



EPISODE 44

GUEST: LARRY NELSON



"I Would That I Could Persuade All . . . to Repent"

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:

Join Dr. Larry Nelson as he uncovers the timeless insights of Mormon. Explore how environments, DNA, and personal choices shape our attitudes and faithfulness today. Discover what Mormon's writings reveal about our modern-day challenges and triumphs as Latter-day Saints. Don't miss this eye-opening journey into faith that connects the past with the present!

Part 2:

Dr. Larry Nelson continues to teach through Moroni and Mormon how to shun violence and discouragement in violent and uncertain times through covenants and our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Timecodes:

Part 1:

- 00:00 Part I - Dr. Larry Nelson
- 02:53 Bio of Dr. Larry Nelson
- 05:23 *Come, Follow Me* Manual introduction
- 09:06 Nature vs nurture
- 12:03 “Giving Children Love, Limits, and Latitude” by Dr. Nelson
- 16:41 1 Nephi 1:16, 1 Nephi 2:16 - Nephi’s development
- 20:07 Physical stature affects development
- 23:47 A sober child, quick to observe
- 28:43 Social withdrawal, introversion, and shyness
- 35:46 The Lord needs each individual
- 37:04 Mormon and a Father-son relationship
- 41:18 Mormon “Let God prevail”
- 46:02 Mormon 1-Mormon 2:15 - How Mormon’s life affected his writing
- 49:12 Mormon teaches how to protect families
- 51:41 Mormon 3:1-16 - Bad battle strategies
- 54:32 Mormon 4:10-21 - Nephites fighting in anger and revenge
- 57:34 Mormon 5:1-2 - The connection between spiritual and temporal
- 1:01:10 Mormon 7:1-4 - Why Mormon addresses modern Saints about violence
- 1:05:41 Moses 5-6: Satan rejoices and the Lord weeps
- 01:09:39 End of Part 1 - Dr. Larry Nelson

Part 2

- 00:00 Part II - Dr. Larry Nelson
- 1:09 Studies on the influence of violence
- 06:19 Rationalization about how violence affects the Spirit
- 11:58 Sacrifice and gratitude
- 16:18 *Supersonic Saints*
- 22:06 The call for spiritual reflection
- 25:59 Child development and media research
- 28:39 Mormon addresses resolving conflict and anger
- 33:31 Elder Renlund’s “Infuriating Unfairness”
- 37:12 Mormon’s soliloquy
- 39:45 President Nelson’s call for peacemakers
- 42:11 Mormon pleads to rest his mind through Christ
- 43:26 Mormon a historian
- 47:25 The Parable of the Marinade
- 49:18 Raising righteous children in challenging times

- 52:29 Reflections on the relationship between Mormon and Moroni
- 54:01 Clinging to Jesus and covenants
- 57:49 End of Part 2 - Dr. Larry Nelson

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Biographical Information:



Dr. Larry Nelson is a professor of human development in the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University. He earned a master’s degree in family sciences at BYU and a Ph.D. in human development from the University of Maryland. He teaches courses on human development, parenting, and marriage/family relationships. He studies factors that lead to flourishing or floundering in the transition to adulthood with a particular interest in parenting, social competence, social withdrawal, identity, and culture. Dr. Nelson served a mission in Zurich, Switzerland. He and his wife Kimberly have been married

for 32 years. They have three children and two grandsons. He serves as a priest quorum specialist in his home ward in Pleasant Grove, Utah. In his free time, he loves to be outdoors.

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Mormon 1-6 Part 1



GUEST: LARRY NELSON

- Hank Smith: 00:00:03 Hello, everyone. Welcome to another episode of FollowHIM. My name's Hank Smith and I'm your host. I'm here with my co-host, John Bytheway, who is a sober co-host and quick to observe. John, I was reading in the book of Mormon in the Book of Mormon and that verse stood out to me. "I perceive that thou art a sober co-host and quick to observe." Now, John, when you think of the book of Mormon in the Book of Mormon, what comes to mind?
- John Bytheway: 00:00:32 Oh, I think of children who have to grow up too fast. I think of Mormon who saw unspeakable things and doesn't even want to tell us about it, it was so bad, and then those things that you just said talking about you're going to need to be quick to observe because you're going to be a historian and abridger. That's what I think of.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:50 It was a while, John, before I realized that we learn about Mormon all the way through this book. This isn't the first time we're actually going, "Oh, who is this guy?" He has been speaking to us for so long and now we finally get to hear about his life, his story, and to help us out today, John, we have Dr. Larry Nelson here. Dr. Nelson joined us last year in Corinthians. Larry, we're happy to have you back. Tell us what we're going to do today.
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:01:19 Well, I'm excited after hundreds of pages in the Book of Mormon covering the hundreds of years that we finally get to really meet the man who has abridged this book, who we've heard little snippets from, but I'm so excited to learn about him, maybe what shaped his early years that made him pay attention to certain things and affected what he chose to include in his abridgment and then, dig in a little bit to what he really wanted us to take from what he wrote and he says that in his own words and I'm excited to look at that.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:58 I've come to appreciate Mormon a lot more as I continue to read. One thing I did as a reader is I didn't understand that,

when we get Mormon for the first time, it's in the words of Mormon and we don't know who he is, but he thinks we know who he is and he says, "I, Mormon, I'm going to give this record that I've been making to my son, Moroni," and you're going, "Who are you? I've read from Nephi and Jacob. I don't know who you are."

00:02:25 And so, you really don't know who he is if you're a first time reader until you get here. He's been telling you stories. He's been walking through war chapters. He's been walking through the visit of Christ and he's such a good narrator, you kind of forget that he's even there. You say, "Oh yeah, you've been talking this entire time. You're the one helping me draw lessons out of this." John, like I said, Larry joined us last year for Corinthians, but those who are new may not know who he is. Can you give us a brief bio?

John Bytheway: 00:02:53 Yes. We're so happy to have Dr. Larry Nelson back with us. He's a professor of human development in the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University. He has a master's degree in family sciences at BYU and a PhD in human development from the University of Maryland. Now, my favorite part of his bio, Hank, he studies [factors that lead to flourishing or floundering in the transition to adulthood](#), and I'm not sure if I flourished or floundered or flubbed, so I'm in there somewhere. He served his mission in Zurich Switzerland. I've always wanted to ask somebody this, if you had Swiss chocolate there, could you ever go back to American chocolate after that?

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:03:35 No. In fact, I use that as an example of the law of opposition that we need to... Sickness and health, pleasure and pain, Swiss chocolate and everything else, so, yeah. Exactly.

John Bytheway: 00:03:47 Oh, that's great. Right now, Larry's serving as a Priests Quorum specialist in his home ward in Pleasant Grove, Utah. He has been married for 33 years to Kimberly. They have three children and two grandsons, and we're really happy to have you back. Thanks for coming back.

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:04:01 Thanks. Thanks for having me.

Hank Smith: 00:04:03 Larry, before we begin, tell us about this book you've been working on.

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:04:06 I've had the opportunity with a wonderful colleague, Dr. Sarah Coyne. We've edited a book that will be used as a textbook in a course in our department, Strengthening Marriage and Families.

Incredible colleagues and scholars have written chapters on various aspects of family life, dating, marriage, equal partnership and so many more. Just received word it'll be published by [BYU studies](#). Really happy with how it turned out. While it's geared towards college students and the course that they're taking, we definitely hope that there are principles that may be of help to anybody who's able to read it.

- Hank Smith: 00:04:50 Wonderful. And, it's not quite available yet to the general public, but it will be?
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:04:54 Yes.
- Hank Smith: 00:04:55 We'll keep our eye out for it. Larry's one of the best. He's beloved at Brigham Young University. Larry, let me read from the [Come, Follow Me](#) manual and then, I'm excited to see where you want to go here. I remember as I was looking at this lesson, I see we start with Mormon at 10 years old all the way through to the end of his life and that's your expertise. I remember talking last year, the idea of the [whole human life](#), what'd you call it? "Womb to tomb," I think you said. That's what you study. Here's the manual.
- 00:05:23 "Mormon spared us the full account of the awful scene of the wickedness and bloodshed that he saw among many fights, but what he did record in these chapters is enough to remind us how far people who were once righteous can fall. Amid such pervasive wickedness, no one can blame Mormon for becoming weary and discouraged. Yet through all that he saw and experienced, he never lost his sense of God's great mercy and his conviction that repentance is the way to receive it, and although Mormon's own people rejected his pleading invitations to repent, he knew he had a larger audience. Behold, he declared, 'I write unto all the ends of the earth.' In other words, he wrote to you and to me and his message today to you and me is the same message that could have saved the Nephites in their day. Believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. Repent and prepare to stand before the judgment seat of Christ."
- 00:06:17 What a beautiful opener to the man behind the curtain who's been telling us all these stories. We finally get to meet him. What do you want to do today, Larry? How do you want to start this?
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:06:27 Well, if I could, I know that you often ask your guests at the end for them to express their feelings about the Book of Mormon or a prophet in the Book of Mormon that they may be discussing or whatever, so I apologize for stealing your thunder, but I have

to start the discussion of the lower B book of Mormon by letting everybody know how I feel about Mormon. He's my hero. He's my hero of the Book of Mormon.

00:06:53 Several years ago, I was really, really distressed about how things were going in our society, the political climate of the United States and the world is depressing and dark and it was really weighing on me. In that state, I read these very chapters that we will be studying and I was struck by the fact that Mormon was this incredible person who held beliefs that we are told his entire civilization had turned away from.

00:07:21 They didn't believe anymore what Mormon believed, and yet they respected him. They trusted him. They wanted him to be their leader. They followed him. I wanted so badly to learn how to remain faithful and get along with those who don't believe what I believe. To not only endure, but to be able to love and serve those who I don't agree with. How Mormon did what he did in the face of what was happening around him is astounding to me. It was in that moment when I needed it and it still is. He's my hero. I appreciate so much this opportunity to discuss his life and his messages for us.

Hank Smith: 00:08:02 Thank you for that. I don't know if there's anybody listening who lives in perilous times full of wickedness or dark and depressing things. There may be someone out there. This book really was written for us.

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:08:14 It really was. I know often you have experts on in a wide range of areas. I'm a little different, in that I study, as you noted, human development. I mentioned last year that I believe the study of human development is the most important thing we can study because that's what our Heavenly Father's work and glory is, to bring to pass immortality and eternal life, which is the development of his children. Just as kittens grow up to be cats and puppies grow up to be dogs, children of Heavenly parents, as we're taught in the family proclamation, have the divine potential to grow up to be like them. I want to focus on that process of development and mortality focusing especially on Mormon's development, but how it may help us to read the book of Mormon through the lens of development.

00:09:06 I'm sure many, if not most, have heard the terms nature and nurture as that applies to children growing up. Nature refers to the physical body that we're born with. It's genetics, but also it's autonomic nervous system, the hormones, firing of neurons in the brain and so much more that make up these incredible bodies that we have.

- 00:09:28 Nurture refers to the impact that our environments have on who we are becoming, our families, our friends, the culture that we're born into, the country that we live in. When I say nature and nurture though, sometimes we have an incorrect understanding of these. What do I mean by that? When I introduce nature and nurture in my human development class, I ask students whether they think nature, the physical body, or nurture, the environment, plays a greater role in shaping development and without fail, without fail, they say, "The environment." In fact, I just did this couple of weeks ago and in a class of 225 students, only three felt that their body plays a greater role than the environment for shaping who they become.
- 00:10:13 When I ask them why they seem to discount the role of nature, the answer I get is that they feel that if they think nature plays a greater role, then they would be taking away agency, that somehow giving credit to the body for affecting our lived experience and mortality is somehow saying we don't have agency. I then ask them to think back to when they were five and ask if they got to choose their siblings, where they lived or how their parents were raising them. I asked them as they got older to think whether they chose to be bullied in school, whether they had a pandemic come and affect how school looked for them. As they got older still, did they choose to have their hearts broken when someone they were dating decided to break up with them?
- 00:11:04 In other words, most of the things that occur in our environments are not things we choose either, especially for very young children. Obviously as we get older, we can have more control to shape our environments, but we still don't choose everything in our environments. For example, a ward boundary split changes the environment of the congregation that we worship in.
- Hank Smith: 00:11:28 You want to be careful there. That's going to bring up a lot of hard feelings for people on those ward splits.
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:11:34 Yeah. Those emotions remind us there are a lot of things about our environments, that we didn't choose any more than our bodies, but they affect us. Our bodies and our experiences are critical in shaping who we become in mortality. How we choose to respond to our bodies and our environment, that is when our agency comes into play, how we choose to respond to those things that maybe we didn't choose.

- 00:12:03 Why am I talking about this in preparation for discussing Mormon? Because, I look at the scriptures through the lens of development and I do it in two ways. I look at it through the lens of my own development, where I am in life. We're told that we're here on earth among other reasons to have a body and experience, but sometimes we forget what that means and how that's really shaping us and the Book of Mormon can be this incredible guide through those experiences with our body and the environment. Every time we read the Book of Mormon, we're at a different place in our development. Whether our bodies are changing due to age or health or disabilities, pregnancy, infertility, a cancer diagnosis or our environments are changing with the birth of a new child, being newly married, going off to college, a new calling, the Book of Mormon can shape these things for us and give us insight.
- 00:13:07 I remember reading the Book of Mormon as a new father. I hit 3 Nephi and the visit of the Savior to the Nephites and all of a sudden that was a brand new experience where I was taught parenting principles. I learned how to be a dad in 3 Nephi. I went on and my education became focused on doing research and teaching about parenting. I realized what researchers have found is the best parenting to achieve the best outcomes in children, they were the same things that I read in 3 Nephi. 30 years later, I'm still studying and teaching and learning from those things that I learned as a new dad. Every time we read the Book of Mormon, it can be a brand new book because we're at a different place in our own development.
- Hank Smith: 00:13:57 The book doesn't change, but we do.
- John Bytheway: 00:13:59 That reminds me of something. One of our previous guests, they talked about water-skiing over the top of the scriptures, that sometimes if we go deeper, we scuba dive, but we can even deep sea dive. They're as deep as they are wide. You can say, "Oh, I read that book," but with this book and with scriptures, there's always more in there that you didn't see and I love what you said. It's a different experience every time you read it because you are in a different place.
- Hank Smith: 00:14:26 Yeah. Larry, I'm actually really glad you brought this up because I read an article in the August, 2020 Ensign. Fantastic author wrote this article called [Giving Children Love, Limits, and Latitude](#), and it starts this way. "In our family, my son is nine years younger than his siblings. When he was little, we often heard him say, "Why? They don't have to do that." For example, as a preschooler, he was usually sent to bed long before his teenage sisters, and he never felt this was fair. Many parents

find themselves wondering how to be fair, consistent or equal in their parenting," and the rest of the article is all about how to do that using examples from the Book of Mormon. Larry, it seems like this author really honed in on what you were saying there. The author's name was... Oh, look at that. Larry Nelson, professor, School of Family Life at Brigham Young University, so-

- John Bytheway: 00:15:17 What a coincidence.
- Hank Smith: 00:15:18 No. It's shocking. He must be a twin or something. The article is called Giving Children Love, Limits, and Latitude from Dr. Nelson who's here with us today. We'll link that on our show notes at FollowHim.co. This really is something you've put your mind to, Larry?
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:15:34 It really is. Every child is different. I have students who say, "Well, we all grew up in the same home but we're so different." Well, the Book of Mormon can also guide parents through understanding each of their kids.
- Hank Smith: 00:15:47 I frequently have to apologize to my oldest child. I say, "I was new," and she frequently points out, "I never would've had that. You never would've allowed me to do that," to her younger siblings and I say, "I know. I know." And, her little siblings say something like, "Well, you should have been born last. It's a lot better down here."
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:16:08 Every child has a different experience and every child is a different experience for the parents and having a book that can teach us principles that can be applied in each of those unique circumstances with those unique kids, it's powerful. Part of that is because we see the development of the individuals in the Book of Mormon as well. It's not like we're reading conference talks here. We are witnessing the development of Nephi and Lehi and Alma and the sons of Mosiah and now, Mormon.
- 00:16:41 For example. Isn't it interesting that the most read chapters in our faith include statements about nature and nurture? What do I mean by that? 1 Nephi 1:1, the most read because of how many times we start the Book of Mormon says, "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore, I was taught somewhat in all of the learning of my father and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days" and then he begins, but that's a statement about the impact of his nurture on his development.

- 00:17:17 One chapter later in 1 Nephi 2:16 says, "I, Nephi, being exceedingly young, nevertheless being large in stature." This is a statement about something in his nature having to do with his physical body. Did that play a role in his development and the experiences we read about? Yes, being able to wear the armor of Laban, building a boat, standing against his brothers. His body made a difference in this account. His environment shaped his experiences, the relationship with his father leading him to obey him. How many chapters are filled with the anguish caused by his brothers and the impact of Jerusalem, the time in the desert, the promised land?
- 00:18:05 I share Nephi's because we've examined him, but I'd like to now do that and look at how understanding maybe those formative years of Mormon, his nature and nurture in the small B book of Mormon may help us learn why he chose to include what he did. We have to remember that we're told that he couldn't include even a hundredth part of the history, so why did he choose to include what he did? We know at some points he tells us that the Spirit directed him. By mentioning those times when the Spirit specifically directed him, it lets us know that he'd been given a stewardship and therefore his agency to include other things of his choosing, so why did he choose what he chose? I wonder if a look at his nature, nurture might help us understand that.
- Hank Smith: 00:19:04 I really like this approach and I've heard John say before, "If you have some problems in your family, you'd fit right in, in this book."
- John Bytheway: 00:19:13 Like Larry mentioned, it starts out with a family that was all over the place. "Let's kill dad. Let's kill Nephi. Let's kill dad and Nephi." Unusual family situations throughout in all of the scriptures, that you don't find perfect families.
- Hank Smith: 00:19:28 Yeah, Alma the Elder struggled early and came around a little bit later. Alma the Younger struggled early, came around a little bit later. Corianton struggled early, came around. It's almost like it's genetic.
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:19:42 Let's begin very similar to Nephi. We'll actually start in Mormon 2:1. Would one of you read that for me?
- John Bytheway: 00:19:51 "And it came to pass in that same year there began to be a war again between the Nephites and the Lamanites and notwithstanding I being young, was large in stature. Therefore, the people of Nephi appointed me that I should be their leader or the leader of their armies."

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:20:07 This is something about his body, his physical stature. Is it going to impact him? Yes. It probably played, maybe not the only role, but a very significant role in being asked to lead the army at such a young age. I'm not an expert in ancient battle, but I can only imagine that being large inspired an army. Being able to stand at the head of the army and literally be seen was probably helpful, but then in a time where war was hand to hand combat being able to follow somebody who was big and strong probably inspired confidence and courage in the soldiers, but I wonder the impact that this had on Mormon. You mentioned it a little bit, John.

00:20:54 I wonder what being selected based on one aspect of your development, your body, how that impacted other aspects of his development. When researchers look at the impact of pubertal timing, when a child begins puberty, we sometimes see that those who develop early physically or who are big for their age, they're often treated in ways that harm them because other people will look at their physical stature and assume, "Well, you're bigger physically. You also must be more mature emotionally and cognitively and spiritually." I can't imagine what he must have felt like as a sixteen-year-old to have the expectations of a nation on his shoulders, let alone having to stare death in the face at that age. That's going to impact the things that we hear from him, his feelings about war. I want us to keep that in mind as we move forward.

Hank Smith: 00:21:55 I do that same thing when I look at someone who's a little bit bigger and taller. You are surprised sometimes. "How old are you?" "Oh, I'm 13." "You are 13? You're so tall." That expectation would be different.

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:22:07 Sometimes boys who are a little more physically mature might play a sport, maybe even on an elite team because of that, and then watch as coaches will yell and scream at this child and the child starts to cry and they're like, "What? Are you crying? Are you just being a kid?" And, yeah. He is. He may be bigger, more mature physically, but that doesn't mean he's more mature emotionally or socially or cognitively. That was a little bit of a look at his nature.

00:22:42 Now, if we can go back to chapter one, we learned at age 10 he had already started his education. Now, this is something about his nurture. Having an education and being able to read and write made him stand out as well. It was a huge advantage in his young life, but once again, because he was maybe a little more advanced and had those opportunities, he was selected out and asked to take on a huge responsibility. I wonder how that then

affected his future studies. Regardless, it enabled him to pull off an incredible accomplishment of producing a record that is a historical account, that is beautifully written, that teaches moral and religious principles and do it all in one. It's brilliant, and so something about that early environment affected him in a way that enabled him to be able to do that.

Hank Smith: 00:23:47 Larry, when Ammaron says, "I perceive that thou art a sober child and are quick to observe," what does that look like today? Would that be a teacher coming up to a child and going, "You're an old soul. There's something about you. You're a little more introspective, a little more careful than a typical ten-year-old."

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:24:11 I think we can talk about what those characteristics mean, but first, the importance of maybe giving a shout-out to Ammaron. As I think about Ammaron, I often think of watching a movie and the main actors get so much attention for the film, but it's really all those people whose names are flying by at the end of the movie as we're leaving the theater that contributed so much. Ammaron mentioned briefly, but what an impact and identifying a young man who he sees potential and skills and gifts in a wide variety of areas and selecting him to receive the plates. Big shout out to Ammaron and the role that he played in all of this.

Hank Smith: 00:24:58 I actually have another article written by another wonderful author. This one's in the [church news](#) just recently, February of this year. Talking about Ammaron, it says, "'He came unto me,' is a little phrase with a lot of power. Ammaron must have known about young Mormon and his progress in learning the doctrine of Christ. At some point he came unto Mormon. Note that Ammaron sought out Mormon not the other way around. Young men might not seek out mentors, but mentors can seek out young men." This entire article is on the need for mentors to help young men become lifelong disciples of Christ, written by a member of the Young Men General Advisory Council, John G. Bytheway. Now, I know John Bytheway, but this is someone that sounds very important. John G. Bytheway. So, John, what did you see in Ammaron that led to this article on mentoring?

John Bytheway: 00:25:54 Ammaron is also quick to observe. He must have seen Mormon and saw things in him and came to him. What an encouraging thing. If someone comes to you and say, "You're a sober child and you're quick to observe," he may not even have known of those traits in himself, but boy, when an adult comes along and says that... When I was a teenager, go back to the seventies and eighties, I don't remember who won the Academy Awards or who won the Super Bowl or who won the World Series, but I

can remember all my leaders and I can remember all my bishops. When I go down to verse five, I see, "I remember the things which Ammaron commanded me." That had a big impact. I agree. Let's give a shout-out to Ammaron for finding this 10-year-old and giving him a path and a purpose. I mean, maybe being part of that shaping of his life.

Hank Smith: 00:26:46 John, you said something wonderful that really inspired me at the end of this article. "Being a good example is always a wonderful thing here. We have a lot of adult men in the church who are wonderful examples." John, you wrote, "Our young men need more. They need inspired mentors who see more in them than they see in themselves." Maybe this is part of ministering, John. I don't have to be assigned to a young man's family to take interest in him. I like to check in with the youth in my ward. "How are you doing? How are things?" John, is that what you're seeing? Is that what you had in mind here?

John Bytheway: 00:27:21 That is what I had in mind. I can think of times in my life when somebody put their arm around me and said, "I see this in you." You may think that's a little thing, but it had a huge impact when you're just a kid and you're trying to figure things out. We can apply some of what Ammaron did and try to do that with the young people that we get to be around like ministering. I like that you use that word, Hank.

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:27:45 I'd like to look at these characteristics that Ammaron identified, sober, quick to observe. And, I hesitate to read too much into these as these words may have had a slightly different meaning in his culture than the word Joseph Smith used in his translation, had in his context and then what it may even mean today, but I find them fascinating. I think it's important to look at how these attributes that he was born with or that he had nurtured in him, shaped the man and the leader he became.

00:28:21 Specifically when I think of the attributes of sober and observant, I think of the fact that he had immersed himself in learning. All of these things point to me of an introverted personality. And, I don't want to spend too much time on that because, again, I'm reading into it, but I want to lay the foundation for something that we can take from this.

00:28:43 I study social withdrawal. It's one of my areas of research. I know that words like shy and fearful and introverted and withdrawn are often treated as the same, but they're not. Introverts are not afraid of social interaction. They don't dislike being with people. Introversions isn't about fear, it's about energy. Introverts aren't afraid of social interaction. They're

often drained by it, so they will take time in solitude such that you may find them reading, sounds familiar, what Mormon was doing, or in nature. Studies have shown that they actually do really well with other people because they are observant. They think through their thoughts before opening their mouth. That phrase, "Better to be thought a fool than open your mouth and remove all doubt," introverts think things through before they comment.

Hank Smith: 00:29:45 Oh man, I need to be an introvert.

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:29:50 They tend to see when somebody's being left out or, because they're observant, they see somebody in need that a less observant person may miss. They're not anti-social. Relationships mean so much to them. That's why they prefer one-on-one settings or small groups of meaningful conversations and catching up and discussion rather than maybe less meaningful talk that occurs in large group contexts. They tend to be empathetic, good listeners and make meaningful contributions to the group.

00:30:27 Now, again, I don't know from such a brief description of Mormon as a child that he was indeed an introvert, but so much of what he does later, including his leadership style seems to reflect these attributes, sober, observant, and if we were to think that through, his empathy. He felt things deeply. We're not reading into that. We see that he feels things deeply, very emotion-filled passages that we'll look at.

00:30:58 He withdrew for a time. Isn't that interesting? Maybe it was to spend time in solitude working on the records. He was observant of things going on with people. Of all of the hundredth part that he could have included, he spent so much time comparing the approaches of Ammon who took a quiet service-filled approach to missionary work versus the stand-up and preach approach of his brothers and showing which one worked. He noticed the impact of people who were often not seen such as the female servant, Abish, who was a believer in Christ and wanted to share that with others. He chose to include that story. He was observant. I could go on and on, but so many things point to the importance of these characteristics that Ammaron saw in him.

00:31:54 The thing that I would like to take from that and apply to us today is that the Lord will use all personality types in his work. Many of us may have a singular stereotype of leader who is dynamic and funny and extroverted, who can speak effortlessly and vibrantly to a crowd, but in reality there are many ways to

lead, to fulfill any calling that you may be given. You don't have to try to be somebody else. Be you. We've all had that leader who is obviously so nervous standing in front of a crowd, but who is so good at ministering to the one, serving quietly and away from the eyes of others and noticing those on the margins. My life was impacted by this. I could give numerous examples, but I'd like to share one of the most powerful experiences of this quiet service-filled leadership.

00:32:55 Early in my career I had been asked to serve on a committee. I worked four years on that committee. It was a lot of time, a lot of effort. We hit a point over four years in which the fruits of our work were finally going to be seen. We were going to get some data that was going to be helpful in understanding for students and when we hit that point, without any explanation, without any warning, I was dismissed from the committee. I was the only one. The others on the committee were specifically told that I wasn't to see the data. I was the only full-time faculty member on the committee. Everybody else had administrative posts and you can only imagine that was distressing. I felt devalued, unappreciated, mistrusted. It really hurt. As I understand it, the person who made the decision never spoke with me, didn't know me, which made it hurt even more.

00:33:58 Well, there was an administrator, I believe at the time this person held the title of special assistant to the president. I don't know how he found out about how I was feeling about all this, but he had his administrative assistant invite me to have lunch with him. Went up to his office and sat knee to knee with this individual as he listened to me, didn't change the situation, nothing about it, but just listened to me and changed how I felt about the situation because of his love, his compassion, his listening, his empathy.

00:34:40 Well, about two weeks later, I was back in my office and there was a knock on my door and I opened it and this individual was there and he said, "I've just been thinking about you and I wanted to check in and see how you've been doing since our visit together." He had taken the time to come over, leave his office and come and seek out the one who he perceived maybe needed a visit, wanted to follow up with me. Who was that individual? It is the now Elder Gerritt Gong, that quiet service-filled approach to ministering to leadership. So, there's no one way to be a leader to fulfill a calling. The Lord can and will use all of us with all of our strengths, those inborn, those nurtured. He will use all of those in his service.

Hank Smith: 00:35:46 And, that's so empowering to those who like [Newel K. Whitney](#) who said, "I don't see a bishop in me," or, "I don't see a relief society president in me. I'm nothing like so-and-so who is so good with people." If I'm hearing you right, Larry, it's, "The Lord chose you. You have gifts. Use those gifts. Don't try to be someone else, be you and great things will happen." I think you can see that with Mormon. "I'm going to be me and move forward in this project being me, not trying to be someone else."

John Bytheway: 00:36:22 I remember my wife and I talking once we remembered that we had never seen President Monson get weepy in a talk and that's okay. Bring who you are.

Hank Smith: 00:36:33 Recently, [Elder Kearon](#), our newest apostle, spoke at BYU. The way he started was interesting because Elder Stevenson, I think, was supposed to speak at the Devotional and Elder Kearon jumped in right at the last minute. He said, "I'm so sorry that you don't get to hear from a real apostle," and so, I think we all feel this way, going, "I don't know if the Lord can use me like he uses other people."

John Bytheway: 00:37:02 Yeah.

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:37:04 The next thing I want to point out about Mormon's upbringing that might be relevant is found in Chapter 1 verses 5-8. If we could read those together.

Hank Smith: 00:37:12 "And I, Mormon, being a descendant of Nephi and my father's name was Mormon, I remembered the things which Ammaron commanded me and it came to pass that I, being 11 years old, was carried by my father into the land southward even the land of Zarahemla. The whole face of the land had become covered with buildings and the people were as numerous and almost as it were the sand of the sea, and it came to pass in this year there began to be a war between the Nephites who consisted of Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites and this war was between the Nephites and the Lamanites and the Lemuelites and the Ishmaelites."

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:37:47 Thank you. Mormon mentions being carried by his father to Zarahemla, but we never hear about his father again. Despite being a military leader, it is obvious that Mormon does not like war. He detests the shedding of blood. It's pure speculation and I wonder if we need to go no further in wondering why he detests war and bloodshed to the possibility that he lost his father in the war that took him to Zarahemla. He mentions his dad here, but never again. 11 years old. As we look at the

accounts Mormon chose to include in the Book of Mormon, we note the inclusion of numerous father-son relationships, Mosiah and his sons, Alma and Alma the Younger, the interactions between Alma the Younger and his sons, Helaman choosing carefully what to name his sons and others.

00:38:45 Father-son relationships make up a significant part of Mormon's record and I think it is interesting to consider how his early life with, or without maybe, his father may have shaped his approach to the record and his approach to war. Regardless of whether the war took his father, we know for a fact that he was exposed to war from an early age. He tells us this and that undoubtedly shaped his views of war and what he paid attention to later when he compiled the plates, so we're going to have to talk about the impact that early and prolonged exposure to war had on his message.

00:39:23 Not only did he grow up in an environment filled with war, but in an environment full of such wickedness and iniquity that in verses 14 & 15 we're told disciples were removed, miracles no longer occurred, no healing or spiritual gifts. Can you imagine being an adult in such an evil environment, let alone a child in his formative years?

00:39:47 A few years ago I had the opportunity to take a sabbatical, a professional leave, and we spent part of it in the Baltics. We lived in Lithuania for the time and visited some other countries like Estonia and Latvia and I remember one evening while walking together, my wife, Kimberly, wondered aloud how the youth of the church can stay strong in places like that.

00:40:11 This past summer we led a study abroad to Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and Austria and we discussed it again. Kimberly and I both served missions in Germany and Switzerland respectively, so we'd had experiences with places where the youth organizations of the church weren't as strong, youth were growing up without that support, but being there now as parents and as those who work with young people, we are struck by how difficult it must be to lack large, strong, supportive groups and peers and I wonder then how Mormon could grow up in such a wicked environment and be so strong. But, when we hit that point, we received the answer in verse 15, if we could read that.

John Bytheway: 00:41:07 "And, I being 15 years of age and being somewhat of a sober mind, therefore I was visited of the Lord and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus."

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:41:18 In this setting of such awfulness, war and wickedness, Mormon chose to do the one thing that would allow him to rise above his circumstances. He let God prevail in his life. He developed his testimony of the Savior and I think seeing Mormon's circumstances and his ability to rise above it by developing a personal relationship with our Father in Heaven and our Savior sets the example for us and underscores what [President Nelson](#) was teaching us when he taught, "With the help of two Hebrew scholars, I learned that one of the Hebraic meanings of the word Israel is, let God prevail. Thus, the very name of Israel refers to a person who is willing to let God prevail in his or her life. That concept stirs my soul. The word willing is crucial to this interpretation of Israel. We all have our agency. We can choose to be of Israel or not. We can choose to let God prevail in our lives or not. We can choose to let God be the most powerful influence in our lives or not."

00:42:28 He continues, "Are you willing to let God prevail in your life? Are you willing to let God be the most important influence in your life? Will you allow His words, His commandments and His covenants to influence what you do each day? Will you allow His voice to take priority over any other? Are you willing to let whatever He needs you to do take precedence over every other ambition? Are you willing to have your will swallowed up in His?"

00:42:59 I just love this. We see such an example in Mormon of what happens when we let God prevail. We've learned some things about his nature and his nurture that were very difficult, but now we see the piece that I mentioned briefly earlier, which is that we now get to choose how we respond to the things in our environment or in our nature that we didn't choose. We can act or we can be acted upon.

00:43:26 To be very clear, I don't get to use my agency to change what I can't control. As much as I wanted to be taller as a teenager, I can't choose to be six foot four. I have an autoimmune disease that I didn't choose in which I don't get to choose out of my life. There are things about our environments, about our nature that we don't will away, but we can choose to act rather than be acted upon by them and Mormon is showing us the best way to do that is let God prevail in our lives.

Hank Smith: 00:44:01 John, one of my favorite moments you've told me about is when someone said that they're tall, dark and handsome and you said, "Well, I'm O for three," and your wife said, "You're not short." Right?

John Bytheway: 00:44:16 Oh, so I'm one for three. Thank you so much.

Hank Smith: 00:44:19 Thank you, sweetheart.

00:44:22 But, yeah. If I could choose to be tall, dark, and handsome, I would definitely choose that. I frequently tell my children, "You should see my spirit. He is so strong and he is..." I really like that. Larry, it seems, Mormon 1:15, correct me here, talk me through this that, if a youth is going to last in their spirituality into their adulthood, that these type of things have to happen. We can have family prayer, we can have family scripture study, we can go to church, but the most lasting thing that we can do for our children and help me out here, Larry, since you're the expert, is send them to the Lord so they can have their own experiences.

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:45:04 Yeah. The phrase that comes to mind, we were told, [President \[Heber C.\] Kimball](#), I believe, "We can't live on borrowed light. We have to have our own light." Absolutely. Yeah. And, I think we're going to see that even more as we move on here. Our most important role as parents is to help children cultivate a relationship with our Heavenly Father and the Savior on their own. We can't force, we can't protect, we can't bubble forever. We've got to help them choose to let God prevail in their lives. That's what gave Mormon the strength.

Hank Smith: 00:45:46 This quote from [Elder Holland](#), he said, "See your students, and you could say your children the same way, as not vessels to be filled with knowledge but matches to be lit. Push them to the Lord and let Him light that match."

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:46:02 Now we have this foundation of various aspects of Mormon's development that might have shaped him and led him to the messages that he wanted to convey with us and what he chose to include in the plates. Let's look at some of those messages now through that lens of his upbringing. At the end of Chapter 1, we start to see two separate but connected concerns for Mormon that we can see may be influenced by a revelation from God, absolutely, but also influenced by Mormon's development. One is the people's spiritual state. The second is the people's temporal state or the war they were fighting. Let's look at that connection. If we could go to [Mormon 2:15](#).

Hank Smith: 00:46:58 This is Mormon 2:15. "And it came to pass that my sorrow did return unto me again. I saw the day of grace was passed for them both temporally and spiritually. For I saw thousands of them hewn down in open rebellion against their God and

heaped as a dung upon the face of the land. 344 years passed away."

- Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:47:21 "Both temporally and spiritually." He's going to start to show that these are so connected and they can't be disconnected in any way. Their spiritual state and their temporal, in this case, their military state. You start to see which one disturbs him more. In 15, he's pretty direct about the physical state when he's talking about the number who were hewn down and heaped up as dung. He doesn't have any problems sharing a very graphic picture of that physical state, but then we go to verse 18, it says, "But upon these plates I did forbear to make a full account of their wickedness and abominations. For behold, a continual scene of wickedness and abominations has been before my eyes ever since I have been sufficient to behold the ways of man."
- 00:48:24 We go from being very graphic, "heaped up as dung upon the face of the land," to, "I can't even begin to tell you how bad the wickedness is." How bad must it have been? He's connecting these two things for us and his sorrow-filled writings continue. He hearkens his inner captain Moroni and calls on them to fight for their wives and children in homes, which rallies them a bit, but ultimately it's unsuccessful because they haven't let God prevail in their lives.
- Hank Smith: 00:49:00 That really is, Larry, what's missing from the title of liberty? He's got wives and children and homes, but he doesn't have in memory of our God.
- John Bytheway: 00:49:10 And our religion, right?
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:49:12 Yeah. Mormon is showing us that weapons aren't enough to defend our families. As a father, I'm rather offended that we have reduced our role of protector to the stereotype of dad sitting on the porch with a shotgun as his daughter's date comes to pick her up. Really? Is that the best that we can aspire to as dads? Mormon is showing us it isn't enough. [President Howard W. Hunter](#) has tried to expand our view of how we protect our children. He said, "Earn the respect and confidence of your children." Let me stop. He didn't say, "You are my child. You have to obey me. Respect me because I'm your father." He said, "Earn the respect and confidence of your children through your loving relationship with them. A righteous father protects his children with his time and presence in their social, educational and spiritual activities and responsibilities. Tender expressions of love and affection toward children are as much the

responsibility of the father as the mother. Tell your children you love them."

00:50:26 That's how you protect our children. As we noted it is equipping them to be spiritually, socially, cognitively, emotionally and morally strong so they can withstand the challenges that will come their way. Mormon is showing that spiritual strength supersedes physical military strength. Let's look at how he used a time of peace. There's a period in this battle between the Nephites and the Lamanites in which there's basically a peace treaty for a time. Let's look in [Mormon 3:1-2](#) and see, once again, the connection between these two things and how this time was used.

John Bytheway: 00:51:14 Mormon 3:1-2. "And it came to pass that the Lamanites did not come to battle again until 10 years more had passed away and behold, I had employed my people, the Nephites, in preparing their lands and their arms against the time of battle and it came to pass that the Lord did say unto me, 'Cry unto his people, repent ye and come unto me and be baptized and build up again my church and ye shall be spared.'"

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:51:41 They use the time to prepare defenses and to prepare them spiritually. Preparing arms can't do what coming to Christ can do. We've hit this point in Mormon 3 where the Nephites are having some success and battle even though they're no longer supported by the Lord because of their wickedness. They're on their own, again seeing some success, but everything changes in 3:9. We can mark the beginning of the end, I believe, right here. "And now, because of this great thing which my people, the Nephites, had done, they began to boast in their strength and began to swear before the heavens that they would avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren who had been slain by their enemies."

00:52:35 At this point, they began to boast of themselves and seek vengeance and we know that Mormon sees this as the absolute worst thing they could do. Go on the offensive driven by vengeance because it combines the worst of their spiritual and military state. And, we know that he thinks this is the absolute worst combination, where their spirits are, seeking vengeance, and by going on the offensive. We know that it's how he feels about it because, at this point, he utterly refused from this moment forward to be their leader. If we were to read verses 11 through 16 without verses, so it's one long statement and if I could give the Larry translation of these verses-

Hank Smith: 00:53:29 I've read that version. I would love a full Book of Mormon with the Larry version.

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:53:35 I think he's saying, "Behold, listen, I led them. I love them. I poured my soul out in prayer for them. I've led them three times to victory, but they crossed the line the moment they went against Christ to go up in vengeance. That is too far. I'm done." This emphasis on their incorrect spiritual and incorrect temporal or military choices is very clear. Let's start in verse 4 please.

Hank Smith: 00:54:10 "It was because the armies of the Nephites went up unto the Lamanites that they began to be smitten, for were it not for that, the Lamanites could have had no power over them."

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:54:21 He's saying, "This is a bad battle strategy because it was a bad spiritual strategy to seek vengeance." 10 and 11, please.

John Bytheway: 00:54:32 [Mormon 4:10-11](#). "And, it came to pass that the three hundred and sixtieth and sixth year had passed away and the Lamanites came again upon the Nephites to battle, and yet the Nephites repented not of the evil they had done but persisted in their wickedness continually, and it is impossible for the tongue to describe or for man to write a perfect description of the horrible scene of the blood and carnage which was among the people, both of the Nephites and of the Lamanites, and every heart was hardened so that they delighted in the shedding of blood continually."

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:55:08 There is no separation here between the spiritual state of their hearts and what's going on in war because it is this poor spiritual state of their hearts that's driving them right now in battle, such that they're delighting in the shedding of blood. Verse 14, what happens here?

Hank Smith: 00:55:31 "And they did also march forward against the city Teancum, and did drive the inhabitants forth out of her and did take many prisoners, both women and children, and did offer them up as sacrifices."

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:55:42 The Nephites watched their women and children being offered as sacrifices. Some may think if there is anything that would justify being vengeful, got to be that, right? Let's read 15, please.

John Bytheway: 00:56:04 "And it came to pass in the three hundred and sixty and seventh year, the Nephites being angry because the Lamanites had

sacrificed their women and their children that they did go against the Lamanites with exceedingly great anger, insomuch that they did beat again the Lamanites and drive them out of their lands."

- Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:56:23 They went up to avenge the killing of women and children, but what are we going to see that leads to? Verse 21. "And when they had come the second time, the Nephites were driven and slaughtered with an exceedingly great slaughter. Their women and their children were again sacrificed unto idols."
- 00:56:46 We may think if there's anything justified in being vengeful and seeking revenge, it's because women and children have been sacrificed, but the only thing that led to was more women and children being killed. They went up to avenge the Lamanites for killing their wives and children but what if they had taken the advice of a prophet of God in President Hunter? What if they had put all of that energy into defending them by repenting, by forgiving, by teaching them in love and righteousness? This is what the [family proclamation](#) teaches us to do when we fill our role to protect. Vengeance cannot do that.
- 00:57:34 Verse 18 makes it clear. I said the beginning of the end and here we have it in verse 18. We are told that they never again gained control, never again. Their bad military decisions were a result of their bad spiritual decisions. This focus on violence as the means of protection rather than righteousness is one of Mormon's main messages. We really need to pay attention to it. Again, he states it in Mormon 5:1-2. This emphasis on the connection between our spiritual and our temporal, how we approach others, is so important.
- 00:58:21 Since I was asked to cover these chapters several months ago, the thoughts have flowed over and over again about one topic that Mormon is making clear has to be a discussion point. Why did God send the flood in the days of Noah?
- John Bytheway: 00:58:38 Because the earth was filled with a violence.
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:58:42 Yeah. We often talk about wickedness generally, but in both Genesis and the book of Moses, we read, "The earth was corrupt before God and it was filled with violence and God looked upon the earth and behold it was corrupt for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth and God said unto Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence and behold I will destroy all flesh from off the earth.'"

00:59:13 Violence. We are so quick to ignore discussions of violence. We all sheepishly may admit that we've heard this or been a part of this where conversation may sound something like this. "Oh, you have to see this movie. It's great." "Well, what's it rated?" "Oh, it's rated whatever, but there's no nudity. There's-"

Hank Smith: 00:59:37 Only

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:59:38 "... only violence."

Hank Smith: 00:59:42 I've never said that. I don't know.

Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:59:43 "Only violence." As if we're dismissing the one thing that the Lord specifically said corrupted the earth. I recognize the topic is uncomfortable. It isn't fun to discuss these things. Believe me. You had [Dr. Eva Witesman](#) on who found herself needing to be bold as she discussed the account of Alma and Amulek who were forced to watch the women and children and other believers being burned. She noted how often we skip over the burning of these people and simply turn to Alma and Amulek and how difficult it must have been for them to watch it.

01:00:22 Now, I'm sure it was difficult for them to watch it, especially because they could have stopped it with the power of God, but she noted that we seldom, if ever, dwell on how hard it was for those who were in the fire and she forced us, if you remember, to consider the amount of violence towards women and children that are occurring all around us. I loved her boldness and I need to follow her example and I need to live up to my hero, Mormon, and share his words because even Mormon is basically saying, "I know it's difficult to hear but you need to hear it. I, Mormon do not desire to harrow up the souls of men in casting before them such an awful scene of blood and carnage as was laid before mine eyes."

01:01:10 So, this isn't just a spiritual part. He's actually talking about the violence and then says why he has to do it. With that, remember that there weren't chapters and verses in what Mormon wrote. Chapter 7 is divided up in Come, Follow Me and 7 would be in next week's study, but I have to jump into the first four verses because really this would've all been part of Mormon's message to us. If we could please read the first four verses of 7.

Hank Smith: 01:01:45 "And now, behold, I would speak somewhat unto the remnant of this people who are spared. If it so be that God may give unto them my words that they may know of the things of their

fathers, I speak unto you, you remnant of the house of Israel and these are the words which I speak. Know ye that you are the house of Israel. Know ye that you must come unto repentance or you cannot be saved. Know ye that you must lay down your weapons of war and delight no more in the shedding of blood and take them not again, save it be that God shall command you."

- Dr. Larry Nelson: 01:02:18 In some, this isn't fun for me, but Mormon didn't include this description of war and violence for us to turn into a metaphor of spiritual battles only. I agree completely with something Dr. Grant Hardy observed that, "As a military man himself, Mormon never speaks of war figuratively or makes it a metaphor for Christian living." He may include accounts where others refer to types or symbols of spiritual warfare, but he does not. Laying down weapons of war and delighting in bloodshed is not figurative. If we go back and think about his early years, we may start to understand what's shaping this. He watched nothing but war and violence his entire life and although we immediately don't know to what extent meaning whether family members were killed in war or not, we know that was the context for his formative years.
- 01:03:17 Then his work on the records has done nothing but show him more scenes of carnage brought about by violence and vengeance and weapons of war. He has read in the records about accounts of entire civilizations being wiped out through violence and now he's just witnessed his own people utterly destroyed by it. He has seen what vengeance and violence does to people. This is why I think Mormon, in choosing what to include in the Big B Book of Mormon, is focused so much on the people of Ammon.
- 01:03:53 Remember, it wasn't just that they laid down their weapons of war, but it is that they, one, came to Christ, they were converted, two, they repented of their sins, three, they buried their weapons as a sign of a covenant with God. This covenant is that they would A, be killed rather than shed blood of another, B, that they would give to their brother rather than take anything away from them and C, they would spend their days laboring abundantly with their hands rather than in idleness.
- 01:04:30 This was about how they would obey God, treat God's children and how they would live their lives in keeping covenants. Going back to Mormon's purpose in writing, in 7:1-4, he's connecting all of these things, the spiritual, the military, what he showed with this incredible civilization that took a different approach than his people, the Nephites at that time. Those verses tell us

keeping covenants, that speaking of the House of Israel, that's covenant language. Repent, lay down weapons of war and come to Christ. That is how you protect women and children by making and keeping covenants, repenting, serving to others and coming to Christ. Through that faithfulness, the children who didn't die were raised in righteousness such that they knew their mothers knew it. The stripling warriors, they were protected not by their father's weapons, but by their making and keeping covenants.

- Hank Smith: 01:05:41 When you talked about the Lord and the flood, do you remember, John, someone connecting this, I can't remember who it was that taught our lesson there in Moses 5 and 6, it's Enoch seeing the Lord weeping and the Lord weeps because they hate their own blood.
- John Bytheway: 01:05:57 "I ask them to choose me, their father, but behold, they're without affection and they hate their own blood."
- Hank Smith: 01:06:04 The tears of the Lord go right into the story of Noah. Such a surprising-
- John Bytheway: 01:06:12 Like they rain. And Enoch says that. "How is it that the heavens weep and shed forth their tears as rain upon the mountains," which is poetry anyway.
- Hank Smith: 01:06:21 And then, yeah, the next few verses are the flood. It's the Lord weeping that turns into the flood, which I found just an interesting concept, and then the other story I thought of from Mormon's abridgment is the city of Ammonihah sacrifices women and children, but the Nephites do not go in battle, in vengeance. It's the Lord. The city of Ammonihah is destroyed, not by the Nephites, it's destroyed by the Lamanites who had nothing to do with that.
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 01:06:54 With these messages being conveyed, we have to honestly look at what is he saying for us in our day? If we truly believe that this book is for our day, how do we lay down our weapons of war and delight no more in the shedding of blood? That's Mormon's language here. I want to pause as we look at what this might apply for us. We've had to do some hard things in the study of the Book of Mormon. At one point we had to reflect on our own relationship with money, and we learned that it isn't money that's the problem, but the-
- Hank Smith: 01:07:29 The love of money. Yeah.

Dr. Larry Nelson:

01:07:32

We've reflected and learned that it isn't learning, that is the problem, it's being learned and proud. In other contexts we've learned and been taught that the internet, for example, isn't inherently good or bad, but how we choose to use it. So, on and on. We've had to do some hard reflection. "What's my relationship with money? What's my relationship with being learned?" And it's not those things that are the problem. It's pride. It's the love of those things. We have to do some spiritual self-reflection about this word delight in the shedding of blood. Do we delight in violence? Do we delight in our weapons of war? How much violence have we invited into our lives, into our homes, through the things that we purchase, watch and play? When I mentioned it that way, sometimes the pushback probably immediately be, "Oh, but violence in video games or in movies, that's fake. It isn't real, so it isn't a problem."



Mormon 1-6 Part 2



GUEST: LARRY NELSON

- John Bytheway: 00:01 Welcome to part two with Dr. Larry Nelson, Mormon 1 through 6.
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 00:06 Scholars who publish research about the games that we play and the things that we watch, they get a lot of pushback. Nobody wants to think that what they watch or play is affecting them. Arguably, the thing that scholars who study media violence here the most is I play violent video games, and I haven't killed anybody. Well, give that individual a prize. What an incredibly huge accomplishment. You have restrained yourself enough after playing a video game that you haven't killed anybody.
- 00:37 Well, that obviously settles it. Mormon was wrong. God was wrong. There is no need to discuss violence. Do you remember this science experiment as a kid that we found so fascinating when we were young where we would take a white flower, and you'd put those flowers in different containers of water, colored water? And over time by being in that environment, what happened to the flowers?
- John Bytheway: 01:07 They changed color.
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 01:09 They took on the color of the environments they were in. Let me share just a few quick studies thinking about this from a spiritual perspective. A few studies. I wish I could claim them as mine. They're not. They're brilliantly done, but I'd like to share a few.
- 01:29 In this [first study](#), the researchers measured mood, simply mood in a group of university students playing a violent video game for 15 minutes versus a group that played a bowling game, and then asked them to report their mood. Violent video game participants after just 15 minutes reported more feelings of anger, annoyance, and irritation, just 15 minutes. What of the environment that started to seep in?

- 02:00 In [study two](#), researchers measured something called cardiac coherence. This is simply a measure of stress, which is when our breathing and our heart rate aren't in synchrony. They had one group play violent video games. Another play nonviolent video games for 20 minutes. The group with violent video games produced greater cardiac incoherence. Their heart and their breathing after just 20 minutes weren't there. So little things that we may not think are big, but I want us to see it's impacting, even our physiology when we are immersing ourselves in an environment of violence and vengeance.
- 02:46 In a [third study](#), since researchers can't conduct experiments in which people may actually be hurt, the people who studied this had to be clever. In one study, participants were told that they were playing against a stranger in another city. Half the group was playing nonviolent video games like a skateboarding or soccer game, and half played violent video games.
- 03:13 After playing, participants were asked how much they identified with the character in the game, how much they respected, wanted to copy their behaviors, be like them. Then they were told that if they want to, they could give the person they were playing the stranger in another city, a blast of loud noise through their headphones. So they could pick whether to blast them with a loud sound, how long to blast it and how loud to blast the other person with this sound.
- 03:45 They were told that the sound could range from one to 10, but that anything above an eight could cause permanent hearing damage. The results, those playing nonviolent video games who identified with nonviolent characters blasted their opponents with loud sounds at substantially lower rates, while an increase in identifying with violent characters led to increases in blasting the opponents with noise. And this is just incredible, with those who identified the most with violent characters blasting their opponents with noise on an average of nine on the sound level. Remember, they were told that eight and above could cause permanent hearing damage, higher rates of identifying with violence, higher rates of blasting, and higher volumes of blasting.
- 04:40 And finally, [last one](#), participants played a pro-social game, game where you were helping some played that pro-social game. Some played a neutral game, and others played a violent game. Then they were shown three levels of a, it's called a tangram puzzle, but a puzzle to be solved. They could be easy, medium or hard. And they were told that their partner will get \$10 if they can solve the puzzle in 10 minutes. And you, they

were told, get to choose which puzzle they have to solve, an easy, medium or hard puzzle.

05:16 So if you care about the other person, you're going to give them an easy puzzle so they can get \$10. Those who viewed pro-social or positive games assigned easier puzzles, neutral, less easy. And the violent viewers assigned the hardest puzzles. They weren't as helpful. They weren't as kind.

05:39 Again, this is about our spiritual state as we are letting the environment of violence and vengeance start to color us, referring back to the analogy with the flowers. And the sad thing is that many of us don't think that this could be impacting us in these ways. It impacts other people, but not us. A study was done with about 700 college students, and they were asked these questions. First, how many of you believe that violent video games harm children? And the response could be a, one, doesn't harm them at all. Five, a lot.

06:19 And when asked about children, almost everybody agreed the average was over a four that, yeah, it harms children. Then they were asked, "How many of you believe that violent video games harms everybody?" The average response dropped to about a three and a half. Then they were asked, "How many of you believe that violent video games harm the average college student?" It remained just above a three. So it harms, but then how many of you believe that violent video games harm you? Now, the average was about a two.

06:59 It affects children. It affects students. It affects other people, but not me. We often claim that we are the exception that it won't happen to me, that it doesn't apply to me, especially when it comes to things like this, sound like the epitome of what we learn in the Book of Mormon, that Satan will pacify and lull them away into carnal security and leadeth them away carefully down to hell. Again, if we open ourselves up to the reflective process, we've done it with the use of money. We've done it with learning and so many other things. But on this very thing that the Lord talks about corrupting the earth and violence, are we willing to do it?

07:48 There's no need to get defensive or angry. Make it a matter of personal prayer, pondering and reflection. How am I in regard to violence? And this applies to the extent that we may delight in our weapons of war, literally and metaphorically. How much have we put actual weapons of war in the forefront of our values, our beliefs, our entertainment, our financial expenditures?

- 08:16 Remember, this is about our spiritual state. He asked us to consider what we delight in regarding shedding blood and laying down our weapons of war. It's a spiritual matter. Satan has promised that he's going to try to reign with blood and horror on the earth. What do we delight in?
- 08:36 One of the things in this spiritual self-reflection that we should all think about in regard to our choice of technology and media and where we spend our time is an analogy I like to think about when the saints found themselves in Winter Quarters, in the early days of the church, they were given the charge to get to Zion. Well, as those saints thought about getting to Zion, there were two ways that would make sure that they never ended up in Zion. One is if they took the wrong path, a path that led them somewhere else. The other is if they never got up and left Winter Quarters.
- 09:12 Sometimes, our choice of technology, of media, of how we spend our time, sometimes, it's the content that we need to be worried about, the violence, the pornography, whatever it may entail. That's the wrong path. But sometimes, we just have to be honest and spiritually self-reflective and say, "This isn't getting me up and moving. I'm not progressing."
- 09:38 The time that we spend in these things is the equivalent of staying in Winter Quarters, and we'll never make it to Zion with that. Indeed, it's very interesting when we think about that idleness doing that something that is not helping us progress. I return to the Anti-Nephi-Lehies again. One of the parts of their covenant is that they would work with their hands and cease to be idle. There's a connection here between covenant keeping, not being violent, and working. Oftentimes, the inordinate amount of time that we spend with technology, media in whatever form keeps us from doing things that would help us progress.
- 10:25 Maybe, in your life, you don't have to worry about the wrong path. Maybe, you do, the content involved. But maybe, it's just about the time involved in those things. Let's all get on the right path. Get up. Leave Winter Quarters, make our way to Zion. This is about spiritual self-reflection. I have to do this. I'm an outdoorsman. I pay for television and streaming services in my home. There are gaming consoles in my home as an outdoorsman and as a person who makes choices every day on what to watch on my streaming services, read in my books, and play on my gaming consoles. I have to ask these questions every day as part of my spiritual self-assessment. Have I let violence and instruments of violence become too much a part of my life,

of how I spend my time, my money, and my focus? What do I delight in? Where's my heart? Who am I becoming?

Hank Smith: 11:24 Larry, I really like this. John frequently reminds me that an airplane is off course most of the time, but get those corrections. Stay close to where you're supposed to be. This lesson can be instead of a, "Whoa, that's not true about me." It can be a, "There are some things that I have let slip. Maybe, I can turn that around." I know. I have four boys. Sometimes with those boys, I, "Hey, let's watch this violent television show or let's play this violent game."

Dr. Larry Nelson: 11:58 Bless you some would say, "Well, saying something against the military," that's not true. I am so, so grateful to the men and women who take up arms to defend me and my family and keep my daily life free from the atrocities of war and violence. I'm so grateful to them because they not only sacrifice so I don't have to experience those things, their sacrifice goes on for a long time, not just during active service.

12:29 [Stats vary](#), but our veterans will experience some level of PTSD. A male combat veterans marriage has a 62% higher likelihood of divorce than other men, staggering problems of death by suicide and homelessness. Even if none of these happened to individuals, they miss valuable time in their marriages with their children and family members, and friends. And they'll never get that time back. And they made that sacrifice for me. And now, what do I do with their sacrifice? By inviting the violence that they're protecting me from into my home because it does affect these incredible individuals who have offered so much to support my freedoms.

13:16 I can attest to that sacrifice. This past summer, I led a study abroad in one of the places that we were with Sarajevo. So we stood on the spot where a man chose to use violence to kill Franz Ferdinand, the archduke of Austria, that set in motion the events that led to the start of World War I. And the ripple effects of that person's choice affected countless individuals including the ripples of that choice all the way to my doorstep.

13:49 My grandfather in Ogden, Utah was affected because of that man's choice to pick up a weapon and take a life. My grandfather served in World War I. I've read and reread the letters that he wrote home, and there was a moment in his letters where the tone and content of the letters change. And we finally find out why in one of the letters. He briefly mentioned it almost in passing, but that he had been injured in battle. He'd been exposed to some gas agent.

- 14:22 My grandfather remained the good man that he was. There are stories of acts of service he would render to those on his postal route as a postman, especially when it involved getting letters as quickly as possible from individuals serving our country to their families. But there are also stories of how he withdrew inward, was less emotionally available, didn't display some of the same musical talents after the war that he did before.
- 14:52 My grandfather left part of himself on the battlefield of Europe, and his family members never got those pieces back. I wonder what my family, my grandmother, my dad, my sweet aunt and all of us grandkids, I wonder what we lost on the battlefield of France. I'm proud to come from a grandfather who fought for his country. He carried that the rest of his life. And as a result, we all lost part of him because of that violence.
- 15:27 For me, at least, it's a disrespect to my grandfather and every other service woman or man who fights to keep violence from my doorstep for me to then let it in other ways that I don't carefully and prayerfully reflect about, to see if I need to make a one-degree course correction. In the same way I do about money, my pride about being educated and shunning pornography and every other evil influence, I have an obligation, I believe, to follow the admonition of Mormon and truly meekly and prayerfully ask myself the extent to which I may delight in violence and instruments of violence, whether they be technological media or actual. It's a spiritual matter that Mormon is warning us about.
- Hank Smith: 16:18 Larry, I find this fascinating that you're drawing this principle out of these chapters. I'm seeing it differently. John, I'd be interested in what you have to say because I know you wrote a [couple of books](#) about [supersonic saints](#). Say that fast a couple of times. I know your dad fought in World War II. I also know that you are a war history buff. Tell me what your thoughts are as Larry's been teaching us here.
- John Bytheway: 16:42 I am in total agreement. I think the word that Mormon used and that Larry is pointing out is what they're delighting in. When I've read the Isaiah chapters, and I read about turning their swords into plowshares, I think about how many farming implements could be made out of an aircraft carrier. And I tell my class, "I just want to keep one F-16. I don't want to shoot anybody. I just want something grossly overpowered."
- 17:12 But that phrase, delighting in bloodshed, is the critical one there. I'm going to read now from Mormon abridging the war chapters in Alma 48. This is verse 21, "But as I have said in the

latter end of the 19th year, yea notwithstanding their peace amongst themselves, they were compelled reluctantly to contend with their brethren, the Lamanites. Yea and in fine, their wars never did cease for the space of many years with the Lamanites, notwithstanding their much reluctance. Now, they were sorry to take up arms against the Lamanites because they did not delight in the shedding of blood.

17:53 Yea, and this was not all. They were sorry to be the means of sending so many of their brethren out of this world into an eternal world unprepared to meet their God." That captures what does a man or woman of Christ do in a time where they have to defend their families? Do they delight in that, or are they sorry and reluctant because they do not delight in it? I'm grateful those verses are there.

18:24 Then you read in verse 24, "Nevertheless, they could not suffer to lay down their lives that their wives and their children should be massacred by the barbarous cruelty of those who were once their brethren." Those two words, reluctance and sorrow and not delighting in the shedding of blood seemed to be Mormon's own answer to that. In fact, I remember one of the stories of an F-100 pilot, his name was Tad Derrick passed away a year or two ago.

18:52 He became a mission president in Pennsylvania. His wingman had to eject and was down in the Mekong River. He gets on the radio. First, he had already asked for a rescue helicopter. And then he saw the boats. He said, "These boats have turned toward my wingman" I don't know if they're fishermen or if they are running guns up the river. What do I do?" Command said, "Use your discretion." He said, "I needed an answer right now." I said, "Heavenly father, I don't want to kill innocent fishermen," which I loved because he sounded like Captain Moroni. I did not delight in bloodshed.

19:30 But I have to say, "John, what do I do?" And he said, "The answer I got was immediate. The answer was, 'You don't have to kill anybody. You can scare them off.'" And he said, "I almost forgot I was in a fighter jet." He came down by these boats and came down really close and pulled up and let them know back off, don't touch my wingman until the rescue helicopters finally held up and rescued him. But I loved his character, Brother Derrick, because he said, "I don't want to kill anybody. I've got to save John."

Hank Smith: 20:03 One of the memories that came to my mind from growing up in St. George, I had to be under 12 years old. I still remember this.

It was such a moment for me. I was at a funeral of a neighbor. I'd gone with my parents. We were at the graveside service. He had served in the military. There were some older military men there, and they came in their uniforms. But I still remember this. They had the John, you'd probably know what it's called, like a 21-gun salute.

- John Bytheway: 20:30 Yeah. Some veterans came and did a salute to my dad as well. Shot the guns in the air.
- Hank Smith: 20:37 That's what exactly it was. This neighbor of mine, he didn't die in combat. He was older, but I still remember this. They fired the guns, and one of those older soldiers yelled and dropped to the ground.
- John Bytheway: 20:50 Wow.
- Hank Smith: 20:52 And I remember he yelled almost like in terror. He yelled and dropped to the ground and someone else came over and helped him back up, and he looked a little flustered. And I looked at my dad, and he said, "It's okay. That's what happens."
- John Bytheway: 21:07 Yeah. Hank, you mentioned my dad. Those loud noises, he was on a carrier that was attacked by suicide bombers, and he saw tremendous violence, and it affected him. We think he had PTSD before they knew what to call it. And I remember hearing him when I was a kid talking about the enemy then and saying, "They didn't want to be here. I didn't want to be here."
- 21:33 And I thought it was a very mature attitude for him at such a young age. These poor guys, they don't want to be out here. I don't want to be out here. Such a thrill that my dad got to send my brother to Japan after all of that and how thrilled he was when Kendrick opened his mission call to Sapporo, Japan. And my dad was like, "You're going for a totally different reason than I went," and that was cool to see that reaction in my dad who dated his post and fought for his life during an attack. Talk about violence.
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 22:06 In our desire to give all the gratitude that is deserved, which is never enough for those who have fought, that can't be a deflection of this spiritual question we have to ask ourselves because it is in the very nature of respecting them and giving our gratitude that we recognized that they had to place themselves in a context of violence that affected them and others so powerfully. That is the very thing that underscores what Mormon is saying, and that's examine yourself. Do not let

violence and the love of it delighting in any way, shape or form become part of it because it destroys lives.

- Hank Smith: 22:57 Larry, talk to me as the listener. I've calmed back my defenses because at first I'm going, "Well, well, here's all the reasons. It's fine. And this Larry guy wants to take away my fun."
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 23:09 You have to be clear. I am not asking you to bury your game consoles or weapons. Spiritual self-reflection of what you delight in. Okay. Sorry, go ahead.
- Hank Smith: 23:20 I'm going to trust you here. And as a human development expert, I've got a lot of children, and I don't know if it's just my children, but they seem to really enjoy high-intensity violent games. If I were to say, "Guys, we're going to switch to this bowling game," I might get some resistance. So maybe, give me some counsel and advice as I move forward here.
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 23:47 We talk about some practical things. I often found myself as a dad doing this, hear parents going, "Turn off the video game. Stop doing that. Get out and play." But do we offer any alternatives? Hey, let's go together and do this. Do we spend the resources that we did on that gaming console on a trampoline in the backyard or whatever it may be so that there are spiritually and physically healthier alternatives, helping teach children how to be aware of and monitor their own feelings and their emotions, learning to take control of that, I really want to make sure we discuss that in the time that we have left from an early age, start to monitor, have video games or whatever media, scheduled boundaries on it.
- 24:44 One of the saddest things to watch is how often we as parents don't practice what we preach and watch how media, violent or not, but media and technology can interfere with things. I'll give a quick example of how subtle these things can be in affecting relationships for years and years and years.
- 25:09 If you picture a mom feeding a child, breastfeeding or any parent with a bottle feeding a child, we often have that child, and we're cuddling and feeding, and often talking to and maybe stroking their head while we're doing this. And there's just this beautiful interaction that has always occurred during feeding of young kids. But now, one of the things we're seeing is instead of that interaction, feedings occurring while the parent is scrolling on a phone. No more the eye contact, the physical interactions, the verbal interactions. Think how subtle and small that is, but what a difference that could be for that child who's brand new in the world and starting to form a relationship?

25:59 If we just think about how we go about selection of media, use of technology and all those things, I think we'll... Ways to go up, but we can certainly in the show notes, I'll give some references to a project that I've a part of studied children since their first year of life. It's called [Project Media](#) at Project Media Research, looking at the development of children in this new media saturated world that we live in and hopefully something that can be helpful.

Hank Smith: 26:34 That would be great. I find all those suggestions really helpful. I also thought this is going to be self-incriminating. But as parents, we often get our kids down their asleep, and we think, "We've got a half hour, 45 minutes. Why don't we watch a little television or something?" And often, the choices are murder. This person got killed. Now, they're going to figure out who did it.

John Bytheway: 26:58 Hank, you have to go to Mayberry sometime.

Hank Smith: 27:01 Yeah. I think to myself, "Well, maybe, instead of watching that murder mystery with that graphic murder at the beginning, then we're trying to figure out who did it," there may be another choice out there to go buy a season of the Andy Griffith show. Try to figure out what John sees that I do not see.

Dr. Larry Nelson: 27:21 And the overarching thing is we could get caught up. I hesitate a little bit in giving some practical advice which everybody wants, but trying to do that in the time that we have. I hesitate a little because I don't want any of these practical moments in our daily lives try to tease them all apart. We all know how we could do better. The key thing is that self-reflection, self-assessment of I do need to. What am I delighting in?

27:49 And if we just begin there making sure our spiritual strategy towards these things is in place, then I think our actual, how we're going to tackle and battle these things in our lives. It has to begin with having a good spiritual strategy and asking ourselves these questions. What do I delight in? What are the weapons of war in my life that I need to lay down? How much of the environment that I'm in that's starting to influence me is of poor quality filled with violence or whatever? And I think that'll guide each of us in our personal lives in these moments if we start with the spiritual strategy before we move into the actual war, as it were.

Hank Smith: 28:39 In a very charged political climate, we can become maybe not violent, but we can become aggressive. This is how I'm going to

resolve this conflict. I'm going to be aggressive with other people instead of thoughtful and careful.

- Dr. Larry Nelson: 28:54 That's a beautiful segue into the part of Mormon's challenge about vengeance, not seeking vengeance. Now, turning away from acts of violence to violence we may be letting in. But once again, our heart, what we delight in, but is it filled with vengeance? When we start seeking vengeance for what has been done to us, perceived or real, we start a decline in our life, just like we saw in the book of Mormon, small B here, is that soon as they change their strategy to in vengeance go on the offensive, their decline started.
- 29:34 We need to remember, when something's done to us, it isn't about the other person anymore, but it's what we get to choose now will happen next for us. If something's done to us, our response will decide our course of development of what and who we are going to become. It's in our hands.
- 29:55 Let's refer back to the [example](#) of the color of the water seeping into the flower petals to color them. I tell family members, students, ward members have to remind myself all the time, multiple times a day, it seems, that when I respond to somebody else's unjust, unkind, uncompassionate, un-Christ-like behavior with anger and vengeance, it allows darkness to bleed into my heart.
- 30:25 The effect on our hearts of choosing anger and vengeance has a far worse impact on the darkness that fills our heart and the developmental trajectory than the actual act did. And it is usually at this point that we all experience the most dreaded symptom of spiritual disease. There may be in this regard the yes-but-they syndrome. We may hear this and say, "Yeah, but they," and then list the number of things the other person or group or party or whatever did or the extreme nature of what they did and feel justified in saying "Yes, but they." Does it get much worse than having women and children sacrificed by the Lamanites?
- 31:10 Aren't the Nephites justified in that with yes but they? Well, according to Mormon, he is saying, "No." It will only hurt us if in this terrible tragedy, we respond with yes but they, because that ruins our hearts and leads us to do terrible things. The yes but they led to the complete destruction of the Nephites. So what might it do in regard to the possible total destruction of our hearts? Anger is so destructive. This is a silly example, but I remember family members playing a game one time, and somebody did something in the context of the game to set one

person in our group back, and she spent the rest of the game trying to get revenge on that, so angry and trying to hurt the other person. And afterwards admitted, "Yeah, it didn't make me feel better." It just ruined the game and actually hurt a relationship that night.

- 32:19 Anger isn't classified clinically as an addiction, but it has many of the same properties as other behavioral or substance addictions similar to those addictions. Anger can feel good. It can activate the same reward center of the brain of certain substances so that we want it more. People, if we allow ourselves to become very, very angry because of things done to us, will start looking for more reasons to get angry, look for perceived slights, interpret things in ways that were never intended to be mean. But also, that will feel justified in feeling angry.
- 33:02 Yes but they. When this happens, when we're angry, it forces others to distance themselves from us, which we may then see as another reason to be angry without accepting any responsibility for the role that our own anger or our behavior may be playing in the situation. Anger can affect our jobs, our marriages, our relationships with other family members, friends, and neighbors.
- 33:31 It affects our spiritual progress as we often direct our anger towards church leaders and our ward members. Becoming angry and seeking vengeance is not about what others did to us, yes but they. It's about our spiritual development. [Elder Renlund](#), one of my all-time favorite talks, Infuriating Unfairness teaches us when he said, "When faced with unfairness, we can push ourselves away from God or we can be drawn toward him for help and support."
- 34:01 For example, the prolonged warfare between the Nephites and the Lamanites affected people differently. Mormon observed that many had become hardened, while others were softened because of their afflictions insomuch that they did humble themselves before God. Do not let unfairness harden you or corrode your faith in God. Instead, ask God for help. Increase your appreciation for and reliance on the Savior rather than becoming bitter. Let Him help you become better.
- 34:32 Allow Him to help you persevere, to let your afflictions be swallowed up in the joy of Christ. Join Him and His mission to heal the brokenhearted. Strive to mitigate unfairness and become a stone catcher, especially in regard to feeling angry or feeling justified because yes but they. We get caught in this back and forth of yes but you, and then in return, yeah but you,

is like this rock that is indeed being thrown back faster and harder at each other with the only result being the bruises left on each other by the exchange.

35:12 This image of catching the stone and choosing not to throw it back is powerful, stops the back and forth. It stops the bruising not only to the other person but to us. It allows healing. In that talk, [Elder Renlund](#) quotes from Bryan Stevenson, the author of Just Mercy, several times. In another place, Bryan Stevenson tells us what stone catching looks like in today's world.

35:43 He describes meeting an older woman in the courtroom whose grandson had been murdered some years before. She kept coming to the courtroom to provide solace for grieving families, sometimes the families of the victims and sometimes the families of the perpetrators. It's a lot of pain.

35:59 She said, "I decided that I was supposed to be here to catch some of the stones people cast at each other." And it was catching the stones thrown by others that was allowing her heart to heal. How counterintuitive does that seem? Taking the stone as a way of healing and preventing your heart from being darkened. Elder Renlund said, "Brothers and sisters, not throwing stones is the first step in treating others with compassion. The second step is to try to catch stones thrown by others."

36:37 The vaccine against yes-but-they is yes-but-I. The anger, vengeance, and violence stops with me. Instead of attacking those who think and act differently than we do, we love them, as Mormon did and Mormon 3:12, love them. Pray to have the love for them, pray for them. Be proactive to do what it takes to develop love for others and express that love. It requires that we look at ourselves, yes-but-I. Notice in Mormon's lament, we've got to hear from Mormon once more before we wrap up. If we could turn to [Mormon 6:16](#) through 22.

Hank Smith: 37:21 Sure. Mormon's soliloquy, some people have called it, where he looks over his people. This is verse 16. "My soul was rent with anguish because of the slain of my people, and I cried, "O ye fair ones, how could you have departed from the ways of the Lord? O ye fair ones, how could you have rejected Jesus who stood with open arms to receive you? If you had not done this, you would not have fallen. But behold, you are fallen, and I mourn your loss. You fair sons and daughters, fathers, mothers, husbands, and wives, fair ones. How is it that you could have fallen?"

37:58 But behold you are gone, and my sorrows cannot bring your return. And the day soon cometh that your mortal must put on immortality. These bodies which are now moldering in corruption must soon become incorruptible bodies, and then ye must stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged according to your works. And if it so be that you are righteous, then are ye blessed with your fathers who have gone before you. O that you had repented before this great destruction had come upon you. But behold, you are gone. And the Father, yea the Eternal Father of heaven knoweth your state and he doeth with you according to his justice and mercy."

Dr. Larry Nelson: 38:37 These are beautiful. And if you notice what's not in there is not once did he blame the Lamanites, not once. He engaged in yes-but-we and accepted the responsibility that they, the Nephites, had both spiritually not letting God prevail in their lives, not coming to Christ, not repenting and having a vengeful heart and militarily by delighting in bloodshed, seeking vengeance and going on the offense of what these two things, bad military strategy because it was a bad spiritual strategy, had in their own destruction not anybody else but accepting responsibility.

39:23 This was not about the Lamanites. It was about the Nephites. And notice that the Nephites development literally ended now. But we are to see that our spiritual development will do likewise when we don't make and keep covenants, don't come unto Christ, when we don't repent or lay down our weapons of war, no more to delight in the shedding of blood and when we don't stop the vengeance. Mormon is issuing the same call as our prophet [President Nelson](#), has to become peacemakers.

39:55 "One of the easiest ways to identify a true follower of Jesus Christ is how compassionately that person treats other people." He continues "the Savior's message is clear. His true disciples build, lift, encourage, persuade, and inspire no matter how difficult the situation. True disciples of Jesus Christ are peacemakers. One of the best ways we can honor the Savior is to become a peacemaker.

40:23 If you are serious about helping to gather Israel and about building relationships that will last throughout the eternities, now is the time to lay aside bitterness. Now is the time to cease insisting that it is your way or no way. Now is the time to stop doing things that make others walk on eggshells for fear of upsetting you. Now is the time to bury your weapons of war.

40:48 If your verbal arsenal is filled with insults and accusations, now is the time to put them away. You will arise as a spiritually

strong man or woman of Christ." These things are about our spiritual state. And that's why I believe Mormon conveyed it over and over and over again through what he wrote and what he chose to include in his records. Keep covenants. Come to Christ. Repent. Lay down your weapons of war. No more to delight in the shedding of blood, and stop the vengeance. So grateful for him. So grateful for him.

- Hank Smith: 41:28 This topic has been fantastic. John, do you remember a couple of years ago we were studying church history? [Alex Baugh](#), I think it was said, "One of the greatest moments in church history is really looked over is when Joseph and Hiram are killed." The Nauvoo Legion does not retaliate on Carthage, which they could have. I think it's Willard Richards who says, "Don't. Don't." And I know Alex has told me in the past, "This is one of the greatest days in the church that the people of Nauvoo do not take revenge for the death of Joseph and Hiram." They actually have a vote, I think, for peace.
- John Bytheway: 42:11 That idea of yes-but-they, I just wrote in my margin, and I love this because in the book of Moroni, in Moroni chapter 9, it's a letter from Mormon. He says in verse 6, "Now, behold, son, notwithstanding their hardness", yea, but they, "let us labor diligently." That's the yes-but-I. It's not reactive. It's proactive. I don't know what they're doing, but let us labor diligently. And then at the end of this tender letter, he says, "Be faithful in Christ and may not the things which I have written grieve thee to weigh thee down unto death, but may Christ lift thee up. May his sufferings and death the showing of his body unto our fathers, his mercy, long-suffering and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever."
- 43:04 I love that idea of what we are allowing to rest in our minds. That's what Mormon in the midst of this is telling Moroni, "Don't do yes-but-they, yes-but-I," and let Christ lift thee up, and his mission and his triumph over death rest in your mind forever.
- Hank Smith: 43:26 Larry, as I'm looking at the life of Mormon, not only in the book of Mormon, this small book, but also throughout the way he wrote, I noticed something, and I would love to hear your comment on it. As we watch Mormon open up the book that he's writing in Mosiah, he had written before this, and the pages were stolen. But as we open up, he has a lot of historian language. This is Mosiah 6:4.
- 43:53 Mosiah began to reign in his father's stead. He began to reign in the 13th year of his age making in whole about 466 years from

the time Lehi left Jerusalem, and you get a lot of that explanation, timeline and things from Mormon. He seems to be pretty meticulous, especially early on about what year it is and what happened. And then by the end, he's a different person. If you look at one of the last things he writes is something we looked at last week, Third Nephi, this is 30. This is the same guy in chapter 30, verse 2, "Turn all ye Gentiles from your wicked ways and repent of your evildoings, your lies, deceivings."

44:36 If I'm reading closely, I think I can follow him. From historian to prophet, he's gone from I got to keep a meticulous record to I'm begging you to come to Christ. What have you seen with your expertise following Mormon from beginning to end? How would you describe what he's gone through, the changes that you've seen?

Dr. Larry Nelson: 44:57 I see so much of an individual who had some really hard things happen in his life. Many things put upon him experiencing so much undoubtedly losses in there. I'm seeing the impact of the very words that he's reading now shaping him. One example I saw in Mormon chapter 1, verse 15 where we see his incredible experience gaining his testimony.

45:35 He says, "I being 15 years of age and being somewhat of a sober mind. Therefore, I was visited of the Lord and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus." That word tasted was interesting to me because we see that a lot in the Book of Mormon. I did a quick search. Nowhere in the Old Testament is tasted use. In the New Testament, you can count on about one hand, and it's all about tasting death or literally tastes like what the Savior tasted when on the cross being given that sponge filled with gall. Doctrine & Covenants, it's used in relation to tasting death.

46:16 Number one, if Joseph Smith was the writer of both the Doctrine & Covenants and the Book of Mormon, we would see similar use of tasting, but we do not. Tasting of the goodness of God, tasting the word of God, tasting the fruit is Book of Mormon language. Here, I see this is a concrete example of the very record that he's reading is now influencing how he's trying to make sense of his own life and his own development.

Hank Smith: 46:47 It's become his vocabulary.

Dr. Larry Nelson: 46:49 But then if we go even deeper now, if it's affected his vocabulary that much, look what it's done to him as an individual trying to become like his Heavenly Father. We see the impact of the very words that he's now sharing with us what they've had on him. And it's another sign of the effect that it

can have in our lives. If we will immerse ourselves to even a little bit of the extent that he must have done for decades in preparing what we now have, it'll change us, right?

- Hank Smith: 47:25 John, the [parable of the marinade](#) you gave a great talk years ago, probably back in the 1900s. What was that about?
- John Bytheway: 47:33 Both of you probably know the name Dallyn Bayles. He's played Hiram Smith and Joseph Smith. He's played lots of different people in church movies and things. Well, he was on Broadway. He was the Phantom. I spoke at a huge conference in Rochester, New York. He got up, and he sang Bring Him Home, just brought the house down. I got on the plane home, and I sat next to Dallyn, and I said, "What are you doing now?" And he said, "I'm teaching seminary in Springville." And I said, "Oh, I thought you were Broadway and Hollywood and all that." And he said... reached for a pen. He said, "Well, my mentor told me, regardless of your original intention, you'll eventually become what you surround yourself with.
- 48:15 That was the impetus for that talk, Hank. Thanks for bringing it up, that you marinate something. It can't fail to affect it, if that's what you're surrounded by. Now, amazingly, Mormon had a lifetime of war, but he clung to Jesus so beautifully. He's a great example of growing up in this environment that we've talked about and not becoming part of it.
- Hank Smith: 48:44 He marinated in the scriptures, it sounds like what Larry's telling us.
- John Bytheway: 48:47 And he tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus, never lost that. And that's what got him through.
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 48:54 There are things about our nature. There are things about our nurture that we can't change. But when we choose to let God prevail and let the words of this book affect all that we do, we can act rather than be acted upon. We can be changed. We can rise above the challenging nature of our circumstance, become like our Heavenly Father.
- Hank Smith: 49:18 Larry, I know that we could let you go right now, but we have an expert here. So I want to ask a couple of questions. One would be we see Mormon raising a righteous son in a terrible environment. What advice would you give to parents who are trying to do that same thing today? We can't force them to be righteous, but we're trying to give them an environment to which righteousness can grow in a pretty dark world. I'm sure

you've had that question before. How do you usually address that?

- Dr. Larry Nelson: 49:49 Let me give the parable of the sower and the seeds. If we go to the New Testament, that parable where seeds were distributed, and all the seeds were good. It wasn't the seed that determined whether they took root. It was the ground. It was the ground, whether it was rocky, hard or the soil was good. Parenting is about preparing the hearts of our children to receive the word, to receive the seed, the things that we're teaching them.
- 50:24 You can't force that. Parenting isn't about what we do when our child won't sleep through the night. Parenting isn't about what we do when our child throws a tantrum at the checkout counter at the grocery store. Parenting isn't what we do when they won't do chores. Parenting isn't what we do when they are late for curfew. Parenting is what we do to establish the atmosphere in our home where relationships can flourish.
- 50:51 Building that relationship with our children so that they'll want to receive the words that we're teaching them, give place that they'll choose to give place in their hearts. We can't force a seed into them. We can't make it take root, but we can sure try to prepare the ground through our love, our warm time that we spend with them, that climate that we build in our home. And then we look developmentally. In the early years of a child's life, we teach them what is right and wrong.
- 51:29 But as they get older, they want to know why. So next, we need to teach why something is right or wrong. But then, they're going to hit a point to where now we have to let them choose between right and wrong. They have to start practicing. We can't force that. We teach it. We teach why we believe what we do, what is right and what is wrong, and then we allow them to start practicing, choosing between right and wrong.
- 52:02 And that whole process when done in an atmosphere or climate of love and warmth where relationships can flourish, increases the likelihood, nothing is guaranteed with agency, but increases the likelihood that they will give place in their hearts for the seed to begin to grow, and they'll develop their own relationship with the Savior.
- Hank Smith: 52:29 That's beautiful. In my mind, I picture Mormon in his whatever his office looked like and his little son, Moroni comes in and, "Dad, what are you doing?" Well, have I ever told you the story of Alma and Amulek? Oh yeah, I love that one. Have I ever talked to you about Samuel, the Lamanite, and sharing these

stories with him that he's been studying and abridging for us?
It's a beautiful idea.

- Dr. Larry Nelson: 52:54 There was probably at a time that he had with Moroni just like we have with our kids, in which Moroni was like, "Yeah, yeah. Okay, dad. You've told me that before. I want to go out and play catch whatever they wanted to do." And my guess is Mormon knew the value as we've talked about probably of a father-son relationship said, you're right. Let's go play ball because it's playing the ball with them, spending time with them, listening to what matters to them that will increase the likelihood that the next time we sit down hoping to share one of those stories, read the scriptures, have family home evening that they'll want to engage with us then. Again, it's that in which order do we have to do those things for it to be successful?
- Hank Smith: 53:45 Frequent, personal loving interaction builds that relationship. I'm going to go text my children right now on the group chat, something really funny. So they'll think, "Man, I-
- John Bytheway: 53:56 I love my dad.
- Hank Smith: 53:57 Yeah, I love my dad. He sends me funny memes.
- John Bytheway: 54:01 Hank, I'm reminded of something I've heard you say about if you're wondering, gosh, life is hard, prophets have hard lives. Look at what Mormon went through here. Look at everybody in the Book of Mormon. That life was hard. Thankfully, he knew who to cling to.
- 54:17 Larry, thank you so much for bringing up that wonderful introspective question. Are you willing to let God prevail? It is so good. This is not a happy book. This is the downfall. Right at the beginning, Nephi sees the destruction of his people, and he says, "I went back to the tent or whatever, and I considered my afflictions were above all because I just saw the downfall of my people." Learn to be more wise than we have been.
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 54:43 I've thought about that, felt some things to share, and I've enjoyed prepping this. I'm like, "Oh, this isn't a fun book. This is the end of a civilization. How can I throw in some humor and keep it engaging?" There's heaped up as dung on the earth. That's what I've got to work with here.
- John Bytheway: 55:03 It's not a funny story.
- Dr. Larry Nelson: 55:07 No. But the message so important for us today.

Hank Smith: 55:12 Larry. I don't know Mormon personally, but I think if he was here, he'd say, "Thank you Dr. Nelson for taking this on."

Dr. Larry Nelson: 55:19 I hope so. Thank you, Mormon.

Hank Smith: 55:22 Yeah.

Dr. Larry Nelson: 55:22 Thank you.

Hank Smith: 55:24 What a book. What a book. With that, we want to thank Dr. Larry Nelson for being with us today. We loved having him back. We also want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. And every episode, we remember our founder, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We have a new voice, a new narrator, a new storyteller, the son of Mormon in Moroni, coming up on followHIM.

55:53 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.co. 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.

56:28 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: 56:48 Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Turn to Him. Follow Him.

HE BARRELED AHEAD



- Hank Smith: 00:02 Hello, everyone. Welcome to another followHIM Favorites. This is where John and I are sharing a single story to go with each week's lesson. John, we're in the book of Mormon in The Book of Mormon. There's a three-word phrase that I want to tell a story about. Ammaron comes to this little boy, Mormon. He's 10-years-old. He says, "You're a sober child and you are..." three words, "Quick to observe."
- 00:26 John, I have a story about a man who was not quick to observe. All right. I'm hoping you'll get a good laugh out of this. It was told by President Hinckley in conference years and years ago.
- John Bytheway: 00:39 Oh, does it involve bricks in a bucket?
- Hank Smith: 00:42 It does. It does. Here we go.
- John Bytheway: 00:44 I can't wait.
- Hank Smith: 00:45 It appeared that a company in England owned a property, a building in the West Indies. A violent storm damaged one of the buildings, and a man was sent to make repairs. Of his experience, he wrote to the manager as follows.
- 00:59 "Dear Sir, when I got to the building, I found that the hurricane had knocked some of the bricks off the top. So I rigged up a beam with a pulley at the top of the building and hoisted up a couple of barrels full of bricks."
- 01:12 So if you don't know what a pulley is, it's like a wheel. You put the rope through and you can pull on one side of the rope and it raises up the other. He used that and he pulled up some barrels of bricks.
- 01:21 "I fixed the building, but there was a lot of bricks left over. So I pulled the barrel all the way up again and tied the line at the bottom, and then went up, and I filled this barrel that's hanging from this rope with all the extra bricks. Then I went to the

bottom and I untied the rope. Unfortunately, the barrel of bricks was heavier than I was. Before I knew what was happening, the barrel started down, jerking me off the ground. I decided to hang on. Halfway up, I met the barrel coming down and received a severe blow on the shoulder. I then continued all the way to the top, banging my head against the beam, and getting my finger jammed in the pulley."

John Bytheway:	02:06	Oh.
Hank Smith:	02:07	"When the barrel hit the ground, it burst apart, allowing the bricks to spill out. I was now heavier than the barrel and started down again at high speed. Halfway down, I met the barrel coming up and received severe injuries to my shins. When I hit the ground, I landed on the bricks, getting several painful cuts from the sharp edges. At this point, I must have lost my presence of mind because I let go of the rope."
John Bytheway:	02:42	So here comes what?
Hank Smith:	02:44	"The barrel came down, giving me another heavy blow on the head and putting me in the hospital." Then he finishes. "I respectfully request sick leave."
	02:56	So Ammaron says to Mormon, you are quick to observe.
	03:00	You can either be like Mormon and be quick to observe, or you can be like our friend here and not be so quick to observe. What would that be? Slow. Slow to realize.
	03:10	Slow to observe.
John Bytheway:	03:11	I guess.
Hank Smith:	03:12	Slow to observe and have a lot of pain in consequence. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcast. We're with Dr. Larry Nelson this week, he walks us through the life of Mormon from 10-years-old to 70-something-years-old.
John Bytheway:	03:30	You'll love what he does with the stories.
Hank Smith:	03:32	And then come back here next week, we'll do another followHIM Favorites.