



*“The Rise of the Church of Christ”*

## Show Notes & Transcripts

### Podcast General Description:

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

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

### Podcast Episode Descriptions

#### Part 1:

What is the most significant truth revealed since the Annunciation? Dr. Casey Griffith discusses the Church's organization and the joyful Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### Part 2:

Dr. Casey Griffiths continues to explore Doctrine and Covenants 20-22 and discusses topics such as the role of grace and works, the purpose of church ordinances and programs, and the nature of church leadership and revelation.

## Timecodes:

### Part 1 -

- 00:00 - Part 1 - Dr. Casey Griffiths
- 02:23 The Restoration Proclamation
- 03:19 *The Come, Follow Me Manual*
- 04:30 D&C 20: Church Constitution
- 06:15 The influence of Moroni 6
- 11:03 Dr. Griffith's bio
- 14:15 *Moroni's Guide to Surviving Turbulent Times*
- 15:56 The big picture
- 18:47 April 6, 1830
- 24:22 What it means to be a member of the Church
- 26:41 D&C 20:6-11 Power from on high and holy work
- 28:59 Why was 6 afraid of 7?
- 30:56 A second witness of Jesus Christ
- 33:03 The Book of Mormon is a witness of the Restoration
- 37:33 D&C 20:37 - Why we do what we do
- 41:43 D&C 20:17-36 - A positive view of the Fall
- 49:49 The great finale and Jesus Christ's mission
- 54:52 In part how the Atonement works
- 57:52 A missionary story about grace
- 01:03:05 Choosing the Celestial Kingdom
- 01:06:17 Elder Christofferson and Jean Valjean
- 1:12:51 End of Part 1 - Dr. Casey Griffiths

### Part 2 -

- 00:00 - Part 2 - Dr. Casey Griffiths
- 01:51 New lyrics to "I'm Trying to Be Like Jesus"
- 04:48 Stephen E Robinson's story of a daughter and the ocean
- 09:24 D&C 20 - Division of the section
- 11:45 The ministering brother to Joseph Smith
- 15:07 *The Church is as True as the Gospel* by Eugene England
- 18:20 Dr. Griffiths shares his ward's love for his son
- 21:00 Video game testimony and a Vietnam Vet
- 24:16 D&C 20:70 - an overview and saving ordinances
- 28:34 Church programs change
- 35:46 The true and living Church
- 37:40 Seer and seership
- 42:02 Apostle and elder
- 44:31 Patience and faith and two stories of friendship
- 51:08 D&C 21:6 - Weeping for Zion

- 52:52 D&C 22 - Background
- 56:08 Dr. Griffiths shares his thoughts about Joseph Smith
- 01:01:38 *Church History Matters Podcast*
- 01:06:26 End of Part II - Dr. Casey Griffiths

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## Biographical Information:



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

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## The Rise of the Church of Christ PART 1



GUEST: DR. CASEY P. GRIFFITHS

- Hank Smith: 00:00:00 Coming up in this episode:
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:00:02 I'm a missionary in Southern Florida. We knock on this guy's door. The guy opens the door and says, guys, I'm a Lutheran minister. I don't think you want to talk to me. And I was, you know, pretty fiery. And I stuck my foot in the door and said, actually, you're exactly the kind of person that we want to talk to. And the guy goes, okay, tell me, if you had to stand before God and justify why you deserve to go to the celestial kingdom, or whatever you guys believe in, why you're justified to be there. And I was 19 and very young and kind of dumb and I remember saying...
- Hank Smith: 00:00:41 Hello everyone. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I am your host and I am here with my repenting co-host John Bytheway. John, have you ever read Doctrine & Covenants 20 verse 29? We know that all men, including John Bytheway must repent daily.
- John Bytheway: 00:01:00 Hourly. Repent relentlessly.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:03 I know you well and there's not a lot of repentance to be done, but I I'm sure you could find something.
- John Bytheway: 00:01:08 Oh contraire mon frere. There's plenty. We'll keep trying.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:12 John we are joined today by our friend. Honestly, John, when I think of my favorite teachers in the church, the entire church I've ever heard, Casey Griffiths comes to mind. Dr. Casey Griffiths is with us today. Welcome Casey.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: Thank you. Back at you. You two are two of my favorite teachers also.
- Hank Smith: We love having you with us. I'm sure a lot of people are very excited. Now let me ask both of you, John, we're going to look at section 20 today. This is a pivot point for the church.



Everything changes in Section 20. So John, what are you looking forward to?

- John Bytheway: 00:01:47 Thank you for asking. Well, what I am hoping we can do, especially for the adults who listen, who have kids and grandkids who ask questions. Because the question I get a lot is, well, why do we need a church? Can't we just believe in God and be good people? Why do we need a church? Why does it have to be an organization today when a lot of people have different feelings about organized religion? I'm excited to talk about why does the Lord say you're going to have a church and this is what you're going to do and this is what it's about.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:14 Hmm. That's fantastic. Casey, as you've looked at these sections, I can't imagine how many times in your career what stands out this time?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:02:23 This time. I just read through it again this afternoon and what stood out was how much the emphasis was on the Savior from the very beginning. Section 20 is through and through a document about Jesus Christ, what he does for us and how we can draw closer to him. Can I quote the [restoration proclamation](#) about this? They write, we declare that the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints organized on April 6th, 1830, which is what is happening when this section is given, is Christ's New Testament church restored. And then they wrote this, this church is anchored in the perfect life of its chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ, and in his infinite atonement and literal resurrection. And there's no way a person could read Section 20 and not come away believing and knowing that we're centered on Christ, that that's what we're all about, that that's what we believe in, that he's the central figure in our religion.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:19 What a way to start. The [Come, Follow Me manual](#) has a great opener that I want to read for both of you and then Casey, let's find out what you want to do. If you want to give us some background, if we want to just walk verse by verse, here's how it starts. The Savior's work of bringing forth the Book of Mormon was now complete, but his work of restoration had just started. In addition to restoring doctrine and priesthood authority, the Lord had made it clear through earlier revelations that he also wanted to restore a formal organization, his church on April 6th, 1830, more than 40 believers crowded into the Whitmer family's log home in Fayette, New York to witness the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ. Some people may wonder why an organized church is even necessary. The answer may be found, at least in part, in the revelations connected with that first church meeting in 1830. They describe blessings that

would have not been possible if the true church of Jesus Christ had not been regularly organized and established in the latter days. Huh, what a great kickoff. Casey, where do you want to go? How do we start to get the most out of this section?

- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:04:30 Well, let me take a minute and explain the significance of this section. Doctrine & Covenants 20 has been called the Constitution of the Church. It's sort of the founding document, but on a practical level, this is the Doctrine and Covenants before there's a Doctrine and Covenants. They don't talk about making a Doctrine & Covenants until about a year and a half later. It's the first church handbook too. It's all those things combined together in one thing. If I were to try and capture its essence, I would also say it's sort of desert island, Latter-day Saintism. I mean, imagine a scenario, this is what I bring up with my classes. If you were on a ship that was going down and everybody's jumping off and you're going to have to organize a branch of the church on this desert island and you can't take anything with you, you'd open up your Doctrine and Covenants and tear out Section 20 because it gives you the basic operating instructions for a branch of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- 00:05:27 It's got the basic history, it's got the basic beliefs, and it has the most basic ordinances that we do, including baptism, confirmation, the sacrament and blessing children. This is about as essential as it gets. And for a lot of people, this was the motivation to create a Doctrine and Covenants as people were literally taking copies of Section 20 and folding them up and putting them in their pockets so that when missionaries were going around, they knew how to organize the church. Like this is the most basic set of operating instructions for the church that you can find in any of the four standard works.
- John Bytheway: 00:06:03 I love Moroni six. It has a little bit of why we take everybody's names and how we do our meetings, why we do our meetings, but this is a lot more we just say.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:06:15 Yeah, and it's fair to say that Moroni six is a huge influence on this one scholar, Jack Welsh has done a little study where he compared the content of Doctrine & Covenants 20 with the content of the Book of Mormon, and about half of the section is a direct quotation from the Book of Mormon, which also demonstrates that they were taking the Book of Mormon really seriously and they were using it as a template for how they were going to set up the church. So some of those really influential passages like Mosiah 17, almost the entire book of Moroni were used as the building blocks to set up this church in

the latter days. It's got a close relationship with the Book of Mormon. And it's probably fair to say that the reason why they waited until April 1830 to organize the church is they were waiting for the first copies of the Book of Mormon to be printed and to be in people's hands so that they would know. And from the beginning, this is going to be a church that's centered on the scriptures, and especially the Book of Mormon, which gives us that kind of Christ-centered approach that we want.

- Hank Smith: 00:07:16 What a week and a half earlier you have March 27th, right? 1830 you have copies of the Book of Mormon.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:07:22 Yeah, I think they were raring to go as early as Doctrine and Covenants five. The Lord had told them they were going to organize a church. Then Doctrine and Covenants 10, and then Doctrine & Covenants 18, the Lord's telling them, okay, here's the things the church needs. And at that point, which is the summer before the spring that this happens, Oliver Cowdery is told to draft a document that's going to be the founding document for this church, and he puts it together. It's kind of a unique fusion. Parts of it were definitely given by revelation. Joseph Smith describes it as a document given by revelation. In fact, here's how he introduces it in his 1838 history, he says, in this manner, did the Lord continue to give us instructions from time to time concerning the duties which now devolved upon us and among many other things of the kind we obtained of him.
- 00:08:12 The following that is articles and covenants by the spirit of prophecy and revelation, which not only gave us much information, but also pointed out to us the precise day upon which according to his will and commandment, we should proceed to organize his church once again here upon the earth. Doctrine & Covenants 20 is kind of a unique thing where we can find places where Joseph Smith told Oliver Cowdery to draft it, but then Joseph Smith says, but we also received it by revelation and then it has a big healthy chunk of the Book of Mormon, and it looks like it's all three of those things coming together to create this foundational document for the church.
- Hank Smith: 00:08:47 That's fantastic. I remember two weeks ago, [Brother Harper](#) was here with us. If you look at the very beginning of section 18, the Lord tells Oliver Cowdery the things which you have written are true, which Dr. Harper said, that's the Book of Mormon. And then in the next verse, he tells him to rely upon the things which are written. So it sounds like he did that very thing.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:09:09 Yeah. And the exact next verse in Section 18 for in them are all things written concerning the foundation of my church, my

gospel, and my rock. One thing that Latter-day Saints sometimes don't appreciate is the ecclesiology in the Book of Mormon. Ecclesiology is just a \$10 word for the instructions on how to build a church. I was at a meeting once where some people from another restoration church got up and said, well, there's no ecclesiology in the New Testament. There's no specific instructions about what you're supposed to do. And I raised my hand and said, well, there's tons in the Book of Mormon. Don't you guys use the Book of Mormon? And they were, they looked at me like I was from Mars or something. They were like, are you crazy? Doctrine & Covenants 20 is them essentially doing that. They're following the Lord's instructions, which are, hey, I gave you this book, now it's time to start using it to do what I've asked you to do.

00:10:00 Use the instructions in the book to set up the church and Oliver and Joseph as a testament to their sincerity, rely deeply upon the text of the Book of Mormon to structure what the church is going to look like. And the DNA that's laid down in section 20, you can still see in every church meeting that you go to on Sunday, everything is right there from our practices to the offices that you see operating within the church to everything we do from baby blessings to blessing and passing the sacrament, it's all kind of here. Wow. In the first meeting, the first of many meetings, I might point out too, like if you've ever looked up on the stand during the sacrament and seen the bishop staring down at his scriptures, he's probably got D&C 20 open because that's where the sacrament prayers are. And we've all had that experience where you messed up on the sacrament prayers. This is where the operating instructions are. So any ecclesiastical leader needs to refer back to D&C 20 pretty quickly. It's the handbook too.

Hank Smith: 00:11:03 Beautiful. Now John, we need to do something that Casey didn't ask us to do and he wouldn't do himself, so let's do it for him. Casey, when it comes to resources that he has offered to the church, he's prolific John. He's a machine, especially when it comes to church history.

John Bytheway: 00:11:19 Yeah. Recently Scripture Central put out a Doctrine and Covenants commentary. Yeah, I think it's called the [Scripture Central Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants](#).

Hank Smith: 00:11:29 It's a pretty good name.

John Bytheway: 00:11:31 Which is like four volumes I think? That would be great because it's the latest scholarship I would say. And you could find that at where Casey?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:11:42 Just about I mean anywhere fine Latter-day Saint Books are sold, but the publisher is Cedar Fort. They were great to work with. A shout out to the team there who were just absolutely wonderful and the book looks great. One request that I had was I wanted to include the text of the Doctrine & Covenants. So I hate it when I'm using a commentary and I forgot my scriptures and so I can't refer back to the actual verses. One thing I love about the way they put it together was the actual text is there, so text and then commentary and you can have it all in kind of one place.

Hank Smith: 00:12:15 Yep. All you would need to do is go to Amazon, type in Casey Griffiths, and not only are you going to see those books, but you're going to see a lot of other books that Casey offers. All of these are really well written. He has a way of teaching, a way of writing that is informative and natural and he's actually pretty funny. John, if you don't mind a little bit of Dad in him.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:12:38 I'm not as good at dad jokes as you Hank. I'm kinda like the weird uncle eccentric person. Uncle jokes. Yeah. But I will say too, we also on [Doctrine & Covenants Central](#), which you mentioned John, have a ton of resources including a commentary and videos and maps and things like that that will help a person. Susan Easton Black wrote short biographies for everybody that's mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants and that's all free on Doctrine & Covenants Central. Go there, take advantage of that. We just wanted people to have a deeper understanding. Steve Harper, who you mentioned earlier, contributed some of our historical context and we've spent the last couple years filming videos at church history sites and other things to allow people to contextualize and understand the revelations. That's all free. That's wonderful. I tell my students, we live in the golden age of church history because you're a couple clicks away from not just seeing the text of Doctrine & Covenants 20, but the earliest version of the text, which the Joseph Smith papers have gathered and digitized and placed on their website. It's just incredible what we can do and the depth of study we can go to. Like you can go as far as you want to go. It is a little overwhelming, but that's okay. Do what you can. Pace yourself and just enjoy it. There's so much, so much to learn. I love it.

Hank Smith: 00:14:04 Moroni told Joseph Smith, your name will be known for both good and evil. We see the evil all the time, but there's a lot of good, a lot of good being said, what a time to be alive.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:14:15 Right?

Hank Smith: 00:14:15 Yeah. John, you didn't ask me to do this either, but let me just ask you a question. When you wrote your book on Moroni, what was it called again?

John Bytheway: 00:14:24 [Moroni's Guide to Surviving Turbulent Times.](#)

Hank Smith: 00:14:28 All right. You need to get the Scripture Central people to help you out with your titles. It could be John Bytheway's Commentary on Moroni. John, do you see Section 20 differently after writing that book?

John Bytheway: 00:14:42 Well, yeah. Like I mentioned, Moroni six is very brief, but it does have in there, it has the focus on Christ. It has the fact that we remember each other and that we're baptized and then our names are taken so that we can be remembered so that we can be nourished by the good word of God. It speaks about meetings. There's the tongue in cheek 14th Article of Faith. You guys have probably heard it a million times, that we believe in meetings, we hope for meetings, we have endured many meetings. We hope to be able to endure more meetings. And if there's any justification for holding a meeting, we seek after these things. When I share that, I always say if that's offensive, call me. We'll have a meeting. But it talks about why they meet to fast and to pray and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls. I just love that little glimpse Moroni gives us of why we meet and how we strengthen each other.

Hank Smith: 00:15:43 And it bridges into this. I love the bridge from the Book of Mormon to the restoration. Okay, Casey, what do we do now? Do we just start at verse one? Do we read the entire constitution here?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:15:56 Let me give you a little bit of a big picture idea. Okay. So it's the constitution of the church, but the title that early church members would've used is the articles and covenants of the Church of Christ. It's got at least five important things going for it. Number one, it gives us the original name of the church, which is the Church of Christ. That again, is going directly from the Book of Mormon 3 Nephi 27. The Lord says the church has to be called after his name. It has the foundational events of the church. So it's the first history of the church that's written. The earliest one. As a historian you're going for earlier histories. It has the foundational doctrines of the church. So think Articles of Faith, but even an earlier and more distilled form. And then it has the foundational practices of the church.

00:16:45 And the last thing is it gives Joseph Smith five titles and explains what they are. So if you're breaking down section 20, you can

easily break it into three different sections. Okay? Verses one through 16 is the history of the church. Verses 17 up to about verse 36 is the foundational beliefs of the church. That's kind of the proto articles of faith. And then verse 37 to the end are the foundational practices of the church from verse 37, verse 84, this is where we get into baptism, how to baptize, how to confirm somebody, how to do the sacrament, how to do a baby blessing, and also the basic offices of the church, starting with elder, priest, teacher, deacon. When you look at it that way, it's not quite as daunting. And if you're teaching it, it's easiest to kind of break it down that way. Okay? What did verses one through 16 say about the history of the church to this point, which this is the birthday of the church. So what led us here verses 17 to 36, what do we believe? What makes us different? What makes us unique? What brings us together as believers and makes us a church? Because a church is just a group of people, and then what are we going to do? What are the practices? That's everything from verse 37 on to verse 84, which explains how things are going to go.

- Hank Smith: 00:18:16 Casey, I want to throw in all three of us, and I'm sure many, many people listening love this church. Everything that I love and adore has come because of this organization and of course the Lord. So those of you who love this church, it's kind of fun to say, okay, this was the beginning. I'm excited to just gaze into the past and say the beginning of something that has impacted every area of my life.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:18:47 I'm glad you brought that up Hank, because maybe we should set the scene too. This is all written down before, but like Joseph Smith said, they were told by Revelation the very day they should organize the church. April 6th, 1830, imagine the [Whitmer farmhouse](#). I know both of you have been there. There's a little replica on the [Whitmer farm](#) today that was built for the 1980 general conference of the church, the 150th anniversary. You might even be old enough to remember that they held a session of general conference in the recreated Whitmer farmhouse. I don't remember it. I was two years old. But we may have someone here who remembers.
- Hank Smith: 00:19:29 Lemme look around.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:19:31 I was trying to like gently John, do you remember this?
- John Bytheway: 00:19:35 I watched it live. It was a type of a thing because you just don't do it, you just don't broadcast general conference from any place but the tabernacle and all of a sudden there was President Kimball with you know, a not very good resolution TV in 1980

and there was President Kimball in the [Peter Whitmer farm](#). I still remember all of us going, so I guess I was probably what Hank 17 or something like that. And I remember how cool that was to see him broadcast from there. When you see the picture from the outside, I dunno if you guys agree, it looks smaller. When you get inside, it feels a little bigger, but it still doesn't feel like it can fit as many people as were there.

- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:20:21 Yeah, you imagine 40 people in there. I mean a significant number of them. Their last name was Smith or Whitmer. In fact a couple years ago there was an article in the Ensign where they tried to figure out who were the original six members of the church because that's how many you actually have to have to organize a religious society in the state of New York. And there's several different lists given like people don't always agree on who the original six members are. And by the way, we have one list that comes from David Whitmer and one that comes from Joseph Knight and one that comes from Brigham Young, who wasn't even a member of the church until a couple years later. All the lists include three people, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Hyrum Smith. Everybody agrees that they were there. Brigham Young said that Samuel Smith, this is Joseph's little brother and Joseph Smith Senior, Joseph's father, and this is interesting.
- 00:21:18 Porter Rockwell were among the original members. Joseph Knight says, yes, Samuel, but then he says Peter Whitmer and David Whitmer were the other ones, and the last list includes John Whitmer and Christian Whitmer. Richard Lloyd Anderson, who's the person who did all this great research, said the most likely lists of the six original members are Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, David Whitmer, Peter Whitmer, and Samuel Smith. That's not important. There's not going to be an exam or anything on this, but it is kind of wonderful to visit that site and think of this small organization of mostly family members and that this church which was going to grow to several million members in hundreds of countries around the world really just started out with these six disciples of Christ.
- Hank Smith: 00:22:13 I love it. Wouldn't you love to go visit? Just get to, you know, look in the window and watch this happen.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:22:20 Yeah, be a fly on the wall and witness it and some cool things happen. Joseph Smith receives section 21 during the organizational meetings. He actually dictates and they record the revelation that becomes section 21. The same day they go down to a body of water, probably Lake Seneca, which is nearby and they hold the first baptisms. One of the most moving



passages I've ever read in the history of the church was Joseph Smith seeing his father be baptized. You'll recall, Joseph Smith's father was a seeker. He hadn't really committed to any religion. He was a sort of universalist when he was growing up, but he just wasn't satisfied with organized religion. And here's, he's seeing his dad join it. In fact, Joseph Smith writes, oh my God, I have seen my father join the Church of Christ, which to me is just really powerful, really sweet.

00:23:15 It kinda gets at the essence of what the church is, which is a place where families come together and where they experience life events that matter to them. And you guys both started out by saying, so grateful for the church. I'll say, Hey, I'm grateful for the church and the experiences I've had there with my family. And we get to see that the first day of the church is very similar to every Sunday in the church. Five years from now, it's going to be the bicentennial. Maybe the picture will be a little clearer than it was in 1980 if they choose to do that again.

John Bytheway: 00:23:50 Mm-Hmm. Hank, what was the line that you quoted a couple of weeks ago? [Elder Holland](#) had said it's not 1830 anymore and there aren't only six of us.

Hank Smith: 00:23:59 Right? Yeah. I think it's the idea that I'm scared to go and I think it was a missionary or someone who was nervous to go talk to a high ranking government official and he said, Hey, just remember it's not 1830 and there's not just six of us anymore.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:24:15 And I'll flip that, a friend of mine, [Taunalyn Ford](#) likes to say it's always 1830 in the church somewhere.

Hank Smith: 00:24:21 Yeah.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:24:22 Yeah. So somewhere out there, there's a single family home with a bunch of people crowded into it, and that's the church wherever they are. Section 20 kind of for me captures the essence of what it means to be a member of the church. That you get together with people that believe the same as you, and you with authority participate in ordinances that help you draw closer to God. That's the core of what we're all about.

Hank Smith: 00:24:47 And hopefully, like you said Casey, it's an uplifting, powerful, uniting time. I've had those times. So Casey, we're going to walk through these three sections: history, beliefs and practices.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:25:01 We can do history relatively quickly because that's what you've been doing the last couple weeks. But let me point out a couple

highlights. Verse two Commandments were given to Joseph Smith, Jr. who was called of God and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ to be the first elder of this church, and Oliver Cowdery who was called of God an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the second elder of the church. That's the church hierarchy. Sustaining went much faster. Hey, we've got two sustainings to do today, the first elder and the second elder, and that's the end of the list. That's how complicated the church was when it was first set up. There's a couple things hinted at in here that I wish I could talk to them and say, Hey, what were you referencing this for instance, verse five says, after it was truly manifested unto this first elder that he had received a remission of his sins.

- 00:25:51 This could be the earliest account of the first vision. I know you had [Maclane Heward](#) on a few weeks ago, and he probably talked about how the earliest accounts, the main message for Joseph was God knows me and my sins are forgiven. This is earlier than the 1832 account or '35 or any of the others. This might be the first time Joseph tiptoes towards saying, I learned that God knows me and that he forgave me my sins. He summarizes, he was entangled again in the vanities of the world. So again, he's setting up the idea this church isn't led by perfect people, but after appending and humbling himself sincerely through faith, God ministered unto him by a holy angel whose countenance was like lightning and whose garments were pure and white above all other whiteness. So now we move into the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and he's just giving us the basics of what we need to know that commandments were given.
- 00:26:41 Verse eight gave him power from on high by the means which were prepared to translate the Book of Mormon. And then it gives us this introduction of the Book of Mormon, which I think is perfect too. It contains the record of a fallen people and the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, of the Gentiles and the Jews. Also nice summary of the Book of Mormon, it's to teach the gospel, but it's the record of a fallen people and then a stated purpose for the Book of Mormon. Jump down to verse 11, why another book of scripture? One, to prove to the world that the holy scriptures are true and that God does inspire men to call them to his holy work in this age and generation as well as in generations of old, thereby showing that he is the same God yesterday, today and forever.
- 00:27:27 There's the Lord basically saying, here's why we needed another book of scripture. It's supposed to prove that the scriptures are true. It's looking backward and it's supposed to prove that God

still speaks to people. Today it's looking forward. I think just about how last night I was on Reddit or something and somebody was talking about how hey, maybe Jesus was just this really incredible magician who tricked a bunch of people into thinking he was amazing and somebody else chimed in and said, no, no, no, no. That's not what happened. Jesus was a good guy, but they added in all this stuff about him being the son of God and him being resurrected later on like they reconned the narrative. The Book of Mormon flies in the face of all that. If the Book of Mormon is true, the stories about Jesus in the New Testament, being the Son of God, miraculously healing people and dying for our sins are all true. So if you've got a record on this side of the world and a record on this side of the world that talk about the same Savior, it's pretty hard to refute those two independent witnesses that testify that not only was Jesus a great moral teacher, but Jesus was the son of God. I mean, if the Book of Mormon is true, Jesus flew here to America, it's pretty pretty hard to imagine that happening by accident or being embellished in the story. If the two records line up.

- Hank Smith: 00:28:48 That's wonderful. And having come off a year of Come, Follow Me in the Book of Mormon, you and I still have that excitement from the Book of Mormon, all that we learned, all that we saw.
- John Bytheway: 00:28:59 In fact this phrase proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true. I've got in my margin, Mormon 7:9. Hank, do you remember me back in Book of Mormon saying why was six afraid of seven? because 7, 8, 9. Which will only make sense in English, but look up the verse Mormon seven, eight and nine, therefore repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus. Lay hold upon the gospel of Christ which shall be set before you, not only in this record, but also the record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews. Which records shall come from the Gentiles unto you. And Casey, what you are saying. Look, I love verse nine. For behold this Book of Mormon is written for the intent that you may believe that, the Bible and if you believe that, the Bible, you will believe this, the Book of Mormon also. And if you believe this, you will know concerning your fathers and the marvelous works which were wrought by the power of God among them. I love that verse because that's what it just said right there. Here's the Book of Mormon backing up the Bible saying to your Reddit poster, not so fast my friend, those miracles were real and Jesus is the son of God.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:30:11 Yeah, John, you made me think of another verse. This is in first Nephi 13 where Nephi seeing kind of his big vision, the overview, you know, before you get into the story, he sees the Book of Mormon coming forth, but the way he phrases it is

unique. He says, these last records, which I'm assuming includes the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price, which now is seen among the Gentiles, that's us, shall establish the truth of the first, meaning the Bible, the record of the Jews, which are of the 12 apostles of the Lamb and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues and people that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, the Savior of the world, and that all men must come unto him or they cannot be saved.

00:30:56 I don't know, maybe it's an old rusty analogy, but I remember as a missionary saying, you know, if you had a sign and you had one nail in it, you can turn it any which way you want to go. But if you have two nails in it, then it points the way and it can't be adjusted. The Book of Mormon is a second witness. Later on, we'll add the Doctrine and Covenants as a third, and we continue to receive scriptural witnesses. Like that's one of the stated purposes here is that the Book of Mormon is also supposed to prove that the day of miracles is not passed. That miraculous things like a new book of scripture or healings or manifestations are still things that can happen in our time. So that's a pretty great introduction to what we're all about in the latter days.

Hank Smith: 00:31:37 And the setting that you set for us, Casey just seems to fit. The Lord of the Bible, the God of the Bible. If you look at Abraham, this incredible figure, he was just a, just a guy, an immigrant and his wife, and then we'll get Mary in Nazareth. It was just out in the middle of nowhere, just some normal everyday person out there. And then here's this cabin with a farmer being the first elder.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:32:06 Yeah, the weak things, the Savior's going to call them in Doctrine and Covenants. One, nothing big, nothing flashy, not the king rolling in with an entourage and an army. It's these small people who hold big and important ideas that are really going to transform the world and cast down the corrupt systems that have ruled for thousands and thousands of years. It's beautiful. It's those couple first verses. The last ones introduce an idea of witnesses. In fact, it says this, verse 13, having so great witnesses by them shall the world be judged even as many and shall hereafter come to a knowledge of this work. Now this could be a reference to the witnesses of the Book of Mormon who most of whom are present at the organizational meeting, but the Book of Mormon is the witness. And that explains a little bit about how the early church operated, which was you probably noted most people didn't

talk about the first vision when they were introducing the gospel.

00:33:03 The early missionaries always talked about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, because the first vision provides a great pattern for how a person can get answers to questions, but there's no proof there. It's a story that you accept or don't accept. The proof of the restoration is this book. This is the point where Joseph Smith could say, hey, I'm not just telling stories. I have a 500 page record here that was revealed to me that came forth under miraculous circumstances. And you can read it for yourself. And that in a basic sense is still what we do. We use the first vision to teach people the process of revelation, but the Book of Mormon is the witness that God has given that the latter-day work has begun again and that the church has been restored.

Hank Smith: 00:33:47 Casey, correct me if I'm wrong, you know the history, but there's people in Joseph Smith's day and age having visions, reporting visions.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:33:56 He's different. He has this book. That's actually one of the criticisms of the first vision is sometimes people will say, well, there are a lot of people saying that they had experiences with God and that they saw visions and things. And I'm saying, yeah, because God loves all his children, not just this one kid that lives in Palmyra. And there were a lot of people, I'll say during this time too, some notable figures like Alexander Campbell who were trying to restore the church from the New Testament. And they all have interesting ideas and they all have interesting stories I'll say too, but none of them really have anything like the Book of Mormon and none of them make claims as bold as saying, an angel brought us this book and we have a new book of scripture and that might explain why none of them seem to endure the type of persecutions that we do.

00:34:46 Like nobody's making big claims like we are. Boy, it does seem like a sword that cuts asunder. People have strong feelings about Latter-day Saints. There's not a lot of people that go, yeah, you know, whatever. Because people that think seriously about our message realize that, oh, I've gotta make a choice whether or not I accept this or not. Maybe you've heard that old story with Hugh B. Brown. Hugh B. Brown was the mission president in London when the second World War was breaking out and he was friends with a barrister there, an English lawyer. The lawyer came to him and said, it looks like there's going to be a war. If there's a war, you're going to have to go home. So I respect you, but I don't understand your beliefs. Lay them out

for me. And Hugh B. Brown prepared this legal brief that is just awesome.

00:35:33 It's called [Profile of a Prophet](#). Go read it. Amazing stuff where he laid out, Hey, here are several reasons why I think Joseph Smith is a prophet and lays down a devastating legal case. But the part that's always resonated with me is that after he's done laying out this legal case, the barrister looked at him and said, do you realize that if what you're saying is true, this is the most important message since the angels announced the resurrection of Christ? And then the guy, well the way Hugh B. Brown says it was, he wept and said, I would to God. Like I don't know if he convinced the guy that it was true, but the guy at least got the point, which is this is a big deal and it's difficult to have a neutral opinion about. I use that to comfort myself when I take a beating on the internet or Reddit or something like that, that it's supposed to produce strong feelings at people.

Hank Smith: 00:36:31 Yeah, a third option isn't open to you. It's either what it claims to be or it's not. And John, I think you've done this before, like oh, there was an angel there. There was an angel. Oh yeah, there was John the Baptist. You're John the Baptist, yeah, yeah. Oh, Peter, James and John and Moses and Elijah right?

John Bytheway: 00:36:49 And Elias. The audacious just keeps going. Yeah.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:36:55 Yeah. One of my favorite passages in the Doctrine and Covenants is section 128 when Joseph Smith says, and Michael detecting the devil is an angel of light on the banks of the Susquehanna and then doesn't say anything else about it. And you're like, is Michael having a rematch with Satan? Not a big enough deal for you, for you to pause and tell the story. That's just something you mentioned in passing. Remember that guys? But I think at that point Joseph Smith was the momentous was mundane to him that the extraordinary was kind of a, yeah, we've had some fun times, haven't we?

Hank Smith: 00:37:28 And we just walk around with this knowledge every day like it's Yeah. How is this news?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:37:33 Yeah, yeah, maybe occasionally we need to pause and recognize it and how significant it is. I like that. And then the history section concludes, if we jump down to verse 16, the Lord God has spoken it and we, the elders of the church, and remember there's only two elders. There's Joseph and Oliver, but he's probably making reference to the fact that a lot of the people at this meeting are going to become leaders and a lot of the people at this meeting are witnesses of the Book of Mormon.

We have heard and bear witness to the words of the glorious majesty on high to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. A reference probably to the witness experiences and that the second elder, Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith had not only seen the plates, but they'd heard God testified that the book was true. And now they feel this obligation to share what they've learned. This is the earliest history of the church. It's a great little here's where we come from. Here's our mission statement. Here's what we do. Here's why we think there needs to be a new church and a new scripture. Here's what we're all about.

- Hank Smith: 00:38:44 And yet again, it shows Joseph Smith in an interesting light. He was again entangled in the vanities of the world, this beginning of the Doctrine and Covenants. It's not a great look for Joseph, right? section three, section 10, why are you doing all these things wrong? Then again here he's entangled in the vanities of the world. This isn't someone who is trying to come off as I am your liaison with God.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:39:11 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 00:39:11 Let's remind everyone of that and let's canonize it.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:39:15 Yeah. Yeah, let's canonize my biggest mistake and put it at the first of the book. I think it was the Lord putting in our face the idea of infallibility is not going to fly in this church. These are fallible people, but it is a little hard on Joseph. I mean, I don't get up before my classes and say, hi, I'm your instructor and I was kind of a bad kid in high school or something like that. Yeah. But Joseph has all of his youthful foibles kind of put out there and then his first stumbles as a prophet, it is a message that we have to have repeated again and again because so often well-meaning, but maybe misguided, Latter-day Saints invest too much in the perfection of the leaders of the church. And that's not what we believe. We believe in flawed, weak people that are made extraordinary through Jesus Christ.
- Hank Smith: 00:40:04 That's wonderful. I remember once my mother-in-law, she wasn't a very tall woman, she was 5'1", 5 foot. She said, I met a prophet once and I shook his hand and sadly he just looked right over my head. I was just too short. And I was looking up at him, but he didn't look down at me and she said, I walked away from that going, oh, I wish I could have talked to him longer. And then she said, you know, I just love the prophet. I just liked her saying, yeah, I met him. I wish he would've noticed me, but he's human and he's still the prophet. It was just a little testimony of, yeah, they're not perfect because I think some might go into

a, I'm going to meet a prophet and he's going to call me by name and tell me where I served my mission and probably give me a patriarchal blessing right there. Right on the spot. Yeah. It was just wonderful to see her. She didn't have some sort of grand idea that he's perfect.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:41:00 Yeah, my mission president told this story, what, where an apostle came and stayed in their home and he didn't ever say who the apostle was, but he said he was getting ready to go to bed and he saw the guy kneel down and he just kind of held back and said, oh, I'm going to get to hear an apostle pray to the Lord. So he held back and he heard the apostle go, Father in Heaven, I am so tired, I'm going to talk to you in the morning in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. And for him it was a wonderful humanizing moment to realize, oh, these people get tired. We don't want to oversell. They're good qualities, but we also don't want to undersell that they are really good.

Hank Smith: 00:41:41 Alright, Casey, what do we do next?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:41:43 The next part of the revelation is the basic beliefs of the Church of Christ. So it's basically verses 17 to 36. This would be a great place to point a person to, to say, Hey, here's what Latter-day Saints are all about. In fact, some stuff that we still emphasize from time to time, and some of this shouldn't be surprising. Verse 17, there is a God in heaven who is infinite and eternal from everlasting to everlasting, same unchangeable God the framer of heaven and earth. Verse 18, he created man, male and female after his own image and in his own likeness created he them and gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve him. We've got creation. Is this sounding like a familiar pattern? Yeah. Verse 20, by transgression of these holy laws, man became sensual and devilish and became fallen. Men Creation Fall, and you probably know what the next thing is going to come.

00:42:36 Wherefore the Almighty God gave his only begotten son as it is written in those scriptures which have been given of him. So Creation, Fall, Atonement, here's the basic beliefs of the church. I can point out a couple little interesting things here. It seems like the Book of Mormon is already affecting them, and I don't want to over claim here, but in verse 20, it's interesting that they don't use the word sin, they use the word transgression, and I'm not claiming that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had done a deep dive into second Nephi two at this point, or anything more than just read it, but they're already kind of softening the language a little bit to where there's a difference between a transgression and a sin. I might be wrong here, they



could be synonyms, but it does seem like they're starting to inch towards this idea of the Fall being something that was progressive. Yes, it caused us to Fall, it brought death into the world, but it was part of the plan, which is what the Book of Mormon basically puts forward.

Hank Smith: 00:43:37 If I'm a new member of the church. Is the church's stance on the fall of Adam and Eve, different than especially in Joseph's day, is that different than what people taught?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:43:50 Yes. If we're saying in Joseph's day, and that includes the introduction of the temple ordinances, and I hope I'm not going too far, but spoiler alert, everybody, Creation, Fall and Atonement are what are discussed in the temple ordinances. It does seem to be introducing this more positivistic view of the Fall. I mean just the simple phrase in the Book of Mormon that Adam fell that men might be and men are that they might have joy immediately takes this from being an original sin that really offended God and completely threw off God's plans and designs to something that no, God intended to happen and that God turned into a good thing and that eventually became a way for us to experience good and evil, but learn from that, overcome it and come back to God knowing good from evil, if that makes sense. This is our first tiptoe. Section 29 is going to pick up on this a little bit, but I will say, yeah, based on the Temple Endowment, which is kind of the last iteration of Joseph Smith's exploration of the Fall, I can't get into what the temple says and I, I won't, but it does present a much more positive view of the Fall and its purposes being something and it does stuff like take Adam and Eve to messed up God's plan and caused each of us to experience sorrow to people who had to experience and know joy and sorrow in order to be whole and complete.

00:45:16 Maybe I'm reading too much into the use of the word transgression, but it is interesting that if you view the church leaders, they've always kind of hued away from saying original sin, which is what most Christians would say and say transgression. There is a difference between a transgression and a sin, though sometimes they're used interchangeably. Let me tell a story when this comes up in my class and someone says, what's the difference between a transgression and a sin? My wife was pregnant, she woke me up in the middle of the night and said my water broke. I got her in the car and it was 3:00 AM and I drove to the hospital and I was going on a road where I knew it was 35, going about 85 was the action that I took a sin or was it a transgression? On the one hand, I knew what the speed limit was.

- 00:46:01 I knew that it might be a little dangerous, but I feel like the law that thou shalt not go faster than 35 miles per hour is less important than the thou shalt not let thine wife die while she is in labor with thine child. Adam and Eve acted out of necessity and it wasn't necessarily against God's plan and they're sort of hinting at that here, but later people will get into the Book of Mormon and realize the texts like Second Nephi two really changed the game. If you have that different perspective on who Adam and Eve were, you have a different perspective on humanity. Now this does say, and the Book of Mormon does have other passages that say, man became central and devilish and became fallen. It doesn't shy away from the introduction of evil into the world, but it's again, hinting at maybe a higher purpose for the Fall.
- Hank Smith: 00:46:46 I really like that there may be some out there in the history of Christianity that taught you know, a fortunate fall, but not many. This goes against the mainstream of Joseph's day and even today.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:47:00 Yeah, and that's okay and it's an interesting discussion to have with people. I remember talking with people as a missionary saying, well, God's original plan failed, so he came up with a backup plan and that just doesn't mesh with my theology. I think that all of it was part of the plan from the beginning, but that God couldn't just shove us out of his presence. We had to make a choice, and that's how we deal with and introduce a number of complex questions like why is there evil? Why do bad things happen in this? Why is there sorrow and death? It's just so beautifully presented in our theology to say that, yeah, these things are bad, but they're necessary for us to know the opposites for us to experience opposition. It shows the impact of the Book of Mormon on their thinking, their theology.
- Hank Smith: 00:47:45 I think you're right. Also, John, you remember when Ammon and Aaron both teach to the Lamanites, this is how they do it, Creation, Fall, Atonement.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:47:55 Yeah. This is the Nephite plan of salvation. They don't draw the circles and lines. They draw the bridge, which has three pillars, the creation of the earth, the fall of Adam and Eve, and the atonement of Jesus Christ. And again, here in our constitution, here's what we believe. God created us in His image, we fell, but there was a way for us to be saved. Verse 24, he gave his only begotten Son.
- John Bytheway: 00:48:22 I like the phrase that you used Hank of Fortunate fall, our friend and colleague [Brad Wilcox](#), remember that really quotable

thing? He said the Atonement was not plan B which God came up with to clean up the mess Adam and Eve made of the world, but it was plan A. He referenced Mosiah four six, and I've noticed this ever since Brad pointed that out, how often in the Book of Mormon when it says, this is Mosiah four six, so King Benjamin, and also the atonement which has been prepared from the foundation of the world. In other words, that was always the plan.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:48:58

It really does impact your worldview, right? If you view the progenitors of the human race to be incredibly dumb, or if you view them as taking an action that was necessary for them to know good from evil, to know love and also know loss. I'm not trying to downplay the unpleasant aspects of life. We all experience those, but there's a lot of joy to be found in life too. And if I walked around thinking this was all just a big mistake that would affect my worldview a little bit and I'd be a little bit more negative. At the same time, we've got to be careful that the scriptures say even this scripture, that man became sensual and devilish and then all are fallen and come short. It was a fall downward, but it was a fall forward, might be the best way to put it, but it caused progress and I'm glad you brought that up.

00:49:48

You're referencing Doctrine and Covenants 138, which is the grand finale where everybody shows up. It's the Avengers End Game, and it is really comforting that the first two people that Joseph F. Smith describes being in paradise are Adam and our glorious Mother Eve. And I also think of that passage in Moses five, where Eve finally has the Atonement explained to her and says, were it not for our transgression we never would've known seed. And the joy that she ties those two things directly, I don't know exactly when that little episode with the angel happened. It was probably before she knew what it was like to lose a child, which she does eventually experience, but just the idea that they belonged together and that the Fall was going to help them. There's this beautiful book by Mark Twain called The Diary of Adam and Eve, and most of it's just jokes about men and women, but there's a beautiful scene at the end where Adam is watching his children and Eve has passed away and Adam thinks to himself, the truth was there never was a choice because wherever Eve was, that was Eden.

00:50:57

Boy, that captures better than anything our view of the Fall, that they weren't choosing to sin against God. They were choosing each other. They were choosing to experience what it really was to know love. That's what the Book of Mormon brings up, is that in the garden there was total equilibrium. There was no joy nor sorrow. And so we have to conclude, I don't know if

they knew love. There's nothing as joyful and as sorrowful as being in love with somebody and having to process those emotions. Boy, I love what the Book of Mormon brings to the Fall.

Hank Smith: 00:51:30

And you did tell us Section 20 does pull.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:51:33

Yeah, this is the Reader's Digest Book of Mormon, I guess you'd say. Let's condense the Book of Mormon down to 84 verses, and he even has that little introduction. Here's where it came from, here's what it teaches. Here's what you've got to do now, get baptized.

Hank Smith: 00:51:47

Well, let's keep going, Casey, what's next?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:51:48

The summary of Jesus Christ's mission, which Joseph Smith is going to quote later on. You'll notice in verse 23, he says He was crucified, died and rose again, third day, and ascended into heaven to sit down on the right hand of the Father to reign with almighty power according to the will of the Father. This is going to get quoted by Joseph Smith again and you hear it quoted again and again and again, sometimes three or four times in a general conference. In 1838, Joseph Smith, he did like a q and a in the Elders Journal. What do Latter-day Saints believe? This is the statement that he makes. He's quoting Section 20, which is pulling from the Book of Mormon. He said, the fundamental principle of our religion are the testimony of the apostles and prophets concerning Jesus Christ that he died was buried and rose again the third day and ascended into heaven.

00:52:37

And all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages. When Joseph Smith's mind, if the teachings of the church are like a tree, the trunk of the tree is that Jesus died, was buried and rose again the third day and ascended into heaven. Everything else, even major things like temple work is a big branch and missionary work. And then there's little branches like ward socials and green Jello salad and stuff like that. But we ought to follow his example and maybe use the Doctrine and Covenants 20 as a text where, hey, what do you guys believe? Well, fundamental to our religion is this idea that Jesus died, was buried and rose again the third day. He's sticking with the basic message here too. And sometimes we go off on little theological tangents, which can be really fun and interesting, but we need to continually circle back to these ideas of, hey, this is really why we meet together and why we serve and why we venerate Jesus because of what he did for us.

Hank Smith: 00:53:38 Yeah, when someone says, I have a lesson coming up. I don't know what to teach. What should I teach? Well, if you don't know what to teach, why don't you talk about the Savior, the begotten son of God that he suffered temptations, he was crucified, died, rose again on the third day. That is why we do everything we do. When he says appendages Casey, wouldn't you also say then that they only have their power from that? The branch has no power of itself.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:54:05 Yeah, everything has meaning because of that. The church is just a social club really. If we don't have the power of the atonement of Jesus Christ, if we don't have the Savior as the center of our worship, and that's not a terrible reason to go to church every Sunday. I like the people in my ward and they're my friends and I'm happy to see them. But it's those few moments when we recognize what Jesus did for us. The broken bread and the water that represents his blood. I think John, you wrote a book that says, hey why are we doing this? What's the core? Yeah, it's that little moment when we come together to recognize Jesus died, was buried and rose again the third day.

Hank Smith: 00:54:46 So if you're going to have family night, you don't know what to talk about.

John Bytheway: 00:54:49 Yeah, there's an idea.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:54:52 Yeah, it's a good story. Yeah. It's a gripping narrative and now he's going to expand and a lot of the basic belief section is talking about you go to verse 27, the gifts and calling of God of the Holy Ghost. Spiritual gifts are going to be part of our teaching. In verse 28, father, son and Holy Ghost are one God, infinite, eternal without end, which the Book of Mormon teaches that idea. We just have to nuance what we mean by them being one God and then getting into the basic principles of the gospel. Verse 29, all men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ and worship the Father in his name and endure in faith on His name to the end or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God. Then the next two verses are the two verses that I kind of like hone in on because this is where they start to say a little bit about what they believe about the Atonement and how it works.

00:55:43 And I remember an old teacher of mine, Craig Ostler, talking about how understanding the gospel is sometimes understanding the terms that we use. There's two terms here used in verse 30, in verse 31 that could be misunderstood. And once you understand them, it does expand a little bit about how Latter-day Saints view the Atonement. We know that

justification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true. And we know also that sanctification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true to all those who love and serve God with all their might, mind and strength. And I would say that a lot of our discussion with other churches, especially Protestant and evangelical friends, centers around this idea of grace, how grace works, what we believe about grace. And these two verses have led to me having a number of wonderful conversations with my friends of other faiths about the difference between justification and the difference between sanctification.

00:56:49 Craig Ostler, I remember in his class actually opening up a [1828 dictionary](#). That's when Noah Webster published the first dictionary of the English language and saying, well, okay, I don't know if this is exact, but hey, here's how maybe Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery thought of justification and sanctification. Here's the definition. Justification according to an 1828 dictionary in theology, remission of sin, an absolution from guilt and punishment, or an act of free grace by which God pardons the sinner and accepts him as righteous on account of the atonement of Christ. Just like it says here, justification comes through grace. This is a place where we agree with all of Christianity, that it's not us that saves us. We do a terrible job explaining this to people, not just non-members, but I think to our own children. We do a terrible job explaining this idea. Let me share an example.

00:57:52 I'm a missionary in southern Florida. We knock on this guy's door. The guy opens the door and says, guys, I'm a Lutheran minister. I don't think you want to talk to me. And I was, you know, pretty fiery. And I stuck my foot in the door and said, actually, you're exactly the kind of person that we want to talk to. And the guy goes, okay, tell me if you had to stand before God and justify why you deserve to go to the celestial kingdom or whatever you guys believe in, why you're justified to be there. And I was 19 and very young and kind of dumb. And I remember saying, I would say to him, I've done everything that you've asked me to do. I hope that I'm worthy to enter your presence. And the guy looked at me and he said, and that's what's wrong with Mormons. You think you're going to save yourself? And he closed the door. I was pretty devastated because I gave a really poor answer.

Hank Smith: 00:58:51 You didn't mention Jesus, right?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:58:53 I never said Jesus. Right. Why do you deserve to be here? I never brought up Jesus Christ. I never said the words grace. I

never mentioned the Atonement. It was a terrible answer. Objectively, it caused me to do a lot of reflection and studying, and I'd answer that question completely differently today. But how many of our kids do get that idea that there's some kind of eternal scoreboard and you're just trying to get enough points so that you're justified in going to heaven? That's really scary. Our friends of different faiths, especially evangelicals, are correct in saying that we don't save ourselves. We don't. We're justified through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which is just and true. If we examine those words, justification according to the definition we read is a pardon. Boy, there's a lot of discussions about pardons back and forth in our current discourse, but a pardon fundamentally isn't a person saying this person isn't guilty of what they've done.

00:59:56 It's sometimes you saying, yeah, they're guilty, but we're just not going to punish them for it. We're going to set aside this. A president pardons somebody. It's not us saying they're innocent. It could be us saying they're guilty. Like the example I use in class is [Gerald Ford pardons Richard Nixon](#). And President Ford wasn't trying to say Richard Nixon didn't do the things that he did. His justification was I think this would put the country through too many problems. And so I'm just going to pardon him. He's lost the presidency. That's enough. We're going to move on. Justification means that Jesus Christ covers you for your sins and it's not anything that you earn. It means that you're square with the law of justice. In fact, that's what the root of the word is. When we think of justice, we think of that statue with the sword and the scales and she's blindfolded.

01:00:49 It's just basically us saying, no, you're never going to be righteous enough to earn your way into heaven. Please don't think that you are justified through Jesus Christ. You are going to be there because of what Jesus Christ did and not because of anything you did. That attitude does raise the question of, well then why do we keep the commandments? Why don't we just accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and then move on? I mean, you've all seen those little comic books they used to put around where you'd sign at the end your name and you would've accepted Jesus Christ and his grace and you're saved. And full disclosure, I did sign one of those once just to make sure I'm covered. Get your bases covered.

01:01:30 I got my bases covered, right? If this whole restoration doesn't work out, I'm good with that particular church that left that comic book in that Denny's. Again, it raises the question of, do you just sign the paper and then that's the end of your life? What's the role and why was Jesus so insistent on righteousness

and sincerity and keeping the commandments? And that's where verse 31 comes in. We know also that sanctification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true to all those who love and serve God with all their might, mind and strength. We're saved by grace but to borrow from our friend Brad Wilcox are we changed by grace? A justification means you're saved, you're going to be okay no matter what happens. Sanctification means, did we actually change something like going back to my 1830 dictionary in that dictionary sanctification is defined as the act of making holy in an evangelical sense, it's the act of God's grace by which the affections of men are purified and alienated from sin and the world and exalted to a supreme love of God. We're saved. We don't have to worry about going to hell. But the question is, when we get to heaven, are we going to be the kind of people that feel comfortable and belong there? And that's where sanctification comes into play. Once you have accepted Christ as your Savior, have you actually changed to where it has made a difference to you?

Hank Smith: 01:03:05 Sometimes when I'm questioned about the same subject, I'll say, I don't live the gospel so I can get into the Celestial kingdom. I live the gospel, so I'll choose the Celestial kingdom. When it is offered to me that I'll say that's what I truly want, that's where I want to be. And Casey, if we continually teach our children and grandchildren about some sort of celestial scoreboard, it's defeating. It comes from a place of fear, I think.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 01:03:40 Yeah. And it's caused a lot of problems. Like one word that I don't think anybody knew 20 years ago is scrupulosity. It's the idea that some people almost get a religious OCD where they feel like if they don't say prayers three times a day or they fall asleep while they're reading their scriptures, that they're going to get in trouble with God, that they have to check every single little box and these verses, by introducing the terms justification and sanctification do free us up a little bit to the point to where we have to get across the idea that we're not earning our way into heaven. We're learning what it's like to be in heaven. We're trying to become celestial. Both of you are probably familiar with [Stephen Robinson](#), he's a wonderful theologian. He wrote an amazing book that everybody should read called *Believing Christ*. He talks about how he was trained at a Baptist seminary.

01:04:34 That's where he did his graduate work, and then he came to BYU. He noticed at BYU that a lot of students believed in this model of grace where you do everything you can and then grace carries you the rest of the way. We're saved by grace after all we can do. He realized that was causing them to have major



anxiety over, am I doing enough? Like he even realized that his own wife, he said his wife came home one day and she was one of those ladies that had like the big giant church binder and she chucked her binder down and started crying and said, I can't do this. Man this is too much. I'm supposed to be a perfect wife and a perfect mother and have a church job, and it's way too much.

- Hank Smith: 01:05:16 And I think she said something, I'll just settle for the telestial kingdom. Yeah. Like I'm just not celestial material.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 01:05:22 Yeah, and if you realize that even a person as great as his wife was fundamentally didn't get it, like you don't have to be perfect. What you do is you have to be sincere. And sanctification is just us basically saying, yeah, I accept your grace and that I'm going to be saved because of what Jesus did, but I'm going to try and be a better person. I'm going to try and live the commandments. But there's no scoreboard or timer or anything like that. There's just you and the Savior and you saying I'm sincerely trying the best that I can. Once I came to understand that, it freed me up a lot to say, hey, if I fall asleep before I say a prayer at night, or if I stub my toe and I let loose a word that I shouldn't have used, it doesn't take off my righteousness points.
- 01:06:17 There's no such thing as righteousness points. There's just you and the Savior and the level of sincerity that you have. D. Todd Christofferson gave this awesome talk where he likened the whole thing to Les Miserables. If you're familiar with that, at the first of the play, Jean Valjean robs this priest. He steals from the priest, he gets caught and gets dragged back when the cops are basically saying, this guy robbed you, didn't he? The priest says, no, actually, I gave him these candlesticks too. And at that point the cops have to let him go. And Jean Valjean is like, why did you do that? And the priest explains, because I want to give you a chance, that's justification. Jean Valjean is still the sort of guy that steals from priests, but at this point, he's been given a new lease on life. He's not going to be punished for his past transgressions.
- 01:07:07 And then he goes out and he tries to live a life that matches what that priest did for him. And then the way [Elder Christofferson](#) describes it, at the end of the play, Jean Valjean sees all the people that he's helped and all the lives that he's affected, and that's sanctification. That is okay. He's changed. He's not the sort of person that robs priests anymore. When my students come in, a lot of times, and a really common question, especially when I taught high school seminary, was how do I

know if I've repented? And sometimes we do get into a little bit of trouble with our checklist model. You have to realize you've committed the sin. You have to confess the sin, you have to make restitution for the sin, and then you don't do the sin again. And if that gets you to where you need to be, awesome.

01:07:51 I just think the problem is, is that it's sort of missing the point of the whole thing. Like I had a colleague at BYU who said he was in a bishopric, and this girl came up to him before sacrament meeting started and said, hey, can I talk to you, Bishop? He goes, okay, do we need to go in my office? She's like, no, we can do this right here. Last night I broke the law of chasity and he said, we need to, we need to have a conversation about this. And she goes, no, I realize what I'd done was wrong. I apologized to the person I'm confessing to you and I'm not going to do it again. We're good. Right? That's still us trying to do justification. The truth is the real question that you should be asking is, well, am I the sort of person that would do that?

01:08:33 Again, have I changed into the sort of person who wouldn't commit that sin? This is another idea in the Book of Mormon, when King Benjamin's people accept Christ, they don't say, hey, we're never going to sin again. They say, we don't have any desire to commit sin, and that seems to be what we're aiming for here. It's not a perfect sinless life. That's just not possible, and it's not necessary. Jesus Christ has paid the price for our sins, but a sincere life where we strive and don't deliberately sin or at least try to get to that point to where we don't have the desires to sin anymore.

Hank Smith: 01:09:10 I really like that. John, another talk, [Jesus knows I'm Christian](#). I remember this because you had a conversation with a man on an airplane who said, you're not a Christian.

John Bytheway: 01:09:21 Yeah. He said, you guys believe in the Jesus of the gaps. The way my mind works. I thought, I don't know where Jesus shopped. I don't think it was the Gap, but he was talking about this very thing. You think you're going to do all this and then he's going to make up the difference. He's going to make up the gap in the end. I thought, oh, I know where he gets that. That's after all we can do. Thankfully, there's been a lot of really helpful discussion in teaching about that, what Nephi meant there. You've got to read the next verse too. After that, I went home. I took out my triple, and I found every reference to merits. I would recommend anybody do this who wants to really have a wonderful experience about this idea. And every time I found a verse about meriting salvation, it was never our merits. It was always through the merits and mercy and grace of Christ. And it

was such a cool thing to say, there's no gap. I got no chance except for the grace of Christ and his merits. It was really cool to go through every verse and what was a little bit astonishing, or as the Book of Mormon might say exceedingly astonishing about it, was that the seven different references were from seven different characters in the Book of Mormon. Pretty cool. So it was consistently and broadly taught.

Coming up in part two of this episode.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 01:10:50 Elder Merrill and I found this in his journal, went to a meeting in Salt Lake Temple. This was in, I believe 1943, was ushered into the room and quickly told by a member of the first presidency that Richard Lyman had committed a really serious transgression that they were considering his membership in the church.



- John Bytheway: 00:00:00 Keep listening for part two with Dr. Casey Griffiths, Doctrine and Covenants sections 20 through 22.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:08 John, you and I have been doing this way too long together because I had my index open to merit because I wanted to back up what Casey is saying here, which is he said a lot of this comes from the Book of Mormon. And if anybody's wondering, wait, does the Book of Mormon teach what Casey just taught? If you go to merit, you have second Nephi two, Lehi. No flesh can dwell in God's presence. Save through the merits of the Messiah. Second Nephi 31, Nephi rely wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save. Alma 22. This is Aaron. Since man had fallen, he could not merit anything of himself. Alma 24, God has taken away guilt from hearts through the merits of his son. There's nothing in here about me earning, about me,
- John Bytheway: Earning my merit badges, right? My salvation merit badge.
- Hank Smith: This is Helaman 14, have remission of sins through Christ's merits. And then Moroni six rely alone upon the merits of Christ. He saves 100%. I had a great conversation with my friend Michelle Behr out here in Mapleton. We talked through this, how much is my part? How much is Jesus's part? And it's 100% Jesus. It is 100%. It's not 99.99% him, it's all him. And I live the gospel to firmly attach myself to him. So he'll take me where he is going.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:01:39 Isn't it transformative to change to that perspective to say, hey, I don't have to do everything right, I just have to sincerely strive. Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 00:01:51 In fact, I have my own version of the song. I'm trying to be like Jesus. It's called I'm failing to be like Jesus. I'm messing up every day. It goes like that kind of. Sometimes you'll hear people say, I accept Jesus as my Savior and I make him Lord of my life. And I like that idea. I'm going to try to follow him because he asked me to, what manner of men and women ought you to be, be

like me. So I'm going to try, but that's not the formula for salvation because I'm going to mess up coming to him and repenting. That's what we're supposed to do. And Hank, you mentioned Alma 24, I think it's Alma 24:11. Stephen Robinson pointed out for it was all that we could do to repent. I mean, listen to the phrase they used. Therefore it was all that we could do to repent. That's the only thing you can do. Everything else is just turning our hearts. And then the sanctification comes also through the grace of Christ. But we're going to strive. I like the idea of striving. It's not the measure of your striving that saves you, that part's done.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:02:58 We're making it sound like justification is the only thing involved in the grace of Christ, but it's just a gift that you receive salvation. But in verse 31, they say, we know that sanctification comes through the grace of our Lord and Savior. So sanctification is linked to grace too. And we shouldn't think of grace as just this infusion of righteousness that comes near the end of our lives, but as something that as we're striving to be better, he helps us. He makes us better. [D. Todd Christofferson](#), this is what he said, to be sanctified through the blood of Christ is to become clean, pure, and holy. If justification removes the punishment for past sins like being pardoned, then sanctification removes the stain or the effects of sin. These two terms are interrelated. One explains why we don't have to spend every moment of every day worrying about our celestial scorecard, but sanctification also gives us a reason to strive to be better, to self-improve, to work towards something.

00:03:57 Even if we acknowledge and realize that any improvement we make is a gift from Christ and we need to keep him centered on the whole thing. So wish I could go back and smack my 19-year-old self in the head and say, do better. I was being sincere when I gave that answer. It just kind of illustrates to me that, boy, I grew up in a great community with people that loved me, but for some reason I just missed that step, you know? And it seems like a big thing to miss. I wasn't very scripturally literate at the time in my defense and I spent the next two years reading the Book of Mormon and since then, teaching this idea, could we emphasize that maybe a little bit more? Can we help people understand the role of grace and how important it is? And hey, Amazing Grace is back in the hymn book now, so let's sing it as well. Any opportunity we get to.

Hank Smith: 00:04:48 One more shout out to Brother Robinson. If any of his family's listening, they're going to say, wow.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:04:53 Wow. They're just stealing from this guy, right? He's so good. That's all we're doing. His stuff is so good.

Hank Smith: 00:04:58 Yeah, he just tells the story. I've told it before when he was teaching his daughter to swim, she was so terrified that she couldn't learn. My dad's going to drown me. I'm going to die. She's like, the water was only three and a half feet deep, but Becky was only three feet deep. She was so petrified. She began to scream and cry and kick and scratch and was unteachable. Finally I had to grab her. I threw my arms around her and I held her and I said, Becky, I'm your dad. I love you. I'm not going to let you drown. Now relax. Bless her heart she trusted me. She relaxed. I put my arms under her and I said, okay, now kick your legs. And we began to learn how to swim. Then he said this, there are some of us who are similarly petrified by the questions, am I celestial?

00:05:48 Am I going to make it? Was I good enough today? We're so terrified of whether we're going to live or die or whether we've made it into the kingdom or not that we're not making any progress. It's at those times when the Savior grabs us, throws his arms around us and says, I've got you. I love you. I'm not going to let you die. Now relax and trust me, if we can relax and trust him and believe him as well as believe in him, then together we can learn to live the gospel. He just had a great way, Casey, right? of making these analogies, oh yeah, I can do that.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:06:22 He did such a good job. He's not the only one. I'm going to say [Brad Wilcox](#), the most downloaded BYU devotional in history is on grace. President Uchtdorf, [Elder Christofferson](#), a number of leaders of the church, have helped us make this shift away from, hey, if we do good works to no grace and works come together. You know, [C.S. Lewis](#) once answered the question of what's more important, faith or works? Grace could be substituted easily there. And he said, that's like asking me which blade in a pair of scissors is more important.

John Bytheway: 00:06:57 So brilliant, what a great answer.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:06:59 Both are important, but mentally as Latter-day Saints, we need to recognize a lot more the power of grace in our lives and stop putting this kind of toxic perfectionism, this scrupulosity that just really, really harms people. In some ways the gospel is the good news. It's meant to relieve us of our burdens. At the same time, we want to strive to do better. We just don't need to be so hard on ourselves sometimes.

Hank Smith: 00:07:30 Sometimes maybe Casey, we reverse it. The first John, it says We love him because he first loved us, and we sometimes reverse that. He'll love us when we love him. Yeah. That's not his way. Yeah, and you don't need to be afraid as a parent or grandparent to teach this. We almost think, well then they're going to go sin and they're going to go have all these major problems and I, I don't want that to happen. So I'm really going to lay on the pressure of being obedient. Yet I don't know if that's going to be as effective as we think.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:08:03 There's obedience that comes with fear and obedience that comes with love. The obedience that's linked to love is much more fulfilling. It's much more healing and it's much more gratifying in the end. I don't want my kids to do what I tell them to do because they're scared of me or they're afraid of some eternal damnation or punishment. I want them to do it because they know I care about them and because I love them. These two verses, I think they're the most important verses in section 20. I'm going to go out on a limb and say because they prompt so much discussion about what does the Savior actually do for us. And if he does justify us, then why keep the commandments? There's a good reason why we emphasize both and it's just a question of keeping that idea in balance. I think for a little while there we may have emphasized our acts a little bit too much and section 20 is pulling us back and saying, alright, let's understand who's actually the instrument of your salvation and why you're righteous is not to earn your way there. It's to learn what you're supposed to be like.

Hank Smith: 00:09:09 Another part of the true and living church. Yeah, as a church we learn and grow. So Casey, you've showed us these three sections, history, beliefs. Are we ready to move to the third section, practices?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:09:24 Yeah, this is the biggest section. It's basically verses 37 to 84. It breaks down into priesthood offices. That's about verses 38 to 67. What happens after a person gets baptized verses 68 to 69. Then it talks about ordinances. So offices and ordinances. I'm starting around verse 70. They start to mention ordinances starting with interestingly, blessing children. Verse 70 talks about that. Then instructions for baptism about verse 71 to 74, the sacrament prayers are 75 to 79 and then record keeping. So I'd like to point out a couple things here. First, it is interesting that in introducing the duties of the priesthood holders in the church, the priesthood of the church, there's instructions specifically for elders, for priests. And I want to point out, in the early church, most of these offices were held by adult men. It's kind of a development in the 20th century that 16 year olds,

now it's down to 11 year olds hold these priesthood offices, but each one has instructions given to them. I'll just pull one out here. The priest's duty, this is verse 46, is to preach and teach and expound and exhort and baptize and administer the sacrament, visit the house of each member and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties. Again, this is going to be an active church with people assisting each other, people helping each other, people visiting. It's sometimes seen as a negative thing, but it's actually helpful to have people that are all up in your business all the time. Right?

00:11:13 I think in my own ward about the ministering sisters and brothers and all the good that they do, we had a lady in our ward who fell while she was getting in the shower and laid on the ground for five or six hours because she couldn't get up. And her ministering sister who lived next door had a prompting that something was wrong, went over, had the audacity to just go in the house too and found her and got her to the hospital. This active engaged church is going to be part of it as well. And one of the things that's emphasized throughout all these is everybody is going to be doing this. I want to share a story. This is from a guy named [William Cahoon](#).

John Bytheway: 00:11:52 Oh, I love this story.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:11:54 Yeah, he's a teacher in Kirtland, Ohio and his job was to home teach the Smiths, to teach Joseph and Emma. So he's 17 years old and you can imagine it would be intimidating, but this is the way he relates it. He said, I knocked the prophet came to the door, he invited me in and then William said the following, they soon came and took their seats. He, Joseph Smith, said Brother William, I submit myself and my family into your hands and took his seat. Now brother William said, he asked all the questions, you feel like by this time all my fears and trembling had ceased? And I said, brother Joseph, are you trying to live your religion? He answered, yes. I then said, do you pray in your family? He said, yes. Do you teach your family the principles of the gospel? He replied, yes, I am trying to do it. Do you ask a blessing on your food? He answered, yes. Are you trying to live in peace and harmony with your family? He said that he was. And then I turned to Joseph and said, I am through with my questions as a teacher and now if you have any instructions, I shall be happy to receive them. So, imagine going into the prophet's house and being like, hey, how you doing buddy?

00:13:07 You blessing your food? and you're 17. Are you teaching your kids the gospel? But that's the structure set up in section 20 is that everybody's looking out for everybody and as time goes on,



we'll expand this to include ministering sisters and others to make sure everybody's okay. It even says, this one always struck me. If you go down to teachers in verse 54 and part of a teacher's job is to see that there's no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting or evil speaking. So the teachers are supposed to be walking around saying, hey, I saw what you posted on social media. That's not cool. You can't get mad at your neighbor because they were doing renovations at 4:00 AM in the morning. That not okay. That is kind of the essence. It's going off what Moroni described, which is that the church is supposed to be this rollicking family that's all up in each other's business all the time.

00:14:04 In a positive way, in a way of, hey, how you doing? You doing okay? Are you doing all right with the commandments? And if not, what do we do to help you out? I guess we're saved as a community. That's always been a big part of the church that appeals to me is it's not you go to the most popular preacher on Sunday, you're organized geographically, so you're stuck with these people, whether you like it or not, you've gotta make them work. I used to tell people, if you've got a ward, you've got a family. That's what comes across when people join the church that okay, now you've got all these people that are going to take care of you and that you're going to help take care of. The officers of the church are specifically instructed to do this. And as we expand the church with, with different organizations like Relief Society, like Young Women's, like Primary, this central idea of we're all watching out for each other grows out of this little tiny church organization that exists in section 20 of the Doctrine & Covenants.

Hank Smith: 00:15:07 I love it. John, I remember with [Dr. Melissa Inouye](#), do you remember last year? She said, Jesus says, love your enemies. So he put a bunch in your ward to let you practice and you said, so many enemies, one convenient location.

John Bytheway: 00:15:26 Yes. So funny. [Elder Christofferson](#) gave a talk called Why the Church Back in 2015? One of the things he said was to experience the application of divine doctrine. Then he said, we experience each other's idiosyncrasies. And then I think it was off the cuff in conference, he said, President Packer used to call them our idiot syncrasies. Yeah. Now here's the Divine doctrine. Now here's a place you can experience it in your own ward.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:15:58 I was going to mention one of my favorite essays is by [Eugene England](#). It's called the Church is true as the Gospel because we've gotten so used to saying, well, you know the gospel's

true, but the church, and we tend to denigrate the church and the point of his essay, and I'm just going to paraphrase them here, is that the church is a, like a laboratory. We get all kinds of different people and what connects us is our beliefs, not our background, not our upbringing, not our socioeconomic status. What brings us together is the belief in Jesus Christ and in that little laboratory, yeah, we learn how to love sometimes even really difficult people. We learn how to serve and we learn what it means to be part of the body of Christ that you can't say to the hand, I have no use of you because they might be doing something totally different and we learn to extend mercy to those whose circumstances we can't fully understand. Like I'm just really grateful to have that little community that I've been part of. I think I've been part of my ward for like 20 years and it's a ward where people move in and out all the time. Starter homes, whenever anybody introduces themselves in Elders Quorum. I say, yeah, I moved in in September of 2002, and I'm the old man in the ward now, but it's just been so wonderful to have these people care for me and care for my family and really help lift us up. It's just a huge blessing.

Hank Smith: 00:17:26 And Casey doesn't it just rip your heart out when you hear someone have a terrible experience? In your experience knowing church history, when do things go wrong. When does it turn in a way that this is not how it was supposed to be?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:17:43 There are stories where it went wrong and stories where it turned into a problem for people, but it's generally us trying to find that happy medium between being too involved in someone's life, maybe putting too many expectations on them and being too little involved. My experience with my ward and my ward is awesome, they just have been so amazing throughout the years, is that we do run into problems sometimes when we get a little too judgmental. I think I've mentioned that I have a son that has autism. When he was little, he was really hard to control. A guy in our ward came up to me and said, why don't you control your kid during sacrament meeting? He was an older guy and I said, you know that he has autism, did you know that? And he didn't back down. He was like, well, that's no excuse.

00:18:37 But then a week later he brought over a sheet of printouts on autism, that he had found on the internet and it was kind of his Mia culpa. His way of saying, hey, I'm sorry he couldn't actually say the words I'm sorry, but his sorry was, I've been researching this and I think there's some stuff here that would help you. And he came to become my dear friend. And as that little boy grew up from being a troublesome child who would sometimes he

ran up and grabbed the microphone in the middle of the sacrament meeting and yelled, boom, and then ran back and sat down. Our ward just always embraced him. Our son would go through phases where he was really obsessed with trains and with Ben 10, and then he got really obsessed with Michael Jackson. I remember him passing the sacrament and he passed it and then did like a Michael Jackson spin and went “ee-he-he”

00:19:25 and I was, my wife and I were just mortified, you know, covering our faces and everybody in the ward was like, that's just Josh. A few weeks after that, I remember he came to church and all of the young men and young women had learned the dance to thriller as a treat for him. Man, it was like Christmas morning for my son. He always knew that we loved him and that we cared about him, but to have this larger family that did stuff like that for him and that stuck up for him at school and looked out for him has just been a major blessing for us. Again, in these verses has kind of captured that idea of, the duty of the officers of the church is to keep everybody in line, but don't press too hard, but also be involved, be part of people's lives. That's what we're signing up for when we join the church.

John Bytheway: 00:20:22 Back to Moroni six, there's a line that I've just always loved there. The church did meet together oft to fast and to pray and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls. So it wasn't, they went to listen to one guy or one woman every week. It was, it's us. Let's speak one with another concerning the welfare of our souls. I've always loved that line that it's a community of saints getting together. What did [Elder Holland](#) say? The church isn't a monastery for perfect people. It's at least one aspect of the church is more like a hospital for those who are ill and want to get well.

Hank Smith: 00:21:00 Now, two stories. One Casey, just to make you feel better. I had a son who bore his testimony one week that you can feel the spirit and God will speak to you through horror video games, and explicit music.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:21:18 I know this son, I have met this son. He's a character.

Hank Smith: 00:21:24 That's an interesting moment for my wife and I, but I was a lot like you where I looked around and I thought this ward, they know this boy and they love him, they love him. We all just kind of chuckled together. I wanted to share one other, John, I've never shared this before, but a good friend who moved into the ward has a lot of children like we've talked about. They sat down behind an older gentleman in church and the boys and you know, the kids were just pretty loud and crazy and this man

and his wife stood up and went and sat on the other side of the chapel. My friend was so bothered by this, he thought, you know, I'm trying, I'm trying to help my kids. And he said he felt frustrated with this man, he just couldn't get past it.

00:22:17 Well, eventually my friend is in the bishopric and this older gentleman passes away at his funeral. Somebody said, I think it was a daughter or somebody who knew him said, you may have noticed how difficult it was for him to be around children. It's because in Vietnam he had a lot of experiences where children were armed to come after him. And so if he ever was around children, he had to usually remove himself because of all that trauma that occurred there. And my friend just said, oh, and had I known, had I known what he was suffering with. Casey, I love, I love what you've taught us. We're here for each other.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:23:07 Yeah, yeah. It's a laboratory. We wouldn't run into people like that in our regular life and during the pandemic, I felt that right? We were siloed in our basements and we weren't seeing people. When we went back to church, I started to see the value in that, hey, this guy next to me might be totally different from me. He might be crazy in this one direction, but I need his perspective. I need to see that so that I know that the world isn't full of scary people. It's full of good people who are different from us, but who we can see a lot of good in and we can learn to love. So again, these sections just kind of emphasize we're all up in each other's business. We're a big family and that's by design, that's on purpose.

Hank Smith: 00:23:58 The Lord says in verse 47, you're going to visit the house of each member, right? Then we're not just going to see each other on Sunday. We're going to be in each other's houses.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:24:09 Yeah, we're going to be all up in each other's business all the time, which is by design, not by accident. Thank goodness for that. Now if I could, let me jump to verse 70 and I want to do a broad overview here for a second. When it comes to what the church does, John, you brought up this question of why the church? and a big part of it in [Elder Christofferson's](#) discourse was, well, because we have authority to perform ordinances. Let me point out the ordinances here and you give me kind of the one of these things is not like the other. So baptism is here, confirmation, sacrament, prayers and blessing children. Now which one of those is different from the others in a fundamental level?

Hank Smith: Blessing children.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: Right.

John Bytheway: 00:24:58 They have no idea what's going on.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:24:59 I put up pictures in my class and say, hey, is this a saving ordinance? Is this a saving ordinance? Blessing children is not a saving ordinance. Baptism, the sacrament, are both spoken of as being essential in the Book of Mormon and here and in the Bible. But blessing children isn't essential. Like we don't do baby blessings if a person joins the church when they're 73, that would be weird. You know, we bring him down and we bounce him up and down and say the name he shall be called by is Murray or something like that. But it does point out the purpose of ordinances. On the one hand, some ordinances are essential for us to be saved, you have to be baptized, you have to be confirmed. I don't know if you have to take the sacrament or not to be saved, I guess you get baptized, confirmed and die and never take the sacrament. Be okay.

00:25:54 But some ordinances are just given to allow us to do good and to be good. The rule of thumb for an essential ordinance is do we do it on behalf of people that are deceased? You know, in the temple we do baptisms and confirmations, endowments and sealings if they were married. But some ordinances we just do to make the world a better place. Some ordinances we do just to invoke the power of God. A later section of the Doctrine & Covenants is going to say in the ordinances thereof is the power of godliness manifest. And sometimes we just use the authority god's given us to do something good. Like there's this little couple that lives next door to me and they've become our good friends. They had a baby. And you know how your first child, you're constantly panicking about everything. They called me and said, baby's yellow.

00:26:44 This was like three or four days after she'd come home from the hospital and I wanted to say, you know, she's probably got a little jaundice and it's pretty normal. Most of our kids were yellow for a couple days too, but they were just absolutely panicked. Do we go to the hospital? Should we call the doctor? What should we do? And finally they said, could you come and give us a blessing? And so I went over, I remember the mom was holding the baby, the dad was really nervous, but I said, this is your child. You place hands, so little tiny baby just barely putting our hands on her head while mom held the baby, all three of us were participating in some way and I just listened to this father and I literally had to sort of explain the instructions while he was doing it.

00:27:28 Okay, say this, say this. But I listened to this little father invoke the power of godliness to bless his child. The baby's fine. You know, she's over at my house a couple times a week now and terrorizes us and everything. But I thought to myself, hey, that's something that we do also. Sometimes we get so caught up in the work we have to do to save people that we neglect the influence we can have and the power God gives us just to do good things. Some ordinances are for salvation, some ordinances are just to help people, to give them comfort and guidance. That's another purpose of the church too, is hey, if you are struggling, if you need to make a big decision, it's okay to call your ministering brothers and have them come over and give you a blessing of comfort. You don't have to be in the hospital and attached to a respirator before you ask for the power of God to assist you. Some things we do because they're essential, they're ordinances where we make covenants with God. Some things we do just to bless people and just to help them.

Hank Smith: 00:28:34 Casey, let me ask you a question since we have you here. So here's the basics in Section 20. Now obviously we do a lot more than this today. Primary's not here. Young men's and young women's isn't here. Eventually we're going to get to bishops and apostles. I know that you've studied the history of the church. Why do we have this program and then switch it up and do this program and why do we shift on this? And then go back to that.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:29:06 We've been talking about the importance of section 20, but really it's not all supposed to be here in section 20. This is foundational. This is the foundation that the superstructure is built on. Later revelations, the Lord's going to say, you know, men should be agents unto themselves and do many good things to bring to pass righteousness. This is part of the living aspect of the church too, where this is the minimum expectation for what the church can do. We meet together, we administer ordinances of salvation, we check up on each other and we use the power of godliness to bless each other. But as the church has progressed, there's been a number of additions to the functions of the church, all of which have served their purpose. Some come and some go. We don't go to church for three hours anymore. We don't have seventies quorums in stakes any longer.

00:29:56 That reflects the living, growing nature of the church. But just to give you an example, the primary association was started by a woman named [Aurelia Spencer Rogers](#). She started it because Eliza R. Snow came to her ward and introduced Relief Society and Aurelia's problem was. The kids were like getting into

trouble and causing issues and she basically said, why can't we have something like Relief Society for the kids? Or at the time they were setting up the MIA, the Mutual Improvement Association, the Young Men, Young Women's Program, what do we do for the little kids? And Eliza Snow said something like, there must be some way to teach them the primary principles of the gospel. There you go. The Primary association is introduced. A lot of stuff in the church. We assume the model is revelation comes from on high to leaders of the church and they make changes.

00:30:51 But just as often, revelation comes from the bottom up where something like the Primary association is started by Aurelia Spencer Rogers in Farmington, Utah. And it's a good idea and it catches on and then becomes an official church program. [Seminary](#) was started as a little program by the Granite Stake just because they were worried about kids that couldn't go to a church academy that had to go to a public high school. But it caught on and it became something that helped people. None of these ideas are permanent. I'd say what's in section 20 is the foundational bedrock of the church. That doesn't mean that we can't feel free to improvise. Like if we're building the church as a house, we want to put a granite countertop in here or knock down this wall and add in an extra bedroom or something like that. It's a living, breathing organization.

00:31:39 And what are here basically is the skeletal structure of the church that is beautiful and wonderful and essentially talks about what we do, but can be expanded, can be broadened. The Savior's charge here to look after each other, to bless each other, can take on different iterations and forms. Like I said, if you're reading through Section 20, you would think that just the priests, teachers, deacons and elders would be visiting people today. Ministering sisters do a lot of the heavy lifting when it comes to helping people throughout the church. And I think that's a wonderful addition. I'm really happy that when my daughter, who's 11 right now turns 14, she's going to go out and minister and she's going to be assigned a family in the ward that she's supposed to keep an eye on, an older lady who's going to mentor her in the ways of ministering.

00:32:28 So the Doctrine and Covenants is foundational, but a lot of the revelation happening in the church is taking ideas of the Doctrine & Covenants and adapting them for the circumstances that we live in. And it seems like especially recently, the leaders of the church have been giving us a lot more flexibility and part of that is us looking and saying what's essential? What's not essential? What can we keep? What can we get rid of? I'm

guessing the church will look quite a bit different a hundred years from now than it does right now. What you see in Section 20 will always be there in some way, shape or form.

- Hank Smith: 00:33:04 I have to add one fun fact. My sister, Jennifer Johnson, who was over a women's conference at BYU, she once presided over the largest primary in the church who was in Spanish Fork, Utah with hundreds. Yeah, that's really hundreds of children in primary. For the first time to my knowledge, they received permission to split the primary in ward and so they had two primary presidencies and that would be an example of adjusting to fit circumstance.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:33:35 We're being flexible. A ward my wife and I lived in when we were younger had nine nurseries. Nine nurseries. Every fast Sunday, half the meeting was taken up by baby blessings. I remember my bishop getting up and saying, we have a few baby blessings today, but not many, just six and then moving on. So we change and adapt using these foundational principles
- Hank Smith: 00:34:03 And things will change. Sometimes I think we get converted to a program. It's hard to see it go.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:34:10 Yeah, my wife and I have experienced that. I got called this the Teaching Improvement Coordinator. The TIC was our abbreviated version of that and I loved it because I was Mr. Teaching and I was observing people and then I came to church one Sunday and they said, actually the Sunday school president does that, so you're out of a job. My wife loved cultural arts. She would stage plays and we did an interactive Easter every year and then she was the cultural arts director. The CAD. One day they stopped doing that too. And my wife and I have both said, you know what? We're the finishers in the church. Generally when we get a calling it means the calling is going to end. That happened. My wife was the personal progress leader in our ward. When all that changed, that's part of the ever changing nature of the church. Some things we do will never change, but most things are flexible.
- John Bytheway: 00:35:01 I was one of those 18 month missionaries. I don't know how it happened, but I imagine it, hey, we think there might be a good idea to have the elders go for 18 months. And I don't know if it was for school or scholarships. I've heard all sorts of guesses and so they did for a while. My mission call said 24 months on it, but then another letter came out and said 18. So we among ourselves said, well, we can do 24 months of worth of work in 18, but and then they changed it back. I just figured that was



one of those cases where it was, Lord, we want to try this. And later on, Lord it didn't work the way we thought. That's okay.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:35:46 Yeah, that's the church, right? It's living. It's true. It grows and it changes with the times. I would say that there's openings left in there as well because obviously there's going to be more saving ordinances. We eventually receive the ordinances of the temple and there's going to be more blessing ordinances too. We do more than just bless children. We can do blessings of comfort or father's blessings to provide guidance. Or blessings of healing and all of that is laid out in later sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. I'd be okay if new ordinances are established. I don't think the Doctrine & Covenants talks about blessing homes, but the latest handbook does. The Doctrine & Covenants doesn't describe dedicating graves, but the handbooks of the church do and instructions are updated based on the revelation to the leaders of the church, which is based on the necessity of the circumstances we find ourselves in.

Hank Smith: 00:36:44 And Joseph Smith taught that very thing.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:36:46 Yeah, I think Joseph Smith was clear that we shouldn't be too tied to a particular way of doing things as long as we recognize the fundamentals, which he seemed to think were what Jesus did for us, we could embrace a lot of change as they came along. I love it. Section 21 is kind of a follow-up where Section 20 was written before they had this organizational meeting on April 6th. Section 21 was actually received the day that they're organizing the church there in the presence of everybody. Joseph Smith dictates a revelation that's written out, and this has to do with the structure of the church, which like we said at the time was pretty basic to elders. Here's the basic offices of the church, but it's going to be talking a little bit about the role that Joseph Smith is going to play. And again, one of the biggest questions we still wrestle with in the church is what is the role of the leaders of the church?

00:37:46 Are they infallible? Are they not infallible? When do they have the right to receive revelation and when should we seek our own? Joseph Smith has given five titles here. Verse one, behold there shall be a record kept among you and thou shall be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ. The titles that are given to Joseph Smith are seer, translator, prophet, apostle, and elder. We could walk through each one of those and say what each one means. For instance, the Book of Mormon says that a seer is greater. That a seer is one who can perceive hidden things.

John A. Widtsoe said, A seer is one who sees with spiritual eyes. He perceives the meaning of that which is obscure to others. Therefore he is an interpreter and a clarifier of eternal truth.

00:38:40 And we've all seen examples of seership. We've been talking about change in the church, but that three hour to two hour change, which we kind of use as an example of change because it's fairly innocuous. Nobody was offended. In fact, it was probably the most popular revelation in the history of the church. like literally nobody complained. But the underlying motivation behind it was President Nelson had been given direction that we needed to be more home centered. We don't always acknowledge that we went from three hours to two hours to zero hours of church and the church functioning at its most basic level during the pandemic, which was at home. I remember the first Sunday that my son and I blessed and passed the sacrament to the rest of the family. President Nelson was really gifted with Seership in recognizing, and I'm not saying he knew that there was going to be a pandemic, but that the home was where the magic really happens and we needed to be better prepared for that. It was a blessing that we had that shift in focus, even if it was just for a little while before we went into that kind of lockdown survival mode.

Hank Smith: 00:39:51 That's really great. Casey, can I throw in that I think the church also learned about its single members during that time and thought, wait, what do we do when someone is at home by themselves? How do we make that work for them? And I saw a lot of adjusting in a ward and a stake level.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:40:12 Yeah. And that's part of their role, right? A seer can see things that the rest of us don't see. The old analogy of a watchman on a tower. That means that they might perceive changes that we need to make and sometimes the changes can be difficult, but they're looking out for us to kind of steer us in the right way. Now the others might seem a little bit stranger like a translator. I'll have students say, hey, has anybody besides Joseph Smith done any major translation? And the honest answer to that is no. Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon and then the Bible and then the Book of Abraham. But translator in our understanding too, we'll probably get into this more as we progress in the Doctrine & Covenants and his purpose to translate the Bible. When you look at Joseph Smith's Bible translation, it's clear that it wasn't always just putting back stuff that was lost.

00:41:05 It was understanding the intent of the original scriptural writer. And if that's what a translator does, if they're translating not

necessarily from one language to another, but understanding the intent of the writer, I would say that's still something that the president of the church is asked to do, that he's given a spiritual gift to read a passage and understand the intent because language is one thing, but intention coming from written words, a completely different thing. The other terms that he saw is a prophet. A prophet is someone that testifies of Jesus Christ. Like the most basic definition is in Revelation chapter 19, verse 10, where the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. And so a basic role of the President of the church is to serve as a witness of Jesus Christ, to testify of his divinity, his resurrection, all those things that we've been talking about.

00:42:02 Then the last two titles are linked to each other. He's an apostle, which is literally just a word that means one sent forth, but it showed up in the Doctrine & Covenants prior to this when Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer are both called apostles. In section 18, in section 107, it's going to become church calling apostle with a capital A. It's going to be defined in section 107, verse 23 as a special witness of Christ Apostle. And the last title is Elder are linked to each other too. [Elder McConkie](#) gave this great definition. This is from his talk, Only an Elder. Remember this where the guy came to him and said, ah, I'm only an Elder. Elder McConkie said, an elder is a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. He holds the Holy Melchizedek priesthood. He is commissioned to stand in the place instead of his master, who is the chief elder ministering to his fellow men.

00:42:57 He is the Lord's agent. His appointment is to preach the gospel and perfect the Saints. Apostle and Elder are closely linked. Elder is the actual title we use for apostles. Each one of these titles is really important in understanding and defining leadership within the church, but there's a lot to explore there too about what they mean and what the limitations are as well. Section 21 was just basically explaining to them and giving the Lord's endorsement. We'll go to verse three. This church was organized and established in the year of our Lord 1830 in the fourth month, on the sixth day of the month, which is called April. Wherefore meaning the church give heed unto all his words and commandments, which he shall give unto you as he receive with them walking in holiness before me. For his word, ye shall receive as if from my own mouth in all patience and faith for by doing these things, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you, and the Lord will disperse the powers of darkness from before you and cause the heavens to shake for your good and for his name's glory. It's wonderful to think that they show up with this incredible foundational document, section 20, but they also receive a revelation right there with everyone present

so that they know that this is the foundation, but it's going to continue. I'm going to give you instruction and I'm going to help you understand and know what my will is. We go forward. It goes back to that this is a living church. We're going to continue to receive direction and guidance.

- Hank Smith: 00:44:31 Casey, would you say that end of verse five, John, you've pointed this out before. You're going to receive it in all patience and faith, meaning it's going to take some patience and some faith to receive the words of prophets.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:44:46 Yeah. Oh man. If we could track the fates of all those 40 people that crowded into the Whitmer home, some of them die for the gospel, some of them apostatize and leave the church. Some of them make it all the way here to Utah where we're at and are buried in the soil that we make our homes on right now. They were going to go through a lot and I think the Lord was trying to prepare them as well. And also let them know that patience and faith are two major requirements for someone that believes in Jesus Christ, that you've got to trust in him and also accept that not all blessings come immediately that you're seeking.
- Hank Smith: 00:45:28 It's reminds you of section one I gave in their language. These commandments are of me, were given unto my servants in their weakness after the manner of their language that they might come to understanding. So I can connect that to verse five. So since it's in their language, in their weakness, use patience and faith.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:45:49 Yeah,
- Hank Smith: 00:45:50 Sometimes I think we're a little too harsh on our leaders the way they say things. I don't like the way he said that or she said that.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:45:58 Yeah. And I mean patience. And patience on the opposite end of things too. It could be frustrating when you are a leader. I love that phrase [Elder Holland](#) shared, imperfect people are all the Lord has ever had to work with. So be patient with each other, go easy on each other. Recognize we all have our foibles and our faults and we're all striving to do better. Let's be kind.
- Hank Smith: 00:46:23 As a historian in the church, Casey, have you seen times where leadership and membership got things just they needed patience and faith with each other? Even leaders in the church? At least I know one biography of an apostle.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:46:40 Yeah, A couple stories come to mind. John Taylor and Brigham Young were sort of like polar opposites. Brigham Young was like an American guy down to the bone. And John Taylor was a proper English gentleman, and Brigham Young would often be sitting there and have soup stains on his shirt from eating food. And John Taylor was always prim and proper and dressed exactly right. I remember a story where John Taylor apparently walked in and Brigham Young said something like, oh, here comes Prince John. And John Taylor walked over and said, sir, you are a despicable person and a prophet of God. And then walked out the door. Well, there's been conflicts among leaders. There's concerns that go back and forth. We're all struggling. And when a person recognizes that, when you follow President Eyring's advice, I think first he said, assume that half the people you talk to are really struggling.

Hank Smith: 00:47:39 Right?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:47:39 And then six months later he came back and said, just assume that everybody's struggling and you'll probably be right most of the time. I think this is the Lord underlining that principle. Patience and faith. Patience and faith with what they have to say. The book I wrote was on an apostle named [Joseph F. Merrill](#), who nobody's ever heard of, but I love the guy. He was like my spiritual mentor because I just spent years in his papers and his writings. He was an apostle from 1933 to 1952. He wasn't the most outgoing guy. He was shy. I've talked to his family members. A lot of them said, yeah, he was usually the quietest person in the room and not a big ebullient personality, but he had this friend who was a fellow apostle Richard Lyman. Richard Lyman was a big, huge guy with a big ebullient personality that everybody sort of loved.

00:48:28 They were best friends. I mean, they were professors at the U. They met at the University of Michigan. They served as apostles. They used to walk from their homes down to the church administration building. On this one occasion, Elder Merrill, and I found this in his journal, went to a meeting in Salt Lake Temple. This was in, I believe 1943 was ushered into the room and quickly told by a member of the first presidency that Richard Lyman had committed a really serious transgression that they were considering his membership in the church. Elder Merrill sat there while they talked back and forth about the best thing to do, and they eventually removed Richard Lyman from the church. Imagine if this happened today. You know, if any of the apostles were removed from the church, how devastating that would be. But as I read in Elder Merrill's journal, I started to find this pattern where it would say things like, I ate dinner with

Richard Lyman tonight, or I took Richard Lyman to a football game, or Richard Lyman and I went for a drive this afternoon.

00:49:31 He didn't give up on this guy. He loved him and he helped him. And one of the last things I found was a little slip of paper from 1954. This was two years after Elder Merrill passed away. That was from Richard Lyman that read, it is my pleasure to inform you that by unanimous decision of President McKay and the quorum of the 12, that I shall be rebaptized and readmitted into the church. Richard Lyman ended his life in full fellowship. He was never made an apostle again. If the rest of the quorum were doing what Elder Merrill did, it meant that, yeah, this guy did a terrible thing, but they didn't cut him off. They didn't shun him, they reached out, they lifted, they blessed, and they helped him. And that's part of the role of church leaders too, is to seek the lost sheep and to find those that are out there like an apostle and an elder sometimes to preach the gospel to those that haven't heard it, and sometimes to find those that have heard it but have fallen in the course of transgressions. That story captures the imperfection, of the leaders of the church, which is going to be manifest as we go through the Doctrine & Covenants you're going to find plenty of leaders of the church causing major issues and in some cases apostatizing, but also the essence of the church, which is we don't give up on people, we stay in their lives as long as they'll let us, we do what we can to try and help and build and lift them.

Hank Smith: 00:50:59 What an inspiring, inspiring story it's going to take patience and faith.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:51:05 Yeah, good stuff.

Hank Smith: 00:51:08 Casey, let me ask you about verse eight. His weeping for Zion I have seen. Is this Joseph?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:51:16 Yeah, I think it's the Lord attesting to the sincerity of Joseph Smith, his weeping for Zion I have seen, and I will cause that he shall mourn for her no longer; his days of rejoicing are come unto the remission of his sins and the manifestation of my blessings upon his work. Now that might harken back to the beginning of Section 20 where we said that he received a remission of his sins, might be a reference to the first vision in Joseph Smith mind. That wasn't the end, that was the beginning. That you receive a remission of your sins, but you've got to receive it over and over and over again. But that's part of the purpose of the church too, is we come to church, we take the sacrament, we make our covenants again, and one of the

promises of our covenants is that we receive a remission of our sins, but that it's a continual thing.

00:52:05 So the Lord here again, when the church is being organized is saying, I'm giving him a remission of his sins. And that must have been really comforting to Joseph Smith, especially after all the ups and downs dealing with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and all the challenges that he faced. But it's part of the function of church too, is for us to go and it's kind of our way of saying, hey, am I doing okay? Am I still in line with things? There's an old saying, I can't remember who said it, but somebody pointed out that if you can take the sacrament every week and do so worthily, you're going to make it. Don't sweat the small stuff. If you're worthy to participate in that one symbol of ordinance, which they did that that day as well, you're worthy to enter the celestial kingdom and you're going to be all right.

Hank Smith: 00:52:53 Casey, this has been fantastic. We have one small section left section 22, same time period.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:53:01 It's received around this time. We don't think it was received the exact day that the church was organized, but a natural question that would've come up was, one, if I've already been baptized in a different church, do I need to be rebaptized to join this church? And there was also the question of, well, some people like Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and Samuel Smith had been baptized before the church was organized. Did they need to be baptized again to show that they were entering into the church? The Lord gives a very simple and direct teaching about the role of the church that we still follow today. Behold, I say unto you, all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing. This is a new and everlasting covenant. Even that which was from the beginning, wherefore, although a man should be baptized a hundred times, it availeth him nothing where you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works.

00:53:57 I think clarity is kindness. In this particular case where he's trying to say, yes, you do have to get rebaptized because this is the beginning of a new church and baptism is the entrance into the church. I remember the first guy that I taught on my mission who got baptized. I was a brand new missionary and this guy was very, very kind. And we were teaching his whole family At a certain point, we were teaching him, by the way, in our mission president's home. My mission president assigned me to his area, because I think he saw me and thought, this kid's trouble. I need to monitor him and make sure he is okay. So we were

doing a cottage meeting and my mission president and his wife were the fellowship. And the guy said, well, I've already been baptized. Why do I have to get baptized again?

00:54:42 And I hemmed and hawed because I didn't want to say, you know, because you were in the wrong church or, I didn't want to say, because of your dead works. I remember my mission president turned to the guy and said, have you been baptized in the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? And the guy said, well, no. And my mission president said, you have to get baptized in the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And the guy was like, oh, okay. I, I spent the entire time trying to come up with a great theological reason for why, but my mission president did what the Lord did here, which is basically just be clear and concise and explain. The church has been renewed, baptism has to come by authority. The authority has been gone from the earth. I don't think he's saying that their works don't matter or that they didn't mean anything, but he's just saying, no, that old covenant is done away. You've got to get baptized into the new covenant. That's just the way it is. Not trying to be mean or anything. That's how things work now.

Hank Smith: 00:55:44 And he says, if you're struggling, verse four, don't seek to counsel your God.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:55:51 It's great how he can do that. This is the way it is. And sometimes we need to have the courage to do that. Also, to be clear and courageous and tell people the way things actually are.

Hank Smith: 00:56:02 Yeah. Especially when the Lord has made it very clear.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:56:06 Yeah, definitely.

Hank Smith: 00:56:08 We don't want to let you go without soaking every bit out of this sponge here. So let me ask you something that I think we've asked you before. You've been on the show many times. There may be someone out there who's listening who thinks, I don't know if I can trust the character of Joseph Smith. From what I've heard, so many people speaking evil of the prophet these days, is he really who he claims to be? You've studied the history of the church, more than a lot of people. You're not that old, but it has been, you're into the decades now of studying the history of the church.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:56:47 Yeah.



Hank Smith: 00:56:48 What would you say to someone who says, I don't know what to think about Joseph Smith and the history of the church?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:56:56 I remember one of my teachers, Richard Bennett, basically telling me like, hey, I've read a lot, and the more I get into things, the more convinced I become that Joseph Smith was a sincere person. We've spent a lot of this discussion talking about imperfections, and we tend to kind of nowadays hone in on a person's imperfections, and we do that to try and prevent us from having too high expectations for our leaders. But sometimes I also wonder if we have too low expectations. Joseph Smith was sincere. I've read tons of documents on his life. When you were talking just now, it brought to mind a letter he wrote to Emma. Joseph Smith is stuck in Greenville, Indiana. He's having a hard time. It was a really tough time in his life. It was right after he and Emma had lost twins, and then they'd adopted twins and one of those twins had died and then he'd been tarred and feathered and a lot of rough stuff had happened.

00:57:56 He wrote this letter to Emma. The church doesn't own this letter. It's in an archive, but you can find it on the [Joseph Smith Papers](#) sites. He wrote, I've called to mind all the past moments of my life and I'm left to mourn and shed tears of sorrow for my folly in suffering. The adversary of my soul to have so much power over me as he has in times past. So this is just a letter to his wife. This isn't a public epistle to the church. He's just very sincerely telling the woman who he's closest to, that he feels awful about the things that he's done, but as the letter continues, he also writes this. He said, but God is merciful and has forgiven my sins. And I rejoice that he sent forth the comforter unto as many as believe and humble themselves before him.

00:58:43 I will try to be contented with my lots, knowing that God is my friend. In him I shall find comfort. I've given my life unto his hands. I'm prepared to go at his call and I desire to be with Christ. That's a person that I can give the benefit of the doubt to. This wasn't a public sermon, it wasn't a public performance. It was a private letter written to his wife that was discovered way, way, way, way, way down the road. And it seems to present a picture of a person who genuinely went through what we went through. Everybody's fighting a hard battle, but also took comfort in knowing that the grace of God was there. Like a simple statement like, God is my friend. I've given my life into his hands. I desire to be with Christ. I'm willing to give Brother Joseph the benefit of the doubt and say that a person that

writes a letter like that in the darkest moment of his life is striving and searching and trying to be sincere.

00:59:45 But just like all of us, he had to rely on the merits, the mercy and the grace of Christ. He did. That's how he picked himself up and kept going in his day-to-day struggles. And I just hope that we can kind of do the same thing. So I'm judging Joseph by the records he left behind, which testify that he was sincere but struggling. That testify that he was an imperfect person that was called to do an extraordinary work. And that testified that he found comfort and solace and hope in the mission of Christ in knowing that he had a Savior. And I can identify a lot more with somebody like that than a perfect figure that never did anything wrong. We just need to do the work to make these restoration figures whole people, and not just cardboard caricatures. When we say Joseph Smith was perfect, we're doing a disservice when we say he was evil, we're doing a disservice. The truth is, is that everybody's more complicated than that. Let's see them as whole people and love him in that sense.

Hank Smith: 01:00:56 Wonderful. John Section 20. Again, we've studied it before, but it's new to me. I see it differently.

John Bytheway: 01:01:05 Me too. And usually I'm not totally inspired by the italics at the beginning, but look at the synopsis here. The Book of Mormon proves the divinity of the latter-day work, one through 16, 17 through 28. The doctrines of creation, fall, atonement and baptism are affirmed. And then its laws governing, repentance, justification, sanctification, baptism, set forth. It's a great summary. You did a great job with that, Casey. Thank you. But that's a pretty inspiring synopsis, isn't it?

Hank Smith: 01:01:38 Yeah. Casey, you just walked us through this in a way that not only now I understand the history of the church and its foundation, its bedrock constitution, but I also have, I've opened my heart to these good people who probably had no idea what they were in for. They were getting into it. They didn't know what they were getting into, did they? Just beautiful. So Casey, what are you and Scott doing over at Church History Matters? A sister podcast. We call it.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 01:02:11 You could call us your children because I think I've said this before, but you guys gave us our microphones. So it would be me and Scott with a tin can and a string that runs to Rexburg if it hadn't been for you guys. We're doing the same thing where this year we pivoted to go through the Doctrine and Covenants. Normally we explore topics in church history, but we felt like it

would be a little strange if we ignored the most important historical documents, which are the revelations of Joseph Smith. So what we're doing is a little bit different than what you guys do. We do a lot of context. We do a lot of controversies. Those are the four C's we do the context, content, controversies and consequences. And I would say you guys do such a wonderful job finding the salvational principles of the gospel.

01:03:01 Scott and I like to dive into the minutia. One of our reviews on Apple Podcasts said, hey, this is not just for nerds. That might say, the audience that we cater to at first was basically history nerds that want to just talk to death. Everything about this document or this particular event or anything. But I will say, you guys and your producers, David and Lisa, are just so wonderful and have been so encouraging to us. And I mean, the other day when we went up on the podcast charts, and it was probably because Scott appeared on your show. It was your producer that texted us a picture saying, hey, great job guys. I just can't thank you guys enough for being gracious and helping everybody up their game, do better and use this medium to help and reach a lot of people. You guys have just done really good stuff and you should be very proud.

Hank Smith: 01:03:58 Well, you are our friends. We want to send everybody over to Church History matters. It is really good.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 01:04:05 Yes.

Hank Smith: 01:04:06 You can tell you're having fun.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 01:04:07 Yeah, it is a blast. And man, you and I got hired at the same time, right, Hank? Yeah. Because seminary teachers can't believe you could do this for a living. I live a charmed life. That's all I can say. Right? I'm so blessed.

Hank Smith: 01:04:20 Come over to YouTube and leave a comment for Casey. We'll make sure he gets those. You can go to our website, [followhim.co](http://followhim.co). Followhim.co. There's a little place you could send us a message. We would love to pass those on to Casey, wherever you are in the world. It's fun to show our guests how big their classroom is and where you're listening from. From Springville to New Zealand, we want to hear from everybody. We want to thank Dr. Casey Griffiths for being with us today. We want to thank our executive producer Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen, and every episode we always remember our founder Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We're going to continue in the Doctrine and Covenants on followHIM. Today's show notes and transcript are

on our website. Followhim.co. That's Followhim.co. Of course, none of this could happen without our production team, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, Amelia Kabwika, and Annabelle Sorensen.

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

## HOMETEACHING DRUG DEAL



- Hank Smith: 00:03 Hello everyone. Welcome to FollowHIM. Favorites. This is where John and I are sharing stories that go with each week's Come, Follow Me lesson. John we are in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants. You know this section, tell us what it is.
- John Bytheway: Yeah. Section 20 is really long. It's kind of the constitution of the church. This is how it's organized. This is what you do.
- Hank Smith: Like the first handbook of instruction. Like this is how we're going to run things. Well there's this part of the new handbook here where it says that we should visit the house of each member and exhort them to pray vocally in secret and attend all their family duties. So this becomes the home teaching program. Eventually, and as we know it now, the ministering program in the church. This wins the award absolutely for making an appointment before you go to teach at someone's house.
- 00:58 This is an article written by Paul Rowley who tells the story of Darrell Zaddick Bud. He says that Brother Bud is known for his cheerful spirit and good sense of humor and colorful writing style. Paul Rowley says that when he heard this story, he had to write an article about it. It's too good not to pass along. Alright, so here's how it goes John. Bud and the Elders quorum president in his LDS Ward were home teaching two lapsed members. So inactive members. When they came upon a home containing a member more lapsed than they could have imagined. They were welcomed into the woman's apartment, which she shared with her boyfriend. As we were preparing to say the closing prayer at the conclusion of our visit, we heard someone pounding on the door and yelling, it's the police open the door. I thought, that's a funny joke. Then there was more pounding. Bud wrote before the boyfriend could open the door, it flew open and 10 armed men wearing Kevlar vests bearing the word police swarmed in ordering everyone to the floor, Bud wrote, I thought to myself, this is going to make a great story.

02:16 This is going to be on a podcast one day, as Bud lay face down on the carpet, the Elders Quorum President stood up from where he was sitting on the couch thinking he could explain why he and Bud were there. The kind officers who were spouting language the two LDS home teachers were not used to hearing, did not seem to like this action. And one very large officer stepped toward Bud's companion, who then found himself looking directly into the muzzle of a gun with a bright light shining in his eyes. The officer placed his finger over the trigger and shouted, I said get on the ground. The portly Elders Quorum President quickly complied, but to Bud's chagrin, there wasn't enough room between the couch and the coffee table. So he landed on Bud.

03:07 I never thought I would need to support the president like that Bud continued. I assure you, I really felt the weight of my calling while they were on the floor. The cops who were part of the narcotics task force continued to shout orders and threats. The humor of the whole situation hit me full force and I started laughing. Wrote, but they were handcuffed and searched for weapons, not including their scriptures. The elders quorum president finally blurted in one breath that they were the home teachers from the ward, causing the officers to look at one another in puzzlement. They asked for church ID and were quickly shown temple recommends. Bud writes this, I knew my temple recommend could get me in the house of the Lord, but I never dreamed it could get me out of going to the big house. Alas, they couldn't save the couple they had gone to enlighten.

04:07 The lost sheep we were hoping to bring back to the fold sadly ended up going to a different pen. Alright, John, back to section 20, that we are to, what was it? Visit. Visit the house of members and exert them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties. So to everyone out there, what's the lesson? Make an appointment, make an appointment before you go over. 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. Casey Griffiths this week who is a Doctrine & Covenants expert and he does a great job walking us through this section and then come back next week, we'll do another Follow him Favorite.