



"Another Testament of Jesus Christ"

Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

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

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

Podcast Episode Descriptions:

Part 1:

How often do we hold a miracle in our hands? Dr. Casey Griffiths and Dr. Scott Woodward open doors to understanding one of the most influential texts in history. They explore the Introduction of the Book of Mormon, the witnesses to the golden plates, and the promises made through studying this miraculous book.

Part 2:

Dr. Scott Woodward and Dr. Casey Griffiths continue to explore the importance of studying. They invite listeners to study, investigate, and ponder the Book of Mormon this year.

Timecodes:

Part 1

- 00:00 Part I–Dr. Casey Griffiths and Dr. Scott Woodward
- 03:33 Introduction of guests
- 04:12 Why study Church History
- 07:22 *Church History Matters Podcast*
- 09:02 Introductory pages of the Book of Mormon
- 12:10 Miracles have not ceased
- 17:09 Jesus Christ is the focus of the Book of Mormon
- 19:13 Three-fold purpose of the Book of Mormon
- 20:54 Purpose as speaker system
- 25:05 The covenant consciousness
- 27:39 Jesus Christ is for the entire world
- 31:23 The purpose and function of the Book of Mormon
- 33:38 Moroni and the errors of men
- 36:41 Dr. Woodward shares an experience reviewing online
- 40:36 Testimonies of the eleven men and one woman
- 45:23 Never deny their testimonies
- 48:20 Martin Harris
- 50:16 David Whitmer
- 58:38 President Dallin Harris Oaks on Martin Harris
- 1:01:12 End of Part I–Dr. Casey Griffiths and Dr. Scott Woodward

Part 2

- 00:00 Part II–Dr. Casey Griffiths and Dr. Scott Woodward
- 00:07 Background of the Eight Witnesses
- 04:00 Samuel Smith as first missionary of the Restoration
- 06:02 *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* by Richard Lloyd Anderson
- 07:01 A miracle
- 09:40 John Welch and the translation of the Book of Mormon
- 12:32 30,000 foot view of the translation and proof of the Book of Mormon
- 18:51 A challenge to reproduce the Book of Mormon
- 20:25 Emma Smith’s testimony of the translation of the Book of Mormon
- 23:13 Intersectionality in the Book of Mormon
- 24:11 The Resurrection
- 24:38 Dr. Casey Griffiths thoughts on The Book of Mormon and gospel of Jesus
- 27:58 Dr. Scott Woodward’s hopes for the Saints in 2024
- 35:14 End of Part II– Dr. Casey Griffiths and Dr. Scott Woodward

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Biographical Information:



Dr. Casey Griffiths

Casey Paul Griffiths was born and raised in Delta, Utah. He served a mission in Fort Lauderdale, Florida before returning home to complete a B.A. degree in History at Brigham Young University (2002). He later earned a M.A. In Religious Education and a PhD in Educational Leadership and Foundations at BYU (2007, 2012). His studies focused on the development of religious education programs among the Latter-day Saints. Prior to joining the faculty in Religious Education at BYU, Brother Griffiths served in Seminaries and Institutes for eleven years as a teacher and a curriculum writer. His research focuses on the history of religious education among Latter-day Saints, the history of the Church in the Pacific, and diverse movements associated with the Restoration. He is married to Elizabeth Ottley Griffiths and they live in Saratoga Springs with their three adorable children.

Dr. Scott Woodward

Scott Woodward loves helping people learn ancient and modern Church history and doctrine and to have an enjoyable time doing so. He has been teaching professionally in the Church Education System for nearly two decades—including in Seminary & Institutes, the BYU Religion Department, and currently as a member of the BYU-Idaho Religion Faculty. Scott is a speaker at Education Week and Church symposia, and is also a managing director of and content producer for Doctrine and Covenants Central (an affiliate of Book of Mormon Central). Scott graduated with his PhD in Instructional Psychology and Technology from Brigham Young University. He lives with his family in the beautiful Rexburg, Idaho, and peach cobbler is his dessert of choice.

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Hank Smith: 00:00:03 Hello everyone. Welcome to a new episode of FollowHIM for a brand new year. We are studying the Book of Mormon. My name is Hank Smith, I am your host, and I'm here with my Book of Mormon loving co-host, John Bytheway. John, you have been looking forward to this, I know, for three years.

John Bytheway: 00:00:24 I really have, and I'll take that adjective. Most of them I can't live up to, but Book of Mormon loving, I'll take that one.

Hank Smith: 00:00:30 Right. John, tell me, you've got a classroom of 100 students. They're ready to study the Book of Mormon. How do you start?

John Bytheway: 00:00:36 One of the things I like to do, is kind of tease them a little bit and tell them we have a guest speaker and then I announce the name Lucy Mack Smith. Can you imagine if she were here, she might say, "Do you know what it cost my family to bring you this book?" And that's a sobering moment, but it's a wonderful moment to think, "What a treasure we have right in front of us and what a sacrifice came to bring it to us." But that's one of the ways I like to start.

Hank Smith: 00:01:00 Absolutely. I don't know if we realize we are holding a real miracle in our hands. I usually start my classes, John, with this quote from President Nelson. Listen to all he promises here. He says, "When I think of the Book of Mormon, I think of the word power. The truths of the Book of Mormon have the power to heal, comfort, restore, succor, strengthen, console, and cheer our souls." Is there anybody listening who doesn't want that? Heal, comfort, restore, succor, strengthen, console, and cheer our souls.

00:01:33 And then he makes three promises, John, he says, "I promise that as you prayerfully study the Book of Mormon every day, you will make better decisions every day. I promise that as you daily immerse yourself in the Book of Mormon, you can be immunized against the evils of the day." And then one more promise, "I promise that as you ponder what you study, the

windows of heaven will open, you will receive answers to your own questions and directions for your own life." John, those three promises make me think, "I want to study the Book of Mormon. I want to study every day. I don't want to miss a day."

- John Bytheway: 00:02:10 You know what that reminds me of? I had a class from Gerald Lund, who afterwards became Elder Gerald Lund in my master's program and he talked about our usual approaches to scripture study. He says, we use guilt. Pack your bags, we're going on a guilt trip. He said, we use shame, we use bribery. If you read, you get a Snickers in class. But he said that the approach the scriptures themselves use, he called it promises. The cool thing about the promises is they're not someday promises, they're right now promises, which President Nelson just said, better decisions every day. They're right now promises. So, I'm glad you introduced that idea. The promises are right now.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:48 John, I love it. I love the idea of Lucy Mack Smith reaching through the centuries telling us, "Read this book. Don't take it for granted." We love it so much. John, what a great connection. We are going to be joined by dozens of scholars this year, who are going to teach us about the Book of Mormon. And John, I know that that's one of your favorite parts of this is being taught, listening. I wanted to start big. I wanted to start with two scholars who are not only incredible minds, but they're just good people to their core. They're both friends of ours, good friends of ours. Can you tell us, John, who is here to start our Book of Mormon year with us?
- John Bytheway: 00:03:33 We're very excited to have Casey Griffiths and Scott Woodward with us. And our listeners will recognize their faces, they co-host a podcast together, a Church History Matters podcast. They probably recognize it from Doctrine and Covenants, and that's okay because the Book of Mormon is a part of Church History. It comes forth during this part and these guys are experts in that. If you've ever been to scripturecentral.org, you know there's a part of that, Church History Matters. I'm so excited to have them teach us about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.
- Hank Smith: 00:04:05 Welcome, Casey. Welcome, Scott.
- Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:04:07 Thank you so much. It's great to be back.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:04:10 Yeah, good to be here again.
- Hank Smith: 00:04:12 In case our listeners don't know, all four of us are pretty good friends. We might be laughing a lot. Between these two, the

years, months, hours of research into the history of the church is difficult to grasp. I'm not saying that they're old but they have done a lot of work. Scott, Casey, tell us what you love about the history of this church. Why do you study it so much?

Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:04:38

For me, I was probably about 17 years old. I started listening to those Truman G. Madsen tapes. I don't know if you remember those. Joseph Smith, the prophet. Truman got me hooked and I haven't stopped ever since, just continuing to dive deeper and deeper and deeper into Church History. And it's been a joy, it's been a testimony strengthening experience, testimony morphing experience. My testimony doesn't look the same as it did when I was 17, but it's rich and beautiful.

00:05:04

I find a lot of strength in it. I find strength in both the human elements of Church History and in the divine. I see Church History as a beautiful mix of both. It gives me hope that weak humans like us have a shot. When you see people in Church History stumbling and making mistakes but seeing how the Lord works with them and is kind and good. It adds a layer of authenticity and reality to the human experience with God interacting with humans. What does that actually look like? Sometimes scripture is a little far away, distant in the past, the ancient past. They talk differently, they had different cultures and stuff, but Church History, I mean this is really recent. These people speak English, they're in America. What does it look like for God to talk with people in Ohio? That's a state in my country. To study Church History and the Doctrine and Covenants. It's really rich, it's really vibrant. I love it. Casey, what would you say?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:05:58

I was trying to think of when I got bitten by the bug. And it was probably on my mission when I read Church History in the Fullness of Times, which is still one of the best histories out there and it's an institute manual, you got it on Gospel library. I found Church History to be really fun and delightful. It was stuff like Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball got chased by a bear and stuff like that that just made me chuckle. And I found, like Scott said, this deep humanity in it.

00:06:24

The thing I love about Church History is, it's a well that just never runs dry. There's so much to study and so many different angles and I learned something new on a daily basis that just surprises and delights me. And the fact that they didn't have to condense it down to a travel size set of gold plates. There's journals and reminiscences and histories from all over the world and from women and from men and from different groups and countries and nations made it such a vibrant thing to study. And

add that to the fact that it's something that is directly relevant in every period of life. You can always find a story from Church History that illustrates a point that you want to make or that gives you courage or hope, or shows you how a person of faith can overcome adversity. That it's really been a deep well that I go back to again and again to refresh myself and to, just frankly have courage to face the next day and to do the hard things that I have to do.

- Hank Smith: 00:07:22 Let's just briefly make sure that we give a major shout out to their podcast. It's called Church History Matters. The reason I invited both of you on today is because I listened to that series. I think it was five episodes of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. And I knew we wouldn't be able to cover it all today, so I wanted to bring you on, give us some elements of that, and then if our listeners want even more, they can go and find that series. I think it was one of the first you did.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:07:49 If you want to do six episodes on Book of Mormon translation, it's there. First vision, plural marriage, race and the priesthood, all the spicy stuff that sometimes trips people up, Scott and I have explored it. I want to credit Scott for being really fearless when it comes to approaching challenging issues in Church History. He's just really good at that and I've learned a lot from him.
- Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:08:10 Or reckless, I'm not sure which one it is.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:08:13 He's like a bull in a china shop, that's how I describe it.
- Hank Smith: 00:08:16 Well, we are not afraid to lift our friends, Jared Halverson, Tyler and Taylor, Grace and David and so many others that I probably can't think of right now. We're all on the same team. We want to bless each other and bless the kingdom.
- John Bytheway: 00:08:31 Anybody who blesses me, blesses my family, blesses my loved ones, lifts all of us. You find a flavor that you like, a different faith flavor if you find a flavor you like, that's awesome.
- Hank Smith: 00:08:43 We are all on the same team. A rising tide lifts all boats. Let's jump in. The very first lesson from this Book of Mormon year is called Another Testament of Jesus Christ, the introductory pages of the Book of Mormon. Let me start here and then Casey, Scott, let's see where you want to go.
- 00:09:02 This is the opening paragraph. "Before you even get to 1 Nephi 1, you will notice that the Book of Mormon is no ordinary book.

It's introductory pages describe a backstory unlike any other, including visits from angels, an ancient record buried for centuries in a hillside and a young man translating the record by the power of God. The Book of Mormon is not just a history of ancient civilizations, it seeks to convince all that Jesus is the Christ and God himself directed how it was written, preserved and made available to us. This year, as you read the Book of Mormon, pray about it, apply its teachings, invite the Savior's power into your life. And you may feel moved to say as the three witnesses did in their testimony, 'It is marvelous in my eyes.'" What a great way to start. Casey, Scott, as you think of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, what do you think our listeners need to know? What would you say, "Hey, this is crucial."? Before you jump into the text, how are these introductory pages arranged in order to start us off on the right foot?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:10:10

I'd start out by saying this, the miracle of the Restoration is in these pages. To an early member of the church, they would not have introduced a person to the church by talking about the first vision. First vision actually comes into its own in the 20th century because it's such a great story about how to search, approach God and get an answer. But to the early members of the church, the proof that God was among us and that God was moving again was the Book of Mormon. They would talk about how it came forward, how it was the work of an angel, and then they would hand you the book as absolute proof that God is bringing back and restoring all things in one.

00:10:52

These opening pages are crucial to understanding, not just the Book of Mormon and its story, where it came from, but also what brought everybody together in the early Restoration. Because it's fair to say, Joseph Smith kept the first vision to himself until a little bit later in his prophetic ministry. The Book of Mormon on the other hand, was proof positive that he could put into your hands to show that God had spoken to him and that he was more than just an interesting charismatic preacher, that he was a prophet of God. It's evidence to the early saints that God is working among people again and that His voice is being heard and there are prophets on earth once more.

Hank Smith: 00:11:31

Beautiful.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:11:32

Amen. This was the missionary message of the first decade of the church, it was the Book of Mormon. You want to know that heavens are open? Here's the Book of Mormon. You want to know if Joseph Smith's a true prophet? Here's the Book of Mormon. You want to know that God is speaking again in our

day? Here's a copy of the book. You can hold it in your hands. Casey and I have talked about this in the past that it may have come across to Joseph maybe a little immodest to talk about his first vision, since he was the only one there, it's kind of taking his word for it. It's maybe more of a personal experience to begin with for him, rather than something he maybe thought was going to be the foundational narrative of the church. In his mind, the thing that people could really grasp onto was the Book of Mormon. This is the evidence of the Restoration. This is the evidence that miracles have not ceased.

- Hank Smith: 00:12:21 Awesome.
- John Bytheway: 00:12:22 My favorite paragraph in Preach My Gospel First Edition says, "Throughout history, God has had a pattern of reaching out to people through a prophet. And people have had a pattern of rejecting the prophets and rejecting Him." And then it says, "Consider our evidence that God has reached out again to a prophet and spoken to His children, and the prophet's name is Joseph Smith and the evidence of this is found in a book, the Book of Mormon." I loved the way they put that. God has reached out again and this time we've got evidence and here it is, the Book of Mormon. That's one of my favorite paragraphs in there that summarize what you guys just said too.
- Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:13:01 Love that.
- Hank Smith: 00:13:02 Casey, Scott, as I open the Book of Mormon, the Book of Mormon, another testament of Jesus Christ, I go to my next page, First English Edition published in Palmyra, New York, USA in 1830. Then I go to the next page, "The Book of Mormon, an account written by the hand of Mormon upon plates taken from the plates of Nephi." That is called the title page of the Book of Mormon. Where did this come from? I mean, this is the first thing I run into. Do I need to know anything about this or should I just skip it and get to 1 Nephi?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:13:36 First thing you should know is that this is the actual text of the Book of Mormon. This isn't supplementary material written by someone later on to explain it. I've got here a quote from the history of the church. Joseph Smith wrote this about the title page of the Book of Mormon. He said, "I wish to mention here that the title page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation taken from the very last leaf on the left-hand side of the collection of Book of Plates, which the record which has been translated, the language of the whole running the same as all Hebrew writing in general. And that subtitle page is not by any

means a modern composition, either of mine or of any other man who has lived or does live in this generation."

00:14:18 Sometimes when people say, "I started the Book of Mormon.", they usually are saying, "I read 1 Nephi 1." But the text of the Book of Mormon actually starts on the title page. This is written by Moroni and is intended to be the introduction to the Book of Mormon. So, don't skip over this by any means. It's not supplementary material, it's not modern. It's literally taken from the plates and is designed by Moroni to sort of give you the crucial information that's in the Book of Mormon, why it matters and the scope that the Book of Mormon's supposed to read. This is where the text begins, functionally, this title page right here.

John Bytheway: 00:14:55 This is so good. And I love the idea of, unto all nations. There are parts of my testimony where things that just make sense to me, and one of those that makes sense is, "Manifesting Himself unto all nations." And I love that when Jesus leaves this group of the children of Lehi, he says, "I'm going to appear to other groups." He doesn't say in one place or many places. I believe it's many places. Thank you for emphasizing that part, "Manifesting Himself unto all nations." We even know that one day we will be getting other books from other places that He visited. And I tell my students, you're going to have a lot of religion classes someday because we're going to have other books we have to study. He tells them they're going to go, so I love that you emphasize that, "Manifesting Himself unto all nations." I heard that in the Philippines sometimes, "Well, why America?" Well, the Restoration took place in a place where religious freedom was guaranteed, at least is supposed to be, but now this book is a message for the world.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:15:59 Amen. And I mean, that's so important for us. I've heard some bright secular thinkers criticize the Bible by saying, "Hey, this is a message to a tiny group of people in an obscure part of the world during the Iron Age of human history. How does this have relevance to me?" The Book of Mormon immediately raises the stakes by saying, "No, this message is for everybody everywhere for all time." If you look at the Book of Mormon as a sequel to the Bible, it's like The Empire Strikes Back, that broadens the story, it deepens the story, and then it sets up all these crazy possibilities about what's going to happen down the road. And it's using an American story to basically illustrate the fact that there isn't a nation on earth that doesn't have a Christ story that takes place in it, and there isn't a people on earth that Christ isn't concerned about. That Israel was held up as the example of how God deals with a nation, how He makes covenants, how He

blesses and exalts them, but it's a story that can take place among any nation, among any group of people.

00:17:09 And it also lays flat out there who the main character is, which is Jesus Christ. So those three things that Scott mentioned, like I said, knowing what God has done in the past, what He's promised to do for you in the future and who you need to connect with right now to know how you can be happy, how you can be fulfilled and how you can gain exaltation. Where the Book of Mormon's at, it's a pretty great introduction that sets the stakes and then opens the door to say, "We're going to take this little story which you assumed was about one people and make it a story about all people." That's a really, really valuable contribution, not just to Latter-day Saints, but to Christianity in general, to say that this was never a local tribal faith, a local tribal God, this was the God of the whole earth starting with this group of people, but now expanding the story to every group of people.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:18:02 There's a plot twist in the Book of Mormon about that, in 2 Nephi 30:2 and in 3 Nephi 30:2, I don't know how it correlates so perfectly, but in both of those verses it says that anyone who receives Jesus Christ through baptism actually becomes part of the House of Israel. You become part of the story of those who are going to rule and reign with Jesus, the Messiah, with the king. It is about the House of Israel through and through, and at the same time, it's about the whole world. How can those both be true at the same time? Well, because the whole world is being invited to come unto Christ and become part of His people, which is called the House of Israel. Super cool how the Book of Mormon works.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:18:45 It's a royal family that anybody can join. And that's a beautiful concept in and of itself.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:18:50 Yes, through baptism, be born again into Christ's family, which is called Israel, and take upon yourself the name of Jesus as one of His people. It's marvelous. It's a simple but powerful message.

Hank Smith: 00:19:03 I love that. It's not 1 Nephi 1. Let's start with the title page, that's where the text begins. I hadn't thought of it that way, but I think that's the way maybe it was intended.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:19:13 Yeah. And we get right there on the title page, we get the three audiences that this book is written to. We got the remnant of the House of Israel, those are the descendants of Lehi. We've got Jews and we've got Gentiles. So let's talk about those for a

second. The remnant of the House of Israel, the Book of Mormon is going to talk about this a lot. These are the descendants of Lehi. And you've got Jews/House of Israel. Those are interchangeable terms. These are the people that come from Jerusalem or these are God's covenant people. And then you've got the Gentiles. Gentiles just means those of nations who are neither Jew nor remnant. In effect then this book is written to everybody, but we don't want to conflate it too strong that way because it's going to have different messages to different groups. There's messages to the remnant, there's messages to the Jews and to the Gentiles. Keep all of those in mind as you read. It makes this actually a much more meaningful read.

00:20:09

Notice this, what Moroni says. He says, this book is, "to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel," Lehi's seed, "what great things the Lord has done for their fathers." That's purpose number one for the Book of Mormon. Number two, "And that they," still talking about the remnant, "may know the covenants of the Lord that they are not cast off forever." That's second purpose of the Book of Mormon. And number three, "And also to the convincing of the Jew and the Gentile, that Jesus is the Christ, the eternal God manifesting Himself unto all nations." Those are three different but related purposes. And I think what often happens is we mush them all together into one purpose, which is to convince everyone that Jesus is the Christ, at least I've done that a lot in my own study.

00:20:54

But let me try a little thought experiment here for us. I want you to imagine that the three purposes of the Book of Mormon are like a three-piece sound system. Just go with me on this, all right? There's a right speaker, there's a left speaker, and then there's the soundbar in the middle. Can you all picture this? A three-piece sound system is meant to put out polyphonic sound. When you're watching your favorite epic movie, there are subtle differences of sound that come from each speaker. Maybe there's dialogue through the left speaker and when a plane flies off to the right, you hear it on the right speaker. And when an army attacks in the front, you can kind of feel it coming at you. When the three speakers are kept in balance, the listening experience can be immersive and incredible. The same is true for the three purposes of the Book of Mormon. If kept in balance with each other, the experience can be richer and more immersive than ever. But I fear that sometimes our three Book of Mormon speakers are not in balance and so we can't fully appreciate the richness of the book. I'm talking from my personal experience here.

- 00:21:52 So let's say for example, the left speaker is this first message of hope to the modern remnant of Israel, okay, Lehi's descendants, to show them how good the Lord has been to their ancestors. Now I've read the Book of Mormon multiple times without even turning that speaker on. I think this speaker could be turned up a little bit, maybe a lot.
- 00:22:10 And let's say that the right speaker is this second message of hope to the modern remnant of Israel to help them know the covenants of the Lord with the whole House of Israel so that they can recognize that they're not cast off forever. Well, I confess, I've read the Book of Mormon multiple times without even knowing that was a speaker, that wasn't just turned off from me, it was still in the original box awkwardly stacked over in the corner with me not even knowing what to do with it. For most of us, this one probably needs to be unpacked and then turned up quite considerably.
- 00:22:41 And then let's say that the middle soundbar speaker is that third purpose of convincing Jews and Gentiles that Jesus is the Christ, the eternal God. Well, I've read the Book of Mormon with this one cranked up way too loud most of my life. It might sound odd to say, but I mean of course this is a good speaker. But like any good speaker, when we blast it too loudly, it can actually distort the learning experience and drown out the other two speakers so we can't even hear them at all. So maybe this one we need to actually turn down a little bit, at least enough to hear it in harmony with the other two speakers.
- 00:23:14 And in fact, I'll just say my experience that when we listen polyphonically, multiple sounds coming from multiple speakers here, I hope this analogy is working for you. If we can listen polyphonically with all three purposes working together, it actually enhances the sweetness of that middle soundbar. I would go so far as to say it's virtually impossible to fully appreciate what it means that Jesus is the Christ outside of understanding God's covenants with the House of Israel. You can't do it. When you turn up those other two speakers, then that middle soundbar is more resonant and beautiful than ever.
- Hank Smith: 00:23:52 Wow, that is fantastic. Here's a book I've read over and over, and yet you're showing me something I've never seen before. I think you're right on here. John, I can tell you're excited about this.
- John Bytheway: 00:24:04 Yeah, I've always felt like when Nephi's sharing the Isaiah chapters, he's talking to his people and saying, "We've got a different area code now, but this is us. And the Jew and Gentiles

already have this in another place in the Bible, but he's telling, we're House of Israel and we got to live up to the covenants and promises to us." And that's that one speaker that helps me to say, "Yeah, why did Nephi throw this in here?" Well, this is for us to remember that our area code has changed, but our covenants have not. And remember what Isaiah said. I like the polyphonic thing.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:24:39

Polyphonic reading of the Book of Mormon. Yes.

Hank Smith: 00:24:42

And maybe there's times in the Book of Mormon where those other two speakers are supposed to be coming at me and yet I'm hearing nothing. Oh, I'm thinking, "Well, this isn't very good." Because it's that first speaker is not as loud as it's been in other chapters. "So let me just skip. Let me just skip ahead until I hear that first speaker again." Where you're saying, well, maybe it's because those other two speakers aren't on.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:25:05

Yeah, when they work together harmoniously, the Book of Mormon is never more beautiful. It's going to take on a richness. If we can especially turn up the covenant consciousness of the writers of the Book of Mormon, they assume so much. They assume that we know the covenant backstory of the Old Testament. They just assume like we got it, because where they're coming from like, "Who doesn't know this story?" But if we don't know, for instance, the covenant with Abraham and we don't know the covenant with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai that's covered in the Book of Exodus and then repeated in Deuteronomy, we're going to be a little bit lost here. They've assumed that you know that. And if you also don't know about the covenant that God made with King David, then it's going to be harder to understand this whole proposition that Jesus is the Christ.

00:25:50

What does that mean? The Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed one. In what context does that make sense outside of the covenant God made with David about his descendant who would both gather together and then rule over Israel as this powerful descendant of King David, he will benevolently rule the world forever. The writers of the Book of Mormon assume that the Abrahamic covenant, they assume you know the national covenant with Israel and they assume the Davidic covenant, the promises that God made to King David. And if you don't have those three, that's the narrative backbone of the Hebrew Bible and it constitutes the essential backstory for key portions and prophecies in the Book of Mormon.

00:26:30 For instance, 1 Nephi 11-14, Nephi's vision, holy cow. And then Nephi's recapitulation of that vision in 2 Nephi 25-30. And then Jacob 5. If you don't know this, Jacob 5 is going to be harder to really sink your teeth into. And as John mentioned, the Isaiah chapters, 2 Nephi 12-24. Nephi is quoting those because he sees that Isaiah has seen the same vision he saw and after Isaiah lays it out, then Nephi says, "Now I want to say a few things concerning this. I want to prophesy." And then he recapitulates his vision from 1 Nephi 11-14. Nephi saw it, he said, my father saw it, Jacob saw it. And now I'm reading Isaiah and I'm realizing he saw the vision about the fulfillment of God's covenant promises with the House of Israel.

00:27:16 That is so big for the Book of Mormon authors, and I have to confess that hasn't always been big for me as a reader of the Book of Mormon. I haven't always seen how relevant the covenants that God made with the ancient House of Israel is for me in my life today. So I think that's why that speaker's always been turned down, but in recent years, as I've cranked that up and put it in its right place, the Book of Mormon's never been better. Honestly.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:27:39 Wow. And let me make a case for speaker three here, to use Scott's analogy too. I think what Scott's done is basically explained that, hey, if you know the gospel, there's a way to go deeper here too. But if you're a beginner also, those words that are put in all caps in the title page, "JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE ETERNAL GOD." I've got the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon pulled up here, and it's that way in that one too. Meaning this was very deliberate, that they wanted those words to be emphasized. And not only the Jesus is the Christ, which the Book of Mormon is to me the most effective way to introduce someone to that. I'm thinking of my own experience when I was a kid in high school or a freshman in college, that the Book of Mormon didn't just introduce me to the church, it was my gateway to understanding Jesus Christ and coming to know who and what he is.

00:28:35 And then it adds in this wonderful phrase where it says, "manifesting himself unto all nations." That in the era that we live, another important function that the Book of Mormon plays is to globalize the story of Jesus Christ. It's a story about Jesus working among all nations. A couple of years ago we were in dialogue with some people from another church and one of them said, "Hey, I don't like the Book of Mormon because it's too America-centric. It talks about American exceptionalism, that America's special." I felt inspired in the moment to say, "The message of the Book of Mormon isn't that America special."

It's that there are holy places all over the world and there's not a people on earth or a place on earth that hasn't felt the power of Jesus Christ." That Jesus isn't just the God of Israel, which those covenants God is mentioning talk about, but that Jesus is the God of the whole earth and that everybody, regardless of where they're coming from, should be able to connect with this message and find joy in salvation.

Hank Smith: 00:29:39 Scott, Casey, I'm thinking of times I've been in my car, plugged in the music and the speaker balance is off and thinking, "Oh, there's something wrong with this music." When no, there was something wrong with the speakers, they're not in balance. As I'm reading, perhaps Jacob 5 and I'm thinking, "Hey, why is this not speaking to me?" Return to these three speakers and say, "What am I supposed to be listening for again?" And then maybe coming back to that chapter and cranking up those speakers, really focusing in, and all of a sudden it starts to speak to me.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:30:13 When you read the Book of Mormon the way the authors of the Book of Mormon crafted it and intended it to be read, it's amazing. Is it that simple? Let's keep our ears and heart attuned to the themes that the authors of the Book of Mormon intended for us to pick up on, which Moroni is announcing right here on the title page for us. Keep all three in mind and if you're starting to say, "This isn't really a lot about Jesus, it doesn't feel like this is a lot about Jesus." Maybe back up and say, "Well, which one of these speakers is it about?"

00:30:42 At different times, different speakers are going to be louder than others. That's the cool thing about surround sound. The right is a little softer than the left at some times, that kind of gives you that immersive experience. And the analogy can only go so far, but they're not all three always playing all at the same time at the same volume. Yeah, that's helpful as a reader to think about that and to consider which of those three or which of the two in balance with each other or are all three active here. What am I supposed to be getting out of this? Jacob thought he was doing something. Nephi thought he was conveying something really important here. Mormon and Moroni thought that they were abridging something really powerful for us. And if we're not feeling that power, then yeah, maybe just a little readjustment of the speakers will go a long way.

Hank Smith: 00:31:23 Casey, Scott, I don't know if I've ever had this kind of testimony of the title page before and how crucial it can be. Because I'm excited, I start into 1 Nephi, I'm following the story. And then I

get to 2 Nephi, perhaps I'm losing the energy that I had and maybe it's I didn't get the lift off that the title page can give me to help me soar through the book, make it all the way to the end.

- Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:31:48 The momentum.
- Hank Smith: 00:31:49 Yeah, the momentum.
- Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:31:51 Now there's another word I sometimes throw out with my students just for fun. The philosopher Aristotle used the word telos, to refer to a thing's purpose, its aim, its end, its ultimate functional reason for existing. Throw up a picture of a toaster and just ask my students like, "What's the telos of a toaster?"
- Hank Smith: 00:32:09 What's its purpose?
- Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:32:11 What's it made to do? And it's actually made to do one thing, one thing, toast your bread, maybe throw up a picture of a Swiss Army Knife and say, "All right, what's the telos of the Swiss Army Knife?" Maybe throw up a picture of an iPhone and say, "What's its telos?" Some things are made to do many things. And then throw a picture of the Book of Mormon and say, "Okay, what's its telos? What was it intended to do? What's its function? Is it more like a toaster where it's made to do one thing or more like a Swiss Army Knife where it can do several things or more like an iPhone, where it can do a lot of things?"
- 00:32:43 There were some minds behind this book, just like there were minds behind the creation of the toaster and the creation of the Swiss Army Knife, and Steve Jobs behind the iPhone. There were minds behind it. Now what do they have to say about the telos of the Book of Mormon? That's how I then go into the title page of the Book of Mormon and then we say, "These are the takeaways. The minds in the Book of Mormon want at least these three things to happen as we read this book." The word telos is helpful.
- John Bytheway: 00:33:09 The last line, last sentence in the title page says, "that ye may be found spotless," And one time I guess I got bored and started looking for every instance of spotless and unspotted and without spot in the scriptures. President Packer said something like, "Repentance is like soap." And the scriptures speak of being cleansed through Christ's blood, which we usually think of as blood stains, but Christ's blood cleans.

- 00:33:38 You've probably all heard the idea that, "You tell them what you're going to tell them, and then you tell them, and then you tell them what you've told them." If the title page is tell them what you're going to tell them, then the last page would be, tell them what you've told him. I see in the title page, I see covenants, I see Christ and I see spotless. And I look at Moroni 10, the last verses and I see that, "The covenants of the eternal Father, which he hath made unto thee O House of Israel will be fulfilled. Yea come unto Christ." There's covenants, there's Christ. And Verse 33, "that you become holy without spot." I see covenants, I see Christ and I see you can become spotless through the Atonement. So, tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them what you've told them, and then the last page.
- Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:34:23 There's one more thing we haven't mentioned on the title page here, and that is this part, Moroni's insecurity. He says, "Now if there are faults, they are the mistakes of men; wherefore condemn not the things of God," Moroni is very self-conscious of the possibility of errors in his record. He knows his own inadequacies, he knows the inadequacies of the other writers. I love what he's saying here. If I could restate I would say, prophetic fallibility does not negate the work of God. For me, it only makes it all the more marvelous because of what it shows us about what God can do through flawed mortals.
- 00:35:01 Exhibition A here is the Book of Mormon. Look at what God can do through flawed mortals. And Moroni is very conscious of that. Ether 12, he's having a bit of a venting session with the Lord and he's saying, "Lord, the Gentiles are going to mock these things because of our weakness in writing." He's definitely the most self-conscious of the prophets I feel like. But that's the miracle. Think of it. This incredible book, tool to do so many eternally vital things, was produced by a series of ancient authors who weren't even college graduates, to say nothing of the very rudimental literacy of its 23-year-old modern translator. If there are faults, they're the mistakes of men, but please don't let that overshadow the fact that this comes from God. Both of those are true at the same time.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:35:49 That's so wonderfully human of Moroni too, to be so insecure about his writing. Which boy, I can relate to, but sometimes I want to just give him a pat on the back and say, "Hey, you're actually a brilliant writer."
- Hank Smith: 00:36:02 Pretty good.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:36:03 I think Scott's correct in saying that, as we recognize these grand and glorious promises, Moroni also just throws in this

sweet little humble reminder of, hey, the messengers that bring this to you are imperfect. Are you going to find flaws here? Yeah. Is the message still powerful, potent and life-changing? It is also an imperfect messenger can deliver a message that leads to perfection, that leads to Christ. His personality shines through. When you compare Moroni 10 with this, it's clear that it's the same author that has his own little quirks and his own insecurities, and a lot of that comes through in his voice as it's depicted in the text.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:36:41

His concern is justified as I've seen how people respond to the Book of Mormon, not everyone is super kind. For instance, a few years ago, back in 2016, there was an overzealous Elders Quorum president, I think is how the story goes, who said, "Hey, you know what we should do? Everyone in our ward should go onto Amazon and go onto the Book of Mormon and leave a five star review, pump up the Book of Mormon." Write why you like it. But then the trolls got involved. Then the counterpoints, they're like 41% five stars and like 55% one stars at the moment that I screenshotted. 751 people, when I screenshotted this had left reviews. And I just feel like Moroni is rolling in his grave.

00:37:22

Here's a few examples of haters. All right. "And it came to pass, that it came to pass, while it came to pass. It passed, it came. It came to pass. It passed to come. Then while it was coming to pass, it passed and it came and it passed." "It comes and passes a lot," said one reviewer. Yeah, that was actually kind of true. It does say it came to pass a lot. I just feel Moroni as being like, "Ah guys, go easy on us. If there's faults, they are the mistakes of men. Okay, maybe we could have cut out a few, but it came to pass. Don't let that overshadow that, stop making fun of this book." And that's what the Lord says too, Moroni writes. He says, "Fool's mock, but they shall mourn." And if they don't have charity toward your writing, it's not going to be good with them. His exact words are, "For behold the same that judgeth rashly shall be judged rashly again." Rash judgment of the Book of Mormon will backfire. Be kind, look through the faults of the writers and try to get to the nuggets that they're actually trying to give us, and you're going to have a great experience.

Hank Smith:

00:38:22

Can I share from Elder Holland? This is April, 2013. John, you've quoted this a lot to me, "Except in the case of his only perfect begotten Son, imperfect people are all God has ever had to work with. That must be terribly frustrating to Him, but He deals with it, so should we." And when you see imperfection, remember that the limitation is not in the divinity of the work, as one gifted writer has suggested, 'When the infinite fullness is poured forth, it is not the oil's fault if there is some loss because

finite vessels can't quite contain it all.'" Those finite vessels include you and me, right? Not just Moroni, not just Mormon, not just Nephi. Those finite vessels include us too. And Elder Holland finishes, "So be patient and kind and forgiving." I love that you've pointed out in the title page of Moroni saying, Please go easy on us.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:39:18

Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:39:19

I'm trying to imagine what it's like to be Moroni, son of Mormon, and your father has been working on this project forever. And it's his book, and it's the Book of Mormon. And then all of a sudden he's killed in battle at age about 73. And you are like, "I have no ore I have no... Whether I go, I don't, I have no kin, I have no friends." The way Mormon 8 starts where, "Am I supposed to finish this? Do I have to finish this?" And he has to finish his father's work, and I've always felt that's part of his insecurity that it sounds like is coming through is, "This wasn't my plan, this was my dad's project and his work, and now I have to finish it. And I hope I'm doing okay, dad." I mean, sometimes I looked at it that way that this wasn't the way I think Mormon expected it to finish. I think he thought his dad was going to be done with it.

Hank Smith: 00:40:16

I think in the spirit world, the three of them, Joseph, Mormon and Moroni trade the plates on each other's mantle like, "Hey, it's my turn." As I keep going in the Book of Mormon, I run into the Testimony of the Three Witnesses, and just a paragraph later, the Testimony of the Eight Witnesses. And then there's 11 names here, that if I'm a first time reader, "Who are these people? What's happening here?" Casey, can I ask you? What do I need to know as I head into these two testimonies of these 11 men?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:40:48

There's three witnesses that saw the angel and the plates and heard the voice of God. They have kind of a supernatural experience. They're all people that are deeply involved in the translation of the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery is the primary scribe for almost the entire text. David Whitmer is associated with Oliver Cowdery, brings them to his family's farm, and that's the place where Joseph and Oliver are residing when they complete the translation of the Book of Mormon. And then Martin Harris is well-known too. He's one of the earliest scribes. Emma Smith's probably the first scribe from what we can tell. Martin's the scribe for the lost portion of the manuscript, which is a whole other episode in and of itself.

00:41:32 But those three have a supernatural experience, and I'll come back in a second and go into more details, I'm just giving you an overview here. Then you've got the eight witnesses. The eight witnesses don't have a supernatural experience. Their experience is very much physical. They see the plates, they handle the plates. We even have a piece of paper where one of the eight witnesses, we believe it's John Whitmer, transcribed characters from the plates. One of the things that the witnesses are designed to do, is to operate together. B.H. Roberts pointed out that what happens to the three witnesses is very much supernatural. What happens to the eight witnesses is very much natural. Critics of the Book of Mormon, for instance, could say, "Hey, these three guys were hallucinating. They had a shared hallucination," however that works, "that's how you account for what they saw." Well, that doesn't account for the eight witnesses who saw a set of plates. On the other hand people could say, "Well, Joseph Smith just made a fake set of plates." That doesn't account for the three witnesses who saw something supernatural.

00:42:30 It's very much by design that the two sets of witnesses are designed to work together. And by the way, there's a 12th witness, which you got to add on the next page, which is Joseph Smith. You add three plus eight plus one, that's 12. That's a nice number when it comes to witnessing things. And then if you want to, you can even add in Mary Whitmer who also saw the plates and the angel, that gives you a baker's dozen, 13 people. To the early saints, to us today, this is really important stuff. Because a common criticism of the Book of Mormon is, "Where are the plates? Why don't you just show us the plates?" Even if we have the plates, I don't know if it would make that big a difference because the message cuts to the quick, you have to make a decision about it. But the fact that we have so many witnesses, and if I was going into court and I had 13 witnesses at my back, I could pretty much win any case.

00:43:24 We might not have the plates, but the next best thing is to have 13 people, who, by the way, never ever denied their testimony in spite of what must have been massive pressure to do so. Like I said, starts us down the path. And if you're a critic of the Book of Mormon, this would keep me up at night, "Why were all of these people so willing to sacrifice and give up so much if this isn't true?" But they do, and what they go through is pretty incredible as well.

00:43:52 Doctrine and Covenants 17 actually gives a list of what the three witnesses are going to see. And Section 17 says they'll have a view of the plates which they all describe in detail. David

Whitmer, who I'm going to use as my example here, said, "We not only saw the plates of the Book of Mormon, but also the brass plates, the plates of the book of Ether, the plates containing the record of the wickedness and secret combinations of the people, down to the time that they're being engraved and many other plates." He says, "The fact is, it was just as though Oliver and I were sitting here on a log. We were overshadowed by a light. It was not the light of the sun, not like that of a fire, but more glorious and beautiful. It extended a way around us. I cannot tell how far, but in the midst of this light, about as far off as he sits," And in this interview he pointed to his nephew, John Whitmer and said, "as it appeared and a table in many records with plates on it."

00:44:44 These guys not only see the gold plates that are associated with the Book of Mormon, but they see all these other numerous records. Then Section 17 says, they're also going to see the breastplate, because there's a breastplate associated with this. The Sword of Laban, which they also testify that they saw. The Urim and Thummim, or the Nephite Interpreters that are used to translate the Book of Mormon. And then Section 17 mentions that they will see the miraculous directors, which we assume is a reference to the Liahona, the actual Liahona from the Book of Mormon. There's all these relics that belong to the Nephites that are passed down, and the three witnesses see all of those things.

00:45:23 And like I said, the three witnesses all have sordid histories with the church. All three of them are excommunicated or leave the church. We're not certain if Martin Harris left the church, but none of them ever deny their witness.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:45:39 Martin says, "I didn't leave the church, the church left me."

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:45:42 Yeah, right. Martin Harris is the one that we don't have any record of an excommunication, so we don't think he was excommunicated from the church. But he definitely was not closely affiliated with the church for a period of decades and never denies his testimony. On the other hand, David and Oliver are both excommunicated from the church. You can go to the Joseph Smith Papers site and actually look up the minutes from their excommunication hearing. It's painful for them. It's very painful, and yet they never deny their testimony of the Book of Mormon either, they stay true to it. In fact, they give numerous speeches when they're outside the church, write letters and continue to bear testimony of the Book of Mormon.

00:46:25 For instance, the earliest record, and Scott and I did an episode on this a couple of weeks ago, November, 1829, Oliver Cowdery writes a letter where he tells somebody about the experience. If you're looking at timelines here, the Book of Mormon is received by Joseph Smith in 1827, translated primarily from April to June of 1829. And it's sometime in the summer of 1829 that they have this experience where they see the angel and behold the relics as well. This letter is from November 1829. Here a historian, that's really close to the time of the event. This is as accurate as we would expect it to be. Oliver writes to someone saying, "This record gives an account of the first inhabitants of this continent. It is engraved on plates which have the appearance of gold, and they are a very curious workmanship. It was a clear, open, beautiful day, far from any inhabitants, in a remote field at the time we saw the record of which has been spoken, brought and laid before us by an angel, arraigned in glorious light, ascend out of the midst of heaven."

00:47:34 Boom, within a couple months, Oliver is explaining the experience, and not in vague terms like, "I had a sort of fuzzy vision." "It's a beautiful, clear, open day, and we saw this angel descend from heaven." There's a lot to process there. This guy's seeing an angel. And you can go to Martin Harris's grave, it's in Clarkston, Utah. I drove my family up there. I made my kids stand on the grave and I said to them, "You are standing on the grave of someone who saw an angel." And I remember my son's words were, "Are we going to go to Hardee's after this because I'm really..." And I was like, "Honestly, do you realize what a big deal this is?"

Hank Smith: 00:48:16 Do you know who's in front of you talking about this and who's under there?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:48:20 Yeah, I should have fed him before I took him there, in retrospect. But still the fact that where we're living is two hours away from the grave of someone who certifiably saw an angel is to me an amazing, amazing deal. Now, speaking of Martin Harris, I want to quickly go through the evidence. These three witnesses were interviewed numerous times. They all lived for decades after. Oliver Cowdery is the first to die, he passes away in 1850. We probably have the least from him. But Martin Harris, and especially David Whitmer, live on for decades afterwards and are interviewed numerous times.

00:48:56 Just a sampling, a little man named William Pilkington, he was hired to take care of Martin Harris. And Pilkington says, "I heard Martin bear testimony scores of times." This is after Martin has rejoined the church and traveled to Utah, now he's living in

Clarkston. Pilkington, this is William Pilkington, said that the day before he died, Martin Harris shared his testimony. Even asking William, who's 14 years old at this time, to hold up Martin's right hand while he spoke. So Martin is so weak he can't hold up his own right hand, he asked this 14-year-old who's this paid helper to raise his hand for him.

00:49:33 According to William, this is what Martin said, "Just as sure as you see the sun shining, just as sure I am that I stood in the presence of an angel of God with Joseph Smith. I saw him hold the gold plates in his hands. I also saw the Urim and Thummim, the breastplate, the Sword of Laban. I saw the angel descend from heaven. The heavens were then opened and I heard the voice of God declare that everything the angel had told us was true and that the Book of Mormon was translated correct. I was commanded by God's voice to testify to the whole world what I had seen and heard." Day before he dies, July 8th, 1875, according to William Pilkington, Martin Harris bears his testimony of the Book of Mormon. Never denies it, as far as we know.

00:50:16 David Whitmer is probably the most challenging, I guess. He's the one of the three that never rejoins the church. Oliver Cowdery is excommunicated in 1838, but he rejoins in 1848 and dies in the faith in 1850. Martin Harris never excommunicated, re-affiliates with the church, dies in 1875. David Whitmer never rejoins the church. David Whitmer is more than willing to be interviewed when it comes to this. I've got a book on my shelf called, David Whitmer Interviews that Lyndon Cook put together, it's about this thick, and it's just his interviews on the Book of Mormon. And he is crystal clear.

00:50:50 But to give you an example, David, in 1887, the year before he dies, makes this statement directly refuting two encyclopedias. They were the American Encyclopedia and the Encyclopedia Britannica. Remember when there used to be TV ads for those? Both had published articles saying that the witnesses had denied their testimony. This is what David Whitmer writes. He says, "It is recorded in the American Encyclopedia and the Encyclopedia Britannica that I, David Whitmer, have denied my testimony as one of the three witnesses to the divinity of the Book of Mormon, and that the other two witnesses, Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris denied their testimony to that book. I will say once more to all mankind that I have never at any time denied that testimony or any part thereof. I also testified to the world that neither Oliver Cowdery or Martin Harris at any time denied their testimony. They both died reaffirming the truth of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. I was present at

the deathbed of Oliver Cowdery and his last words were, Brother David, be true to your testimony of the Book of Mormon."

00:52:00 The way you connect the witnesses, is Martin Harris is kind of like the weird uncle of the Restoration. He's this figure that's not connected, but David and Oliver are deeply connected, they're brothers-in-law. Oliver marries David's sister, Elizabeth. After Oliver rejoins the church in 1848, instead of going west, he goes to Richmond, Missouri to try and get his in-laws to rejoin the church. They don't, and Oliver passes away while he's there. But they're there at the deathbed. And that's what every one of the Whitmer's say that Oliver did, on his deathbed Oliver bore a final testimony of the Book of Mormon, said that it's true.

00:52:35 We don't know where Oliver's buried, but I've been to David Whitmer's grave in Richmond, Missouri, and his headstone, actually, the guy's headstone has the words, "The record of Jews and the record of the Nephites are one. Truth is eternal." chiseled into the headstone. I would suggest that if you're having something chiseled into your headstone, you're pretty serious about it. He wanted this witness to be there. And this is a guy who isn't part of the church at this point, who has not a lot of good things to say about Joseph Smith because he's still angry 40 years later over his excommunication, but refuses to deny that he saw an angel, saw the relics, and that the Book of Mormon is true. How much more powerful than that can you get? Incredible.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:53:20 It used to bother me that the three witnesses got excommunicated or were out of the church, I would cock my head and be like, "How on earth could those three be out of the church if what they said was actually true?" And that used to bother me. But the deeper I dug into that and researched their lives, like you're saying so well, Casey, they were adamant to the core that their experience was legit. They lost faith that Joseph Smith was still a prophet of God and that the church that he organized was the only way to come unto Christ, but they never, for one second questioned the authenticity and validity of their experience.

00:54:02 I found a great quote that brings this home from President Henry B. Eyring. This is back in 2003. This is how he framed it, which I thought was perfect. He said, "The three witnesses never denied their testimony of the Book of Mormon. They could not, because they knew it was true. They made sacrifices and faced difficulties beyond what most people ever know. Oliver Cowdery gave the same testimony about the divine origin

of the Book of Mormon as he laid dying," Casey just mentioned that. And then he says, "but in the times of trial, they wavered in their faith that Joseph was still God's prophet, and that the only way to come unto the Savior was through his restored church." And then he drops this line, "That they continue to affirm what they saw and heard in that marvelous experience during long periods of estrangement from the church and from Joseph makes their testimony more powerful." Thought about that a lot, and I wholeheartedly agree with that. There was no possible conceivable ulterior motive that could keep these men continuing to testify the authenticity of that experience and yet speak, especially David Whitmer, so outright against Joseph Smith.

00:55:11 I have a picture of a handwritten note from David Whitmer in response to a Mr. Robert Nelson back in July of 1887. Robert Nelson had asked about his experience, "Is it really true?" David Whitmer says this, he says, "Dear sir, I did see the angel as it is recorded in my testimony, the Book of Mormon. The book is true," and he underlines 'is true.' And then he says, "but the gathering to Jackson County, Missouri, I think was a little too hasty." And he starts to complain about Joseph Smith. It's just right in the same... He had a big problem with Joseph's polygamy, he had a big problem with Joseph even organizing a church, he thought that was a little arrogant. He has all these funny, quirky little things against Joseph Smith. But Book of Mormon, absolutely true, no question, not for a second.

00:56:03 God chose His witnesses wisely on that score, knowing that they would do what they did is perfect because it does take away all of the ulterior motives that one might have. If they were angry at Joseph Smith, there are no three men better positioned to hurt him than these three men. If their testimony is false. They are co-conspirators with Joseph, and when Joseph allows them to get out of the church, if this was false, game over for Joseph Smith because these guys can really hit them where it hurts.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:56:33 They can expose that, yeah.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:56:34 Pull the carpet right out from underneath the whole narrative.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:56:38 Yeah.

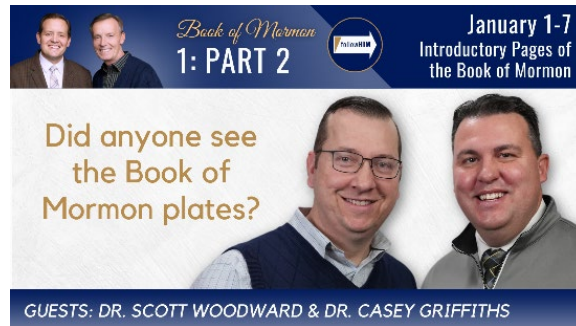
Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:56:38 But if an angel of God commanded you to bear witness of this and you heard the voice of God bear witness and say that you'd be accountable before the judgment seat of Christ for how well you actually bear witness of this book, not about Joseph Smith, not about the church, but about this book, if that was an

authentic experience, then their behavior makes total sense. It's pretty remarkable.

- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:56:59 Yeah. And there's a tendency on our part sometimes to criticize these guys like, "Why did they leave the church?" I'm not going to deal with that. But as witnesses of the Book of Mormon, they are stellar. They never falter, they never have a weak moment. We're still finding stuff that shows this. There's a manuscript written by this early apostle named William McClellan that was only published a couple of years ago. They did work it into Saints, but it was during the Missouri persecutions and McClellan is literally hiding out in the woods for fear of his life. And according to McClellan, he comes across Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer who are hiding in the woods as well, and he breaks down and says, "Guys, this is tough. I don't know if I can do this unless it's true." And William McClellan said that right then and there in the woods, David and Oliver both assured him, "Hey, it is true. We saw an angel and we saw the plates."
- 00:57:53 Again, under those circumstances where you're being burned out of house and home, it would be so easy for them to just stand up and say, "It was all a joke." And yet they're there assuring this poor struggling brother in his faith that, "No, it's real. It's real. You're not giving up your home and your safety for nothing. You're doing it for something that's very real and that comes from God." I honor these men for their integrity, even if they did have maybe some personal feelings along the way. They weren't perfect.
- Dr. Scott Woodward: 00:58:25 We could go back to the title page of the Book of Mormon. If there are faults in these three witnesses, they are the faults of men, but don't let that overshadow the power and consistency of their testimony of the Book of Mormon.
- John Bytheway: 00:58:38 You guys will remember this, but I remember in general conference when Elder Dallin H. Oaks, at the time, he was talking about Martin Harris and there was this mic drop moment when he said his middle name was Dallin Harris Oaks, and he talked about the connection. He said, we need to let Martin come out from the shadow of that event in Church History. And I thought, "Yeah, he was baptized after the 116 pages were lost or stolen. Do we believe in baptism for the remission of sins?"
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:59:09 Yeah. The H in Dallin H. Oaks is for Harris, because he's a descendant of Martin Harris's brother, Emer Harris. These three witnesses, not only is the role they play in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon crucial, but these are the three who are

chosen to call the first 12 Apostles to serve. Until 1838, these are Joseph's right-hand men. Then all that stuff happens that causes them to be excommunicated or leave the church. But like you said, we need to honor them for what they did. We need the glory and their goodness and not dwell so much on their faults. And when it comes to the Book of Mormon, boy, they passed the test with flying colors.

- John Bytheway: 00:59:48 Another thing it makes me think of is, you pick up a book now nearly 200 years later and you see these names, but at the time they had to live in these communities. They were accessible. Like you said, people went and interviewed them over and over and over. And to put your name out right now in contemporary time, that's a different thing and sometimes 200 years later we forget that.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 01:00:11 Amazing, amazing men and we need to give them credit for what they did.
- Hank Smith: 01:00:15 Yeah. Let me read from their testimony before we move on. We can't read the whole thing here, but let me just give you some highlights. "We have seen the plates which contain this record. We know of a surety that this work is true. An angel of God came down from heaven and he brought and laid before our eyes, we beheld and saw the plates. We bear record that these things are true. We bear testimony of these things. Honor be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost." That is a powerful message that speaks through the centuries.
- John Bytheway: 01:00:57 Please join us for part two of this podcast.



- Hank Smith: 00:00 Welcome to part two with Dr. Casey Griffiths and Dr. Scott Woodward on the introductory pages of the Book of Mormon.
- 00:07 Casey, we so often focus on the three witnesses that sometimes the eight are overshadowed. You said that these two testimonies complement each other. One is the supernatural experience, the other, this very tactile natural experience. What do we need to know about these eight witnesses?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:24 The eight witnesses, like you mentioned, have a much less supernatural experience. In fact, here's their words. Joseph Smith Jr., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold, and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated, we did handle with our hands. We also saw the engravings thereof, all of which has the appearance of ancient work and curious workmanship, and this we bear record with words of soberness that the said Smith has shown unto us for we have seen and hefted, and no of assurity that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. What they bear witness to is that they actually physically handle the plates, that they're able to turn the pages. We have a document that community of Christ has in his possession, that we're fairly sure comes from John Whitmer, where he copied characters from the plates called the characters document, and they tell a story too.
- 01:19 Not all of the eight witnesses stay in the church either, and the general rule of thumb is if their last name's Smith, they died in the church. If their last name's Whitmer, they didn't die in the church with two exceptions, Christian and Peter. Christian and Peter both die in 1835 and 1836 respectively and don't ever leave the church, die faithfully. But Jacob Whitmer, John Whitmer, and Hiram Page, Hiram Page is a brother-in-law, the Whitmer, he's married to Catherine Whitmer, all do leave the church but also never deny their testimony. The witnesses are essentially from these two families. They're Smiths and they're Whitmers. The Whitmers were the family that Joseph and Oliver

stayed with during the last month of Book of Mormon translation, and they become the stalwarts in the church. Unfortunately, in 1838, when David is excommunicated, the Whitmer [inaudible 00:02:14] leave together, and that includes Oliver, who's a Whitmer as well.

02:18 So walking through each one of them, there's a hundred other stories to be told about their faithfulness, their fidelity, their integrity when it comes to questions about the Book of Mormon. For instance, John Whitmer, who is assigned his church historian, who writes some of the early histories of the church, is bearing witness of the book of Mormon into his late seventies. This is something that was written down when someone saw him preach February, 1878. Mr. Whitmer is considered a truthful, honest and law abiding citizen by this community. That's Kingston, Missouri, the town where John Whitmer settled and stayed there the rest of his life. Consequently, his appointment drew out a large audience. Mr. Whitmer stated that he had often handled the identical golden plates, which Mr. Smith received from the hand of an angel. He said it was a pure gold. Part of the work was sealed up as solid. The other part was open. And it was this part that was translated, which is his day termed the Mormon Bible.

03:19 This is the first time Mr. Whitmer has attempted to preach in a good many years, and the time who waits for no one, has written many a furrow upon his brow. He's upwards of 60 years old, and gave some good advice to both old and young before closing and asked the audience if they would take the book Mormon in the Bible and compare them, and to take Paul's rule to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good. So not just the three witnesses, but the eight witnesses demonstrate absolute integrity and fidelity when it comes to their testimony, that there were plates, that they handled the plates. In fact, Hiram Smith, you know, right? And Joseph Smith Sr. is the original patriarch in the church. That's Joseph Smith's father.

04:00 Samuel Smith is a Smith brother that we don't hear as much about, but he is the first missionary of the church, and apparently as soon as the Book of Mormon was published, took a ruck sack of copies of the Book of Mormon and started going around and preaching. And the story we usually tell is that Samuel wasn't super successful, that he didn't convert anybody on his trip, and even got turned out of doors for testifying in the Book of Mormon. But the second part of the story that we need to tell is that he does place a copy of the Book of Mormon with John Green, and he's married to a woman named Rhoda Green. Rhoda's maiden name is Young, which should ring a bell.

Rhoda's the sister of Brigham Young. Eventually, she starts to read the book of Mormon and converts, and she brings her brother Phineas Young to meet with Samuel.

04:50 So Samuel comes back. And apparently they're all sitting there at a table, and Phineas Young pulls out the book of Mormon and turns to the back of it, because that's where the witnesses are found in the 1830 Book of Mormon. They're not at the beginning, they're at the end of the book. And he read through the testimony of the eight witnesses, then pointed at Samuel H. Smith, then turned to Samuel and said, "Sir, is this your name in the book?" Samuel said, "Yes, and I want to bear you my testimony in person, that I saw the plates and that the book is true." Samuel was a little bit more successful than we sometimes give him credit for it because he does convert Rhoda Young, and then Phineas Young, and then eventually Brigham Young down the road, all become part of this chain of conversion that Samuel sets off.

Hank Smith: 05:34 And they have some impact, right, Casey? They have some impact on the future of the church, right?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 05:38 They do a good thing here or there. The school I work at is named after one of them, so they turned out okay. Always nice to look back on your converts and see how they're doing.

Hank Smith: 05:50 Yeah. Yeah, Samuel's like, "How did mine turn out?" He did all right.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 05:54 Pretty good. Pretty good. But again, none of these eight witnesses either ever did either testimony though. Three of them end up outside the church.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 06:02 I just wanted to put a quick plug if anyone wants to do a deep dive into the witnesses, there's an awesome book. It's called Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses by Richard Lloyd Anderson. I think it's a single best thing ever written about the witnesses, not quite 200 pages. So it goes a deep dive into not just their witness, but also critics. It's awesome. It's excellent.

Hank Smith: 06:25 Wonderful. Let's move to a different section of the manual. It's called the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon As a Miracle. If someone asked you where the Book of Mormon came from, what would you say? How would you describe God's involvement in giving us the Book of Mormon? As you read Joseph Smith's testimony, pay attention to how he described it. Based on what you read, how do you think God feels about the

importance of the Book of Mormon? Now, Scott and Casey, I know that you have episode after episode, episode on the Church History Matters podcast about this. Our listeners can go there if they want to get the details, but give us a 30,000 foot view, as John likes to call it.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 07:01

I would say it this way. Sometimes when I teach this, I'll ask my students, "Do you guys want to see a miracle?" And they're like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." I'm like, "No, honestly, do you guys want to see an actual miracle? I'm not joking. Okay, does this look like the face of a guy who's joking right now?" Kind of build it up, and they're like, "Okay, sure, sure, sure." "All right, I got it right here," and then I pull out of my backpack a Book of Mormon, just the nice missionary blue one. I'm like, "It's right here. Do you guys want to see it?" Kind of walk up and down the roads, do you guys want to... Do you want to hold it? But then I just want to say I am dead serious about this, and then we get into it, right?

07:41

The Book of Mormon itself frames the coming forth of the Book of Mormon as a miracle in context of describing the coming fourth of the Book of Mormon to an unlearned boy struggling to get a sealed book translated. The Lord is quoted in second Nephi 27 as saying this, so it's in this context he says, "For behold, I am God and I am a God of miracles, and I will show unto the world that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever. And I work not among the children of men, save it be according to their faith." And he says, "Therefore, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people. Yay, a marvelous work and a wonder for the wisdom of their wise and learned shall perish and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid." That's the framing of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. It's the God of miracles working through an unlearned boy to bring about a marvelous work and a wonder. That's how the Book of Mormon frames it. That's perfect.

08:39

And as we do a deep dive into the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, it just gets more and more astonishing how miraculous this actually was. Let me just drop a few things, 30,000 foot view here. The last of the book of Lehigh was super brutal for Joseph Smith. The plates and the Yurman thumb were taken away for a season, a season of repentance. On the 22nd of September, 1828, Joseph gets his gift restored, the plates are restored, the Yurman [inaudible 00:09:09] restored. He doesn't seem to do much translating during that time until Oliver Cowdery shows up in April of 1829, April 5th to be specific. And then two days later on April 7th, they start. They begin what is basically the entire Book of Mormon as we have it. Joseph picks

up right where he left off. The book of Lehigh probably starts in Mosiah, goes all the way to the end of the Book of Mormon. And then they ask, "Should we retranslate? The book of Lehigh?" Answer is no. D&C 10 says, just do the small plates. And so they'll actually translate first Nephi through, words of Mormon last.

09:40 In the midst of all of that, we can actually track a few key dates, a few anchor points as to the speed of the translation. This is where it just kind of starts boggling my mind. The speed of the translation was about 65 working days within about a 90 day period, about 65 working days is how closely we could track it. And credit to Jack Welch, founder of Scripture Central for really doing the hard work at pinning down these anchor points. So good, so meticulous. 65 days, why might that matter, to know that the Book of Mormon came forth in 65 days? I would respond the speed at which this comes forth is very suspicious of a miracle. It kind of smells... It smells miraculous. For comparison, King James Bible took seven years for 47 scholars, theologians, clergymen to translate from Hebrew and Greek into English, the LDS triple combination Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants Pearl of Great Price, that took three years for six full-time, general authorities, full staff and secretaries, 100 plus return missionaries three years to get that done.

10:51 Some people might say, "Well, it's fiction. Book of Mormon, it's fiction," to which we'll shelf that argument for now, but I'd say, well, let's compare it to some fiction. The Hobbit, JR Tolkien, this took two and a half years for him to write. Lord of the Rings trilogy, 12 years. Harry Potter, just volume one, just volume one, where we're doing some serious world building, Tolkien and JK Rowling build a world, which would be required for the Book of Mormon, Harry Potter volume one took six years. Les Misérables by Victor Hugo took 12 years. Let me just state it again. The Book of Mormon took 65 days. One pass and it was done, no punctuation. One sentence.

Hank Smith: 11:35 One sentence.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 11:37 The witnesses who were scribes for Joseph Smith, we're talking Emma Smith, we're talking Martin Harris, we're talking Oliver Cowdery, they say that Joseph was just looking at the instruments that came with the plates to translate, or alternately a seer stone that Joseph had. Several of them talk about him putting it in the bottom of his hat, so as to block out extraneous light. And he would put his face in the hat, and the rocks, the stones, the seer stones would shine. David Whitmer

says, "He drew it, the hat, closely around his face to exclude the light. And in the darkness, the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. And Joseph would read it off and Oliver Cowdery would write it down. And if it was correct, then it would disappear and another character would appear with the interpretation underneath it."

12:32 He says, and this is David Whitner saying, "Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God and not by any power of man. You think about this, a book like The Book of Mormon, 65 days, Joseph Smith, 23 years old at this time, dictating to scribe that wrote it down, and we get a book like The Book of Mormon. And the complexity of this remarkable book, the literary complexity, and we could talk about that for a few hours if you want. Just a few things to throw out. There's just a few examples of complexity like geographical complexity. There are more than 500 references in the Book of Mormon to 150 plus geographical locations that are internally and spatially consistent with each other. There's three different calendar systems that are referred to consistently and without error throughout the whole book from the time my father left Jerusalem, and then the reign of the judges, then from the time of the sign of the Savior's birth. That's just in the background. It's so subtle, but it's always consistent.

13:37 There's efficient monetary systems of weights and measures. There's authentic legal cases. There's realistic warfare. Huey Brown broke it down like this. He said there's 71 chapters on doctrine and exhortation, and 21 chapters on the Ministry of Christ that clarifies and expands upon, but doesn't contradict biblical doctrine. Let's add another one. There's one chapter, 77 verses long that describes an extended allegory about taming wild olive trees that cryptically expounds upon the scattering and gathering of Israel throughout all time, all while agreeing both with true botanical principles and true biblical doctrine. There's one chapter, 30 verses long that forms the most complex and complete chiasmus known in scripture, and there's no attention drawn to the fact... We're at 30,000 feet, Hank. Let me know if we need to go lower on any of these things.

Hank Smith: 14:27 Hey, give us a preview for what we're going to look at this year. Yeah.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 14:31 Yeah, that's right. We're previewing this. This chiasmus is just a nice ancient literary style of writing of parallelism. Nobody even

knew about those in the Book of Mormon until about 120 years after Joseph Smith's death. Then we have a missionary in Germany, John Welch, who discovers this after attending a Jewish presentation about Chiasmus in the Bible. And he thought, well, the Book of Mormons ancient scripture, so maybe it's in there too. It was written by people who spoke Hebrew, so maybe we could find it in there. And sure enough, all the chiasmus research of the Book of Mormon is born through this marvelous moment in time. Throughout the entire book, you're going to find this kind of complexity, Hebrew complexity, literary complexity, elaborate flashbacks, literary foreshadowing, allegory, metaphor, unique figures of speech. There's locations that will later be discovered as real Nahom, the place of bountiful where Nephi is ship. These areas that have been studied like crazy by scholars for years and years and years saying this is all not just plausible, but there's actually a few anchor points that are really incredible here.

15:41 Joseph Smith whipped through all of that in 65 days. And I'll say that there are some seeming anachronisms, things that don't seem like they should be there, like steel in 600 BC, or cement horses. And there's been big long lists made of the anachronisms book of Mormon. But what's fascinating is that over time, that list is shrinking. We're finding more and more evidence that what we thought was anachronistic in the Book of Mormon shouldn't be there yet. Actually, oh, it turns out there was barley over here. Oh, it turns out there were people using cement. Yeah, there are actually steel swords. We found some manjerico about this time period, and are [inaudible 00:16:21]. So there are still some on the list of anachronisms that don't seem to fit in time yet, but that list is slowly but steadily getting authenticated over time.

16:32 John, Hank, Casey, he's 23 years old. I don't know any 23 year olds that can crank something out like this in 65 years, let alone 65 days. And from that experience, we get the Book of Mormon. It's dumb founding. Astonishing isn't quite strong enough. As the Lord said in 75:27, "The wisdom of their wise and learned shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid." It is absolutely a bonafide remarkable miracle, a marvelous work and a wonder. To keep that in mind as you read the Book of Mormon is phenomenal. Oh, by the way, we haven't even mentioned the spiritual convincing power of this book and the clarity of the doctrine and the principles that it teaches to actually help drive you to Jesus, millions can bear this testimony, that that's what the book does really, really well. That's part of the telos of this book, is that in the Book of Mormon brings people to Jesus, and it does it really, really well.

- 17:34 You add all that together, the young, inexperienced, relatively uneducated, 23-year-old translator looking at stones, his process, looking at stones in his hat and reading words that appear, and then the remarkable content with the complexity, the coherence, and the remarkable spiritual convincing power of this book, you understand why this is called a marvelous work in wonder. The miracle is that a book like this came through a boy like that. But then you add the stones in the hat bit, and it's off the charts. You want to see a miracle? You want to see a miracle? Get a copy of the book of Mormon and you're looking at it.
- Hank Smith: 18:10 It's no wonder B.H. Roberts, church historian, church leader, when someone said to him, "Come on, it's just a book." He said, "Match it. If it's just a book, you do it. Match it. Match it, I say, or with hands on lips remains silent when Joseph's name is spoken." If it's so simple, you do it.
- Dr. Scott Woodward: 18:32 I do joke like that with my students. I'll say, you know what? You don't have to do another assignment in my class. If you just want to write your own book a Mormon, I'll give you an A. You can skip all the other stuff.
- Hank Smith: 18:42 Don't even have to attend. Yeah.
- Dr. Scott Woodward: 18:44 Here's the criteria, and then I lay all that out.
- John Bytheway: 18:46 You can't have any notes. You have to just look into a hat and dictate it to Siri. And you can't go backwards.
- Dr. Scott Woodward: 18:51 Exactly. Brian Hills has that challenge. He says, you don't even need a scribe today because you could just use that little button on your phone for text messaging, and you've got a virtual scribe. He said, "Here's what you got to do though." He said, "You need to recite a series of text messages of 20 to 30 words each to a recipient who's then going to compile them to create a manuscript." And he says, "To more closely emulate Smith's efforts, the text block should be consistently spoken in a vernacular that's different from the author's daily speech. Before hitting send, spelling and grammar could be corrected, but once you hit send, that's it. The sequence and the meaning of the sentences will not be altered. And after repeating that sequence around 10,000 times to create a continuous string of words of about 270,000, the text is then immediately delivered directly to a publisher for typesetting and printing." So give it a shot. That's how you do it.

19:42 Nobody knows exactly how it works, but what we do have is the end product of that. I don't know much about seers stones, and I find it a little bit odd, but what I do know is the Book of Mormon text, and if that text came through seer stones, then I'm a believer in seer stones.

Hank Smith: 19:58 I have a thought here from Elder Callister, Tad Callister, and I think this sums up pretty well what you've taught us, Scott. He says, the argument that Joseph Smith made up the Book of Mormon is simply counter to the realities of life. It is one thing to have creative ideas. It is quite another to put them into a complex, but coherent and harmonious, whole inundated with majestic doctrine, all truths all done in a single draft.

Dr. Scott Woodward: 20:24 Amen.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 20:25 What Scott's done is exactly the way we should approach this. There's a lot of complexity. We did six episodes on it as to how the Book of Mormon was translated as to what David Whitmer said, versus what Oliver Cowdery said, versus what Emma said. But in all of that, don't miss the forest for the trees here. The big view is that every single person that was involved in the coming forth the Book of Mormon saw it as miraculous, as something that they could not explain through natural means. In fact, if I can share an experience really fast, a couple of years ago, I was in the community of Christ Temple doing research in their archives and I was with Taunalyn Ford who's this wonderful scholar, one of my favorite people, and they brought out a manuscript to her. It was just a bunch of loose leaf paper written all over in pencil. And I walked over and said, "What is that?" And Taunalyn said, "These are the notes from the last interview Emma Smith gave before she passed away."

21:24 The interviewer was her son, Joseph III, who was president of the organized church at the time. Boy, am I suddenly interested. Because of all the people involved in the translation process, Emma is there the night that he gets the plates. She's literally at the hill when Joseph goes up and gets the plates and brings them down. She's probably the earliest scribe. And other than a couple of weeks when Joseph was at the Whitmer home, Emma is there for the entire process, from when he gets the plates in September, 1827 to when the manuscripts completed in 1829, and during those crucial three months when Joseph and Oliver produced the entire 531 page manuscript that we're familiar with. At one point in this interview, and I took a picture of this page, he flat out asks her, "Do you think he could have faked this?" And this is what he wrote down Emma as saying.

22:16 She said, "My belief is the Book of Mormon is of divine authenticity. I have not the slightest doubt of it. I'm satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired. For when acting as his scribe, your father would dictate to me hour after hour, and when returning after meals or after interruptions, he could have once begin where he left off without either seeing the manuscript or any portion of it read to him. This was a usual thing for him to do. It would've been improbable that a learned man could do this. And for one so ignorant and unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible." There's the person closest to Joseph Smith through the whole process basically saying, "I can't explain this. I knew him better than anybody else. I can't explain where it came from." And one point in here that John Hilton, our friend, likes to point out is that she says Joseph Smith would leave and come back and pick up without looking at anything.

23:13 There's intersectionality in the Book of Mormon. There's places in the Book of Mormon where prophets in the Book of Mormon quote earlier prophets. The Book of Alma quotes King Benjamin. The text produced exactly. What Emma is describing, if it's accurate, has no physical explanation for how he could have done this. It's like Scott said, the book starts with a miracle. Don't skip over the material before the record begins in one Nephi, because what they're documenting here is a miracle as well-documented as any I can think of. Maybe the resurrection of Christ, but you have so many people who had so many reasons to doubt what happened that all came away with this ironclad testimony that they had participated in something miraculous. And for those of us today that look for miracles, that wonder if God is there, if he hears us, if the day of miracles has passed, this is proof positive that it has not, and God can and will still do miracles for us.

Hank Smith: 24:11 I'm glad you brought up the resurrection there, Casey. It just reminds me, when I see that empty stone box, the paintings of the empty stone box in the Hill Cumorah, I always think of the empty tomb, right? Two miracles, two miracles with that empty stone box.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 24:26 Well, 12 witnesses of both, right? It lines up really well as well.

Hank Smith: 24:29 And a woman named Mary. Yeah.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 24:32 Oh, that's a good one, Hank. Well done. Yeah, I hadn't made that connection. Nice.

- Dr. Scott Woodward: 24:38 So in saying all of this about the miraculous nature of the Book of Mormon, does this actually prove the Book of Mormon is true? I think that's an interesting question to ask. Does that prove that it's true? And if I'm being totally honest, I have to say no, it doesn't prove that it's true, but it does prove that this book should be taken very seriously, that this book should be studied very seriously. Although it's casually dismissed by far too many people in the world, we're not going to let that happen, are we? Not this year. We're going to study this book deeply in this church. We have the singular opportunity to do that, to dig deep, to examine, to ponder this book more deeply and seriously and carefully than maybe we've ever done before in our life. What an opportunity before us now. This book deserves our careful, careful study, and we get to do it this year. It's amazing.
- Hank Smith: 25:31 Absolutely wonderful. It has been such a treat to have you both here. I picture our listeners at home, they're either folding laundry or they're shoveling snow, or maybe they're down in Australia on the beach. What are you hoping? What do you want us to know? Casey, let's start with you.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 25:50 The first thing that comes to mind is just read it. My testimony of the church and my testimony of Christ is linked to the Book of Mormon. Before I knew all this stuff about the witnesses, before I knew all this stuff about translation, before I was familiar with the evidence, which I find overwhelming that the Book of Mormon is an authentic document, that it's exactly what it claims to be, I was just a college freshman who came to BYU with a lot of doubts and questions and was asked by a great religion teacher, Todd Parker, to read the book of Mormon 30 minutes a day. That was the only assignment in his class, pretty much was you have to read the Book of Mormon 30 minutes every day. That year of my life when I was in the Book of Mormon every day, because I took his class two semesters in a row, first half, second half, changed me, helped me know that Jesus Christ was my savior, helped me make the decision to serve a mission.
- 26:48 All good things in my life I could trace back to those choices that I made. I would say pick up the book and read it, and read it intensely. And read it with those three things we've talked about, what good things Christ has done for people, what covenant he's made with people, and that he is the Christ manifesting himself to all nations. And you don't have to dress it up much fancier than that. If you do that, you'll gain a witness that Jesus Christ lives and that the book of Mormons true. Or if you already have those things, you'll find your witness

strengthened and your spiritual health restored as you spend time in these pages.

27:27 Weird experience I could share really fast. We had a strange event happen on my mission where these elders felt like demonic spirits were influencing an investigator. And we were all panicking. We called our mission president. Our mission president said, "Just sit down and read the Book of Mormon with them. Read the Book of Mormon. You'll have those anxieties, those fears, those evil spirits cast out, and you'll feel the Holy Spirit in your life." Read it. Get your nose in the book and read it would be my first counsel to everybody.

Hank Smith: 27:58 Thank you, Casey. Scott, what do you think? We're setting off here in 52 weeks of intense study of the Book of Mormon, and I hope all of our listeners can commit to that. I know with Come Follow Me, it's often the beginning of the year, we hit it hard, and then we kind of dwindle a little bit, and we can all commit I'm going to get all the way to the end of the row here. What are you hoping happens?

Dr. Scott Woodward: 28:19 Well, I want to share a little quote from Wilfred Woodruff who was hanging out at Brigham Young's house on November 28th, 1841. Here's what he said. "I spent the day at Brigham Young's home in company with Joseph and the 12 in conversing upon a variety of subjects." He said that Joseph started talking about the Book of Mormon. This is cool, right? This is now what, 12 years almost removed from the translation of the Book of Mormon. It's had a life so far, a short life in the church, but it's had a life in the church. And here's Joseph Smith reflecting on the Book of Mormon a little bit, and Woodrow Woodruff writes this down. He said, "Joseph said The Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth and the keystone of our religion," and this part's my favorite part, "and a man would get near to God by abiding by its precepts then than by any other book."

29:19 I guess that would be it, Hank. My testimony is that the Book of Mormon can not only withstand careful examination, but that when we seriously engage with it, do what Joseph said here, abide by its precepts, that it leads to incredible spiritual strength and intellectual satisfaction. That has absolutely been my experience. That's what I would leave with you, abide by the precepts. Abide by its precepts.

Hank Smith: 29:47 Abiding by its precepts. Over the course of my teaching, I had a long conversation with the Lord in which the beginning of my teaching, the beginning of coming out of my teenage years

reading the Book of Mormon, I think I told the Lord, "Lord, the book of Mormon's true," and he said, "Yes. Yeah. It is. I'm glad you found that out." I've learned since that that wasn't the end. That was the beginning. I thought that was the point where we find out the book is true. And then I see that there's so much more than that. Because once you realize the book is true, I've come to realize it can make me true. That's what I've seen the power in it, not necessarily in finding out that it's true, which it is, but finding out what it can do to me as I abide by those precepts, like you've said, Scott,

Dr. Scott Woodward: 30:38

That makes me think of a verse in doctrine and Covenants 84 where it's a famous verse where the church is under condemnation because they have not been remembering. Yeah, they've been taking lightly the things of God, particularly the Book of Mormon. He highlights in verse 57, he says... But listen to this just in light of what you were just saying, being in light of that Joseph Smith quote, the Lord says, "They shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the New Covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments, which I have given them, not only to say but to do according to that which I have written." Now, what you doing? I didn't give you the Book of Mormon just so you could have fascinating intellectually stimulating conversations. I didn't give you the book of Mormons so you could talk doctrine with each other. It's not just to say... I do want those conversations, yes, but not only to say but to do according to that which I have written, he says, which I have written.

31:34

I think that just goes hand in hand with what you're saying and with this abide by its precepts concept. That's powerful.

Hank Smith:

31:41

Wow. Wow, John, what a day. If I was excited before which I was, I'm even more excited now.

John Bytheway:

31:49

Absolutely. I've got pages of notes of additions to my own teaching that I'm going to make. I love what Scott just said about abide by its precepts. Because I think when I was younger, I thought a testimony was a feeling. It was, I'm going wait for the burning. That's how I know I have a testimony. And I'm still growing and learning, but I feel like more and more of my testimony now is you'll know by their fruits. It's you'll see results, you'll see outcomes. And abiding by its precepts brings outcomes. It changes me. It has changed me. It's changed people that I have loved by reading it, and then abiding by its precepts. And that is what is the real testimony. Do what the book says and watch what it does to you and for you, and watch the light that you get from it and the hope and the forgiveness

that you get when you start abiding by its precepts. And that's where my testimony is. It's look at the fruits of this, look at what it has done for people I know and love.

- 32:47 And for so many, this is going to be a very fun year for that reason.
- Hank Smith: 32:52 Absolutely. Let's return to where we started this opening paragraph of the manual. Before you even get to one Nephi chapter one, you'll notice the Book of Mormon is no ordinary book. This year, as you read, pray, and apply its teachings. You'll invite the Savior's power into your life, and you may feel moved to say, as the witnesses did, "It is marvelous in my eyes." Scott, Casey, thank you so much for your time. It has been wonderful to have you back, friends.
- Dr. Scott Woodward: 33:24 Thanks for having us.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 33:24 Thank you. Wonderful to be here.
- Hank Smith: 33:26 John, this is just the beginning of what's going to be a powerful, wonderful year.
- John Bytheway: 33:31 Absolutely.
- Hank Smith: 33:32 We want to thank Dr. Casey Griffiths and Dr. Scott Woodward for being with us today. What a joy. We want to thank our executive producer Shannon Sorenson, our sponsors David and Verla Sorenson, and we always remember our founder, Steve Sorenson. Join us next week. We're jumping into first Nephi on Follow Him.
- 33:52 Today's transcripts, show notes, and additional references are available on our website, followhim.co. That's [follow him.co](http://followhim.co). 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. 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. We've just completed a new project we think you'll love.
- 34:22 If you would like short and powerful quotes and insights from all of our Old Testament episodes, join our mailing list on our website, followhim.co, and we will email you a PDF of the first three chapters of our new book, finding Jesus Christ in the Old

Testament. If you enjoyed our guests on the podcast last year as much as we did, we think you'll love this new collection. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Nielsen, Will Statton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Quadra, and Annabel Sorenson. We also love hearing from you, our friends and listeners. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Nielsen, Wilson Statton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Quadra, and Annabel Sorenson.

Speaker 5: 35:10

Whatever questions or problems you have. The answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Turn to him. Follow him.

I WILL NOT BURN THE BOOK!



- Hank Smith: 00:02 Hello, my friends. Welcome to FollowHIM Favorites. My name's Hank Smith. I'm here with the incredible John Bytheway. Last year, for FollowHIM Favorites, we answered a single question. This year, Book of Mormon, Come, Follow Me, we are going to tell a single story. So John, we're opening up our first lesson in the Book of Mormon. What is the single story we're going to tell this week?
- John Bytheway: 00:24 We talked about this, because we had lots. But one that I love was from a movie the church made years ago called How Rare A Possession, and I think you can still find it. There's a man named Vincenzo Di Francesca, which is, I think, something I had at Olive Garden once. But he was born in Sicily. He was a pastor, and he was in New York. This is 1910, and he's walking down Broadway in New York and he finds this book on top of a barrel of ashes and he doesn't know what it is. The front pages are torn off. He doesn't know the title, but he's like, "This is a religious book." He sees the name Isaiah, but he also sees names like Alma and Mosiah and Mormon. And he's like, "Who are these people? I have no idea."
- 01:07 There was a lot of ashes on the book, and it was burnt. He gets some rubbing alcohol and he's able to clean some of the soot off the pages. He spends the whole day with this. And one of the things that impressed me was he said, "I read the declaration of the witnesses."
- Hank Smith: 01:23 A lot of us just skip those parts. We flip through those, we're like, "Hey, let's get to the beginning."
- John Bytheway: 01:28 Yeah. And he said he was impressed with their declaration of what they said, that they knew it was true. And he doesn't even know what the book is. He reads it all day, and he gets to Moroni's promise and kneels down, and he gets a witness that the book is true and it changes his life. And the fun part, and you've got to watch the movie, is he starts using it in his preaching, but he doesn't know what the book is.

Hank Smith:	01:55	So he's quoting it in church to his congregation.
John Bytheway:	02:00	He's in New Zealand, I think. And there's a couple of guys in the back that are in priestly robes and they're listening to this sermon when he quotes King Benjamin. And one of them says to the other, "Angelo, where is that scripture found?" And he's like, "It's in the Old Testament somewhere." They just kind of nodded, and he keeps going. His congregations start growing, and his colleagues are getting smaller. Lines that we think are so commonplace to us, like, "When you're in the service of your fellow beings, you're only in the service of your God." And people in the congregation are like, "Yeah."
Hank Smith:	02:36	That's beautiful.
John Bytheway:	02:37	It's King Benjamin, and nobody's ever heard it before. Well, in the story, he's censured, he's brought before disciplinary councils, like, "What's this book?" He doesn't even know what it is. "I found it in New York." And they tell him he can't use the book anymore. They tell him he has to burn the book. And he says, "I will not burn the book."
Hank Smith:	02:56	Francisco, you must burn the book. Yeah.
John Bytheway:	02:59	There's an article in the Ensign, the January '88 Ensign called "I Will Not Burn the Book," if you want to read about it. Well, finally, he is reading in a French dictionary, of all things, and he's skimming it for something and he sees the word Mormon. And he's like, "That's from the book."
Hank Smith:	03:18	That's in my book. My strange book that I found on the street.
John Bytheway:	03:22	"That's in the book. Yeah, I've seen that name before." And there it references that there was a university in Provo, Utah. Perhaps you've heard about it, Hank. Have you heard about that place?
Hank Smith:	03:32	It's a small little university at the base of the mountains.
John Bytheway:	03:35	Right. And he starts writing to people saying, "Tell me more about this." And they send him a Book of Mormon in Italian, because his was in English. And he keeps requesting baptism, and World War I comes up, World War II comes up. And eventually, I mean, I want people to go watch the movie, but the thing that is so powerful to me about it is, book with no name, he doesn't even know where it came from. But the book by itself, the words of the book, the message of the book has a

spiritual power to it. And it impacts him to the point that it's a lifetime quest for him to figure out, how do I join with these people that know about this book?

- Hank Smith: 04:17 He found the book in 1910. I think he's baptized in '51. 41 years.
- John Bytheway: 04:24 A lot of that not knowing the name of the book. So the very last paragraph in the January '88 Ensign article I mentioned, it says this, "On April 1956, I entered the temple at Bern and received my endowment. At last, to be in the presence of my Heavenly Father. I felt that God's promise had been fully fulfilled. The day had come indeed when the book would be no more unknown to me, and I would be able to enjoy the effects of my faith." Kind of a quest just to find out the title of the book. It's a great story. I guess that's the message, wouldn't you say, Hank? There is a power in these words and this testimony from these people in the past that is palpable and it changes people.
- Hank Smith: 05:04 John, what a perfect story to start FollowHIM Favorite Stories this year. Come back next week, we'll tell you another FollowHIM story to go with the lesson.