



“Enter into the Rest of the Lord”

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:

In what ways does the Lord share his power? Eva Witesman unabashedly explores the difficult topics of violence against women and children and the power offered by the priesthood of God.

Part 2:

Dr. Eva Witesman continues examining the differences between God’s power and peace versus man’s attempt at terror and control and how the kingdom of God provides safety for all people.

Timecodes:

Part 1

00:00 Part I - Dr. Eva Witesman
02:02 Introduction of Dr. Witesman
02:48 Lesson introduction
05:21 The temple endowment
08:12 Coercive power vs. sharing power
10:31 Foreordination and Dr. Witesman shares a personal experience
18:13 Alma 13:13-Chiasmus
25:58 Wrestling with difficult ideas
29:02 Mechizedek and the power of God
33:02 Melchizedek vs. Nehor
35:12 Alma 13:7 - Eternal power
38:55 Alma 13:28 - Compare D&C 121
42:04 Alma and Amulek and Liberty Jail
43:04 Alma 14 - Exposition on ordinances and repentance
46:01 Alma 14:6-13 - Zeezrom's guilt and teaching to all
47:11 Alma 14:8 - An important moment
50:45 President Johnson on sisterhood of peacemakers
54:52 Women in the scriptures and violence against women
58:30 The gospel teaches humility and peace
1:00:29 The experiences of women and violence
1:04:15 End of Part 1 - Dr. Eva Witesman

Part 2

00:00 Part II—Dr. Eva Witesman
00:07 How do we become peacemakers?
01:55 Mosiah 10:17 - Teaching love or hate
04:01 Alma 14:8 - Personal power and influence
07:46 Gathering Israel and the power to bless
08:37 The experience of women
12:44 How can we witness horror?
14:23 The purpose of the eternities
19:23 Alma 16:11-12 - John shares his experience at Columbine High School
26:20 Alma 15:18 - Alma and Amulek's struggle
28:11 Alma 14:28- Alma 15 Alma and Amulek survive prison and reunite with Zeezrom
30:33 Alma 15:6 - Zeezrom believes and is healed
33:39 Alma 15:10 and Alma 36 - Conversion and healing through the Atonement of Jesus Christ
36:03 Alma 15:15-26- Parallel to D&C 121-2
38:39 Alma 16:17 - Why are we bringing people to Jesus?
41:12 Dr. Witesman shares her testimony of the Atonement of Jesus
47:54 End of Part II— Dr. Eva Witesman

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Biographical Information:



Eva Witesman is a professor at Brigham Young University, where she directs the Ballard Center for Social Impact and teaches in the Master of Public Administration and Master of Business Administration programs. She is the chair of the Public and Nonprofit division of the Academy of Management, and as founder of the BYU GoodMeasure program, has helped hundreds of organizations improve their social strategy and outcome measurement. Her edited volume, "Reimagining Nonprofits," was recently published by Cambridge University Press and provides a global view of nonprofit work.

Dr. Witesman also contributes regularly to LDS Living magazine and has been featured as a guest in various television and podcast productions (Come, Follow Up; Grounded; All In; Go & Be). Dr. Witesman recently co-facilitated a global conversation as part of the 2024 United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, and regularly presents her research on government, nonprofit work, and prosocial

business at national and international conferences. Her viral 2017 BYU devotional on women and education has been viewed by a global audience has been republished by the church and is being included in an anthology of influential LDS speeches published by Illinois University Press.

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Alma 13-16 Part 1



GUEST: EVA WITESMAN

- Hank Smith: 00:00:03 Hello, everyone. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name's Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with my humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love, and long-suffering co-host, John Bytheway. And our guest, Dr. Eva Witesman. John, we are in the last part of basically Alma's reactivation tour through all of these cities. What have you learned so far? What are we looking forward to?
- John Bytheway: 00:00:31 Wow, what a difference a different area makes. Alma 5 was Zarahemla, gave him that spiritual checklist we talked about. Alma 7, he goes to Gideon, they're doing great. He gives them prophecies about Christ, and then he goes to Melek briefly, and then to Ammonihah. This is a scary place and some really frightening things happen here. We get to see how he and his newly reactivated companion... Wouldn't you say that about Amulek? Living beneath his privileges, how they react to this whole thing. It's a sobering, powerful story.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:07 Excellent. John, like I said, we have Dr. Eva Witesman with us. She's from BYU, gave an incredible [BYU devotional](#) a few years ago. What are we looking forward to today? Where are we going to go?
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:01:20 In chapter 13, we're going to talk a little bit about the temple and the priesthood and what that looks like. In 14, it gets a little heavier. We're going to talk about the role of women and children in times of war and peace, and the role that they play and what that looks like in societies. In chapter 15, though, we come back to the miracle of repentance. We're going to really focus on that, and then we'll end really on that high note entering into the rest of the Lord.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:46 Wonderful. I'm really looking forward to this. Even though we're taking on some very difficult chapters, I think there's a lot to learn. John, Dr. Witesman has never been on our podcast before. We are so lucky to have her. We better give her an introduction.

John Bytheway: 00:02:02 Yes, we are lucky to have her. Dr. Eva Witesman is a professor in the BYU Marriott School of Business where she studies government and nonprofit management and pro-social business. She's the director of the [Ballard Center for Social Impact](#), which develops the faith and skills to solve social problems. And as you mentioned, Hank, in 2017, she did a BYU devotional on Women and Education, which has basically gone viral. It's been viewed by a global audience, and her talk there is being included in an [anthology](#) of influential LDS speeches published by Illinois University Press. We're really glad we caught her to be able to come and join us today.

Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:02:45 I'm happy to be here. Thank you for inviting me.

Hank Smith: 00:02:48 I was so excited when she said yes, John. I emailed her, we'd never met. And I heard that devotional, had shared it with my daughter up at BYU-Idaho, and I thought, "Well, why don't I give it a shot?" And she responded. This is exciting. Eva, let me start with the Come, Follow Me manual, and then let's find out where you want to take us. This is how it starts. It says, "In many ways, life in Ammonihah had been good for both Amulek and Zeezrom. Amulek was a man of no small reputation with many kindreds and friends and much riches. Zeezrom was an expert lawyer who enjoyed much business. Then Alma arrived with an invitation to repent and enter into the rest of the Lord. For Amulek, Zeezrom and others accepting this invitation required sacrifice and even led to unbearable adversity."

00:03:35 But of course, the story doesn't end there. In these chapters, we learn what ultimately happens to people who believe in the power of Christ unto salvation. Sometimes deliverance, sometimes healing, and sometimes things don't get easier, but always the Lord receiveth his people up unto Himself in glory. Always, the Lord grants power according to our faith in Christ and always that faith gives us hope that we shall receive eternal life. As you read these chapters and we get to study them with Dr. Witesman, you can take comfort in these promises and you may come to understand better what Alma meant when he spoke of entering into the rest of the Lord. Man, I love these opening paragraphs of the manual. With that, where do you want to start?

Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:04:21 In the introduction, one of the things that you talked about is the power that the Lord grants to his people, and I really think that that's where we're being dropped into Alma's discussion of that power. If you look at chapter 13, there's actually the beginning of this exposition on God's power, and on the plan of salvation, and all of these beautiful things. It actually starts in

chapter 12. I think that's important in part because toward the middle and end, he's talking about the Garden of Eden, he's talking about the Fall, and he's talking about the plan of salvation that was created before the foundation of the world. And the reason that I think that's useful when we start chapter 13, verse one says, "And again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord gave these commandments unto his children," we're going forward from the time of Adam and Eve that was referenced in chapter 12. And part of the reason that I think that's helpful is because the pattern of this exposition follows the pattern of the temple.

00:05:21 So I want to quickly go to the description that the church provides about the temple endowment, which is the title of this [webpage](#) that they have to prepare people for what happens in the temple. And one of the things that says is during the ordinance... Talking now specifically about the endowment. During the ordinance, events that are part of the plan of salvation are presented, they include the creation of the world, the fall of Adam and Eve, the atonement of Jesus Christ, the apostasy and the Restoration. You'll also learn more about the way all people can return to the presence of the Lord. That outlines these things that we learn in the temple and that we study in the temple that are part of that covenant that brings us power. In these chapters, you see Alma talking about each of these things, more or less in turn, clearly not the apostasy and restoration because those haven't happened yet. This, to me, is deeply connected with the temple.

00:06:15 In verse two, we get very quickly introduced to [ordination](#). They refer to it as the order of his Son, meaning the Son of God, Jesus Christ's order, but it's also referred to later here as the order of Melchizedek. And one of the things that I want us to think about as we go through and we look for these temple patterns and we look for the power of the Lord that Alma is teaching us how to access is that there are actually two orders that are represented in these chapters. One is this order of the Son of God or after the order of Melchizedek and the Melchizedek Priesthood in the way of that. And the second is the order of Nehor. And Nehor, if you remember, came and went in Alma chapter one. This is the very first year of the reign of the judges who shows up as opposition. Well, Nehor is there to demonstrate the counterpoint to what this beautiful society is trying to create, and he basically creates and presents an alternative doctrine.

00:07:17 And even though he comes and goes, and this is a decade ago in the history of these people, he comes and goes in chapter one, but still 10 years later in chapter 13, his teachings still live and

there are these people who are living after the order of Nehor. I want us to pay attention to the contrast between the way that the people are being taught after the order of the Son of God as compared with the order of Nehor. And when we do that, usually, what we're focused on is the doctrinal differences, things like sin matters and repentance matters in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It matters that there was a Fall and it matters that repentance is necessary and that the atonement was prepared, but in the order of Nehor, not so much. They believe that there'll be saved in their sins and that there's no additional action necessary. And so usually, we focus on those doctrinal differences. I want to actually focus...

00:08:12 Especially because of what happens in the next couple of chapters after chapter 13, I want to focus instead on a concept that I was introduced to by some readings that I did actually through a series of women scholars. So I can't take credit for these ideas, but I think they have an amazing application here, and that is the distinction between power over which is a coercive power or a dominant power, a power over other people where you can reduce their agency in subservience to your own, as compared with power with, which in this case, includes power with others or sharing power through ordinances where you're doing missionary work, you're sharing the power of the priesthood, you're sharing access to ordinances and covenants so that people have the ability to do the third type of power, which is power to, and that is the power to, in this case, do the will of the Lord.

00:09:09 Those distinctions become very helpful as we look at the behaviors of the people of the order of Nehor as compared with Alma and Amulek and the teachings that they're providing. So I want us to have that a little bit in our background, those two things. Different ways of thinking about power, there are two different powers that play here and we're seeing a contrast between them, which is very instructive, and we're in the context now of the doctrines of the temple, and of the ordinances of the temple, and their connection also with the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Hank Smith: 00:09:44 One thing I've never seen that you just showed me is this Adam and Eve to Melchizedek. That has temple written all over it, and yet I never saw it written all over it. That's a fantastic insight. Because this chapter 13, as I've taught it before for students, it's like this comes out of nowhere. Well, I all of a sudden start talking about Melchizedek, but that's a natural flow if you're thinking of the temple. I love that.

John Bytheway: 00:10:11 Yeah, exactly. It's helpful too when you start in verse one, "I would cite your minds forward," for us though, it sounds like we're going backward in time. So you were saying, "I would cite your minds forward," and this is from Adam and Eve to Melchizedek?

Hank Smith: 00:10:28 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:10:30 Awesome.

Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:10:31 Great. If we look at verse three, we start talking about [foreordination and foreknowledge of God](#), but also agency at the same time. I'm going to read the verse, "And this is the manner after which they were ordained, being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God on account of their exceeding faith and good works, in the first place being left to choose good or evil, therefore they having chosen good and exercising exceedingly great faith are called with a holy calling, yea, with that calling which was prepared with and according to a preparatory redemption for such." There's a lot there. And the main point that I think he's trying to make is, "Look, this plan, including the ordinances and the powers that come through covenant making, we're part of the plan. This is the plan of salvation. This is how we access the atonement of Jesus Christ." Again, Jesus Christ hasn't been here yet at this point in time.

00:11:29 This is all pointing toward the coming of Jesus Christ and the eventual atonement which will take place and he's teaching them how to access this and he's saying this was all the plan from the beginning, and of course we know that both men and women were present in the great council of heaven where this plan was revealed. There are some really beautiful things about that doctrine, but I think one of the things that people often get caught on and hung up on is how can this foreknowledge of God co-exist with agency? How can he know from before I was even born what I'm going to do and prepare this for me and tell me that I am going to have access to these covenants if he doesn't know what I'm going to choose? I'd like to tell a story from my own life that helped me get a different perspective of how time and agency work. It's temple-related. I have four living children, one of them is adopted.

00:12:28 And the story of my daughter's adoption and actually our experience in the temple, for me, completely reshaped the way I think about the knowledge of God and foreordination and agency. Owen and I had a question. He had a job offer in Washington DC, which is my favorite city in the world. It was a

job offer with the federal government, which we're both trained in public administration, so this seemed like the perfect thing. This is right after our master's degrees. We're really excited about this, and we're praying about it, and there is zero clarity coming to me about this and whether or not we should take this job, nothing, for months. It was actually a really stressful time because we're trying to make plans for after graduation and I can't move forward because it wasn't no answer. It was an active discomfort. I really felt I needed some answer. So Owen and I decided to go to the temple. We fasted and prayed. And we lived in Indiana and there was no Indianapolis temple at the time, so we drove down to Kentucky, attended the temple.

00:13:31 As we were leaving, we were in the parking lot and he said, "Well, did you have any insights, any revelation, any inspiration?" And I said, "Well, I did, but it's weird." And I was like, "Did you?" And he's like, "Yes, but it's weird." So remember, the question that we had was should we take this job in DC? So I was like, "Okay, I'll tell you mine if you tell me yours." He's like, "Okay." So we're like "One, two, three." We told each other and we both had had the same impression that we needed to adopt. I mean, two witnesses. And that was not the question that we came with and we both, clear as day, "We need to adopt."

Hank Smith: 00:14:05 That's actually pretty incredible.

Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:14:07 Isn't it neat? Yeah, I love that part of the story. And that's not even the big agency and foreordination part. We started the adoption process through one route and felt really guided in that process and we started working through that route. And then about halfway through that process, we felt like we needed to change and go a different route. We switched agencies, changed the entire path and approach to adoption and went down that path and ultimately got chosen to be the parents of our daughter by her birth mother. And later, I would realize that the trajectory that her birth mother was on, at first, was the first path that we were walking down. And at some point, she discovered an ad for LDS Family Services, which no longer provides adoption services, but she found an ad in the Thrifty Nickel in Indiana and decided to contact LDS Family Services. She's not LDS, decided to place her child for adoption through this alternate route and that's the route that we ended up going. So this is how we ended up being connected.

00:15:17 Fast-forward a year through all the adoption processes and everything, and we're in the temple and we're kneeling across the altar with our daughter being sealed to her. When I tell

you... This is so hard to explain and so hard to describe, but when I tell you that that ordinance shifted our timelines and made that child ours, the miracle of that moment, I can't even really put it into words. For a moment, brief moment, I could see the eternities in these different parallel universes where our agency and her birth mother's agency had put us on this timeline and I could see how there could be a foreknowledge and I could see how the Lord who knows all and has everything before Him at all times could see multiple paths and that there could be guidance in that agency, but still complete choice on our part and complete choice on her part, and yet the power of those covenants in that moment changed reality in a way that made our daughter our daughter.

00:16:35 Her birth mother still has a beautiful place in our hearts, and in her heart, and in her life, and that's not something that can be taken from her, but this was added to us as this miracle. When I read this verse now after having had that experience, I can see that foreordination doesn't mean taking away the opportunity to have agency or a foreknowledge doesn't take away that agency. Our view, our mortal view is so narrow. We're not understanding the fullness of how powerful agency actually is and how powerful, and broad, and eternal the view of our Father in heaven is.

Hank Smith: 00:17:19 What a story. Oh, that is such a touching story and a perfect explanation of how those two principles that seem to go apart from each other. God's foreknowledge and my agency, they seem to be almost a dialectic. How can they both be true at the same time? John, we've said this before, that the Lord is playing 5D chess, moving the pieces around, and I would say the Lord is playing 5D chess and all the pieces have agency. To me, that is a God I can worship.

John Bytheway: 00:17:53 That reminds me of that idea that I remember [Elder Neal A. Maxwell](#) describing, the macro plan of salvation composed of billions of micro plans and our heavenly Father managing the intersections. That's an evidence of that. How he does that, yeah, that's amazing.

Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:18:13 Yeah. One of the really cool things about Alma 13, there's also chiasmus here. It does start in verses one and two, and then it folds in on itself to verse 13 with the central point of Melchizedek's people repenting and obtaining peace, and then it unfolds out.

Hank Smith: 00:18:32 From what I know, [chiasmus](#) is a form of parallelism, almost makes something easier to memorize because once you

memorize the first half, you've pretty much memorized the second half. You would have the first point and the last point being the same, and the second point and the second to the last point being the same. And it keeps going on that pattern all the way to a center point, which seems in a lot of cases, to be the main message. The beginning and the end lead to this center point. John, how am I doing?

John Bytheway: 00:19:03

Good. It's you repeat either words or phrases or ideas in a certain order, A, B, C, D, E, and then repeat them in reverse order, E, D, C, B, A. And the center point, as you said, is most important and the Greek letter X is chi in Greek, and if you were to draw a chiasmus, you see it going this way and then that way again. So I think that's why they named it a chiasmus and we'll be looking at more as we go through the Book of Mormon. It's evidence that this is an ancient text.

Hank Smith: 00:19:36

Perfect, John. Eva, how did we do?

Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:19:38

I think you did great. And that's really helpful because this is the lesson that I had heard... I mean, I'm not a scholar of ancient scripture, so the only way that I know these things is that I've had great seminary and institute teachers talk about this or repeated in gospel doctrine and that sort of thing, so I appreciate you taking that moment and being that teacher. Part of the reason that that's so interesting to me isn't the scholarly piece of it or even that it provides additional evidence of the Hebraic origins of the language that's being used here and translated for us into English, but that structure and learning to watch for those poetic devices in the scriptures actually helped me through a really challenging moment in my life as I was pondering the temple ordinances. This is a half a lifetime ago for me, so I was in my early 20s and I'd just been through the temple for the first time.

00:20:34

And there was a part of the ordinance that was stuck with me and I was trying to figure it out because my initial reaction to it was not overwhelmingly positive. It was something that I needed to make a matter of study. I was studying pretty constantly on this one single topic. I remember this moment so clearly, I was on a UTA bus... In Utah, the public transit is UTA, Utah Transit Authority. I was riding the bus, studying my scriptures. I was reading in 1 Corinthians where Paul is talking about women and the [role of women in synagogues](#). This was very closely related to some of the issues that I was having, so I was just really trying to parse what Paul was saying here. This was 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and this is not usually recognized as something that has a chiasmic structure, but as I was looking

at it, there are a lot of poetic devices that he does use. It does a little bit actually fold in on itself with that same structure that John described it, but it's not a formal chiasmus.

00:21:45 But if you look at it when it folds in on itself to identify the very most important message, the final key moment, basically the center of it all, the center of this entire disposition on women and their roles in the synagogues and what they should and shouldn't do or what they should and shouldn't wear was that women had power and authority. That's what it folded in on. And again, it wasn't a perfect chiasmic structure, but I was watching for that because I was looking for meaning in these scriptures and I was trying to ask the Lord to guide me through this struggle that I was having with something that I was experiencing in something that I just wanted to be easy and beautiful. And the temple is beautiful, but it's not always easy. There's a lot of layers to it, and a lot of study, and a lot of levels of revelation that can happen there, and this was very early in my temple journey. And I would say that that moment was amplified then by the spirit, so that I'm weeping on the bus as I'm reading my scriptures.

00:22:47 But the Lord, in that moment, testified to me that there is power and authority in womanhood, and that there is power and authority in these covenants, and that I as a woman have access to those things. That, for me, was a huge turning point because my Father in heaven and I had this relationship where He was directly telling me, mediated by the scriptures and amplified by the spirit, this message about my own worth and my own role in this grand scheme of our Father in heaven. There are a lot of things that people talk about that are challenging for them, especially around gender issues. And a lot of women in the church have moments I had where there's something that isn't sitting right. What I've found is that that moment, for me, has become one of the bedrocks of my testimony because I know that when I am struggling with something, I don't necessarily have to figure the whole thing out or fix it.

00:23:46 But what I do need to do is turn to my Father in heaven for guidance on what's true and what isn't true and who I am and whether or not He knows me. He has never failed. Never failed to remind me that I am loved, that I am valued, and to give me the patience in some cases that I need and the wisdom in some cases that I need to be able to work through those hard things and those big questions... And I've had a lot of big questions. I think sometimes people think that women just ignore a bunch of stuff and that's how we're okay in the church and that has

not been the case for me. I have faced every one of these questions head on and that has been the pattern for me is that the Lord will provide me with some insight that completely reshapes the way that I'm thinking about whatever the issue is or whatever the question is, and it's always centered on His love for me and my value and my worth as a daughter of God.

- Hank Smith: 00:24:51 That's some incredible humility there. I've noticed that if I want the spirit to show me things as they really are, I have to be open to the idea that I don't see things as they really are. The fact that you're sitting down saying, "Maybe I'm missing something. What am I not seeing?" And then the Holy Ghost can say, "Let me show you." John, you've said before that if you lack information, you can go online.
- John Bytheway: 00:25:18 Ask Google.
- Hank Smith: 00:25:19 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 00:25:21 But if you lack wisdom, that's an entirely different question.
- Hank Smith: 00:25:25 Yeah. If you lack wisdom, go to God. As Eva just said, "I had to go to God."
- John Bytheway: 00:25:31 Eva, I like that you owned your questions. I don't think we're ever being told, "Forget your questions or set them aside." You can own them. You can focus on what you know as [Elder Holland](#) would remind us, start with what you know, wrestle with those questions. Eventually, maybe they'll have an experience like you did. Thank you for sharing that. That's a testimony of it's okay to have questions and to wrestle with them.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:25:58 I will also say that, many times, these have not been I open the scriptures and the answer's right there and it was easy. Some of these have been multiple years-long wrestles before God. I really resonate with those scriptures of how I'm wrestling before God because I've definitely experienced that. So this is not an easy thing in many cases and as we work through the chapters that we have for today, we're going to see more things like that. Hard things, and hard things in particular for women, and some of these things are just not okay. We're going to see here in a moment, war crimes against women and children and those things are not okay. But turning to the Lord over time, he can provide us with the wisdom that we need to be able to progress.

John Bytheway: 00:26:48 Eva, could you tell us what it was in 1 Corinthians 11? Because I'm sitting here looking at it. Is there a particular verse that jumped out at you?

Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:26:58 The specific verse was in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and it's verse 10 that really struck me in that day, in that moment. And that reads, "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels." You can see where I was seeing that reflective chiasmic structure where verse nine before it says, "Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man," and afterward, "Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither woman without the man, in the Lord." So it's not exactly the same, but you can see there's this mirror image. Those structures, they don't appear in every chapter of the scriptures. So it's exciting to me that we have one in Alma 13, especially because I had this experience where understanding that tool helped me in that moment to find that verse. And in this case, it's talking specifically about ceremonial clothing worn in synagogues similar to ceremonial clothing worn in temples, and here, it's describing that as a reflection of power.

Hank Smith: 00:28:00 That's fantastic. I hadn't seen that before. I'm being taught a lot here today. When I've thought of chapter 13, I frequently look at how Alma explains that these priests that were ordained... And he explains why they were ordained in verse three, they were called and prepared from the foundation of the world because of their great faith and their good works. And then he seems to point out, when you see someone like that... I would see President Nelson who is the high priest and he was prepared from the foundation of the world according to foreknowledge of God because of his faith and his good works, and I think that Alma is saying that is a symbol of Christ Himself who was foreordained before the world was on account of his exceeding faith and good works. I like that idea that when the high priest used to walk around the tabernacle in the ancient days, they would think, "Oh, that's Jehovah come among us."

Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:29:02 Yeah, I really like that. And later, we discover that Melchizedek was referred to as the prince of peace. When he was reigning under his father, so that's why he was a prince. He was the king and he was ruling, but he was ruling under the authority of his father, they referred to him as a prince. But what he did was bring peace and repentance to his people. And it's also really interesting in some of the accounts of Melchizedek elsewhere in the scriptures, particularly if you look at Joseph Smith translation of Genesis or you look at the Pearl of Great Price, we learn a little bit more about Melchizedek. This is a man who was

quenching fires, and closing the mouths of lions, and he had all of this power to do miraculous things in the name of Jesus Christ with the power and authority of God.

00:29:52 And then, ultimately, how did he use that power? And this is what Alma also teaches in Alma 13. What he teaches and what he brings about is repentance and peace. And the other thing that they do, and this is one of the hallmarks of the priesthood and one of the ways that it differs, for example, from the order of Nehor and from the idea of power over is that the priesthood is used to share power. And in many power structures, there are hierarchies where the idea is that you actually want to hoard power. You want to reduce the number of people who have access to power and you want them to be subservient under you. And the priesthood is literally the opposite. The purpose of the priesthood is to serve others. Jesus Christ talks about that those who would be chief should be the servant. It's almost like you take the entire hierarchy and you flip it upside down.

00:30:47 A hierarchy in a power over structure, the kind that we see with Nehor, the kind that we see in other kinds of worldly structures, in the priesthood is actually flipped upside down in a way that creates more power for more people. Everyone has the potential if they're righteous and willing to keep these covenants. Everyone has the potential to have access to that same power with God and with one another to create Zion, to gather Israel, to make and keep covenants, to create peace, and the power to do the will of God. This is such a wildly different power structure from something like we see with the Nehors, which is all about coercion, all about violence, all about getting rid of threats, reducing agency, trying to focus on one viewpoint. There's no pluralism here. These are vastly different approaches. I love the idea of priesthood actually being the antidote to those hierarchical coercive structures that if we can teach more people this, we can share this power with and this power to. And the power with is power with God and the power to do His will and we can let go of power over.

00:32:09 And in fact, if we look in the Doctrine and Covenants and we learn about how the priesthood is to be exercised, we hear that power over is how to end priesthood. Amen to the priesthood of that man. It's over. But power to and power with is how the priesthood is to be exercised. I think, a lot of times, people see a hierarchical structure in, for example, the organization of the church, but it's actually flipped upside down. And instead of power hoarding, the people who would be the greatest among us, our prophets and apostles, are doing nothing but serving us and trying to empower us to get the power that they hold and

the keys that they hold literally to as many human beings as possible, which is the opposite of a traditional hierarchy.

- Hank Smith: 00:33:02 Wow. I remember hearing that President Hinckley was in his office usually by 5:00 AM. His last day at the office was a Thursday, I think it was. He was there first. He got ill, didn't come in on Friday, and passed away on a Sunday. Talk about giving and giving. I love what you said there, that flip. Also, this antidote almost to the order of Nehor, this order of God versus the order of Nehor. It comes up I think in verse six, "The holy order of God to teach his commandments unto the children of men that they might enter into his rest." That seems to be the exact opposite of the order of Nehor. There are no commandments, there's no purpose for them because there's no repentance needed.
- John Bytheway: 00:33:46 I love that explanation, that servant leadership versus... And I think Jesus tried to teach that with the 12 too as you mentioned, washing their feet and serving, and flipping that upside down. We see this phrase, foundation of the world, a lot in the Book of Mormon and I suppose it's the most common way that the Book of Mormon hints at the pre-mortal existence. But in Alma 13, we've got also the first place. Do you think that means the pre-mortal existence, in the first place, in verse three and verse five?
- Hank Smith: 00:34:20 I've always thought that when I've read it, before the foundation of the world, because of their exceedingly good works, we were like, "Well, when is that going to take place?"
- John Bytheway: 00:34:30 Yeah. [Elder Maxwell](#) and [President Packer](#) had both referred to the plan of salvation as a three-act play, and that right now, we're in act two and that there's no happily ever after, that's reserved only for act three. When I see verse five, "In the first place, they were on the same standing with their brother," and see, that's an act one type of a thing. When I read things like this, it just makes me ask the question, "Why am I here now? Why are my children here now?" I guess that goes back, Eva, to our micro plan of salvation, your adopted daughter that that was all figured out by an omniscient heavenly Father.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:35:12 It's making me think about verse seven also where it talks about this high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity according to his foreknowledge of all things. So this suggests that the priesthood, while it was created there at the foundation of the world in act one, it's also eternal. It's an

eternal power, an eternal law, has no beginning, has no end, certainly is not contained within that mortal act two because it's without beginning of days or end of years, which obviously are mortal constructs in the way that we think about them. We got to be on earth and be rotating around the sun for those things to be happening. This really ties in this continuity of the priesthood and the access that it provides to the eternal atonement as well and how fascinating that eternal atonement happened in the middle of act two here on earth, in this mortal space.

John Bytheway: 00:36:15 I'm glad you mentioned that phrase, without beginning of days or end of years. I picked up a [Who's Who in the Bible](#) book, it was a Reader's Digest publication. And I specifically picked it up because I wanted to see what they would say about Melchizedek. They call him an enigmatic figure because they're not sure what kind of being Melchizedek is because it says he is without beginning of days or end of years. But the JST changes that to say that his priesthood, the priesthood that he held was without beginning of days or end of years. And it seems in the Book of Mormon, they understood that. And here is Alma saying this high priesthood was without beginning of days or end of years. He modeled the righteous use of the priesthood so well... What's that section? 107. That we call it the Melchizedek Priesthood now, to avoid too frequent repetition of the name of the Son.

Hank Smith: 00:37:13 And, John, I remember, last year, when we went through the book of Hebrews, that author seemed to understand Melchizedek the symbol he was of the Savior. But you're right. For the rest of the Bible, he's not there. But Alma seems to have a significant understanding of who he is. I have a tendency to find a little bit of humor in scripture. In Alma 13, I've chuckled just a little bit and I'm sure I'm off on this, but Alma seems to tell this story of Melchizedek and Abraham and how Melchizedek goes to a wicked city and commands them to repent and they all repent. And it's almost like he's saying, "I'll play the role of Melchizedek. Amulek, you play the role of Abraham. And why don't you, people, play the role of the city that repents? Why don't we do that little role play?" It doesn't work, but I've always thought that's a funny moment where he says, "He went to this wicked city and they repented. How about we try that?"

Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:38:16 Yeah. I think it's accurate, actually. I mean, I think it's a pretty interesting reflection of like, "Why is he invoking this story here? Why is he telling this?" And there is a, "They all lived happily ever after." He was the Prince of peace, and like, "Look

what we could have if you just follow these instructions?" And some of them do, they don't all convert and it doesn't all end up beautiful and peaceful the way it did for Melchizedek, but I definitely see that parallel.

- John Bytheway: 00:38:42 I've thought it, "Why can't we do what they did? That's what I-
- Hank Smith: 00:38:45 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 00:38:46 ... you put it better, but, "Let's do what they did and I'll be Melchizedek."
- Hank Smith: 00:38:51 "I'll be Melchizedek. You be the wicked city. How about that?"
- John Bytheway: 00:38:54 Yeah.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:38:55 If we jump down to verse 27, Alma's actually really pretty explicit about his desire for this people to be like the people of Melchizedek. He says, "I wish from the inmost part of my heart, yea, with great anxiety even unto pain, that ye would hearken unto my words, cast off your sins and not procrastinate the day of your repentance. But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord and call on his holy name and watch and pray continually that you may not be tempted above that which ye can bear and thus be led by the Holy Spirit becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love, and all long-suffering." And there are echoes of what we hear in the Doctrine and Covenants in describing the priesthood. There are echoes of that here as well. This is not powerful, dominant, chief language. This is what the priesthood of God invites people to do and how they would behave, and he's really inviting everyone to this repentance and trying to bless them really with that through the commandments and through these ordinances that he's really describing these very temple-parallel teachings.
- Hank Smith: 00:40:06 I have this thought from [Elder Uchtdorf](#) I've always loved. It's April 2010, I think this was back when we had the priesthood session of General Conference. He says, "As priesthood bearers and representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must serve others in a manner consistent with his example." That's exactly what you're saying here, Eva. And then he says this, "There is a reason that almost every lesson on priesthood at some point arrives at the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenant." That seems what you're saying is that the world's, I guess, hierarchy is being flipped, and the Lord, in just a few verses, provides this master course on priesthood, "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood," and you're

right, this list is so close to that. "Only by persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness and meekness, and love unfeigned." That matches almost Alma 13:28. I'd never seen that before.

- Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:41:08 When you have some time, and I would invite all of you to do this, look at the parallels between Alma 13 and section 121 because there are many, many of them and actually some of chapter 14 is reflected there as well, but it's two completely different people. In chapter 121, we're talking to Joseph Smith and the experiences that he and the early saints are having, but we're about to transition to Alma chapter 14 where we see horrible crimes committed in process of this conflict between ideologies. A similar conflict was happening at the same time that section 121 is revealed and the messages from the Lord and through the Lord are actually remarkably similar in both of those. We're not going to walk through all the specific parallels, but if you're looking for some extra credit, that's a really engaging comparison to draw between those two chapters of scripture.
- Hank Smith: 00:42:04 Wow, I'd never seen that before either. Look at Alma and Amulek are imprisoned, and yet here is almost the exact same language that comes out of Liberty Jail.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:42:15 False accusations.
- Hank Smith: 00:42:16 Yeah. Wow.
- John Bytheway: 00:42:17 So good.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:42:18 The people in peril, and even we're going to come back in a minute in chapter 14, there's a warning that's provided by the Lord in section 121 that actually ends up coming to pass at the end of the chapters that we're going to talk about with the desolation of the Nehors in chapter 16. So we're going to come back to that a little bit. There are some fascinating parallels between the experience of Alma and Amulek here, and Joseph Smith and the early saints in section 121.
- Hank Smith: 00:42:49 That's incredible. John, you've been holding out on me. You've seen that before and I-
- John Bytheway: 00:42:53 Nope. Nope. This is so great, because it does, it fits.
- Hank Smith: 00:42:58 All of a sudden, these chapters are taking on new meaning for me. Eva, we've only gone through 13-

- Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:43:04 We've only made it through one. I know. I know. As we shift into Alma chapter 14, we start to see what the response is to this beseeching by Alma, this beautiful exposition on ordinances, and repentance, and peacemaking, and this appeal to history like, "This is possible. It's possible to take a society like yours and make it a peaceful society. And all we got to do is pay attention to this pathway and these ordinances and understand that these are privileges that we've been promised since before the foundation of the world, and will you please join me in this?" And the goal is to ordain people to this priesthood and to invite them into that work of community, and of peacemaking, and of meekness, and of service to one another, and righteousness and forsaking sin.
- 00:43:58 There's some good news at the beginning of Alma 14 and we're going to take that good news where we can get it, because the first thing that we see is that after he had made an end of speaking unto the people, many of them did believe on his words and began to repent and search the scriptures. This process of conversion, this invitation to conversion starts to work. The problem is in verse two, we see the more part of them were desirous that they might destroy Alma and Amulek for they were angry with Alma because of the plainness of his words to Zeezrom, and they also said that Amulek had lied unto them. And if you follow the footnote there, they're referring to a difference in doctrine. The way that they interpret the doctrine is that people will be saved and they don't have to repent, and Amulek is teaching that they do have to repent and forsake their sins, and so that's the lie that they're referring to and had reviled against their law, which, again, is based on these principles of Nehor's order and that doctrine, and also against their lawyers and judges.
- 00:44:58 So they're angry at this point. Again, it's the more part of the people. So we want to focus on that first part. There's a bright shining moment that we have where it's like people are called to repentance. The spirit is working on their hearts and they're studying the scriptures and they're questioning their law and looking back at the scriptures and doing their own study and saying, "This doctrine that Alma and Amulek are preaching actually is our law that is actually what's recorded here and not how it's been interpreted for us by these lawyers and judges after the order of Nehor." But that is a threat to the power structure that exists here. And the more people light the order of Nehor, they start to fight. At this point, and we're going to come back to this in chapter 15, but verse six, we see Zeezrom's role in this. So Zeezrom is the person that's the primary audience that Alma's talking to. There's a larger audience that's

learning this. And we see also from chapter 14 that the women are also being taught these principles. We'll come back to that one in verse eight.

00:46:01 But here in verse six, Zeezrom is astonished at the words and he starts to see what his way of doing things has created, and he starts to have this desire toward repentance for himself, but first, he's feeling guilt. And this term, "Harrowed up under a consciousness of his own guilt," comes back again in chapter 15. And I don't know about you, but that phrasing, being harrowed up with the consciousness of your guilt, is also in the conversion story of Alma himself, how he describes it. We start to see Zeezrom here feeling these pangs of guilt and, "What have I done," and recognizing his own sin, which of course, you have to do before you can repent. You have to turn inward and realize what you've done. And so he starts to feel that guilt and feels that metaphorical encircling about by the pains of hell. He's now saying, "No. Listen to these guys. They're actually right." And he starts to try to fix this and people call him crazy. He gets pushed aside. Verse eight, "They brought their wives and children together and whosoever believed or had been taught to believe."

00:47:11 So I want to pause there for a second. Even though in verse 13, he's consistently addressing the brethren and it specifically says he's talking to Zeezrom and he's talking to the brethren, it's very clear from verse eight that women were included in the teaching. It may not have been in that specific recorded speech, but they were taught these same things. "Anyone who had been taught to believe," all the women and the children, "They caused that they should be cast into the fire and they also brought forth their records which contained the Holy Scriptures and cast them into the fire also that they might be burned and destroyed by fire." This is a moment that I think anytime that we have studied this chapter in the Book of Mormon is not a space that we like to dwell on, especially in Sunday school. What usually ends up happening is that we zoom forward to Alma and Amulek who are brought to this point and shown this atrocity that is happening. The women and the children, and the scriptures, and the fire.

00:48:18 Amulek is seeing this and he is saying, "Alma, we have this power of God. The Lord has allowed us to use this in other circumstances and miraculous ways to bring these miracles to pass. Let's use our power to stop this." And that's usually where we focus. And we're going to come back to that because that moment is important as well. But I want to stay here in verse eight for a second because this isn't an isolated event. It's not

an isolated event even in the Book of Mormon. So if you look at Mosiah chapter 10 verse nine, you've got women and children being hid in the wilderness as soon as they know that the foes are coming to fight because this is one of the tactics of war at this point in the Book of Mormon. So this is not an isolated incident. And I think looking away too fast does a disservice to our world because violence against women and children is happening now too. This isn't a one verse in the Book of Mormon kind of thing. This is something that we witness.

00:49:34 I mean, I can name at least a half a dozen act of conflicts in the world right now where we have documented abuses not only of just civilians generally, but specifically targeting women and children because of the psychological effects that this has and the long-term effects that this has on communities. It terrorizes and demoralizes populations. It destroys social and family bonds. It creates control and intimidation. You start to get into when you've got all the women and the children, these are the people with the power to create future generations. This is next to genocide. And we see these things today, so I don't want us to look away too fast, because what happens with Alma and Amulek is that Alma says, "Yes, the Lord has the power to stop this, but he's telling me not to, and the Lord has a purpose here. It's his power and I can't use it without his authorization, and he is constraining me here." That's where this story goes.

00:50:45 This, what happens in verse eight, today would be considered not only a war crime but also crimes against humanity. This is the worst of the worst. There are still crimes like this that happen. In targeting, in particular, the women, it's important to understand what power it is that women hold in society that's often not necessarily recognized. I've mentioned that power of creation, the potential of perpetuating additional generations like continuing society, that rests on the shoulder of women. But family bonds as well, the ability to maintain family relationships and all the strength and stability in a society that comes through these families, women are absolutely core to that. And then there's this other layer that [President Johnson](#) recently talked about. It was ahead of International Women's Day. This was this year in Brussels, Belgium, and she gave this beautiful speech where she talks about the need to empower women globally because, and these are her words now, we can achieve what no government can. A sisterhood. A global sisterhood of peacemakers.

00:52:02 So she specifically talks about the role of women in a society of creating and maintaining peace. This act of war is not only psychological warfare and not only next to genocide, but it's

also an attack on the peacemaking power of women that is cutting at the very core of this new penitent society that's just a fledgling at this point. The speech that President Johnson gave is not available in full at present online, but there are some amazing excerpts from it that are available through the church newsroom, and I want to read a couple of these quotes because they're so powerful. She says, "Conflict and ensuing violence always harm the most vulnerable, including women and children. It destabilizes economies and households. It increases inequality, including gender inequality, and it keeps women from using their innate gifts to cultivate peace. Imagine," she said, "What would happen if we as women in leadership roles could unleash the full power of women to transform their personal inspiration into organized action.

00:53:12 And imagine the opposite, a reality in far too many communities, a world where women live in fear of social persecution and official restrictions, stifle their expression of conscientious belief and prevent them from assembling to worship and organized to provide mutual support. In such an environment, women's collective capacity to address complex problems and lift society is vastly diminished and individual hopes and aspirations are dashed." That's another thing that we're seeing here, is that there wasn't a freedom of religion or a freedom of religious expression present in this order of Nehor. You can't have a pluralistic society when your entire premise is that you want to maintain all of the power yourself, your ideas have to be right, your way of thinking has to be correct. All of that power has to be centralized.

00:54:04 The idea that we might be empowering these women and children, empowering these priesthood holders, giving them these ordinances and giving them the tools of peace is a threat to this society that speaks to this larger concept that President Johnson talks about, where we have this opportunity through the choices that we make as individuals to create peace and prevent not just contention, but also war, and not just war, but also the kinds of atrocities that we see here.

Hank Smith: 00:54:39 Even in my own Book of Mormon classes, I'm like, "Okay, let's skip ahead." It's super uncomfortable to sit there. Uncomfortable is not even the right word.

John Bytheway: 00:54:49 It's horrifying. It is horrifying.

Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:54:52 Think also about this. So as a woman studying these scriptures, in the entirety of the Book of Mormon, there are six named women. And just so that you have some sense of how different

that is from the Old Testament and New Testament, depending on who's counting and how they're counting and what counts as a name or whatever, if you add up Old Testament and New Testament, you've got somewhere between 100 and 180 named women in the Bible. In the Book of Mormon, we've got six. You've got some other women like this who were mentioned usually in groups of people or named as a spouse of someone else in the scriptures. But as a woman reading these scriptures, I'm always looking for, "Where are the people who look like me?" Right? Like, "Where are the women?" And to have this be one of those rare instances that I see myself...

00:55:48 We all want to see ourselves as Alma and Amulek, and we jump there and we're like, "Okay, let's get that prophetic perspective and let's see what the Lord tells them as a comfort to them," that's not a lot of comfort to those women, and as me putting myself in the scriptures and seeing myself in one of these rare references to women, it's hard. Harder yet is when we skip over this experience too fast and pretend like this isn't an active real thing for women today. This happens not only in war settings where we've got these huge genocide types of things or war crimes because that's also happening around the world, but also in a microcosm in many homes. This is happening, violence against women, in our society at large. Most women have some proximity to violence or sexual assault that either they've experienced or someone that they know has experienced. I want to point out that when we move too fast away from that, that's hard as a woman because I feel like those experiences and my proximity to them and the very real danger that the world can pose to me is missed.

00:57:15 And that's part of why I want to sit here with it for a minute, because it's not just one isolated verse. It's a very real experience globally and individually for many of us, having that moment and saying, "What has your experience been and what can we do to make your experience better?" This is an opportunity to say, "I see here in the Book of Mormon the example of violence against women. I acknowledge that in our community, there is, on many different levels of severity, violence against women. What can we do to help alleviate that experience for you?" And one of the things that I would say... If I'm asked that question, right? One of the things that I would say is some of the very things that Alma has been teaching in chapter 13, create a culture of meekness, and love, and patience, and shared power in yourself, and in particular, the men around you. That's what you can do.

- 00:58:30 I don't need you to go fight for me. I don't need you to go beat anybody up. I don't need you to bulk up and walk with me everywhere that I go. I don't want to live like that. I want to live my life and I can live my life better in a community of men who are living this gospel, who are not engaging in a power over paradigm, but are engaging in a power with and a power to paradigm and are humbling themselves and constantly repenting. That's what you can do. Turn inward and share that culture with as many, again, in particular, men as you can. And that's what we need here.
- Hank Smith: 00:59:13 Back in chapter 13 verse 18, Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days. Melchizedek didn't rule and force peace. He established a culture of peace.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:59:28 When we hear about the promises, the ultimate promises in act three of the priesthood and its blessings, that power is described as flowing without compulsory means. It's not a power over. When we talk about kings, and queens and priests and priestesses, when we talk about ruling and reigning, we're not talking actually about power over. We're talking still about this agency, you won't have to force things because we will all share this culture of peace. That's part of how we can be joint heirs and there can be so very many of us, we're all invited to that. There can be so very many of us because we're not trying to rule over each other. We're trying to participate in this eternal gospel of peace.
- Hank Smith: 01:00:18 Power with. You mentioned, if I were asked that question, what am I after? What's my experience with? What has been your experience?
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 01:00:29 I've lived a relatively safe and beautiful life. But even so, I remember, for example, in my college days, walking with my roommate to our car. And it was dark, we'd been out in the evening having dinner and we were headed back to our car. And I remember experiencing fear as we walked the block or two to our car. And I don't know how often you've talked to women about their experience of walking through parking lots. Many of us have either been taught to do this, but we'll take our keys, our house keys and stick them in our hands... And we're actually taught these things. You need to constantly be vigilant. You need to constantly be protecting yourself. It gets even more sobering when you realize that much of the violence perpetuated against women isn't the attacks of strangers on a dark street corner, although that also happens with more regularity than any of us would care to admit.

	01:01:29	But a lot of this is happening through relationships and intimate partner violence, and that happens at a variety of levels of coercion where, again, a power over paradigm sets aside things like agency and consent and is really about, "What can I gain and how can I take from this human being?" I live in a beautiful, safe, supportive relationship. I love being in my marriage, and it creates more of me than I would be otherwise. But together, we exist in this culture where, on a day-to-day basis, that's my reality. That's uncomfortable. It's uncomfortable. Verse eight is uncomfortable. It's maybe not quite as uncomfortable as verse eight. Verse eight is pretty horrific. But that is the reality that I live in on a day-to-day basis.
John Bytheway:	01:02:12	It's sad that it seems when societies are falling or are in a fallen place towards the end of the Book of Mormon, and it's Moroni 9 verse 19, and these words are familiar, "They delight in everything save that which is good, and the suffering of our women and children upon all the face of this land, doth exceed everything. Yea, tongue cannot tell neither can it be written." It seems during a time of war, the men are gone. There seems to be famine that goes with it, with the agriculture not being tended to and so forth. And that idea is repeated again as the society collapses at the end of the Book of Mormon, that who suffers the most are the women and children. Is that a happy addition that you wanted me to make-
Hank Smith:	01:03:03	Yeah. No, no, no.
Dr. Eva Witesman:	01:03:05	We'll make it to hope and peace. It's going to be a minute, but we'll get there.
Hank Smith:	01:03:11	Coming up in part two of this episode.
Dr. Eva Witesman:	01:03:14	I was born to parents who are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My grandparents on both sides were members. I had learned this stuff all of my life, but until that moment, until I had experienced for myself the redeeming power of the atonement, I wasn't changed. And that changed me.



Alma 13-16 Part 2

GUEST: EVA WITESMAN



- John Bytheway: 00:01 Welcome to part two with Dr. Eva Witesman, Alma chapter 13 through 16.
- Hank Smith: 00:07 I like what you've said there. I don't need you to get all strong and go fight. I want to live in a culture of peace. How can we create that culture where women feel safe, valued in church?
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:20 I mean, that's a bigger question-
- John Bytheway: 00:22 Yeah.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:23 ... than just this, right?
- John Bytheway: 00:25 Do you know what it reminds me of, Hank? It reminds me of when [Sister Eubank](#) that how can you spend so much money on temples when there's poverty and she's like, "Hey, when you go to temples, you covenant," and she makes this list and I feel, Eva, like you're saying, the same type of thing. If we can get everybody in the temple to make covenants of obedience and the... I mean, that's how we change the world. That's a tall order, though.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 00:58 Yeah. And the principles of it too, even if people aren't prepared to convert and accept the entire restored gospel of Jesus Christ, there are principles in our gospel that we can teach and build into every interaction with people all around the world, and we can connect with others who share those same ideas through a pluralistic society, which again is the opposite of what the Nehors did. We don't all have to be the same right now, and it's not a failure if everyone isn't instantly converted. Eventually, we'll get there. Eventually, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. And we can work toward that. But what we're doing is not trying to change people, we're not trying to force this homogeneity on people. What we're trying to do is share the power that we have and the knowledge that we have of how to build peace. And there are many ways that we can do that. One of those ways is through conversion and covenants.

01:55 But there are other ways too where we can join, for example, with other people of faith and identify the components of peacemaking that exist across faiths and we join and celebrate that and become together a majority of peacemakers, even if we're not a majority of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in any given setting. We can amplify those messages of peace. And when I think about how these people got to the point where they were able to dehumanize these people so much that they were just a tool of psychological warfare, it brings me back again to Mosiah 10. I actually want to read that verse 17. So there's some similar stuff going on, and this is a completely different group of people, but there's this moment where there's a recounting of how the Lamanites have been taught in their families. This is Mosiah chapter 10, verse 17, which reads, "And thus they have taught their children..." It's talking about the Lamanites here.

02:55 "And thus they have taught their children that they should hate them," meaning hate the Nephites, "And they should murder them and that they should rob and plunder them and do all that they could to destroy them." Therefore, they have an eternal hatred toward the children of Nephi. It starts with these words. Words of hatred. It's not necessarily at this moment in Mosiah chapter 10 isn't necessarily violence, although it leads to that, but it begins with teaching that it's okay to hate people and it's okay to talk about them in a way that dehumanizes them. This, I think, is where President Nelson's discussion of peacemaking... He actually is talking about global peace in the same way that we're talking about an absence of war, but he's bringing it all the way back to individual conversations that we have and the language that we use in our relationships with each other and the ways that we talk about other people and other groups of people. The prophet is calling us to repentance on the way that we treat each other in our words online and in person.

04:01 And how often do you hear the word hate? We throw it around like it's nothing. And sometimes we'll even talk about hating a group of people. Maybe I hate my political opposition. Maybe I hate this group of people that disagrees with me on some moral issue that matters to me, and I may even have what I believe to be a morally righteous standpoint, but the moment that I start using the language of hate, the moment that I start dehumanizing other people, I'm on a trajectory to Alma chapter 14 verse 8. When we think about what we can do, I feel powerless in many of the global conflicts that are happening. I am not in those regions. I have no influence on the leaders of those nations or those groups of people other than calling them to repentance. I don't know what I would do even if I did have

that influence. But what I do have influence over is helping to prevent myself and my family and the people around me from using the thinking and language that leads eventually to that dehumanization and that warfare.

John Bytheway: 05:13

Well put. Yeah.

Hank Smith: 05:15

Yeah. Wow. Eva, what you just said reminds me of the most recent General Conference [Elder Rasband](#), Words Matter. Our words, he says, can be supportive or angry, joyful or mean, compassionate or tossed aside. In the heat of the moment, words can sting and sink painfully deep into the soul and stay there. Our words on the internet, texting, social media or tweets take on a life of their own. So be careful what you say and how you say it. In our families, especially with husbands, wives, and children, our words can bring us together or drive a wedge between us. And then he gave three simple phrases. I bet both of you remember this. Thank you, I am sorry, and I love you. Those humble phrases don't have to be saved for a special event or a catastrophe. Use them often and sincerely. Talk is growing cheap, do not follow that pattern.

Dr. Eva Witesman: 06:13

I love that so much and it just really builds on that idea of individual peacemaking and it sounds too small and too simple to be something that could change the world and create global peace, but it truly is by small and simple things that great things are brought to pass. These are prophets and apostles who are teaching us how to bring about peace and it begins with us and the very words that we choose in the relationships that we have with one another. And what I hear as a subtext in those prophetic words both from Elder Rasband and from [President Nelson](#) is we are on a trajectory that is concerning me. We are headed toward a place of war and it begins with these words and the way that we're talking to and about one another. I want us not to diminish those messages thinking that it's too small and too simple because we have prophets of God telling us this is what we need to be doing to create global peace, and this is what we have the power to do as a people to create global peace.

John Bytheway: 07:22

For most of us, like you said, I can't do much about what's happening in other hemispheres, but I can start at home. Aaronic Priesthood Quorum Theme says, "I will use his priesthood to serve others beginning in my own home." That's where it can start. I get power over. I've got a dot, dot, dot after power with. Power with each other to serve, to bless?

Dr. Eva Witesman:	07:46	In the context that it's usually taught in sociology is power with one another in community. I think it's a really useful concept because in the context of the priesthood, we would add power with God. This is Him inviting us into His power. So I actually think it's both of those and maybe we need some new words to really describe that dynamic as well because, sociologically, when we talk about power with, we're talking about power in community, power to come together in community and create... And it's a very gathering of Israel creating Zion concept.
John Bytheway:	08:21	Yeah. I was thinking the word council, but it could also be with God. I mean, that's a really, really great way to show the contrast of a worldly power over and a power to lift, and bless, and heal, which is [sound effect] like you said. Thank you.
Hank Smith:	08:37	These verses have changed for me. I just wrote in my margin, "Do not skip this experience, the experience of women." That's something I hope all of our listeners take away from this piece because I've had a tendency in the past to jump from that verse to Amulek and Alma's conversation.
Dr. Eva Witesman:	08:58	It's not a comfortable place to be. I appreciate you taking the time to be together in that moment and to think about what can we do to help make this better, right? What can we do and what can we learn and gain from the experience of these martyrs in verse eight? We do move on. We move into Alma and Amulek brought to this point of martyrdom. This is, again, a psychological warfare tactic to make them watch this atrocity happen. They're seeing this happen, Amulek, in verse 10, when he sees the pains of the women and children, he's also pained. He has that empathy and he says to Alma, "How can we witness this awful scene? Let us stretch forth our hands and exercise the power of God which is in us and save them from the flames." But Alma said unto him, "The spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth my hand."
	09:52	This is an evidence that this isn't just a power that they're just given to use at their own whim. That's not how the priesthood works. I can't demand that the mountains move because they're inconvenient for me even though the scriptures tell me that even if I have faith the size of a mustard seed, I should be able to move the mountains. It doesn't work like that. It has to be according to God's purposes because it's His power, we see that here. And then he gives this statement, "For behold, the Lord receiveth them up unto Himself in glory." We're going to pause there for a minute because that's pretty awful way to get there, but a great place to be in the end and a beautiful gift for those

believers to know that they will be exalted in their belief. It's some comfort at least, right? In that moment?

- Hank Smith: 10:46 I think so, Eva. This phrase, "The Lord receiveth them up unto Himself in glory," that didn't mean as much to me as it had previously. I'd always skipped to the judgments of the Lord, that the Lord allows agency for His judgments to be just. But I had an experience. Recently, my father passed away a couple of years ago. I was like Amulek in that moment saying, "This shouldn't have happened," and I felt the spirit say, "If you could see the experiences he's having now, you would not want to take that from him." That phrase has stood out to me now, not in this horrific of a way, but in a small way when we have someone who we feel like passes, it's unjust.
- 11:39 What would [Elder Renlund](#) call it? Infuriating unfairness. [President Nelson](#) said this. He said, "Our limited perspective would be enlarged if we could witness the reunions on the other side of the veil." [President John Taylor](#) said, "While we are mourning the loss of our friends, others are rejoicing to meet them." I think you're right. It definitely doesn't fix or say it's okay what's happened in these verses. There is some measure of comfort that on the other side of this tragedy, you have to think that the Lord is right there after this horrific thing happens that this unbelievably beautiful scene opens up before these women and children. I have to believe that.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 12:29 And what a beautiful vision for you to have had of your father and the joy that we can only imagine that he's experiencing, but how sweet that must have been for you. And it does, it brings a different perspective to this loss too.
- Hank Smith: 12:44 Let me ask you both something that comes up in these verses. There's a large portion of the population who can't believe in God, who are atheist for these very reasons. If God is real, and He is love, and He is good, why do these horrible, horrible things happen to people? And I think I've been on the side of Amulek saying, "How can we possibly witness this?" And I think I've come to the side of Alma where trying to gain a godly perspective, can these verses help us at least understand why the Lord allows such pain to happen to innocent people?
- John Bytheway: 13:35 I have written right above that verse, Doctrine and Covenants section 42 verse 46, and I don't know exactly what this means, but it says, "It shall come to pass that those that die in me shall not taste of death for it shall be sweet unto them." I'm not sure what that meant for them. I'm not sure how it appeared to Alma and Amulek. I'm hoping that means it wasn't as horrific as

it sounds, but maybe it was, and maybe the sweetness comes after. Going back to Liberty Jail, what was Joseph told, "Thy suffering and thine afflictions will be, but a...

- Hank Smith: 14:15 A small moment.
- John Bytheway: 14:16 ... small moment between these two eternities."
- Hank Smith: 14:20 What a great cross-reference, John.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 14:23 I've thought about this a fair amount. And for me, I think about the unique doctrines that we have in the Restored Church of Jesus Christ where we understand that the purpose of mortality is to help us become creators in the eternities. That means not only will we retain our agency, but with increased power to do things like create and govern worlds without number, we're going to have to really understand the consequences of the decisions and choices that we're making. If you take that very eternal perspective and that very eternal purpose and understand that a creator, an eternal creator, needs to understand the consequences of certain choices including how very bad things can get. If I think of some of those things as learning... Not necessarily that the bad things that happen to me are okay because at least I learned something. That's not what I'm trying to say.
- 15:32 I'm trying to zoom out into a larger societal global sense. If I look at how people make choices and what the consequences of those choices are, when you step aside from these eternal laws, and these commandments, and the principles on which this power is premised, when you turn away from that, civilizations crumble, war and atrocities occur, sadness happens. And that's something that, as eternal creators in an eternal perspective, we need to know and we need to understand. And I think that's part of why a fall... Going now back to the other side of this mortal life from the end where we're hoping to become creators to the beginning where we're only foreordained to be able to experience some of this, that's part of why a fall was necessary. That's why it was necessary for opposition and evil to be introduced into the world so that we have, and this is the language from the Garden of Eden, knowledge of the difference between good and evil.
- 16:43 That is actually part of the purpose of the fall and this fallen mortality is where those ugly things happen and we had to have that knowledge. Otherwise, we couldn't get from eternal state one to eternal state two. We couldn't get from where we were in that innocent state where all we knew was goodness to a

place where we could manage the incredible creative powers that we're promised. We had to go through the ugliness, we had to go through the consequences of agency. For me, theologically, I think that is one of the most beautiful doctrines that we have that really answers that question in a way that no other theology can. Because otherwise, it's just senseless. But if we connect it with this plan of salvation and also who we're meant to become, all of a sudden, it's like, "Oh, it really is a proving ground and a learning opportunity not just for my day-to-day choices and my own personal repentance, but also for this very global sense of why do we need to take these incredible powers that we may eventually have and constrain them?"

17:56 These are the reasons we constrain those powers. And then you start to see that pattern in other things. This is why we constrain the creative power in mortality, right? This is why we don't just freely get to use all the powers that we've been given even in mortality. We need to learn that commandments are actually a blessing that allows us to perpetuate eternally good things without everything crumbling into ugly, horrific destruction.

Hank Smith: 18:23 You mentioned 2 Nephi too. That's becoming more and more valuable to me over time, that Lehi explains if the Lord is going to allow agency to do all the good you possibly can, He is going to allow or needs to allow the agency to do all the evil you possibly could do. So the same agency that someone uses to commit genocide is the same agency that Mother Teresa used to go into the slums of Calcutta. It's the same agency. And you're right. That's a very unique theology.

John Bytheway: 19:00 There's a verse in the Pearl of Great Price. One line that is so good to me, Moses 6:55, the last phrase, "They taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good." It's another way of must needs to be opposition in all things. I hope we don't think that somehow God is unaffected by all of this either.

19:23 Hank, you know that I had a chance to go speak to the kids at [Columbine High School](#). With my own wrestling, literally tossing and turning, I came to the conclusion, I can't explain why this happened, but maybe we can talk about what do we know from a source where the answers don't change? We know God loves His children, but we do not know the meaning of all things, right? 1 Nephi 11:17. We know that God allows evil to exist in the world. I use that vision of Enoch where Enoch sees the Lord weeping, and it's so poetic. How is it that the heavens weep and shed forth their tears as rain upon the mountains? I mean, it's

beautiful poetry. And Enoch saw Him weep. I just hope when we see this, we don't think that God is unaffected by what He sees happening here. He doesn't move on too fast either, I guess, Eva. Theologically, that's amazing. If Enoch saw Him weep, what do you think could have been happening when he saw this as well?

Dr. Eva Witesman: 20:30

Thank you for that. I think that's really powerful. We're still here in verse 11, "The Lord receiveth them up in glory unto Himself," and that's potentially beautiful, a God who is possibly there with open arms with glory waiting, but also tears for what they've just experienced. Alma goes on and he says, "He doth suffer that they may do this thing or specifically that the people may do this thing unto them according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day." This reference to this fierce judgment of God is really interesting. And this is one of those places where there's another fascinating parallel with section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants. If we go there, this is section 121... I'm going to do verse 15, although there are actually several verses around here that describe this fierce judgment that the Lord, in His judgment, has the option of engaging His wrath.

21:44

Verse 15 of section 121 is particularly interesting. It says, "And not many years hence, that they and their posterity shall be swept from under heaven, saith God, that not one of them is left to stand by the wall." Now he's speaking to Joseph Smith, and he's speaking about the people who are persecuting the early saints and, again, who are engaging in some of this abuse of women and murdering of children. This is happening with the early saints as well. This is what the Lord shares as one of these judgments that's available to Him, and part of why that's so interesting is that in Alma chapter 16, we see what we describe as the desolation of the Nehors where this judgment is actually executed on those people and they are destroyed. Utterly destroyed. And here, what Alma is saying that the Lord is saying to him is similar to what we see mentioned to Joseph Smith. I just think that's another interesting parallel between these peoples.

John Bytheway: 22:51

Wow. Reading down, "Their houses, their barns shall perish," I remember the prophecy, Joseph Smith heard Alexander Donovan, somebody came into the office and was like, "Hey, I'm going to buy some... He was talking about a land deal in Jackson County and Joseph Smith overheard it and said, "I wouldn't do that. There will come a day when only the chimneys are left

standing." A journal entry of a civil war officer that came through Missouri and said all that was left standing were chimneys.

- Hank Smith: 23:20 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 23:21 Reminds me of that.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 23:22 That is chilling.
- Hank Smith: 23:25 If you read the book Truman by [David McCullough](#), his whole first chapter is on independence, Missouri. He talks about the civil war and how every single person in Jackson County was driven from their homes. And it's not that we delight in that.
- John Bytheway: 23:42 I've had people ask me about that verse, "So he lets them do it so that he can really get mad at them later?"
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 23:50 I've wondered the same thing. It's clear that the spirit is saying, "Do not use my power to stop this." That's clear. Because otherwise, he'd have done it and had the ability to do that. Well, I don't know if this is Alma's sense making and saying, "The only justification I can see is this," although the phrasing of the verse makes it sound a whole lot like this is the answer that he's being given in that moment.
- John Bytheway: 24:16 Yeah, very interesting. When we look what happens next here in verse 12, Amulek said unto Alma, "Behold, perhaps they will burn us also." I mean, you can only imagine. I like to think of Amulek as a junior companion to Alma, and Alma's answer, courageous, "Be it according to the will of the Lord," but then this revelation perhaps, "But behold, our work is not finished, therefore they burn us not." I plead with the youth, don't let this tragedy define you. Don't let it put you in a box. Your work is not finished. You have patriarchal blessing. You have a mission, and a purpose, and a destiny which is just yours. And your work is not finished. So you hang on to the power of the Atonement of Christ and you have a wonderful life still ahead of you. So that verse 13 means a lot to me.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 25:24 I love the example of a peacemaker that you were too and being there with those people at that time. That's a really good example of something else that we can do is see people who are suffering and be with them and serve them. I love that example of yours, John.

Hank Smith:	25:47	John, what you pointed out there, also, it sounds like Alma is almost addressing what today I think is called survivor guilt, right? That I've done something wrong by surviving and he's saying, "No, that's not the case. Our work is not finished. We're going to keep going."
John Bytheway:	26:07	I've often wondered if Alma and Amulek had nightmares, "Why did I have to see this? Why did this have to be part of my memory for the rest of my life?" Yeah, you may be right about that.
Dr. Eva Witesman:	26:20	I think the end of chapter 15 answers that question. The penultimate verse, the verse 18. "Alma having seen all these things, therefore he took Amulek and came over to the land of Zarahemla, and took him to his own house and did administer unto him in his tribulations and strengthened him in the Lord." He's not okay. Thinking again about the history of Amulek, this is someone who has given up all of his wealth, all of his comfort, he's converted, and this is the experience that he has in his effort to bring people to the joy that he's been converted to and he witnesses this. I mean, he's not okay. And I think that's actually really humanizing. I mean, it's not supposed to just be okay. And Alma needed to minister to him, and care for him, and love him through that moment and mourn with him. I'm sure Alma was mourning himself too. He was a witness to it as well. It's okay to be sad about it. We need to minister to each other, bear one another's burdens as we've covenanted to do, and then move forward in the work.
John Bytheway:	27:36	It's interesting that when Amulek first opened his mouth in Ammonihah he told him, "Hey, this Alma, he's blessed me. He's blessed my family. He's blessed... He mentions his father. And then we see Alma 15:16, he, being rejected by those who are once his friends and also by his father and his kindred, not only did he see all of that, he's been rejected by his family. So no wonder Alma had to administer unto him in his tribulations.
Hank Smith:	28:08	Eva, what else do you want to show us in these chapters?
Dr. Eva Witesman:	28:11	At the end of 14, adding insult to injury, the judge again, after the order of Nehor, comes down his leg, looks like you couldn't save him, heaps upon this guilt and is trying to make an example of Alma and Amulek, strikes them on the face, puts them in prison. Again, other war tactics, chooses not to feed them for some period of time, and so they're there in prison. And eventually, they come out of prison. Through the power of the Lord, they're able to come out of prison. They're loose from their bands. This is verse 28. The prison had fallen to the earth

and every soul within the walls thereof except for Alma and Amulek... So this massive power is now demonstrated again, even though it had been withheld previously. Here, they were granted that ability to be freed from prison. And this is terrifying to the order of Nehor who essentially flees before Alma and Amulek.

29:13 And so now they're free to go reunite with the penitent people who had been exiled from the community because of their belief, stoned and chased out of the community, but now Alma and Amulek are able to reunite with these people who are now converts. In chapter 15, that's where we find Alma and Amulek. They leave the city, they find all the people that had departed out of the land of Ammonihah and have to recount what they witnessed. As they're reunited with these people, they come back to Zeezrom. So Zeezrom, again, remember, at the beginning of all of this, he was the one who was really advocating for the order of Nehor. At some point, he realizes that he's incorrect. He starts to feel guilty. Apparently, he's now exiled with the believers. Here, we find that Zeezrom is with all of the other believers outside of Ammonihah in Sidom. He is sick. Physically ill. Burning fever, mental stuff going on, sheer guilt. And of course, this is amplified by the tale that Alma and Amulek have to relate to them now.

30:33 Here he is, we hear this word again, "This great sin and his many other sins did harrow up his mind until it did become exceedingly sore, having no deliverance. Therefore, he began to be scorched with a burning heat." Again, this is like the story that Alma tells his son when he's telling the story of his own conversion and that he was harrowed up. He himself, Alma, was harrowed up with the guilt of his sins. We don't read about this until Alma 36 when he's recounting this to his son. It happened obviously prior to this, but the parallels between these two things are really fascinating. Verse six, "It came to pass that Alma said unto him, taking him by the hand, 'Believest thou in the power of Christ unto salvation.' And Zeezrom says, 'Yea, I believe all the words that thou hast taught.' And Alma replies, 'If thou believest in the redemption of Christ, thou canst be healed.' And he said, 'Yea, I believe according to thy words.'

31:35 And then Alma cried unto the Lord saying, 'O Lord our God, have mercy on this man and heal him according to his faith, which is in Christ.'. And when Alma had said these words, Zeezrom leapt upon his feet and began to walk. And this was done to the great astonishment of all the people and the knowledge of this went forth throughout all the land of Sidom." First of all, we have a faith healing here, but just like the

example of Jesus Christ who's like, "Which is the greater miracle? Is it that I can heal your body or is it that I can redeem your soul?" And that's happening here because the sickness is physical sickness that he has is actually a physical manifestation of the pain of soul that he is suffering. And so this physical healing is symbolic of his successful repentance and his redemption from these sins that he's now repenting of.

32:26

I think that's a beautiful parallel across those different stories. Alma the Younger, now Zeezrom, and then Jesus Christ doing the same for many different people, healing them both of their sins and also their physical maladies. For me, the interesting thing about this isn't that there are parallels across the scriptures. That's really intellectually interesting, but for me, the power of this is that I can see a pattern that happened not only for Zeezrom, and Alma, and for many people who were healed by Jesus Christ, but that this is the experience that I had. I have had this experience. I have been in a situation where I came to the awareness of my own sins. Just like Zeezrom describes and like Alma describes, I'm harrowed up. I mean, that just describes so beautifully how I felt. Like Zeezrom, I was experiencing fevers. I was horrified at what I had done.

33:39

The miracle of it is that the moment that my mind turned to Jesus Christ... And in my case, what I actually did was I remembered the story of Alma the Younger, and I turned to Alma 36 in my scriptures. That was what I did in that moment. My mind goes to Jesus Christ and I'm like, "Jesus Christ can heal this." And I remember that it happened before in the scriptures and it happened to Alma, and so I opened chapter 36, and I started to read, and it was the same thing that's described in all of these other settings, with Zeezrom, with Alma, with the various people that Jesus healed during His ministries on both continents. It was immediate, and I was healed. I understood the power of the Atonement toward redemption, and I was a changed human being. It was my true conversion moment.

34:32

I was born to parents who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My grandparents on both sides were members. I had learned this stuff all of my life. But until that moment, until I had experienced for myself the redeeming power of the Atonement, I wasn't changed. And that changed me and it put my feet on this path, in a way, that I have to turn to the Lord because I've experienced the miracle of the Atonement. I know too much. Where would I go that resonates so much with me? Thou hast the words of eternal life, where would I go? This is where the power of redemption is. For me, that's this incredible miracle that we get to witness and we get

to witness not only the miracle for Zeezrom, but we also get to witness the pattern of redemption, that it just requires turning to Jesus Christ and having faith in Him. And that repentance process begins in a way that our hearts can be changed, and that's the miracle here.

- Hank Smith: 35:38 That's fantastic. When you pointed that out to us, I remember the prayer in Alma 36, "Oh Jesus Christ, thou Son of God, have mercy on me who am in the gall of bitterness." And you look at that prayer that he says in chapter 15, verse 10, "Alma cried unto the Lord saying, 'O Lord our God, have mercy on this man.'"
- John Bytheway: 35:59 According to his faith, which is in Christ.
- Hank Smith: 36:02 He sees himself.
- John Bytheway: 36:03 The whole doctrine of Nehor throws out the doctrine of Christ. There's not faith in Jesus Christ. There's not repentance. You look at the end of verse 15 of Alma 15, they did not believe in the repentance of their sins. One of the things I love about Zeezrom is I like to call them got-you questions scribes, Pharisees, lawyers ask in the scriptures. And then there's Google questions, "Where's the nearest Five Guys," most important of all. And then there's just information, and then there's golden questions. And Zeezrom in this story went from a got-you to suddenly he started to listen. For him to be converted is awesome. One more thing I wanted to throw in before we're done is because I love the parallels you've found... And look at verse 26, "Alma cried saying, 'How long?'" Who said how long? Liberty Jail.
- Hank Smith: 36:57 Liberty Jail. Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 36:59 I love that the question isn't, "Are you real? Is there actually no God?" It's not that. It's just, "How long? I know you're there." There's hope in that question. "I know it's going to end, but how long is this going to be?"
- Hank Smith: 37:17 Yeah, the connections you've made, Eva, are...
- John Bytheway: 37:21 I'm going back and I'm seeing all these footnotes to 121 and 122, and I'm going, "How did I miss that? That's really cool."
- Hank Smith: 37:26 So good. So, so good. Eva, is there anything else that we need to cover?

- Dr. Eva Witesman: 37:35 So chapter 15, we really have this beautiful completion of this repentance story. So we see the broad level repentance of a society, this group of people that escapes and now they're going to create this Zion society. They're going to try to anyway, together this converted people. But we also see that at the individual level. So we've got macro and micro and we see what that looks like to use the Atonement and how individual repentance really does amplify to this opportunity for social piece and eventually a global piece, how those small things really do build to the larger ones. And then in the story, we have some more war, but in chapter 16, we have the fulfillment of that warning about the wrath of God. We have the desolation of the Nehors where their entire society is just completely wiped out, which is a sad thing.
- John Bytheway: 38:34 Yeah. In one day, it says. Every living soul.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 38:39 Yeah. And there's a lot of ugliness described there too, right? And sadness in the death there. But then in verse 17, so we're in Alma chapter 16 verse 17. At the very end of that, it talks about entering into the rest of the Lord. That's really where I'd like us to focus the end of this is what's the reason for all of this? Why are we trying to bring people to this power, to this knowledge? Why are we trying to bring people to Jesus Christ? One of the reasons for all of that is that they might enter into the rest of the Lord. It really makes me think about a talk that [President Nelson](#) gave called Overcome the World and Find Rest. And I just want to read a couple of quotes from that because it's really relating the kinds of experiences that we've just witnessed in the Book of Mormon to the kinds of things that we also talked about that we see in our day here. And it brings this idea of entering into the rest of the Lord back home, that this is really the promise that we have.
- 39:46 He says, "It seems that we are accosted daily by an onslaught of sobering news. You may have had days when you wish you could don your pajamas, curl up in a ball, and ask someone to awaken you when the turmoil is over. Absolutely, I have been there. But my dear brothers and sisters, so many wonderful things are ahead. In coming days, we will see the greatest manifestations of the Savior's power that the world has ever seen. Between now and the time He returns with power and great glory, He will bestow countless privileges, blessings, and miracles upon the faithful. Nonetheless, we are presently living in what surely is a most complicated time in the history of the world. The complexities and challenges leave many people feeling overwhelmed and exhausted." He's acknowledging this is hard and you want to hide from it. And the fact that there's

these miracles coming doesn't necessarily make you want to get out of your pajamas, get out of that little ball that you've curled into. He's really acknowledging that.

40:48 But then he goes on to talk about how the reward for keeping covenants with God is heavenly power. Power that strengthens us to withstand our trials, temptations, and heartaches better. This power eases our way. Those who live the higher laws of Jesus Christ have access to His higher power. Thus, covenant keepers are entitled to a special kind of rest that comes to them through their covenantal relationship with God. And I have to believe that when Alma was nurturing Amulek after these tribulations that they witnessed together that this is part of what he was trying to teach his new younger companion, helping him to access that power of rest, and that power of peace, and that power of comfort. There are other miracles that I've witnessed. I talked about the redemption that I experienced and that role of the Savior Jesus Christ was important to me. There are other times in my life I'm thinking specifically of the loss of some of our children. Owen and I have had miscarriages and one really late-term stillbirth.

41:52 Turning to my Savior in that moment and experiencing His role as a comforter and His role as someone who could even in those pains and sorrows provide me with rest in my soul, rest that I can't even really describe is I think what's happening here that that's what President Nelson is talking about is this blessing of our covenants to give us that rest. He says, "Dear brothers and sisters, my message to you today is that because Jesus Christ overcame this fallen world and because He atoned for each of us, you too can overcome this insatuated, self-centered and often exhausting world." Going back to that idea of power to, part of that power too is the power to experience this beauty in the rest of the Lord, to call upon the Savior through our covenants and invite Him to play that role in our lives, that role of comforter. And that I think is the rest that President Nelson talks about here, and that is mentioned here in Alma 16.

Hank Smith: 43:00 Wow. Eva, this has been fantastic. One way that I know I have felt or I'm feeling the Holy Ghost is that I just don't want it to end. I want you to walk us through more chapters of the Book of Mormon so we can keep seeing all these incredible patterns and insights, and then not only just patterns and insights that give us the, "Wow, this is such a great book," to, "Wow, what a great message."

John Bytheway: 43:25 Yeah, and thank you for quoting President Nelson. What I love about that is he is totally aware of what's going on in this world,

but he's also totally full of faith and expectation of wonderful things ahead, and it tells all of us, "Okay, I can be aware, but I can be full of faith too."

- Hank Smith: 43:45 Yeah.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 43:46 The best is yet to come.
- Hank Smith: 43:47 Yeah. I've often thought, when you're on the Lord's side that you can know your best days are always ahead of you. He's that good.
- Dr. Eva Witesman: 43:57 It has been a joy to work through these challenging chapters with the two of you. Thank you for sharing your experiences and your insights. One of the really exciting things about the scriptures is not only the opportunity to liken them to ourselves, but also to see the Lord's fingerprints and to realize that those patterns are the same in our lives as they are in the lives that are recorded in the scriptures. Thank you for sharing your experiences as well.
- Hank Smith: 44:21 Yeah. And we would love all of our listeners, since Eva's never been on our podcast before, come onto YouTube and tell us where you're listening from and we'll pass that on to Eva. It would be fun to know in what different countries, states, cities that we've all studied together today. And with that, we want to thank Dr. Eva Witesman for being with us. What an absolute fantastic time we've had together. We want to thank our producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen, and every episode, we want to remember our founder, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We've got some missionary chapters coming up on followHIM. Before you skip to the next episode, I have some important information. This episode's transcript and show notes are available on our website, followhim.co. That's followhim.C-O.
- 45:16 On our website, you'll also find our two free books, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament and Finding Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Both books are full of short and powerful quotes and insights from all our episodes from the Old and New Testaments. The digital copies of these books are absolutely free. You can watch the podcast on YouTube. Also, our Facebook and Instagram accounts have videos and extras you won't find anywhere else. If you'd like to know how you can help us, if you could subscribe to, rate, review, and comment on the podcast, that will make us easier to find. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew.

David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, and Annabelle Sorensen.

President Russell M. Nelson:

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

THE BLIND WOMAN WITH A CAR



- Hank Smith: 00:03 Hello, everyone. Welcome to another followHIM Favorites. John and I are sharing a single story to go with each week's lesson. John, we are in Alma 13 through 16 today, and you've told me you got a story, so take it away.
- John Bytheway: 00:16 There's a great phrase that Alma uses in a very difficult circumstance, I mean a horrific circumstance, where Alma and Amulek are witnessing people being killed in a fire. It's horrible. And Amulek says, "Behold, perhaps they will burn us also." And Alma says, this is Alma 14:13, "Be it according to the will of the Lord. But behold, our work is not finished, therefore they burn us not."
- 00:41 That idea of if I'm still alive, my work is not finished, is fascinating to me. And I remember a talk Elder Brook P. Hales gave. You can find it in your May 2019 Ensign. And he talked about a woman named Patricia Parkinson, who was born with normal eyesight, but at age seven she started to go blind. She attended Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind in Ogden. That was at nine years old. She had to be at a boarding school away from home. And then at 11, completely lost her eyesight. Moved home permanently at age 15.
- 01:12 And listen to what she did. Her work's not finished. She went to college, graduated with an undergraduate degree in communication disorders and psychology. After a heroic struggle against doubting university admissions officials, entered graduate school. Completed a master's degree in speech language pathology. She now works with 53 elementary school students.
- Hank Smith: 01:37 Wow.
- John Bytheway: 01:38 And supervises four speech language technicians in her school district. She owns her own home, listen to this, Hank, and her own automobile. I was like, "Wait, what?" Which friends and family members drive when she needs transportation.

01:55 Several years ago, it says she was in California with family members and three-year-old nephew said, "Aunt Pat, why don't you just ask heavenly father to give you new eyes? Because if you ask heavenly Father, he will give you whatever you want. You just have to ask him." And she was taken back by the question, but said, "Well, sometimes Heavenly Father doesn't work that way. Sometimes you need to learn something so he doesn't give you everything you want. Sometimes you have to wait."

02:23 Brother Hale said, "I've known Pat for many years, and recently I told her, I admire the fact she's always happy." And she said, "Well, you haven't been at home with me, have you? I've had some rather severe bouts of depression. I've cried a lot. But from the time I started losing my sight, I knew that Heavenly Father and the Savior were with my family and me. We handled it the best way we could, and in my opinion, we handled it the right way. To those who ask me if I am angry because I'm blind, I respond, 'Who would I be angry with? Heavenly father is in this with me. I am not alone. He is with me all the time.'"

03:03 I just love that story. It reminded me of that my work is not yet finished. And here she is helping elementary school children. I just love the question, "Who would I be angry with? God has been with me."

Hank Smith: 03:17 John, whenever someone asks me the question of, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Alma 13, 14, 15, these are essential reading. These are required reading for that kind of question. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcasts. We're with Dr. Ava Weitzman this week and it is a fantastic episode. And then come back here next week, we'll do another followHIM Favorites.