with the Lord, where they have distanced themselves through sin. Righteousness and justice is setting things right, the way that the Lord would in his kingdom. So, help people set things right, that's being righteous. Not just like, I hope I checked that box and did that thing I was supposed to today. But I look around into the world and I now see it as the kingdom of God. This new world that Christ has brought, it's starting now and it's to come still. But this new world, this new kingdom of God, this Zion that we're trying to build, I am helping change things. I am setting things right.

John Bytheway: 00:26:13 I like it. It's rightness or making it right.

Lori Denning: 00:26:17 Righteousness and justice are the same word. You think of that, I'm setting things right, I'm making it just and fair. Even when it always hasn't been, I can set it right just like God would. So, he's saying, I'm hoping that's what you're going to get. That's what you should start to live like. Hey, dear Philippians. Hey, dear Lori. Hey, dear Hank, John. Hey, you listening. I am praying and thankful so that you can start to see that in your own life.

Hank Smith: 00:26:45 I love it.

Lori Denning: 00:26:48 All right, so the next section I just want to touch on his theme, 12 through 18 in chapter one. He's just going to say basically, dear family, the king is being announced. The new king, Jesus Christ. Not the Roman ruler, not the president of your country, not the prime minister. The new Jesus that you follow, he's being announced. And I want you to start to think differently. Now that you're part of this new community, the saints, I want you to think differently. We're going to set aside that other stuff. So, he's setting them up to think differently, that's what I think for that next section. But let's jump to 18 to 26 to say how

that's going to work. Because we're setting up this next big leap into this poem, this big idea about Jesus Christ. Paul realizes where we are, when we're struggling, when things are challenging, and yet we're trying to live this new life of righteousness and justice and being saints.

00:27:43 So 18, he says, "What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." So, he's just saying, well, even though challenging things are different in our lives, he's saying, what am I supposed to do with that? Even if you're suffering, even if things are tough, rejoice. And that should cause us a little bit of pause. Wait a minute, Paul, when things are really tough you want me to woo-hoo. Is that discounting my struggles? And he is like, well, hold on, let's keep reading and see what he says about that. So, he's saying, even when I'm struggling, you should rejoice. And he says, okay, and here's his next verse, 19. "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ."

00:28:37 He turns it on its head a little bit. Even though things are tough in your life, he's saying, I know that that you'll turn to salvation through your prayer. That even though tough things are going to happen, this can work out to your benefit. This can work to help save you, change you, and really through prayer. And how is it? It's the spirit of Jesus Christ. And this is one of the only references by the way of the Spirit in all of Philippians. I think what he's saying here is that even when we're crushed and in despair in our lives, we can still say, I'm wrestling with these things. Now don't forget, Paul wrestled really with these. He was not like a guy that was not suffering. He talks about it a lot.

00:29:16 2 Corinthians 1, I was nearly giving up, you guys. Here's a guy that suffered. And he's saying, what do you do when you're in that? He says in Lori-ease, I shall turn it to salvation. How? Through the spirit of Jesus Christ. Now, we might not know how that works yet. He's going to tell us that in a second. But you're like, something's going to change. I can't take suffering out of your life, but somehow through the spirit of Jesus Christ, it can become something more. Something more positive.

00:29:44 He says, that's really my hope. And I know that I could be ashamed, I could be in these tough situations like prison, that's shameful. And they're living in a society when shame and honor's a big deal. Yeah, he's saying, I know it's going to seem like that, but look, we can work it out. Let's go to 21. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." What? If I live, that's great, because I get to preach. He's going to talk about this at length.

But I get to preach about Jesus Christ. If I die, I'm going to be with Jesus Christ. So no matter where we are in our lives, we can have him.

Hank Smith: 00:30:21 The God's word translation of that verse. Christ means everything to me in this life, and when I die, I'll have even more.

John Bytheway: 00:30:28 I like that.

Lori Denning: 00:30:31 I do like those other translations. He says it in 23, and I'm going to read the NSRV, the new revised standard version. He says, "I am hard-pressed between the two," meaning life and death. "My desire is to depart, to be with Christ, for that is far better." Verse 24, "But to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you." Well, I'm really torn. If I leave, I would be with Christ. But if I stay, that would be better for you because I could keep on preaching and I could keep on teaching Jesus. So I'm really torn. I don't know what's better. Do I die and go with Jesus, or do I stay and preach about Jesus? Tough call. Tough call. Here's something though that I think is super critical for us. A lot of times we are called to more of a... We're ministers, we're ministering brothers, we're ministering sisters, we have family members, other people that we try to help.

00:31:18 Minister is a big word for help. And I think what we do a lot of times is we erase the idea that people are suffering and we think, well, if you're living a good life, you should just not have any suffering. Or that if you aren't suffering, you should just bounce right back. And he's not saying that at all. What he's saying is, we acknowledge that there's suffering. And we sit and we hold ourselves with that suffering. We say, I feel the sorrow, but our hope in the Savior helps us through the struggle. So we don't say, "Oh, I'm sorry you're feeling like that Hank or John. You'll bounce right back." I know that you had a big struggle. What we say instead is, "I hear you, brother. I hear you. And that's just like Jesus and that's just like me. And you know what? He's going to make it better through the journey."

00:32:08 Better through the journey. Verse 25, and I'm still in the new revised standard. "Since I'm convinced of this..." He says, well, actually, I should remain because I can help you out. And then he turns it on his head, verse 25. "Since I'm convinced of this, then I'm going to stay. I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy and faith," 26, "so that by my presence against with you, your boast might abound in Christ Jesus because of me." I'm realizing that maybe I'm here for you and maybe you can feel the same thing I'm feeling. Maybe I'm suffering so that I can help you out. He's a cool guy.

What do you guys think? Do we sometimes erase that someone's suffering? Where you just go, no, you'll just bounce right back because you're a member of the church. You should just not feel that way.

- John Bytheway: 00:32:51 Yeah, I'm going back to Old Testament in my mind. When Job's friends, their greatest moment was when they just came and sat with Job and didn't say a word. And as soon as they opened their mouths and try to explain it all, everything went south. But when they just knew, you're suffering, we're just going to sit with you. And we won't try to explain it, we won't try to make sense of it, we won't try to blame anybody. We'll just sit with you. I think you're right, there's times when it's just so nice to know that somebody else knows what you're going through. Maybe that's important not to pass it off so quick. Oh, you'll get over it. That maybe sounds too quick.
- Lori Denning: 00:33:34 He's saying no, and he's going to talk about this suffering pretty heavy in a second. But I like what you said, just sit with your friends. Just sit there like Job and his buddies. Don't have anything to say, but we'll be with you.
- Hank Smith: 00:33:43 Yeah, mourn with those that mourn. Doesn't say cheer up those that mourn.
- John Bytheway: 00:33:48 Or try to explain it.
- Hank Smith: 00:33:49 Mourn with those that mourn.
- John Bytheway: 00:33:50 Or especially, tell them they sinned and that's why this is happening.
- Lori Denning: 00:33:54 That's Job again. You must've deserved it. This community of Jesus followers, the community that we are all in is for everyone who's listening today, we're with you. We're mourning with you. We might not know exactly what you're feeling, but we all feel that way. And when I'm feeling bad, I can reach out and feel like I know that there's this big community behind me that's got my back, and they're suffering with me. And they're praying with me. And how powerful is that? There's this community across the whole world, this network of people that are saying, "I am mourning with you." I don't even know you, but brother, sister, I feel it.
- Hank Smith: 00:34:34 And wouldn't it be great if every ward, every stake felt this way? This is what we could have.

Lori Denning: 00:34:39 It is. And it's something that I think he's encouraging us to gain, right? These are those fruits of righteousness that he's talking about. I'm so thankful and I'm prayerful, and these are the things that it's time for us to learn. I'm writing you this letter, I'm talking to you today on the podcast so that you can say, "You can still work on it." This is what it's like to be a member of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is what you're being called to do. Because there's no big heavy theology of some like, what is it like in the premortal, and some complicated thing? Paul's got this right down to the ground. This is just application. He's saying, you guys, love each other, serve each other. And then he is going to go, oh, and you know actually what that's about? Jesus Christ. This is big theology. The big theology is the fruits of righteousness. Is loving each other, mourning with those who mourn, and understanding where we are and serving. Be a minister.

Hank Smith: 00:35:35 Verse 27, "You may stand fast in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel."

John Bytheway: 00:35:44 What you just said, Hank, reminds me of when you see one spirit, one mind striving together. Just that sense of Zion we're all trying to get to, which is such an aspirational thing, and we just keep trying.

Lori Denning: 00:35:58 Yeah, he's going to build on that idea. We're still in Philippians 1:27. Hank, will you read again the second half of 27, where it's like, I know that you're standing firm?

Hank Smith: 00:36:07 Sure. Right in the middle of 27, "That whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs. That you stand fast in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel. And in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation and that of God."

Lori Denning: 00:36:32 He basically says, look, I know you're standing firm in one spirit, and this means together. I know that you're standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the Gospel. And you're not frightened by all those adversaries and those guys that are opposing you. You're not frightened by that, he says. And he says for them, those guys on the outside, this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And it's God's doing. I think of a little house, like a little church. And you're in the little church and you're like, I'm feeling all protected in my little church. And you've got these outside forces that press against us. Those outside forces could be big issues in the world. So you've got poverty, you've got racism,

there's a fire in some place. There's just things going on and it's just pressing in on our little community.

00:37:23 And then he says, you're not worried about those things because instead, remember, we're thinking differently. Instead, what we're doing is we're pushing out. We're all unified, our little church together. It's not just me, it's not just Hank. It's not just John. It's all of us together. And we are reflecting back out into the world. Verse 28, you're not frightened by these adversaries at all. And for them, this is evidence of their destruction, but your salvation. While you might feel the most depressed, remember this is a little tiny church. This is a little tiny group. And who hasn't felt like, as a member, as a Christ follower, that you're like, man, I feel like I'm on a little island sometimes. I'm the only one that thinks like this and I'm the only one that's trying. And the world's telling me how bad things are and how everything... And you're like, but I stand together in unity, and I'm not worried about those guys outside.

00:38:11 My little house is secure. And in fact, I'm pushing back out into the world. I'm pushing it back out, and it's my salvation that I can go and help them too. He's flipping it on their head. Don't power down into a little house. You push out, you push out. And this is God's doing. This isn't even you, this is how it works. This is what it's like to be a follower of the Savior. He's going to enable us. Since we're all having the same struggle, he says, I'm sorry to hear you're still having the same thing, but no, I'm in the same boat. And that's what that struggle means, that the struggle is pushing out into the world.

Hank Smith: 00:38:47 There's a moment in Nephi's vision where he sees something similar. This is 1 Nephi 14:12. "And it came to pass that I," this is Nephi, "beheld the Church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few because of the wickedness and abominations of the world." he says. Then he adds in verse 14, "I beheld the power of the Lamb of God that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb upon the covenant people of the Lord. They were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory." They've got all these forces pressing in on them, but look at them pressing out. I like how you describe that.

Lori Denning: 00:39:22 I love that story. It reminds me, Hank, of one of my own personal stories. I served a mission in northern Spain. Northern Spain is like a lot of Europe, where the church isn't very big. In fact, we met in my apartment, but we didn't even have much of a chapel there. It had just come from a group to a branch. So we had just grown to a branch, so there were very few of us.

Hank Smith: 00:39:43 You're a twig? You're a twig still?

Lori Denning: 00:39:44 You're a twig. We were-

Hank Smith: 00:39:46 Not quite yet a branch, but just a stick.

Lori Denning: 00:39:50 And we were a very proud twig, there were just four of us missionaries there. Some great strong members, but very small. We had just one thing after another happen to us. We had rocks thrown at us, my companion and I. And people would yell at us like, "Go home." And a couple days later we were walking home, it was really quite late. Because you'd stay late in Spain because of the heat. We're walking home. And I'm walking up this hill and I just will always remember that the street lamp was above us. And I'm walking, so I'm looking. I'm walking up the sidewalk and I'm looking at my feet because I'm trudging up the hill. And my companion's a few paces ahead of me. Car goes by and they're yelling at us, of course. And I feel this. I'm like, oh. And on my chest, I was like, oh. I have this really sharp pain.

00:40:33 And I'm like, huh, I'm having a heart attack. And I pull my hand away from my chest, and in that light from the street lamp, it's mustard. And I immediately realized what's happened. They had thrown a sandwich at me from the moving car. And you guys, that's going to make me so sad. It made me cry. And I'm not much of a crier. Excuse me, but it made me cry. Here I was just trying to share the Gospel, and these silly hooligans drove by and threw a sandwich at me so much that it hurt. But it hurt my soul. I'm just trying here. We just had the rocks thrown at us and now I'm having this thrown at us. I could feel what they were feeling in that moment in these letters where we're just few in number and we're trying so hard to just share something. And man, it's hard.

00:41:29 It really just broke my heart that people didn't want to hear the message, and they took it out on me personally. And it was just a sandwich. I wasn't in jail, and I didn't have anybody really hurt me. But obviously even here 30 years later it still affects me. It was hard. My little companion looks around is like, "What's wrong with you?" And just took me in her arms and was like, "Hermana, it's okay." And we went home. The story doesn't end. A week later, they were doing a fireworks thing, where they just have tons of local fireworks, not in the sky. And they burned furniture and all these crazy things. The King's birthday. And they lit her skirt on fire. So, we didn't stay in that city anymore, they actually pulled us out of that city.

- 00:42:14 But we're few and far in number. I think sometimes we think that we're bigger than we are, but the saints feel the power of the community throughout the world. It's like, that's okay Hermana Denning, we're behind you. We're few in numbers and we're pressing in on you, but it'll work out okay. Oddly, that was one of my favorite areas, even though how hard it was. The people were so strong there. If this, hearing you Manresa, Spain. Love you. They were some of my favorite people, and became a real strong branch. And now there's a temple, as you know, going into Barcelona. Miracles happen.
- John Bytheway: 00:42:50 Lori, I think I've mentioned it on the podcast before, but my daughter served in France. And one day her note said, "Dad, someone spit on me today." Man, when you're the dad, it really touches you. Thank you for sharing that. That brought back that memory for maybe a lot of people out there listening that had things like that happen. But looking ahead to Philippians 2, I looked at some other translations, and some of them are all indented and in poetic form, which tells me Paul's going to quote something or seeing something that's a little bit different. And you look excited. So what happens in Philippians 2?
- Lori Denning: 00:43:30 Yeah, you're right, it's a song. I know, just to totally change gears, I love this poem. If you had a poetry book of best hymns or best poems about the Savior, this has got to be one of them at the top of the list. And you're right, in our King James version you can't really see its poetry. Now, this is my favorite part. If you think of a poem now, you do foresee that indented formatting thing that we do, especially in English to show that it's a poem. But in King James, it doesn't do that, so it's hard to see.
- 00:44:01 But if you look at another translation, you'll see that it's a poem. Often, I used to skip the poems. I don't know about you guys, but those of you who are also Lord of the Rings fans, if you ever read Lord of the Rings and the Hobbit, they're always breaking out into song. And I used to just skip past the song and then just skip back to the story. And now I realize that the song was like the story. One ring to rule them all, one ring to find them. The core thing is in the poem.
- Hank Smith: 00:44:27 Lori, is the entire chapter a poem, is that what you're saying? Or there's a poem in the chapter?
- Lori Denning: 00:44:31 Yeah, six through 11 is a poem. So we're in Philippians 2, and Paul's going to continue talking about what it means to be this saint, and then he's going to use this poem to highlight it. Think of it like this. How many conference talks have you heard it

where then they quote a hymn? I stand all amazed. That's exactly what he's doing. Taking a hymn. We don't know that he wrote it, it might've been one of the oldest hymns that we ever have. Christ hymns, sometimes called The Christ Hymn. He's quoting it. He's writing the letter, he doesn't reference it. So it's probably one of those, yeah, I stand all amazed. And they're like, oh, I know that. That's a hymn.

- Hank Smith: 00:45:07 Yeah, they know that. He's assuming they know this song.
- John Bytheway: 00:45:10 I think when we say poem, if you're like me when you're young, a poem rhymes. There once was a member named Philip who... Yeah. It's words of a hymn or something. It might not rhyme, but to them it was a poem because they had probably heard it put to music. Is that fair?
- Lori Denning: 00:45:26 Yeah. Our poems have meter and rhyme, right? So, roses are red... The way they rhyme is they rhyme in ideas.
- John Bytheway: 00:45:35 Like chiasmus or something.
- Lori Denning: 00:45:37 And actually, this is a chiasmus, so let's talk about that for a second. A chiasmus is a poem, it comes from the Greek letter kai, which is an X. So I'm making an X with my hands. X marks the spot. So the part in the middle is the key point. Another good analogy for those of us who aren't Greek speakers, it's a hamburger poem. There are two buns, and the buns are the same. And then there are two slices of cheese, and the cheese is the same. And then there's the meat in the middle. The poem is the meat in the middle, but there're going to be parallels. There's going to be bun bun, cheese, cheese, meat.
- Hank Smith: 00:46:11 No pun intended there, meat in the middle. I really like meat in the middle. So it's both meat, and we meet there in the middle.
- Lori Denning: 00:46:15 We meet in the middle. That's right, it's going to do just exactly that. So that's what a chiasmus is. It comes from that X, but that hamburger poem. So there are these parallel ideas, and then bun, bun, cheese, cheese. And then in the middle is the highlight. So if you took a highlighter and you circled it, it would be that section that it's trying to highlight to say, this is really the point is this prayer. Even in your chapters, it's a little hard to see. So I'm going to just do a spoiler, but the spoiler is verse eight. That is the meat in the middle, that is the point of this chapter. We're going to get to it, but just to start with that, it says, and we're talking about Jesus, "He humbled himself and

became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."
So that's the main point.

00:47:08 That's the center point of the poem. And then he's going to build up to that. But let's do one other thing before we jump into this, because this is a little bit heavy. Poems are actually super dense. They're really dense ideas. One thing that we're really used to in our culture is movie scores. We all know movie scores, so we're like, hey, I know a movie score. And when we hear what's called a light motif, or a motif, a little bit of music, we know that that's a character or a symbol. And these poems work the same way. Let me give you an example. If you heard... (singing) I can see you bobbing your heads. You're like, yeah, I know it. Right? I know it. What is it? What's the movie?

John Bytheway: 00:47:56 Star Wars.

Lori Denning: 00:47:57 It's Star Wars. Do you even know what theme or when that comes on? Or what if I did it like this, and it's all slow? (singing)

00:48:10 It's all like an emotional scene. Do you know who it is?

Hank Smith: 00:48:13 Luke, or a Jedi.

Lori Denning: 00:48:16 Yeah, it's a Jedi theme. It's actually called the... They use it for the force. So anytime they feel the force, it's like that song comes on.

Hank Smith: 00:48:22 Kind of like Vader has his own song?

Lori Denning: 00:48:28 (singing) The Imperial March. They play it and you're like, the bad guy's here, or the good guy's here, or there's a theme or an idea. Well, that's what happens in biblical poetry as well, is there are these themes. You start to get to recognize them. And the biggest theme of all is the theme of the cross. You're going to see sacrifice, the Atonement, the cross, sacrifice, the Atonement, the cross, over and over again. And it builds and it builds and it builds and it layers and it layers, and then it puts other ideas on it. And other concepts adds, just like our score. Sometimes it's slow and sometimes it's fast, and sometimes it's the whole orchestra. And sometimes it's a blaring horn. And sometimes it's jokey and you're like, it's the same theme, but it builds on these ideas. Poetry works exactly the same way, and the other way that it also works is it touches us. Because it's in something that rhymes or it's something else, it sticks with us. Do you have a hymn that you're like, if I really want to get close to the spirit, it's one of my go-tos?

John Bytheway: 00:49:31 Mine is, and it's partly because there's a beautiful arrangement of it. I used to hear it when I was a kid, my mom was in the tab choir, but it's, Oh, My Father. There was a beautiful arrangement with French horns. And ever since then, that's just been my favorite.

Lori Denning: 00:49:45 Yeah, I love what you did there though, John. I think that's why music is so powerful, it's associative. You said, because there was a beautiful arrangement and they were in the choir. You're making these associations not just with the music and not just with the song, but what it means to you. That's exactly what these things should do to us too. They're like a hyperlink on a Wikipedia page where you click on it and it takes you to all the other hyperlinks. So you read about the cross or you read about these experiences and you're like, that reminds me of all those other ones.

Hank Smith: 00:50:13 I like Abide With Me, Tis Eventide, and that's because I really like Luke 24, abide with us, tis toward evening.

Lori Denning: 00:50:22 That's beautiful. You have an association with it too.

Hank Smith: 00:50:25 Yeah.

Lori Denning: 00:50:26 That's what Paul is so brilliant about here, is that he's going to teach us more about the Savior, and he's going to tie it in with this poem. Just like Luke Skywalker's theme or just like any of these, he's going to tie it out to something that we're like, we have heard about these ideas over and over again about the sacrifice of the Savior, and we're going to learn about him. And it's deep and it's rich, and there's just a lot to unpack. But if we really get to the bottom of it, it's a hymn. And it should touch us at our hearts, and it should tie into those hymns. If you're not sure what this hymn means, pick your favorite sacrament hymn and replace it. And chances are it's the same theme.

John Bytheway: 00:51:02 You're getting the same idea.

Lori Denning: 00:51:04 Should we read it and see what it says?

John Bytheway: 00:51:06 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:51:06 Let's do it.

Lori Denning: 00:51:07 Let me set up one other idea. We talked about it being a chiasmus or a hamburger that has this point in the middle with Jesus on the cross, but it's actually two big chunks. It's the top

of the burger and the bottom of the burger. And there's a word right in the middle that we're going to hit, which is really, therefore. It's going to hit therefore or wherefore. In verse nine, wherefore. And it's the point at which it switches. It's basically going to say all this stuff at the top is equal to all this stuff at the bottom. Or because of the stuff at the top, the stuff at the bottom's going to be true. It's like an equal sign. Now here's the setting. This isn't just about the Savior. Paul is using the story about the Savior and about his atoning sacrifice to teach us about times when we struggle.

00:51:55 What do we do when we struggle? Well, let's look to him. So that's what we're going to do. Let's go to, I'm in Philippians 2:6-11 is our poem. And remember verse eight is that key verse, right at verse nine's the hinge, therefore. Let's try it then with a different translation. Now, the reason I want to use a different translation is because it's really dense material. Ready? And the King James language just makes it denser. I need it to be a little less dense. John, would you mind reading for us Philippians two, and we're going to do six through 11. What version are you reading for us?

John Bytheway: 00:52:28 Well, I could do the NIV, the new international version.

Lori Denning: 00:52:32 That's perfect.

John Bytheway: 00:52:33 Okay, so starting in verse six, Philippians 2. "Who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing. Taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God exalted him to the highest plane and gave him the name that is above every name. That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

Lori Denning: 00:53:16 So it's pretty dense. There's a lot going on. Let's start it right out. Who being in the very nature of God did not consider equality with God, something to be used for his advantage. So that one's a little bit easier to understand. We're talking about Jesus Christ who had all power, who was the creator of the world. Who could have called down, even says it right in the Gospels, I could have called down legions of angels. Don't you think that I could have done that thing? And he says in this hymn, but he didn't use it to his advantage. Instead, he does something surprising. He does something different. Someone

who's in power that didn't just live the high life, take advantage of it. I was born to greatness. He's the firstborn. He could have just lived like a king, and he doesn't do that.

00:54:04 He does something remarkably and radically different. And what is it he does? Verse seven, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant. A servant. He's God. He's God, Jehovah. He could have just done anything he wanted, and he takes the least. The least, the servant. Now, I don't know about you, but servants in the ancient world, probably not really well respected. The word here sometimes is even a slave. It wasn't like, ooh. Well that's okay. It's okay if you were a slave. It's not like that. It's like he took the worst. He could have done everything and he didn't. And in fact he did the opposite. He became a servant to all.

00:54:52 And then he says, being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death. He's not obedient because death is telling him what to do, he's obedient to his father's will. He's obedient all the way. He could have said, well that was close, you get the idea. I'm God after all, I don't have to do all this. He did the opposite. He becomes a servant, he becomes obedient all the way to death. You can feel it, even death on a cross.

Hank Smith: 00:55:27 And that's the middle point, right?

Lori Denning: 00:55:29 That's the middle point. That's the middle point. Let's talk about that. Why is this called the Christ hymn? Why are we learning about this? What does this teach us about the love of God? Why did Jesus do this?

John Bytheway: 00:55:40 I'm reminded of the idea he descended below all things so that he could rise above all things. And maybe that wherefore is that focal point right there. This is the heart of his performing the Atonement, perhaps.

Lori Denning: 00:55:54 I think you're exactly right.

Hank Smith: 00:55:56 I'm reading the hymn in the contemporary English version and it says, this is starting verse seven. "Instead he gave up everything and became a slave, when he became one of us." And that takes me to Alma 7. He will take upon them their infirmities, their sicknesses, their pains. And why? Why would he do it? So he can know in the flesh how to succor his people. I've got to become like you so I can truly understand you and help you.

Lori Denning: 00:56:30 How powerful is that, that God all powerful Christ can come down and do that so that he could love us?

Hank Smith: 00:56:39 Better. Yeah.

Lori Denning: 00:56:40 Better.

Hank Smith: 00:56:41 So I can love you more. That's a lot of love. I don't know very many people that I'd say, I really want to love you more, so let me experience every bad thing you've ever experienced. That's a lot.

Lori Denning: 00:56:55 I think I've had the most profound experience, personal experience of understanding the Savior with this idea. Not that he came to just free me from my sins, or not that I could have faith in him, but the idea that he descended below them all so he could understand me when I was in my darkest times. I've had some dark times. I don't share this story, so I hope it's okay. But quite a few years ago I was diagnosed with a really weird brain condition, and it caused me to have just severe chronic pain. I had hydrocephalus. A form of hydrocephalus, so water on the brain, but as an adult. And it has similar symptoms to having a brain tumor. I started to have really bad vision and all kinds of other things, but really intense pain, headaches.

00:57:42 It just went on for weeks and weeks and then months and months. So they did an MRI, they did all that, and they could see that it was a problem from an accident I had had as a kid. So it was a brain structural thing. I started just having all these problems. And the pain grew and grew and grew, and there was no relief. Not for one minute. I got harder and harder and harder. And about nine months into this little adventure I was on my last legs, you guys. My parents hadn't seen me for quite a while, they knew I was sick. But I was an adult, they lived out of state. And they came to see me and they're like, "You don't look like you." They took me back to their neurologist and they said, "We got to do something." And they said, "Well, the only thing we can really do is this really risky brain surgery." I know, let's sign up for brain surgery.

00:58:28 I was at the point where I was like, I don't think I can keep going on like this. So yeah, I'll take anything I've got. And I was at a really, really suffering. The pain was overwhelming, and it never ceased. Never, not for a second. I couldn't see a way out. I didn't know what I was supposed to do. And I always thought I'd be real strong. If I have a really hard thing, I'd be a really great person. No, I was miserable. I was just suffering. We meet a brain surgeon, happens to be one of two, just happens to be

here locally. And he says, "Yep, you got the thing, and so we'll do this risky nine hour brain surgery and we'll put in a device, and we'll put a plate in your brain and all this. It'll be great." And it was really scary.

00:59:15 And so I was on the gurney, and I was waiting to be wheeled into surgery. I've got that little hat on and I'm laying there. And I'm still suffering, I'm just feeling so bad. And I'm scared. More than anything, I'm scared. I'm scared of two things. What if it doesn't work? And then the other, well, if it doesn't work, I hope I don't wake up. And as I sat there being so scared, my dad took my hand and he said, "Lori, let Christ have this. This is the Atonement. This is what it's for." And you guys, in that moment I knew him in a way that I will never know the Savior in another way. I knew he was there with me in that moment. I knew that no matter what happened, whether I woke up or not, he suffered that kind of suffering for me.

01:00:21 And that was the moment at which I knew the Savior, I knew him. The hymn is saying that very thing. That it's at that moment when the Savior has descended below it all so that he could be with me during my darkest moment where I had no hope. I know that he's the Christ. I know that Jesus is the Christ. I know Jesus is the Christ. Is this hymn powerful? Yeah, because his Atonement is powerful and it's really real. He really did those things so that he could help me and you and everybody else. I know that in a way that I didn't know before.

John Bytheway: 01:01:15 Thank you for sharing that.

Hank Smith: 01:01:19 Lori, your story reminds me of a quote from Elder Merrill J. Bateman. This is back in 2005, the November Ensign, it's a conference edition. Elder Bateman said this, "For many years I thought of the Savior's experience in the garden and on the cross as places where a large mass of sin was heaped upon him. Through the words of prophets, however, my view has changed. Instead of an impersonal mass of sin, there was a long line of people." He goes on to say, "The Atonement was an intimate personal experience in which Jesus came to know how to help each of us. He learned about your weaknesses. He experienced your pains and sufferings. I testify that he knows us. But more than that, more than just knowing us, he knows how to help us if we come to him in faith."

Lori Denning: 01:02:15 Amen.

John Bytheway: 01:02:16 One of the places that Elder Bateman talked about was going to Abinadi in Isaiah where Isaiah, when his soul will be made an

offering for sin, he shall see his seed. And maybe as Elder Bateman said, that was not just a mass of all sin but an individual thing. That would be the travail of his soul. When we would become children of Christ, he would see his seed. It's a powerful, beautiful thought. Thanks for sharing that.

Lori Denning: 01:02:47 I love the idea that it's so personal. That was a cool quote. And he knows them so that he can help them.

John Bytheway: 01:02:53 He would see his seed and there would be joy.

Lori Denning: 01:02:58 Yeah. On that, I think the power of this poem, if we can go back to it, of how it affects us naturally is that we return back to what that means for Christ. And that's that hinge verse. So there on nine, therefore. That's it. This is like, boom, the hinge. Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, and that is the name of Jesus. And every knee should bow in heaven and an earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. It isn't that the suffering and the trial is just a nothing. It's that becomes something that exalts us. It changes us. It changed him. The suffering that you are going through, remember what the letter is about. When you're suffering and you're going through trials, it's the same thing that Christ went through, and it will make you like him.

01:03:56 It's something that the Lord can use. So instead of being born into something really great and being the king, it's the opposite. It's being the servant and then is what brings us up. So that's suffering that you're going through is good news, because it teaches us to be like him, and the Lord can use it for a benefit. I think of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis where they thought that they were going to cast him out and kill him, and then they sell him as a slave. And then he goes to Egypt, and then even there he's thrown in jail. And then the person in jail even forgets him. His story just goes from bad to worse, to bad to worse. And this guy doesn't really deserve any of it. And then finally someone remembers him. Oh, I remember that he was in jail.

01:04:37 And then he is raised up and he becomes the vice regent. He's the super in charge guy of all of Egypt. Who knew? Jesus knew. He sends a family down there. And it says in chapter 50, to his brothers, you guys meant it for evil, but God put it to good. So you tried to do all this to me, but it was for good, and that's what the Savior can do for all of our suffering. He can say something that was so troublesome, he can put it to our good.

He's not saying that suffering is good, but even the suffering, even those things that are trying can become something good.

- Hank Smith: 01:05:16 I've always thought about that story, Lori. I thought in the past, well, why doesn't the Lord just put Joseph in Egypt instead of making him go through all of those difficult things? But I've wondered, when his brothers show up, had he just been placed in Egypt and not struggled, would he be the person that he was, the forgiver that he was? Had he not suffered so much. So not only does the Lord put us in the right place, but he can also use our difficulties and trials to make us the right person in the right place.
- Lori Denning: 01:05:56 I think that's exactly right, that the Lord gives us those struggles to make us the best that we can be, if we do it consecrated to the Lord, not just struggle. It makes Joseph the best Joseph. If we do it in Christ, if you dedicate it to him, if you consecrate it to him. It teaches us something, we become better. At least it feels a little bit cold comfort like, well, I was hoping to just avoid those trials. But instead what he's teaching is those trials are important for us and they make us more like him. And the whole purpose for our existence is not to avoid the struggles, but to have him with us on our side. With us, understanding us intimately and uniquely when we go through them.
- John Bytheway: 01:06:42 It makes Joseph a stronger type of Christ too because of that time. And back in Philippians 1:19, I know this, Paul's imprisonment, everything shall turn to my salvation. That idea of all things work together for good for them that love God shows up in different stories and in different phrases all over the place, doesn't it? That God can take those times. He doesn't cause all of them, sometimes we cause them. But he can take those and make it for our good.
- Lori Denning: 01:07:14 Yeah, that's really powerful. Thank you, John. I like that, that it's that thread, that theme is just threading through all of these verses. All these chapters, all these different books.
- John Bytheway: 01:07:24 So many stories throughout. Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 01:07:27 Let's look at the rest of Philippians.
- Lori Denning: 01:07:29 We're just going to mention a few of the key things that we won't be able to dig into, but that you should come back to.
- Hank Smith: 01:07:35 Philippians 3:13, 14. It says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended," which I think means I have not reached my

goal yet. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind," which I think he means things he's been through. "And reaching forth under those things which are before," before meaning in the future, before me coming up. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Paul being almost a motivational speaker right there. I'm going to finish this race. I have a goal and I'm going to reach it. I know who I am, I know what I want, and I'm going to get it.

- Lori Denning: 01:08:22 I like the high calling. It's a high calling. This isn't just a putzy little race, this is the race. And I am pressing for it. I'm going to endure to the end and I'm going to make it. And I'm going to bust through the tape at the end.
- Hank Smith: 01:08:36 All right, John, your turn.
- John Bytheway: 01:08:38 Well, the kid in primary that said, "What kind of gun did Paul have?" And his teacher said, "I don't think Paul had a gun." And, "Yes he did. It says we believe in the ammunition of Paul when they were working on the Articles of Faith." And sometimes we don't even know, what was the admonition of Paul. Well, that's Philippians 4:8. Exactly the wrong way to look at, for example, the new FSJ guide is, what will God permit? Instead, a better way is, what would God prefer? As someone said on our podcast recently. And look at what this is saying to look at, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things. And our Article of Faith says, we seek after these things. Instead of just the don't, this has the do. What should I focus on? What should I look for in life? The things that are on us, pure, just lovely of good report, praiseworthy.
- Lori Denning: 01:09:38 I like that too. That reminds me of Martha and Mary, where she has chosen the better part. You just get to pick anything that you know that the Lord wants you to follow. It doesn't have to tell you everything. It's a good thing.
- Hank Smith: 01:09:49 Let's look at the end of Philippians chapter three. Paul is talking about those who are enemies to the cross of Christ. And he said, "Whose end is destruction." And then this phrase, "Whose God is their belly." Basically, who worshiped their stomachs. And I have been guilty of that before, almost as if my belly is my God saying, feed me. Right? Yes, master, I will do whatever you want me to do. Almost a John chapter six moment. I come to Christ because I want to be physically fed. I want to be satisfied

physically. And Paul is saying that's not what it's about. God is their belly. So put that in vinyl in the kitchen.

- John Bytheway: 01:10:34 Yeah.
- Lori Denning: 01:10:36 One of the things I always appreciate is how much Paul calls out his friends. He's always like, "Hey, I love you guys." And he remembers them so fondly, and he always remembers to call them out. We have some of the best names that we only get in these letters where we don't know these people, but we know that they're out there being the people that they are and growing the kingdom of God, growing Zion. And that's just like all of us. We're all just little people. He would've written to each of you. Thanks, Paul.
- Hank Smith: 01:11:07 Lori, what you just said reminds me of a moment in the Beware of Pride talk, that famous talk from 1989, President Benson, Beware of Pride. He's talking about all these things that are prideful. Fault-finding, gossiping, backbiting, murmuring, living beyond our means, envying, coveting. And then he said something that just caught my attention. Pride, withholding gratitude and praise that might lift another. Withholding gratitude and praise that might lift another. Paul takes these opportunities to praise people, to lift them. When I read through this talk, I thought, how often do I withhold compliments or praise that might really be a benefit to someone else? I just don't say it. I think of it, but I don't say it.
- John Bytheway: 01:11:59 That beware of pride talk. I like to think, how many times have you thought something kind about somebody, but it doesn't get that extra couple of inches and come out of your mouth? What's that old poem? I've wept in the night for the shortness of sight when to someone's need I was blind. But I've never as yet felt a tinge of regret for being a little too kind. You think that nice thing about somebody, just let it come out. And here's Paul in prison thanking them for taking care of him.
- Lori Denning: 01:12:29 I think those are powerful things that we can do. And that's always a reminder to me that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is this doing. That we can share this out and be this light. It's not that God's light just shares into us, but we reflect it out. We're like a mirror outwards. Just sharing those kind words, even helping somebody suffering. Mourning with those who mourn. That's powerful, and it's something that I can do.
- John Bytheway: 01:12:55 I've always loved this little thought in Philippians 4:11. It's a little thought, but it's so huge, how hard to do. "I have learned, Paul says from prison, "in whatsoever state I am therewith to be

content." I think there are entire floors in skyscrapers on Madison Avenue trying to persuade us that we should be discontent, that there is some product or service that we don't have. And that we need it so bad that we should not be content. And I remember reading a book years ago called, Fine Old High Priest. I can only remember one line in that book and it was this young adult talking to his grandma who said to him, giving him advice, "Marry someone who knows how to be content." I don't know why I remember that line, but being content is very hard to do. And here's Paul saying, I've learned to be content, and having it come from that place. That verse just speaks to me and tells me I'm not there yet.

- Hank Smith: 01:14:01 John, that's funny that you say that, those floors of Madison Avenue. Because I remember taking a marketing class and they said, "A billboard is meant to create a problem you didn't know you had, and solve it." You're like, I didn't even know I had that problem until I looked at a billboard.
- Lori Denning: 01:14:15 I'm so glad I can pay money to get it resolved. Right?
- John Bytheway: 01:14:18 That's that other old saying that they want to persuade you to spend money you don't have, to buy stuff you don't need, to impress people you don't like.
- Hank Smith: 01:14:29 Whatsoever state I am in, therewith to be content. That's great, John.
- John Bytheway: 01:14:36 Please join us for part two of this podcast.



- Hank Smith: 00:01 Welcome to part two with Professor Lori Denning, Colossians.
- Lori Denning: 00:07 There is another fantastic letter with yet another poem. What I want to do now is Colossians. This is one of the shorter letters. It's also what we call a prison letter. So, let's do a little context to find out why Paul's in prison yet again. A little bit different is Colossae.
- 00:23 So, this is a little bit unique in that it's a short letter. These are all fairly short. I know we're making them sound like they're long, but you can read them in about two minutes. But Colossae is in what we would call modern day Turkey, and it's the central and it used to be a really big city, but it is quite small at this point. And even today if you go, it's just vineyards. There's not even a building still standing in Colossae today.
- 00:49 Paul never went there personally and he didn't start the church there. He gets a letter from a guy Epaphras, we'll call him Epi. He's from there and he's a member, and he comes and visits Paul in prison and he's like, "Hey, Paul, I want to tell you the good news about these members that you've never heard of, but they're doing so great, but they're little, tiny, tiny, tiny."
- 01:10 Now, there hasn't been a lot of excavation there, but we think there were about maybe three big homes and you could maybe fit 15 people in each home. That's less than 50 people. This is a very small branch, and they are on their own. They don't have a big town. It's interesting though, that Paul's going to take the time, so he hears from a native son that comes and meets him in prison. He's in prison again.
- 01:34 Again, sometimes, they'll say he's in Rome because we know he was in Rome for a long time. But it might've been Ephesus, which isn't as far 100 miles. Here's a report about what's going on there. One thing you should do, one thing we're going to notice, he is so excited to talk to them and talk about the wonder and the excitement, and the thrill of being a new church, of joining the church for the first time.

- 02:03 This is a letter for all of us when we're like, "I remember my convert days. I remember being a missionary. I remember when I sang the song of redeeming love," right? Alma 5. So, I remember when I had those moments and Paul is so excited to share those with this little tiny church that he's never been to. This is the letter to Colossae.
- 02:25 One thing in Colossians or any of his letters that we remember is that a lot of times it has a pattern. One thing it helps me is understanding the structure. It usually has the little intro, sometimes called The Prayer or The Thanksgiving, and that's the I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents. And then, the other structure is often this. He's going to do half of the letter on theology, meaning heavy doctrine, big points, big concepts, teach them something. And then, the second half is application.
- 02:54 If you're doing this in your own study and you're like, "How am I supposed to put this with my family?" You can understand that structure, and as you understand the structure you can say big doctrine, big application. He's going to do the same thing. In the first half, he's going to try to talk about some big ideas.
- 03:09 Now, these people, here's that theme again coming in, if you were a new member or we remember when we were new or we've been less practicing in our lives and we're coming back and we're feeling that new life little congregation of new converts and Paul is so excited to tell them, but they're not really sure how they're supposed to do this new life in Christ.
- 03:32 What am I supposed to do? How is this supposed to work? He is going to teach them about how to do that. But I think there are times when we all feel a little bit new or we don't feel like we fit in, and there's this weird feeling like you're the only person that doesn't get it, but let me let everybody in on a secret. We all feel like that. We all feel a little bit like the imposter. We all feel a little bit like I'm not as good as sister so-and-so and I'm not as great as speaker as so-and-so. I don't know scriptures like so-and-so.
- 03:59 Let me just disabuse you all of this idea. You do not need to know ancient languages to understand the scripture. You do not need to know everything to be a good member of the church. What do you need? Faith, repentance, baptism. We already have those things. You just come with what you bring. If you've ever felt like that, this letter is for you.

- 04:20 So, let's jump in and find out what he has to say. Let's do 1:3-8, John, do you still have your other versions so that you could read Colossians 1:3-8? It's actually not very long.
- John Bytheway: 04:38 Colossians 1:3-8, in the new international version, we always thank God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love you have for all the saints, the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world, this gospel is bearing fruit and growing just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.
- Lori Denning: 05:16 This is again a letter to the New Church. What's interesting here is, he's going to include them in the greater community of Zion, the greater saints, all the church. And I love the way he says it. Again, we're going to use this funny metaphor of fruit. He says, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it, and truly understood God's grace. I love this idea that sometimes we feel like we're alone. Sometimes, we feel like we're the only one that get it or we're not really sure. And I think, we've all lived in places where we really are kind of by ourselves as members.
- 05:57 He says, "Look, good news. It's doing the same thing that it's been doing. It's growing just like it's growing in you. It's growing all around the world." I love the idea that the church is something international. We often hear it's like, "Well, people are not really excited about institutional religion." And Paul is saying the opposite. Paul is saying, "It is still growing, and it's growing just like it happens in you and it's happening everywhere."
- Hank Smith: 06:22 Excellent. And Lori, I think he even says that, again, in verse 12, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to the partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." We're all entitled to this inheritance and we're all part of this group called the saints.
- Lori Denning: 06:41 That's powerful, isn't it? I think we live in a very individualistic society. We focus on ourselves on what we're going to do and how we're going to achieve. And anciently, it wasn't true and it really isn't today, although we fool ourselves that it is. But we're part of this bigger community. Out there is this community of saints, this community of people that believe and are striving just like you are and is like, it's your inheritance.

- 07:04 Don't forget that you're part of something bigger, and I love the idea that we're part of something bigger anciently, and in the future across time, not just around the world. We're reading this 2000-year-old text and I'm like, "Yeah, that's just like me." And hopefully, some thousand years from now someone's reading ours and going, "You know, that story is, Hank, that is really profound. That is just like me."
- Hank Smith: 07:27 Don't feel like you don't belong because you're part of the inheritance of the saints.
- Lori Denning: 07:32 Let's jump over then on that same idea because he's going to introduce as we become this new people as we're learning how to do all this. He's going to go in chapter two, and I want to run to six and seven, and he's going to tell us kind of what we do.
- Hank Smith: 07:48 Okay, I'll go back to the KJV. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: Rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as ye have been taught abounding therein with thanksgiving."
- Lori Denning: 08:03 I love this. As ye therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk ye in Him. This is now your new life. This is the way you're going to get out there, and you're now a new person. You walk in Him. If I'm thinking this is a new life and I'm thinking I'm learning how to do this differently, and I'm with this community of saints, what is walk in Christ?
- Hank Smith: 08:29 I think it's answered down below, do what he would do, strive too anyway. Elder Uchtdorf brought up this verse, Colossians 2:6, his question is how do we become true disciples of Jesus Christ? And then, he says, "The Savior himself provided the answer with a profound declaration: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." This is the essence of what it means to be a true disciple. Those who receive Christ Jesus walk with him. That's the Colossians quote. He goes on to say.
- 08:58 "But this may present a problem for some because there are so many shoulds and should nots that merely keeping track of them can be a challenge. Sometimes, well-meaning amplifications of divine principles, many coming from uninspired sources complicate matters further, diluting the purity of divine truth with manmade addenda.
- 09:18 One person's good idea, something that may work for him or her takes root becomes an expectation. And gradually, eternal principles get lost within the labyrinth of good ideas." Later on

in this same section of his talk, he says, "Because love is the great commandment, it ought to be at the center of all and everything we do in our own family, in our church callings, and in our livelihood. Love is the healing balm that repairs rifts in personal and family relationships. It is the bond that unites families, communities, and nations. Love is the power that initiates friendship, tolerance, civility and respect. It is the source that overcomes divisiveness and hate. Love is the fire that warms our lives with unparalleled joy and divine hope. Love should be our walk and our talk.

- 10:06 When we truly understand what it means to love as Jesus Christ loves us. The confusion clears and our priorities align. Our walk as disciples of Christ becomes more joyful. Our lives take on new meaning. Our relationship with our heavenly Father becomes more profound. Obedience becomes a joy rather than a burden."
- Lori Denning: 10:25 Amen. That was awesome. Two things. The next verse is exactly where President Uchtdorf went next. Paul says, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." It seemed like he was describing where you take a good idea, and then President Uchtdorf says, and then you pile on, and then you over apply it, and you're like, "That was a good idea. But it really wasn't the gospel." I think we're all probably a little bit like that. We're just bombarded with really great self-help and things online and we're like...
- Hank Smith: 10:57 Lots of good ideas.
- Lori Denning: 10:58 I could do that. I could do that.
- Hank Smith: 10:58 Yeah.
- Lori Denning: 10:59 That's a lot of good ideas. And they're not really not Christlike. They're not Christlike. But the second thing is, yeah, so many things that how can I follow all the commandments? But he's like, love. Love's the big commandment, and that's the guideline, and we can love as Christ loved. And then, you're on the right track.
- Hank Smith: 11:15 That's exactly right. The contemporary English version of that same verse eight. These arguments may sound wise, but they're only human teachings. They come from the powers of the world and not from Christ.

Lori Denning: 11:28 I think that takes us perfectly to a transition of one of these main points, and that's chapter two verse 12. And he's going to use one of these really powerful symbols of what this means in this new life. If we learned how to love and we've learned to just distance ourselves from these teachings of the world, he's going to remind us of what our new life is.

11:49 Let's go to 2:12. I'm reading it in the NRSV. He's reminding them that you're introduced into this new family, this walk with Christ, this family of the Savior, and he says in 2:12, "When you were buried with him in baptism, you were raised up with him through faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead." We're in a new life. I like that because I need visuals, and I need simple things.

12:19 My baptism renewed in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper every Sunday. I died like he died, but I also have a new life. My new life in Christ. This new walk with Christ. I'm a new creature. I'm a new thing. I can do that, and I can follow him. When I reflect on the sacrament, I think I'm not just reflecting on his sacrifice, which we did in... Philippians so well. But I'm also reflecting on my new life. I'm like Him, and I like that a lot that I died and I'm reborn as something new in Him.

Hank Smith: 12:54 Excellent.

John Bytheway: 12:55 Yeah, that's what I thought when you asked the question, what does it mean to walk with him? And part of that is verse 12, "Be buried with him in baptism and risen with him." And we talked about that in Romans. The Romans 6:4 verse, "Were buried with Him, walk ye with Him." I put in my margin section 19:23, "Walk in the meekness of my Spirit." And that's such a good question. What does that mean exactly?

13:22 And in verse seven, there's in Him. In verse nine, there's an in Him. In verse 10, there's an in Him. Verse 12, "Buried with Him in baptism," which reminds us what we talked about in Romans, we're buried... Let me go to it exactly. "Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism unto death that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should also walk in newness of life."

13:48 The symbol of being baptized, going down under the water like a symbol of death and then we're risen with Him, kind of a do what he did thing, and that's exactly what these Colossians have done. They were buried with Him in baptism and now trying to walk with Him.

Lori Denning: 14:05 I like that. And I like that he keeps bringing it out to this new life, this new walk. And then, he brings it out that we're part of something bigger. We're part of this extra community that he talks about. I don't think Paul is telling us that we should just not follow the commandments. He's not saying you don't need to follow those things. It's just love. But as we start our new walk in Christ, like you said John, as we're kind of born, we leave our old things behind. We're now following him as our new Lord.

14:33 So, we don't think about kings very much because we don't have many of them left in the world. Then, they did. It was like, if you're following your king, that's your guy you're following. But we do have something that we do a lot is that we have stuff that we really align with. It could be our football team. It could be our college that we went to. It could be our political affiliation. And we align ourselves there first.

15:00 And what Paul would advise us in this new death and new birth, you're now following Him. And in this new walk, you follow Him first. You are Christ followers. First you are members of the church, Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints first, in a way that that's supposed to guide you. You have to leave that other stuff behind, or, and he's going to go on quite an example here in a minute, but he's going to talk about how we take our lives and say, "Now, how do we do that then?" And he's going to teach us again how we're going to do this walk through Christ.

15:35 And in a typical fashion, he's going to go back to teach us more about the Savior first, and then he is going to apply it. Since we're doing another poem, I want to highlight a couple things again, how to read these poems and why they're important. The most impactful and emotional things in your life. Let's start with good ones. Let's stay away from the bad ones for a minute.

15:56 Good ones, birth of a child, graduating from school, falling in love. Can you think of anything like that? And then, are there any favorite songs that go along with those? Anything that's the most impactful moment of your life is something that hit you really, emotionally. There's something about something emotional and something hard to describe that works really well in poetry and song.

Hank Smith: 16:24 Lori, I finally thought of one. It's when I very first touched the western wall of the old temple.

Lori Denning: 16:32 So, some of my favorite examples are in Luke. The beginning of Luke is like a musical. And when Mary finds out she's going to

have baby Jesus and she's so excited that the Messiah is finally coming, she sings a song. We call it the Magnificat. My soul is magnified by the Lord. She burst out in a song.

- 16:53 Similarly, Luke also has another song when Zacharia. Finally, he's found out about John the Baptist, his baby boy after being older... Miracle. And he is mute. And then, they say, "What's his name going to be?" And they say, "John." And then, he sings a song. He just burst out in a song. But one of my favorites is the Luke 2 story. The angel comes to the shepherds and it's like, Hey, the Messiah is finally born, born to you this day in a manger. And the skies tear open with what? Glory to God in the highest.
- 17:34 In these moments of profound spirituality, it isn't just emotion. But it's emotion, it's big ideas and it's maybe the only way to really understand them and take something that is hard to understand in your heart and in your mind and everything together is with song, is with poetry. The reason that we find so much poetry in scripture, even if you can't see it in King James is because it's taking those same things where they're hard to explain, where they're spiritual and they're deep and they're challenging.
- 18:07 Let me let you in on one other little secret. The majority of times when the Lord speaks in the Old Testament all the way through the Doctrine and Covenants not as Jesus Christ, but when he's speaking as God, it's in poetry. The Lord is trying to communicate something profound, something spiritual, something deep, something multilayered, something that's going to impact us in ways that it can't do if I just tell you a story, and he's going to do it with a poem.
- 18:35 So, we're going to hit another song. And Paul is going to try to say, I'm trying to explain something that's deep and spiritual and exciting and powerful. We'll make it a song. Again, they don't rhyme like English. It doesn't rhyme like English. It rhymes in ideas. It'll have patterns of ideas. Let's try it.
- 18:51 So, let's go to Colossians. Let's read this one, and it's one of 15 through 20. Remember last time we talked about the hamburger? This one is a little bit different. It has one big section, 15 through 16. Then, it has two little sections, 17 and then 18. So, it's like a really big bun, little slab of meat, a little piece of cheese, and then another really big bun.
- 19:17 So, it's got big little, little big, and that helps us because what it's going to try to do is use the same pivot or hinge in the

middle, which is these key ideas. So, instead of being a big hamburger, it's got a lot of bread, but the meat in it's really powerful, 16, 17 and 18 are the keys in the middle, and that's what we're going to do.

- Hank Smith: 19:39 You're telling me this is a high carb, high protein... Oh.
- Lori Denning: 19:42 That's a high carb. It's all bread. It's a big something. I can't make that metaphor work anymore. But yes, let's try it. What he's going to tell us about here is he's trying to explain the role of Jesus Christ. We're going to start this new life in Christ. We're walking in Christ. He's trying to teach us about him, so we understand what this walk is like. And we've learned it's about love, and we've learned about following the commandments. And now, we're going to learn about him.
- Hank Smith: 20:08 Okay. I have the NRSV here. The new revised standard version starts in verse 15. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in Him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers; all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in Him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.
- Lori Denning: 20:58 There's something powerful and profound going on with these two big sections. We were calling them the bread sections. There are two big sections. He's going to talk about Christ being in the image of God, and then he's going to go back and he's going to use this idea who was in the beginning. And yet, was the firstborn.
- 21:14 When an author uses something like this, they want you to stop and they want you to sit with it, and they want you to research it and ponder it and go for a long walk and really dig into it. This is something that you could spend a lifetime really pondering what each of these lines mean, and how this reflects on the life of Christ. And then, how this reflects on your life as... Remember, you're now dead and now alive in Him.
- 21:40 What I like to think of is, again, this has a lot of layers. Meaning, there are a lot of interpretations. The first interpretation is about God. This is going to tell us about God. The second I think is it's going to tell about Christ on earth. I think it's also going to

tell us about us, and then it's going to also tell us about community and how we live as in a community. And lastly, I think it's going to have a layer on what we do in communities with rulers who are not Christ.

- 22:09 So, it's going to be someone who would be... You're not following the right leader because this is a lesson on how are we supposed to follow Him. We're walking in Him, so we're going to understand God. We're also going to understand Christ as immortal. We're sin ourselves and go once. As we go through that, that's where you can just tease this out and keep going and keep going.
- 22:30 Again, the middle is the core ideas. So, verse 17 and 18, and I have a little different translation. But He is before all things, and in all things in Him hold together, and He is the head of the body, the church. So, He is the creator. He's everything. But I wanted to start on the first idea, the first idea who is in the image of God? The invisible one, the firstborn of all creations.
- 22:53 And here's why. The big ideas are complicated. And sometimes, I get lost in them. But when it's something that I can apply, I'm like, "Yeah, I like that." Here is a place that I think we can apply. We know we're created in God's image. And he's specifically here talking about Christ first that he's created, he's like us. It reminds me of that very first Genesis story that we're created in his image.
- 23:20 When you think of an image, the word that they used to use anciently was an idol, like an idol statue. In the middle of a temple or a building, they would put the statue, and that was the image. It is literally the same word. It's Salem, in Hebrew. They would put that there. It would be the image of God. And he's saying, we don't have that in ours because you're the image.
- 23:44 If you went to the ancient Hebrew temple, there's no person carving. There's no thing, why? Because it's you, you're the image of God. You are like Him in everything. When you worship or you represent something else, you are diminishing yourself, and you're not really realizing where you are. He's the firstborn and you're like Him. You're meant to be a joint heir.
- 24:11 And here's where it gets really interesting. Your role as His image is to go out in the world and reflect that out into the world, so that there are little pockets of Him everywhere. We love the temple, but we don't go to the temple because that is the only place that He can be. We go there so we can learn, and

then take it out. We can take the message of the Gospel to everywhere. He was in the image, and so are you. And you are joint heirs, and you are supposed to go and tend the garden and take care of it. And you are Him. You're his hands, right? You're in his walk. Go do what He would do.

Hank Smith: 24:53 God doesn't want us to make any graven images to him because as Genesis says, "He created man in His own image."

Lori Denning: 25:02 Yeah, and how much more powerful is that? Is that if I am born in Christ and I am in His image, that I am His representative every day. So, just like your President Uchtdorf quote, we're out there in love. We're out there spreading the good news just by what we do every day, being a little kinder, being a little nicer, sharing the Gospel, being a little more patient. We are His image. If He can't be here right now every second... well, He could. But if he's going to make us do it, he is like, Well, go do it. Go walk with Christ. You are His image. And just like you follow Him, you watch Jesus do all these things, and we've been studying in all New Testament. Now, you know what to do. Go do the same thing.

John Bytheway: 25:49 This reminds me of third Nephi, one of the nicknames that Jesus actually shares with us, like image it sounds like is, "I am the light of the world." And then, he says, "I give unto you to be a light to the world." And then, He says, "So, let your light shine, and then "I am the light that you shall hold up at which you have seen me do." That's how we take his image out, kind of that's a parallel idea.

Lori Denning: 26:13 That's a really great application of that. All right. Back to the poem. That's the first idea that really jumps out at me. Let's go to that little section in the middle, the hinge. And again, let's start with he's teaching us about Christ, so that we can understand our walk in Him, so we understand Him, so we can be like Him. And it says, "He is before all things, and all things in Him hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church." This was all part of the plan. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.

26:48 This was part of the plan from the Old Testament, from the Book of Abraham, from Moses. This was before the foundations of the earth. He even goes back that far. He says, "Before everything was created, Christ was there." This was all part of the plan, which I think is applicable to us too. You were all part of the plan. And in Him, He's your boss, and He's in charge of the church. As long as you follow Him, you'll be on the right track.

27:18 And then, it reminds us, He was the first one to die and through His resurrection we will be like Him, and we'll reconcile to God. You're never too far. There's no sin so great that the Atonement of Jesus Christ can't cover because He is God Himself. In this new walk, follow Him. You are in His image, and everything that He sacrificed is so that you can be like Him.

Hank Smith: 27:47 So, Lori, we've seen the second poem here, so grateful we get to read biblical poems in hymns. This is fun. Where should we jump next?

Lori Denning: 27:56 Let's jump to three, and then let's go down to about verse 10. So, Colossians 3:10.

Hank Smith: 28:02 Lori, isn't this pretty typical for Paul to teach the doctrine, and then say, "Okay, here's how you're going to implement this."

Lori Denning: 28:08 Yeah. Here's what I want us to do. I want us to just see if we can pick out any practical things that we would do. So, we're in chapter 3:10. Hank, will you read that again in your translation?

Hank Smith: 28:20 Colossians 3:10 and 11 says, "Clothe yourself with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator." Again, this is the NRSV translation. "In that renewal, there is no longer Greek or Jew circumcised or uncircumcised Barbarian, Scythian", I think that's out of Star Trek, "slave and free. But Christ is all and in all".

Lori Denning: 28:49 Yeah, I love that. Time for a story. I remember that after I served a mission, and we probably all have these in moments where we've been away from people for a long time. Come back and I feel like, how do I introduce my new self to my old friends, my old high school friends. But yet, he's made me something new. And so, I have to put on that new person that I was.

29:13 And so, I think what he's saying here is just exactly what had given me that advice, "Lori, when you go home, you're the new Lori. You don't have to go to your old high school friends and be your old silly high school person. You can be this person." And I'm like, "I don't know. I haven't put this on for very long. I'm not used to being new Lori."

29:31 So, I think it's this image of Him. I'm trying to be more like Him, but I'm not used to it yet. Good news, they loved it. They were like, "Oh, that's great. I'm glad that you did a mission thing. That sounds really great." I was like, "Oh. And here I thought you'd

be critical. I'm glad you liked the new me." But sometimes, it is hard. It's hard to put on the new you.

- 29:48 So, I think that's what he's saying. After you've put on the new one, you're renewed in knowledge and after the image of Him. And then, he takes it a step further as always, then we have to take it out into... We aren't just the places where we were, we're part of a bigger family. We're not Greek or Jew. So, it would be like, "I'm not a BYU fan or a Utah fan. I'm not just from Utah or California. I'm not just from North America or Europe. I am in Christ in all and in all. We're part of a bigger family."
- 30:19 He's changing our mind. I want to show you how he applies this even more. He's going to talk about an old Roman family structure. He talks about what they're supposed to do, and he gives all these instructions to each member of the family. And that's really chapter four.
- 30:36 He's going to take this idea of the new you, and then he is going to say, "What do we do with it?" And he says, "Well, in ancient Roman culture, we've probably heard of this, it's like the father is the super in charge guy, the paterfamilias." And he even had life and death for his family. He could decide. He could punish them any way he wanted. He could do anything. It was a very weird place.
- 30:57 But he's saying now that you're not really Roman, I want you to take this really thing that's just really in your society, and how do you take that new Christlike thing and love and hope and put it into a structure that's already there. He's going to say this family structure, you used to have the dad and the dad had life and death. And the mom was a servant. And kids, we didn't talk to them. I mean, they were just like slaves. And then, they actually had slaves.
- 31:24 And so, he is like, "Well, what do you do?" He takes a real-life example, and he says, "Look, dad's rule in love. Mom's, you're ruling, you're giving yourself to be in this family, not because he's in charge, and he's mean. But now, because you're all following Christ. And the person you really follow is the Savior." So, you're not just following this paterfamilias or the structure that you grew up in. You're now doing this.
- 31:49 And kids, obey your parents, not because they're mean to you, but obey them because you're in this new world. And slaves, you're actually brothers along with your masters. And masters, they're actually your brothers. Yeah, that's what I'm telling you because you're all part of one big family.

- 32:09 And then, you know how he ends the letter? It's a big punch. He says, "Oh, by the way, I got this guy with me, and he's a runaway slave. He says his name is Onesimus. It looks like Onesimus, but Onesimus. He was a runaway slave who became a Christian. And his owner, former owner's name Philemon. We got a whole letter about this in a minute.
- 32:33 And he says, "Can you actually apply this kind of new life where you are one in Christ before anything else?" And he says, "Onesimus, when he shows up to your town, everybody in Colossae, I want you to greet him like a brother, not a slave, not anything else." And you guys, if he was a runaway slave, they could have imprisoned him or worse. This is bad news. And they said, "No. As Christians now, you do something else." And then, he does it again. He says, "Hey, Philemon, former owner of Onesimus, you're just not an owner. You're just not this guy that's whatever... He's your brother. And so, when I send him back, he's your brother now."
- 33:18 Can you imagine? Good luck, everybody. So, you're like, I'm going to put this to the test culturally. I'm going to send Onesimus back. And I hope that all of you can now see that you are now one all-in-all, and you are brothers and sisters in the Gospel, in Zion, and you're one in heart. And it's going to be a little tight at times. See, if you can do it. And that's when we end the letter. Good luck. Love you, Paul.
- Hank Smith: 33:45 Yeah.
- Lori Denning: 33:45 So, he's telling us we live in a new world. We've been dead and arisen in Him. As we learn more of Him, we follow Him. As we follow Him, the application is, we're not that thing we used to be. I am a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and I reflect Him in everything I do and every action, how I comport myself at work, how I drive on the road, how I shop. Everything I do is a reflection of Him. See, if you can do it.
- John Bytheway: 34:12 President Nelson back in... It was July of 2022, and I believe it was a huge young, single adult kind of fireside. What you said reminded me of this. What Paul is saying reminds me of this. He said, "Labels can be fun that indicate your support for any number of positive things. But if any label replaces your most important identifiers, the results can be spiritually suffocating.
- 34:37 I believe that if the Lord were speaking to you directly, the first thing He would make sure you understand is your true identity. My dear friends, you are literally spirit children of God. No identifier should displace, replace or take priority over these

three enduring designations. You're a child of God. You're a child of the covenant. You're a disciple of Jesus Christ.

- 35:01 Any identifier that is not compatible with those three basic designations will ultimately let you down. Make no mistake about it. Your potential is divine. With your diligent seeking, God will give you glimpses of who you may become." And that relates back to that image thing. And some of these, he said they're not wrong, they can be fun, they can indicate support for this or that. But if they replace the most important, and like you were saying, when you have that in your mind, you're different on the freeway.
- Hank Smith: 35:33 Yeah.
- Lori Denning: 35:33 I'm still working on that one, by the way. And I'm working on that. You guys, my business self and my church self, have not quite merged. But I'm learning to because that's what Paul is teaching. That's what we're teaching, is that they're the same person and all-in-all, and first and foremost, I need to represent him even on the freeway.
- John Bytheway: 35:52 Boy, and for Paul to set this up that way so that they're all going, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, agree." I mean, you can almost imagine Paul's, "Can I get an amen? Yeah, yeah." Okay. Now, Onesimus used to be a slave. Now, he's your brother.
- Lori Denning: 36:10 And you're like, if you'd started with that...
- John Bytheway: 36:12 Let me have you practice everything you'd just said amen to. I mean, that was brilliant the way he set that up, wasn't it?
- Lori Denning: 36:19 Yeah, he is a good guy. There's a whole separate letter, you're going to do that one.
- John Bytheway: 36:22 Yeah, that's coming. But he introduces him there in chapter 4, doesn't he?
- Lori Denning: 36:26 He does.
- John Bytheway: 36:26 Onesimus.
- Lori Denning: 36:27 And he leaves it hanging.
- John Bytheway: 36:30 A faithful beloved brother who is one of you, he says in verse 9.

Lori Denning: 36:34 He's just the brother. I always think like, "Good luck. Let's see how you do with your new test." You're like, "Wait a minute. I didn't know there was going to be a test on the end of this one."

Hank Smith: 36:44 I liked what you said. I don't know if I really want to do it. I really like when Paul gives lists of things we can do better. And he does this in chapter three. Now, I have my contemporary English version. It seems to be just on my same level. So, this is what it says starting in 3:5, "Don't be controlled by your body. Don't be immoral or indecent or have evil thoughts. Don't be greedy. You must quit being angry, hateful, and evil. You must no longer say insulting or cruel things about others, and you have to stop lying to each other. You have given up your old way of life with its habits. You're now a new person. You're becoming more and more like your Creator and you can understand Him better."

37:28 It says, "God loves you. So, be gentle, kind, humble, meek and patient." I like this. "Put up with each other, and forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you. Love is more important than anything else. It is what ties everything completely together." So, that gives me a list of things that I can do better. Get rid of greed. Get rid of immorality, and anger...

Lori Denning: 37:54 Don't talk bad about people. Quit lying about those guys.

Hank Smith: 37:56 ... saying insulting or cruel thing, yeah. Don't lie to each other, yeah. I like that. It's the rattling off of things I can improve on.

Lori Denning: 38:05 John, what do you think?

John Bytheway: 38:07 I'm looking at verse 23. I'm still in King James over here. Colossians 3:23, "And whatsoever you do, do it heartily." And I guess, that means with all your heart. The footnote topical guide says, "Commitment, industry." Do it with all your heart, might, mind and strength, we might say.

Lori Denning: 38:28 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 38:29 Yeah, as though you were serving the Lord himself.

John Bytheway: 38:32 And not unto them...

Lori Denning: 38:33 As though your life depends on it.

John Bytheway: 38:35 Yeah.

Lori Denning: 38:35 And I think he always brings it back to the big idea that in the verse that you read, Hank, he actually uses an interesting analogy of clothing. So, he's like, "You lay apart your old clothing and you're putting on this new clothing. So, quit lying. And now, love each other. Put on your new suit and your new suit are these actions," verse 15, chapter 3. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful.

John Bytheway: 39:03 And Lori, the example that you gave, for some people it's not that easy. They come home feeling like a new person, and they want to be that new person. And that's why at the end of EFY... And now FSY, we're seeing, I'm taking it home with me. We want... This is going to be hard because sometimes, they want you to be that old person.

39:24 So, for everybody out there that's trying to put on the new man or the new woman, hold onto that because we have experiences that make us say, "I want to do better. I want to try harder." And sometimes, what's the old analogy? The crabs crawling out of the bucket, the other crabs keep pulling it down. They don't want you to. And I hope Paul can give us motivation to change what we can, so that we can be that new person and put on that new person. And then, take all this advice and do it heartily.

Lori Denning: 39:57 Do it heartily. Go all in. I do think one thing that we can take consolation in, he was writing to people 2,000 years ago and they struggled to do the same things, and so are we. We're not always going to get it. And they seem to be, I love in the poem, that was how it was all planned. We knew exactly what this was before the foundations of the world, and Christ was set up because he knew that taking it home every day and trying these things and being nice on the freeway, and just being a little better every day isn't something you're just going to get in one afternoon, but it's a lifetime.

40:30 In fact, probably, still not going to get it. But you'll be better for it, and he will be there along the way like, that's what he's for. And I think that's the big message of Colossians, that we take this new life in Christ. We take the new clothing. We take this new focus on Him, and we just keep using it, and he'll be there for us all along the way.

John Bytheway: 40:52 And we, as those that were in the congregation of Onesimus have to be able to let them to not go, "No, that's not you." So, when we see somebody who's trying to give it a new start and put on that new person, boy, let's be there for them and

encourage them and help them do that because I think that can be really challenging for them. And oh, let's help them because all of us have moments where we want to do better and be better, don't we?

- Lori Denning: 41:20 Yeah, and I love how he says it.
- John Bytheway: 41:22 Yeah.
- Lori Denning: 41:22 He says, "Brother."
- John Bytheway: 41:23 This is a brother now.
- Lori Denning: 41:25 And you're just going to give him a million chances, and you're just going to hold him close and say, "It's not just some person that we used to know, we're now brothers and sisters." There's just nothing tighter. And I like that, John, give them a chance and hold them close.
- John Bytheway: 41:39 It hurts my heart to think of people who have been less active, people who have not been coming. Boy, we've got to welcome them back with everything we've got, and help them try to put on that new person if that's what they're trying to do. Don't you hear that from people that, "Now, I can't come back because how would they see me? How would they treat me?" Oh, we got to be so welcoming.
- Lori Denning: 42:01 And just understanding, not bringing it up. We're hoping for that for ourselves. But sometimes, it's hard to remember that we're the ones causing the grief in our community.
- Hank Smith: 42:10 I'll be a little vulnerable here. I was once on a seminary faculty with a man named John and a man named Quinn. If they're listening, they'll know who they are. Quinn and I were just the best of friends, and we would poke fun at each other all the time.
- 42:24 There was this one moment where we had some new faculty come on, and we were out doing a little retreat or something and I said, "Hey, you guys, let me tell you a story about Quinn." And it was a story from a couple of years ago, and John pulled me aside and he said, "I know you're being fun and I know you and Quinn are good friends, but let that go. Let that go. Don't tell that story anymore." And I said, "Well, it's a funny story. It's a funny story." And he said, "I don't think he likes it." And I said, "Okay." I never told that story again. I think we could do that

with people. I think we can determine that there's some stories that don't need to be retold.

Lori Denning: 43:09 Thanks, Hank. That was a really good example. That was nice because you were kind of the bad guy in the story. But I think...

Hank Smith: 43:16 Yeah.

Lori Denning: 43:17 So, thank you because it was very bold of you to do that because you're the very kind man. But oh, that's powerful. I think that's exactly what Paul is saying, this new life in Christ, we're all going to need to pull together and be brothers and sisters. And it's going to be hard, and we're not going to quite get it right. This new life is challenge.

John Bytheway: 43:34 I think of so many young men and young women who have come from a tough place and go on missions, and it's a chance for them when no one knows them in the MTC and no one's going to say, "Hey, that's not you," where they literally put on some new clothes and go on a mission. And oh, please let them change. And then, when they come home, yeah, let them put on that new person because we all have to do that to some degree, in some ways more visible than others.

Hank Smith: 44:03 Aren't we each in our own lives, kind of like chapter 4, when Paul sends Onesimus?

Lori Denning: 44:07 Onesimus.

Hank Smith: 44:08 He sends him back and says, "All right, let's see how you do."

John Bytheway: 44:13 Hey, he's your brother.

Hank Smith: 44:13 Yeah, let's see how you do.

Lori Denning: 44:14 Let's see how you do. Let's try it in real life.

Hank Smith: 44:15 And wouldn't it be great if all of us said, "Okay, what's my chance today to put in practice everything that I've been taught here?"

Lori Denning: 44:23 Yeah, I think you're exactly right. Every day, you have a chance to have an Onesimus or a Philemon moment. What am I going to choose to do in my new life? And you're like, oh. It's easy for them. That guy, he clearly should have accepted that slave back and whatever. And now, you're like, "Well, but in my own life."

John Bytheway: 44:41 Yeah, if you haven't renewed your recommend for a while, and you finally get that and you go back to the temple, they're going to say, "Welcome to the temple." If you're one of those that gets it renewed a month before it expires every two years, they're going to say, "Welcome, to the temple." And they're just going to love you. We got to be like those greeters, just welcome back.

Lori Denning: 45:01 Yeah, I think it's always a testimony of the Savior. It comes back to the poems. It comes back to the lesson that that's what He does. He takes the woman caught in adultery, where are thine accusers? I don't condemn you. He picks us up and He carries us in His arms and He says, "Head back out there and try again." And He says, "In fact, I'll go with you this time."

45:23 And I think it's that message of Christ that we can say, "Look, I'm never on my own. I'm never going to quite get it all the way, but He's always going to be there with us, and I am now like Him, and I can reflect Him out into the world." That I think is the core message that Paul is telling us, and he is not saying it's not going to be hard just like Onesimus and Philemon. But he is saying, "You can do it just like he did."

John Bytheway: 45:45 As soon as the prodigal son turns, father runs to him and walks back with him, "I'll be right with you. I don't know what you're going to hear from the townspeople as you come back into town, but I'm going to have my arm around you. I'm going to walk back with you."

Lori Denning: 46:02 Amen.

Hank Smith: 46:03 The Come, Follow Me manual has a great suggestion. It says, "Record your thoughts about how the Savior is changing you, so that you can review them in the future and ponder how you are progressing."

Lori Denning: 46:16 Wow. I made like a face like, "Oh, dear." I better do some better progressing. So, oh, dear.

Hank Smith: 46:23 I can actually, see some progression.

Lori Denning: 46:25 It's like everything. These self-reflective moments are so great, but they're so hard. And we look at these ancient people and go, "That guy should probably do this, and/or they're so silly, why did they choose that?" And then, I go, "But oh, for me, well..." I'm just way farther down the line on fixing these things, and really understanding how Christ works with me.

46:42 So, I guess my message does... Yeah, I'm going to write those down. But I'm going to write, have a little grace with yourself. Give yourself a little time because it's going to take a while.

Hank Smith: 46:53 Beautiful. Lori, this has been fantastic. I think you have endeared yourself to every followHIM listener...

John Bytheway: 46:59 Absolutely.

Hank Smith: 47:00 ... out there. I think our listeners would be interested in a little bit of your story that you're pursuing this doctorate degree in religious studies in the Hebrew Bible in all that you're doing. And yet, here you are a faithful, believing, all-in Latter-day Saint. Can you tell us a little bit about that journey?

Lori Denning: 47:20 Yeah, thank you. I would love to tell that story. I do think there's some weird misunderstanding that as people become more educated, they would become more jaded or find out something. For me, it's twofold. I think the first thing is that, the more I study, the more I find the truths just rebounding on themselves and building and just understanding it more and more. You don't have to know Hebrew to know about Jesus Christ.

47:44 So, I don't want to mistaken anybody that somehow I know more or something. That's not it at all. But the more I study, I see patterns in these Hebrew scriptures, meaning in the Old Testament, and they're the same patterns that Samuel the Lamanite uses. And then, as I learn about the image of God, then I see that in Doctrine and Covenants. And then, I see it in my life.

48:03 And so, it's just like this rebounding, giving back thing that the more I give it is my study and my effort, the more I'm like, "Wow." And so, I absolutely, love it. I love studying the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The second piece is that, it helps me understand Him better. I came to... And I've shared some of that today, but know Him and He knew me. I understood the Savior in a way that I didn't know before. That is hard to express in academics or write in a paper or do in Hebrew, Greek. But I can't ever walk away from that. I can't walk away from those feelings and those impressions, and the things that I know in my soul about Jesus Christ.

48:47 I just want to follow Him. I mean, He is my guy. If He says to do it, I want to do it. I want to be more like Him, and I want to do what He says. I love Jesus Christ. And I could not leave Him as

much as He can love me. Once I've known Him, I feel like there's something there that I just hope to be more like, and more to understand. That's what fuels me. The techie part, and all that is just icing on the cake to following Him. I believe in Him and I am His follower. And that's my hope for all of us. And I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

- Hank Smith: 49:23 Amen. What a great day.
- 49:24 Never think of these two books the same way again.
- Lori Denning: 49:28 Thank you. You guys have been a delight.
- Hank Smith: 49:30 We want to thank Professor Lori Denning for being with us today. Lori, it has been fantastic. We want to thank our executive producer. We couldn't do it without her, Shannon Sorensen. We want to thank our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. We always remember our founder Steve Sorensen, and we hope you'll join us next week. We'll be into Thessalonians on FollowHIM.
- 49:52 Today's transcripts, show notes, and additional references are available on our website, followhim.co. That's followHIM dot C-O. You can watch the podcast on YouTube with additional videos on our Facebook and Instagram accounts. All of this is absolutely free, and we'd love for you to share it with your family and friends.
- 50:09 We'd like to reach more of those who are searching for help with their Come, Follow Me study. If you could subscribe to rate, review, and comment on the podcast, that will make us easier to find. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, and Annabel Sorensen.
- President Russell M. Nelson: 50:31 Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Turn to Him. Follow Him.

WHEN HAVE YOU FOUND STRENGTH
THROUGH CHRIST TO DO HARD THINGS?



- Hank Smith: 00:02 Hello, my friends. Welcome to followHIM Favorites. My name is Hank Smith. I'm here with the fabulous John Bytheway. Welcome, John.
- John Bytheway: 00:09 Thank you.
- Hank Smith: 00:10 John, we're going to have a good day. FollowHIM Favorites. We're going to answer a single question from this week's lesson. We're in Philippians and Colossians today. Is that how you say it, John? Colossians, Colossians?
- John Bytheway: 00:20 Colossians and Colossians. I usually say both and then I know that I've got them covered somehow.
- Hank Smith: 00:27 Yeah, you've covered all your bases. The question comes from Philippians chapter four, verse 13, and you probably know that verse is the youth theme for the church this year.
- John Bytheway: 00:36 Yeah, that's right.
- Hank Smith: 00:36 The question is this. When have you found strength through Christ to do hard things? Because the verse says, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.
- John Bytheway: 00:46 When I was a bishop, I used to have one of those little plastic flexible bracelets that had Philippians 4:13 on it because sometimes I just didn't feel up to the task. That would help me think, well, Jesus told Peter he could walk on water, and if the Lord asks you and the Lord says come, then you can do it. I think the world's self-help approach is I can do all things, period. But this is, I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me. There are some things that even the gospel asks us to do, which we're like, I just don't know if I can do that. Well, with Christ you can. That's what this is telling us.
- Hank Smith: 01:27 Yeah. I think I've seen in my life that when I think I can do all things, it's actually a pretty poor show. I usually say, I can do all things on my own, and then I fall flat on my face. I'm grateful that Paul adds this. I can do all things through Christ which

strengtheneth me. I think in context too, John, we need to understand that Paul is saying, I can withstand trials. I don't know if he's saying, I could run a world record-

- John Bytheway: 01:53 Marathon or something.
- Hank Smith: 01:54 100 yard dash. Yeah. I think he's saying, I can withstand the difficulties that I'm in. The previous verses are about the difficulties he's in. He said, "I have learned wherever I am, I need to be content." And then he says, "I can do that through Christ who strengtheneth me." I've seen that in family and friends who have been able to just survive and even thrive in difficult, difficult trials. They attribute that to the power of the Savior being with them.
- John Bytheway: 02:27 Yeah. Even some like the power to forgive. You know what? I can't do that. I can't do that on my own, but perhaps with the Savior and his power, maybe I can do that. That's where that verse really has some power, in those kinds of times, real trials and needing to move on from something difficult.
- Hank Smith: 02:46 Yeah. When it says, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me, I think it's not just thinking about Jesus, but it's doing the things he has asked us to do. So, I can do all things because I read my scriptures because Christ has asked me to. I can do all things because I attend the temple because Christ has asked me to. It's just not this idea of I put a picture up of Jesus, now I can do all things. It's I can do all things through the commandments of Christ, which strengthen me.
- John Bytheway: 03:15 Doing those things that allow the Spirit to come into you gives you a power beyond your own.
- Hank Smith: 03:23 Absolutely. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcasts. This week we're with Sister Lori Denning and you will love what she does with this lesson. And then join us next week right here for another followHIM Favorites.