



EPIISODE 11

GUEST: JOSEPH SPENCER

"A Marvelous Work and a Wonder"



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:

Does God work through faith or evidence? Dr. Joseph Spencer explores Nephi's pattern for quoting Isaiah and God's plan for expanding the Saints faith and testimony.

Part 2:

Dr. Joseph Spencer examines Nephi's analysis of gentile culture and its effect on spirituality and how the Book of Mormon is a "marvelous work" testifying of Jesus Christ.

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Part 1

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Part 2

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- 31:48 Dr. Spencer shares his thoughts about the Book of Mormon and Jesus Christ
- 38:05 End of Part II– Dr. Joseph Spencer

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Biographical Information:



Joseph M. Spencer is a philosopher and an assistant professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University. He has degrees from Brigham Young University, San Jose State University, and the

University of New Mexico, having earned his PhD in philosophy from the last institution in 2015. He is the author of four books (most recently *1st Nephi: A Brief Theological Introduction*), the coeditor of four collections of essays, and the author or coauthor more than fifty articles and book chapters. His work focuses on philosophy, theology, and scripture. Professor Spencer serves as the editor of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, as the associate director of the Latter-day Saint Theology Seminar, and as a coeditor for two different book series, *Groundwork: Studies in Theory and Scripture* (published by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute) and *Introductions to Mormon Thought* (published by the University of Illinois Press). He and Karen, his wife, live with their five children in Provo, Utah.

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Show Me the Plates!

GUEST: JOSEPH SPENCER



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| Hank Smith: | 00:00:03 | Hello, everyone. Welcome to another episode of FollowHIM. My name's Hank Smith. I'm here with the marvelous John Bytheway as my co-host. John, we're going to be in more chapters of Isaiah this week. How are you feeling about this? |
| John Bytheway: | 00:00:16 | Wonderful. These are so fun to extract things from, and we have experts to help us. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:00:21 | Yeah, we've been learning new things for the last couple of weeks in Isaiah, and we have yet another lesson in Isaiah. I'm really enjoying these, John. Sometimes I think Isaiah gets a bad rap that we should skip it, but I've found a lot of wonderful things so far. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:00:36 | I love the old saying that that which we obtain too easily, we esteem too lightly, and when we do a little work in Isaiah, for a lot of people, it becomes some of their favorite scripture, because they've worked at it a little bit. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:00:48 | John, when I think Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, there's one name that comes up automatically, Dr. Joe Spencer, and he is joining us today. Joe, what are we looking forward to in this third lesson in Isaiah? |
| Dr. Joseph Spencer: | 00:01:02 | Things get a little more down to Earth here. He's been quoting blocks of Isaiah for chapters and chapters, but here, he weaves Isaiah's language into his own prophecy, which in some ways will make this, I think, easier sledding than some of the other things, but we're going to see a lot of cool things here. Particularly, we'll want to spend some time on everything that Nephi has to say about Gentiles, and how he's using Isaiah to think about Gentile situations in the last days, and the challenges that the Gentiles pose to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. So, we've got lots to think about here. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:01:31 | Joe, we've talked in our previous two lessons about Nephi just really thinks Isaiah has the power to convert. That I might more |

fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer, I read Isaiah to them. It's not to help them sleep I read them Isaiah. I wanted them to believe in their Redeemer, so I read Isaiah. What do you think Nephi sees? I know you can't get in Nephi's head, but of anyone who could do it, I think it would be you. What's Nephi going for with all these Isaiah chapters?

- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:02:01 Yeah, in a lot of ways, it seems that Nephi slowly discovered the power of Isaiah, and that this was all built on his own vision. He has this long vision recorded in 1 Nephi 11 through 14. Then a lot of ways is the anchor for all of Nephi's prophetic ministry. After having seen the unfolding of the history of the scattering and the gathering of Israel and especially the Lamanites, it seems that when he went back and looked over Isaiah, he said, "This follows the same pattern point by point what I've seen," which I think is what he means by likening. He sees Isaiah as just a clear confirming witness of the kinds of things he's seen almost as he's like, "I'm not crazy. Isaiah saw this too."
- 00:02:43 So, I think above all, he wants us to hear as he tells us back in 2 Nephi 11, "I want you to see that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, I'm not alone on this. This stuff is going to happen. Scattering, gathering, God will fulfill His promises."
- Hank Smith: 00:02:57 Fantastic. I am really looking forward to this. Now, John, Joe has really done his homework when it comes to Isaiah in the Book of Mormon. Give us some background on what he's done.
- John Bytheway: 00:03:08 Yes, thank you, Hank. Joseph M. Spencer, he's a philosopher, associate professor of Ancient Scripture at BYU. He has degrees from BYU, San Jose State and the University of New Mexico where he got his PhD. He's written chapters, something like 50 chapters, in different books. Been a co-editor of some compilations, but I want our listeners to know about this new book called The Vision of All. You could find it on Amazon, wherever, 25 lectures on Isaiah in Nephi's record. Hank, you were reading some reviews. People are really thrilled about what he's done.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:42 Oh, absolutely. I went on to Amazon, and looked at some of these reviews for this book. One reviewer wrote, "Little gems just oozed out of the Book of Mormon chapters. I felt like the pages were three-dimensional. I was diving through layers, finding interesting and arresting insights in every layer." Man, I need that guy to review one of my books.
- John Bytheway: 00:04:04 A Vision of All, and it's 25 lectures on Isaiah in Nephi's record. I think you also have another one coming out called A Word in

Season, which the University of Illinois Press did about Isaiah's reception in the Book of Mormon. Can you tell us more about that?

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:04:20 Yeah, so that's a primarily scholarly book, though I hope it's as accessible as possible to most readers. What I'm trying to do in that book is look at not just what does the Book of Mormon do with Isaiah, how does Nephi read Isaiah? How does Abinadi read Isaiah? How does Jesus Christ himself read Isaiah? But also try to put that in conversation with the long history of how Jews and Christians of various types have read Isaiah, where Abinadi is reading Isaiah 53. Does he read it in a way that's totally unique? Does it sound like other Christians? Trying to put it in a big broad context and ask how the Book of Mormon sounds in the conversation.

John Bytheway: 00:04:55 Wonderful.

Hank Smith: 00:04:56 John, I know Joe personally, and our offices are in the same hallway. He's good to the core. You can almost feel the light coming out of that office as you walk by. Joe, how do you want to take a look at these chapters of Isaiah? The title of this week's lesson is A Marvelous Work and Wonder. Let me read the opening paragraph of the manual, and then let's see where you want to go. "I prophesy unto you concerning the last days," Nephi wrote in 2 Nephi 26. In other words, he was writing about our day, and there's a reason to be concerned about what he saw, people denying the power and miracles of God, widespread jealousy and conflict. But in addition to these latter-day works of darkness led by the adversary, Nephi also spoke of a marvelous work and wonder led by God himself.

00:05:46 Central to that work would be a book, a book that exposes Satan's lies, and gathers the righteous. That book is the Book of Mormon. The marvelous work is the work of the Lord's Church in the latter days, and the wonder, at least in part, that God invites all of us despite our weaknesses to participate in the gathering. I love that opening paragraph. So Joe, where do you want to go from here?

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:06:10 Well, I think one of the first things I'd like to do is talk a bit about structure, structure of the whole of 2 Nephi so that we have a place for these chapters in particular. Then I think we want to dig into exactly that, that moment, these prophecies concerning the last days and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and the obstacles that the book faces and overcomes. I think that's exactly where we want to go, but structure first might be helpful.

Hank Smith:	00:06:34	Well, we are excited. John, you got a pencil ready to go?
John Bytheway:	00:06:37	Got it right here.
Hank Smith:	00:06:38	Ancient device right there. All right, Joe, kick it off. We're ready to go.
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	00:06:44	I think as Latter-day Saint readers of the scriptures, we don't often think a lot about structure. We tend to read a verse here and a verse there and a verse there, and let them flow over us as we reflect on them spiritually, which is beautiful and right. But when we look at larger structures, sometimes it does a lot of work for us, and the whole of 2 Nephi has a structure. It's organized. First Nephi is also organized, though that's way behind us at this point in the year, but 2 Nephi has a structure, and a pretty straightforward one. The first five chapters clearly function as a kind of introduction. You've got Lehi's final words to his sons, and then what we tend to call Nephi's Psalm, where he's reflecting on some things, and then just a little bit of history in 2 Nephi 5, but the theme running through all three of those things is Laman and Lemuel and their fate.
	00:07:29	Lehi is addressing them directly. Then he's talking about agency and its uses. He's talking about covenant promises in the last days. Then he's talking to Laman and Lemuel's children, and then he dies, and then Nephi is reflecting on his relationship to his enemies. He's only got two, Laman and Lemuel, and he's worried about his own anger. Then immediately after that, we get the story of the split. Nephites And Lamanites divide, and 2 Nephi 5, it ends on this note of now there's this division. The introduction of these five chapters leaves us with this question, "How will God fulfill the promises Lehi has been making given this division between these two peoples?" The Lamanites have been cut off from the presence of God. What now?
	00:08:09	There's the question of the scattering and the gathering just already in a kind of first formula, this question of, "Here are these covenant people, but they're lost. They're wandering. So now, what will God do?" What we get following that is then 25 chapters of prophecy, 25 chapters straight. Though in three parts, we get Jacob's voice. Then we get Isaiah's voice, and then finally we get Nephi's voice. Nephi is explicit that these are supposed to be three witnesses. In 2 Nephi 11, he tells us, "Out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, I'm sending Jacob's words and Isaiah's words forth with my own words so that people will know I'm not making this up." We get Jacob's prophecies woven through the words of Isaiah.

- 00:08:47 Then we get Isaiah himself in this massive block of text, all predicting, scattering and gathering and redemption. Then finally, we get Nephi's own prophecy. That's 2 Nephi 25 through 30, where now he and his own voice with these other two backing him up, he lays out what's going to happen with the redemption of his brothers. Then he ties that all up, and 2 Nephi 31 through 33 is a kind of epilogue. After all that work has been done, all the prophetic work has been laid out, then he turns to his audience, and says, "Now, let's get baptized. Come to Christ. Step through the veil into his presence," and then gives a final farewell. There's a nice structure to the whole of 2 Nephi, and that gives us a place for the chapters we're looking at today. We're looking at 2 Nephi 26 through 30. 2 Nephi 25 through 30 is what constitutes Nephi's own prophecy as he calls it.
- 00:09:36 This is the culmination. That introduction sets up the problem. Jacob and Isaiah anticipatorily confirm what Nephi is going to do, and now, boom, we're in it. We're going to get Nephi's prophecy before he gives his final exhortations. I mean, in a lot of ways, this is the kernel, the hard kernel of 2 Nephi right here.
- Hank Smith: 00:09:54 Jacob and Nephi seem to see Isaiah as very fluid. Malleable. Nephi uses the word liken when he talks about Isaiah. How do you see Jacob and Nephi not just reading the text as kind of a brick, but using it to, like you said, weave their own prophecies through it? How do you see that working?
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:10:16 I mean, in a lot of ways, they seem to be very good readers of Isaiah. That might go without saying these are prophets, but what I mean by that is that they really have worked hard to understand the structure and meaning of Isaiah's own book. The structure of Isaiah's book is relatively straightforward. Once you see it, it starts with prophecies of judgment with little hints of promise. Then about halfway through the book, it turns hard in this direction of redemption and fulfillment and so on and so forth. They seem to track that carefully, and they see this, of course, playing out in their own people's future history. The Nephites are going to wander, and they're going to end up destroyed, and just a remnant will be left behind. That's Isaiah's own word. A remnant, that is the Lamanites, and they'll be lost and confused.
- 00:10:59 But then redemption will eventually come just as in Isaiah through the assistance of Gentiles so that they can be carried home to the lands of their inheritance, and set back in the places that are theirs. God will have redeemed Israel according to promise, and will have involved the Gentiles in a way that gets them a chance to hear the gospel. Then all of this can be

fulfilled, and there are sealed books and all kinds of cool things along the way that, I think, Nephi looking at all this goes, "Man, this is exactly what I've seen," but he recognizes that Isaiah is talking about Jews back in Jerusalem, and about their sojourn in Babylon, and about their coming back to their lands in Jerusalem. He sees all of this as, "Oh, this is the same story in parallel to what's going to happen with our own children."

00:11:43 This is all he means by likening in a certain way is take Isaiah, take what he's seen and vision regarding his own people's history, and then just line them up. Boom. Boom. Boom. Boom. Boom. Boom. He can sometimes quote Isaiah in a block, but at times, he can just weave Isaiah's words into his own prophecy, because they're telling the same story happening with Israel in different places.

John Bytheway: 00:12:02 Wow. Let me see if I can restate this. So then, 2 Nephi 1 through 5 is here's what happens. Here's how the family splits, Laman, Lemuel. Lehi dies. Nephi's Psalm, and then I love this. Oh no, how will this remnant be redeemed? Then the next chapters, prophecies of Jacob, Isaiah, and Nephi. I love when you have a prophet comment on another prophet, and some prophets are easier to understand. So, Jacob and Nephi commenting on Isaiah helps us go, "Oh, okay." Then lastly, Nephi's last lecture, he's going to say goodbye at the end of 2 Nephi, his whole thing, "Come to Christ. Follow him. Be baptized," and all of that. I love this kind of 30,000-foot view as you just did that so beautifully, because then we can go in closer, but now we see the big picture. I get that right?

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:12:55 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:12:56 Joe, I think as a brand new reader to the Book of Mormon years and years ago, I saw 1 and 2 Nephi as a daily journal that Nephi is writing from a young age to an old age. That doesn't seem to be the case, does it? Would you say this is written at not one sitting of course, but at one specific time in Nephi's life towards the end?

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:13:17 We can date it. In 2 Nephi 5, he tells us explicitly when this was written. He says, "It's 30 years after his father leaves Jerusalem before the Lord commands him to create the small plates." So, he's been keeping records, but he doesn't write the small plates, which is what we're reading until 30 years out. Then before that chapter's over, he says, "It suffices me to say that 40 years had passed away," which tells us he spends at least a decade writing this thing. Joseph Smith dictates it in a couple of weeks, if Nephi were receiving straightforward revelations,

write this, write this, write this, he could have done this in weeks. The fact that he takes 10 years plus, and this with 30 years of reflection tells us how much work Nephi has got to put into this to capture what God is after.

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| | 00:13:59 | How many different angles does he take? By the end, I think the structure's got to matter. He has organized this carefully and systematically, and reworked his wording. Every word here has got to matter. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:14:11 | It sounds like you're talking about an outline before I go into detail, which I really love that. Here's the outline. They get scattered. They're prophecies of gathering, and come to Christ. I love it. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:14:21 | If 1 and 2 Nephi were a movie, the movie would probably start with old Nephi looking back over his life, not a day-by-day journal. Joe, I don't know if you talk about this in your classes, but isn't that going to impact the way Nephi writes knowing what happens? You would write differently. |
| Dr. Joseph Spencer: | 00:14:41 | It's got to. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:14:41 | In a day by day journal, the things you would say, knowing what happens, you might even set up the reader for the future. |
| Dr. Joseph Spencer: | 00:14:50 | 1 Nephi is where this is, I think, on display in full force. He's got a lot of eight years in the wilderness, and he's got to choose what stories he's going to tell and how. This is not, "Well, I went back to my tent, and recorded in my journal that night. Laman and Lemuel were jerks again," but it's him looking back over this, and it's very important that in 2 Nephi 5, he tells us it's after the split between Lamanites and Nephites that he's writing any of this. So, he's telling a story about how these people came into conflict. He's setting that up all through 1 Nephi this story, then this story so that we watch a crescendo of conflict over the course of 1 Nephi. Then in 2 Nephi, it comes to a culmination, and now we need prophetic answers. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:15:33 | So, Laman and Lemuel are getting worse and worse and worse, and Nephi... Perhaps that wasn't exactly how it went down, but he's writing it that way. |
| Dr. Joseph Spencer: | 00:15:43 | Yeah, exactly. I mean, there's these moments along 1 Nephi where they seem to turn in a better direction for a time and so on. 1 Nephi ends on a hopeful note before 2 Nephi sees things get bad again. I think that's important too, that along the way, |

Nephi is willing to say, "Boy, this could go in a lot of directions." He's not telling us where it's going to end yet, and when we get to 2 Nephi 4, the very last words he's going to offer before recording the split itself is a Psalm in which he wonders whether his own sins are in the way. That's a really humble prophetic voice.

Hank Smith: 00:16:15 I think that perspective really changes the way you read the book, and it's not something that I would say, "Well, you should have seen this the first time you read it." It comes naturally over time going, "Oh wait, he's much older when he writes about his younger years." Joe, what about these specific chapters that we're looking at today? 26 through 30, would you say they're structured in a certain way?

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:16:35 Yeah, absolutely. I mentioned earlier that Nephi's own prophecy here is found in 2 Nephi 25 through 30. Original chapters make a big difference here. For listeners who aren't familiar with that, when Joseph Smith dictates the text of the Book of Mormon to his scribes, he dictates chapter breaks as part of the dictation process, but they're not the chapter breaks we have in today's copies of the Book of Mormon. Those are the work of Orson Pratt in the 1870s. When Orson Pratt re-divides the text up into chapters, he seems to have been guided by basically the length of chapters in the Bible. Let's get these shorter. Verses should run to about 30 verses or so, but the original chapters are much longer often.

00:17:13 I think we can prove that those chapters are not just Joseph Smith occasionally going, "Maybe that's good. Let's call that a chapter." These go right back to the ancient authors. If we read the Book of Mormon with original chapters in mind, sometimes it reveals a lot to us, and Nephi's own prophecies here are just two original chapters. 2 Nephi 25 through 27, it's the original chapter 11 of 1 Nephi. Then chapters 28 through 30 are an original chapter, the original chapter 12. It gives us his prophecy in two sequences, and you can see the dividing line pretty clearly there. In 25, he opens right after all the big long quotation of Isaiah, and he especially is reflecting on the Lehiters' history, so where Nephites are going to face right down to the coming of Christ, and then where they're going to be left after the destruction of the Nephites, and then lets that open onto the last days and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and what that's going to mean.

00:18:06 He starts to really heavily use Isaiah in chapter 27, and then he'll give you the longest quotation of Isaiah you're going to get in these chapters, and then he'll break the chapter at the end of

chapter 27. Then he'll open chapter 28 with, "Okay, so now let's back up. We've got the story," and then he starts to just give us a sense or texture for the last day's context. We've got the story in the first original chapter there, and the second original chapter backs up and says, "Now, what's that day like?" What are the challenges the Book of Mormon is going to face? It does seem to have its two parts very clearly. Let's get the story. Then let's back up and reflect on the stakes of the story.

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| Hank Smith: | 00:18:41 | Fantastic. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:18:42 | When people go on a church history tour, and they buy a reproduction of the first edition of the Book of Mormon, is that how those are divided in that? |
| Dr. Joseph Spencer: | 00:18:50 | Yep. Those are the original chapters. You can get those reproductions. Of course, the Joseph Smith papers website has early editions of the Book of Mormon on there that can be read for free. There are also study editions of the Book of Mormon that will have modern chapters, but they'll also have original chaptering marked in them. So, the Maxwell Institute Study edition for instance has the original chapters marked all through it so that you can track it while you've got modern verses as well. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:19:14 | If you, by chance, have an original 1830 copy, you could read it there, or you could donate it to the FollowHIM Podcast. We wouldn't mind that. You probably aren't going to use it for anything, so go ahead and mail that. Just put it in UPS for us. Joe, let's take on this first section, 25 through 27. We did cover some of 25 last week with Dr. Olson, but I don't think repetition's a bad thing. Walk us through this first section that you told us, 25, 26, 27. |
| Dr. Joseph Spencer: | 00:19:44 | So, a couple of things happen at 25. We tend to read that chapter as Nephi cleaning up the mess after Isaiah. He's been quoting Isaiah for a long time, and now Nephi gives us some keys to how to read Isaiah. But if we read 25 through 27 as a whole, then 25 is doing, I think, several things rather than just cleanup work. Those first few verses, of course, he is talking about Isaiah and why Isaiah's hard to understand. Starting in verse nine, he gives us what he calls his own prophecy. He's very explicit about that, and when you get to verse 19 or 20, he says, "Now, I have spoken plainly that you cannot err." He is given a prophecy, and said, "You were reading Isaiah that was hard. Here you go. This is as plain as it gets," and he's laid that out very clearly. |

- 00:20:26 Then he spends the next handful of verses talking a bit about the role of the Book of Mormon in the last days, sort of introducing that theme. You can see this in chapter 25. Verse 20 is what we were just reading. I've spoken plainly that you cannot err, and then he says, "As the Lord God liveth that brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, and gave unto Moses power that he should heal the nations after they had been bitten by the poisonous serpents if they would cast their eyes, et cetera, et cetera." He says, "As these things are true, and as the Lord God liveth, there is none other name given under heaven, save it be this Jesus Christ of which I have spoken whereby man can be saved. Wherefore, for this cause hath the Lord God promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved and handed down unto my seed from generation to generation, that the promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph, that his seed should never perish as long as the earth shall stand."
- 00:21:13 There, you can see him starting to talk about the record he's helping to contribute to. In verse 23 in a very famous passage, he'll talk about writing so that people understand the atonement of Jesus Christ, and the role of grace. Then he'll go on to talk about in verses 24 through 30 about ensuring that his children by reading this record will know Christ, and understand the deadness of the law. You can see him already setting up the importance of the Book of Mormon for his own children, for the Lamanites, and for Latter-day readers over these verses before we even get to 26.
- Hank Smith: 00:21:44 Before I let you out at 25, we talked about this with Sister Olson, but let's talk about it again, because it is a well-known verse. How do you see 2 Nephi 25:23? We write to persuade our children, our brethren, to believe in Christ, to be reconciled to God and in this statement, for we know that it is by grace that we are saved after all we can do. Very few verses have received the kind of coverage that verse has out of the Book of Mormon. When you come across this with students or other people that you're teaching, how do you take that on?
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:22:17 Oh yeah, I've written a fair bit about this, and I give a whole day in my class to it. It can be read, I think, in ways that are misleading. I think the very first thing to notice about it is that it states very bluntly that it is by grace that we are saved, and it's amazing to me that people have taken a passage that explicitly states that it is by grace that we are saved, and sometimes turned it into something that says the opposite. That's very strange. The second thing to say about it, I think, is when Nephi says, "After all we can do," and people will say, "Well, that's

very plain. Then I'm saved by grace. Sure, fine, but only after I've done everything I can," but notice that that changes the wording if we think it that way.

- 00:22:54 It doesn't say after we do all we can, but after all we can do. Those are very different ideas. This verse doesn't actually refer to anything I have done. It refers to what I could do, and that is a very different idea. To say that we're saved by grace after all we can do is to say like, "Even if I did everything right, still grace, still grace." That feels to me like King Benjamin saying, "If you were to give all the thanks and praise with your whole soul, everything you've got power to possess, and if you were to serve God with everything you've got, you'd still be unprofitable servants." It's the same message.
- John Bytheway: 00:23:30 I always think of King Benjamin, like you just said, saying, "Are we not all beggars?" We're in that position. None of us can list our things that we've done, and say, "Therefore, I should." Nope. Nope. We're in the position of a beggar. We can't earn it. It will be by grace after all we can do. I always think of Jesus saying, "I'm the vine. You're the branches, and without me, you can do nothing."
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:23:53 Nothing.
- John Bytheway: 00:23:54 The grace of Christ, to paraphrase Elder Hafen, is available before, during, and after anything we can do. It's not a sequence that after word. I think we look at it like, this and then this, and we get some false sequence in our minds when we're relying on grace before, during, and after everything.
- Hank Smith: 00:24:15 It's interesting to me, Joe, that there are so many other verses in the Book of Mormon that say, "We rely wholly on the merits of Christ." Since man had fallen, he could do nothing of himself, save it through the merits of Christ. This one has stood out to mean the exact opposite that I rely on myself. I'm hoping our listeners will walk away encouraged by this verse. How might I rephrase it, or how should I think about it? Maybe you've already told us this. Tell us it again. How can I walk away from this going, "Oh, that really uplifts me and empowers me?"
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:24:47 What's at stake there is simply that it isn't I who has to do it. It's not on me. This is God's work. The discouraging thing is, "I'm going to fail." The encouraging thing is, "It's not about me, so it doesn't matter that I'm going to fail." I find in the next handful of verses where Nephi's wrestling with the relationship between the law and the Messiah, I find a really nice way of thinking about this. Verse 25, he says this, "For this end, for this purpose,

this aim was the law given, which is to say to get us to look forward unto Christ." That's what he has just said in verse 34, "For this end was the law given. Wherefore, the law hath become dead unto us, and we are made alive in Christ because of our faith." I think that's beautiful.

- 00:25:30 If the law is supposed to point us to the coming of Christ, then the law, if it's treated apart from the coming of Christ, is dead. But if I can see that the law in fact is always pointing me to Christ, then it's not about whether I fulfill the law. Christ's job is to fulfill the law. My job is to look forward to Him in faith. That, of course, comes with things he's asking me to do, but I'm not supposed to be the one that fulfills it. Whether we're talking about the law of Moses or any law God has ever given, Christ is the fulfiller of the law. My job is to keep the law. That's the way he words it. Protect it, guard it, ensure its sacredness, make sure that it is recognized as binding.
- 00:26:11 I'm supposed to let that law guide and direct, but not if that law hasn't been fulfilled by me, then it's a disaster. No. No. No. No. This is actually deeply encouraging. I will fail. Fine, not the issue. It's not the issue at all. Christ will not fail.
- Hank Smith: 00:26:27 If any of our listeners would like to hear more about this from Joe, we actually talked quite a bit about this last year when we did our 2 Corinthians podcast, so feel free to go back there, 2 Corinthians 8 through 13, where we walked through this idea of grace. John, I learned quite a bit about the idea that a celestial life is one that really accepts grace, relies wholly upon the Redeemer. John, do you remember talking about that?
- John Bytheway: 00:26:57 Yes, and I remember the impression, and I think we see it here too, that he wants to save us. He wants to. He is mighty to save as you alluded to. That's his work and his glory. It's not my job and my glory, because I'll fail, but his work and his glory, I think he is eager to save, delighted to save, and it lets us exhale a little bit, and think, I'm going to strive to keep the commandments, but that I can strive, and I can mess up, and I can repent, and I can keep on striving, but I'm so grateful he's so good at it, and he's eager to save and to take us.
- Hank Smith: 00:27:38 John, you frequently quote the Lord saying, "I can do my own work."
- John Bytheway: 00:27:42 I am able to do my work. We can be willing. That's what the sacrament prayer says. I'm willing to take upon me the name of Christ, and I'm willing to keep his commandments, but sometimes I don't do it very well, but I'm willing, and I'm going

to come back here next week and try again, take the sacrament again and keep striving, but he's able.

- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:28:01 That language comes from 2 Nephi 27. That's what the Lord says there. You can see how Nephi is setting himself up here by talking about this grace stuff.
- Hank Smith: 00:28:08 I wonder, Joe, if people are fearful that if we say, "Look, you're saved by Jesus," then we're giving them a license to sin. Maybe this teaching is based on fear that I don't want my children to feel like, "Oh, then I can do anything I want." How do you teach that in a way that persuades, as Nephi might say, people to, "No, we want to obey. We want to follow the Lord's teachings, right?" He says, "If you love me, keep my commandments." How would you explain that to a student who says, "Well, if I'm saved by Jesus, then I have license to do whatever I want?"
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:28:41 This talk of the law in these very verses is a nice model for it. If he's saying the purpose of the law is to point me forward to Christ, then it would be absurd to say the purpose of the law is for me to do nothing, right? It's like, "No, the law's got a thing it's trying to do. It's trying to point me to Christ." So if I go, "Oh, grace, I can ignore the law." I've missed it entirely, but if on the other hand, I think, "Oh, the law, I have to do all of this myself," I've also missed it entirely. Benjamin's always so good on grace. When Benjamin talks about all of this, the way that he puts it is, "You have all kinds of things to do. All he asks is, did you keep his commandments?" He doesn't deny that at all. Even though he is saying like, "You're unprofitable servants. You'll never accomplish this. You're never going to pay God off. You're never going to get out of debt."
- 00:29:23 But he does say, "But he asked for you to keep his commandments." The trick is to get out of our heads the picture in which the whole of the responsibility for God's work falls on me, but to get that picture out of our heads is not to get out of our heads, the idea that God has called me to a work. Maybe this would be a good segue into what Nephi does in the next couple of chapters is to point to Moroni for a moment. Ether 12, Moroni is worried about writing books, which is exactly what Nephi is doing here, thinking about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Moroni is worried in particular that the Book of Mormon will be weak. That's the language he uses, that we don't know how to write, and because of our weakness, the Gentiles very specifically, they won't believe this.
- 00:29:59 They're going to stumble. I mean, this is Moroni saying like, "I can't write, and everyone's going to hell, and it's my fault." Just

that simple. God's response to him, I think, is quite beautiful in Ether 12:26. Moroni's been saying the Gentiles are going to mock, and God says, "Yeah, fools mock." He doesn't take that away from him. "Yeah, you're not good at this. That's correct, Moroni. You got that." Fools mock, but they shall mourn. Those who are meek who don't take advantage of your weakness, those who are humble, my grace is sufficient for them. I think the way to hear that is it's Moroni learning that even a work like the Book of Mormon is supposed to not be the thing that fulfills the whole law.

00:30:39 Christ is the thing that fulfills the whole law, and the Book of Mormon points us to Christ. We're going to watch Nephi wrestle with that very question here in these next chapters.

Hank Smith: 00:30:49 That's fantastic.

John Bytheway: 00:30:51 Hank, I love the question of, "Does this giving us license?" Let's skip way ahead to King Lamoni's father who says this incredibly, to me, beautiful poetic prayer. "I will give away all my sins to know thee." Look at that heart. That's not a heart that's saying, "Listen, how bad can I be, and still be saved? How good do I have to be to be saved?" My goodness, so legalistic. He's not that. He's, I am going to strive. I'm not perfect, but I love that "I will give away all my sins to know thee." So, I think we're looking too at Christ can change our hearts so that although we will still make mistakes, it's not our goal to see how many we can make, and still be saved. You know what I mean?

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:31:34 Heaven's ground.

Hank Smith: 00:31:35 I think you're right on. It is by grace that we are saved. Joe, it's interesting that we've taken that verse that you said that says flatly, "It is by grace that we are saved," and yet we've said, "Okay, so what you're saying is it's not by grace that I'm saved, right?"

John Bytheway: 00:31:53 Joe, I love what you did with that. That tasted good.

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:31:57 We can start moving into these cool... Move quickly through 26 so that we can really dwell with 27. The first 13 verses of chapter 26 focus on the time that Christ comes to visit the Nephites and the Lamanites recorded in 3 Nephi. Nephi gives a few words about that. These are words especially written to his children as he says, but then he moves on beyond that as he puts it in verse 14. He says, "But behold", hard turn here, "I prophesy unto you concerning the last days." So, he gives us

just a few verses there, and really aimed at his children saying, "Christ is going to come. Follow him when he shows up." Then he wants to say, "What do the last days look like?" I think this is where we want to dwell for a bit. As soon as he makes that turn in verse 14 of chapter, well, a couple of things we want to note, I think, right out of the gate.

00:32:42 So verse 14, he says, "I prophesy unto you concerning the last days," but then he renames the last days, "Concerning the days when the Lord God shall bring these things forth unto the children of men." That's interesting. For Nephi here prophetically, the last days are the days of the Book of Mormon. That's how he characterizes the last days. We tend to talk about the last days as the days leading up to the coming of Christ again, or the last days as the days of the gathering. Of course, he's going to say things about those kinds of things, but when he characterizes the last days, it's the day of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. As soon as he does that, in verse 15, it's Isaiah time, and for a couple of verses here...

00:33:21 We won't dwell on these at length. He takes a few verses from Isaiah 29, and he reworks them, but it's almost like he's giving us a taste of what he's going to do in chapter 27. He takes a couple of verses from Isaiah 29:3 & 4, and he reworks them. In Isaiah 29, they're about Jerusalem facing down Gentile armies. Here, it's about Nephites getting destroyed, and then Lamanites being left behind, Nephites speaking out of the dust and so on. So, he's likening. He's doing his classic work of likening, taking Isaiah, talking about Jews, but likening it to what he's seen in vision concerning his own people, but he moves past that pretty quick, and gives us a long aside on the Gentiles. This is end of verse 19. Well, verse 19, he says, "It shall come to pass that those who have dwindled in unbelief shall be smitten by the hand of the Gentiles, and the Gentiles," and off he goes.

00:34:12 For the rest of what's now chapter 26, it's a tirade against the Gentiles. I don't know that we want to dig into this in detail for our purposes here today, because I think we really want to give time especially to chapter 27, but there's a pattern running through 20 through 33 here, and the pattern is clear. What Nephi sees in the Gentiles is a culture of exclusion, and exclusion that is rooted ultimately in a desire for gain. That's what he describes happening among the Gentiles. He speaks of them preaching up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning so that they can get gain and grind upon the face of the poor, a certain kind of intellectual culture that allows them to justify their stability that is actually built on the crushing of the poor.

- 00:34:57 As he goes through those verses for the next handful of all the way down to verse 33, he keeps pointing out these kinds of things. This is not how God works. God does not say, "Depart from me." He doesn't say, "Come to me, for your money you'll be saved." No. No. No. That's not our God. God says, "All of you, all of you, all of you, come to me," and that culminates in verse 33 very famously, right? "None of these Gentile iniquities come of the Lord. He doeth that which is good among the children of men. He doeth nothing, save it be plain unto the children of men, and he invited them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness. He denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female, and he remembereth the heathen, and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile," a culture of exclusion among the Gentiles in the last days by contrast with God's inclusive nature.
- 00:35:42 One thing, I think, is very worth highlighting as you come to the end of that long sequence, Nephi seems to suggest that there are a couple of particular problems of exclusion among Gentiles. The fact that he has to say, "God denies no one that comes to him, black and white, bond and free, male and female, suggests that among Gentiles," there's a culture of racism, that there's a culture of economic oppression, and that there's a culture of sexism, of misogyny. That seems to me prophetic. Nephi can see last day's problems with real clarity there coming out of Gentile culture. European culture is really what Nephi seems to mean by Gentile culture.
- Hank Smith: 00:36:18 I was going to ask you that, Joe. When he says Gentile, and I hear Gentile, what should I be thinking of?
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:36:23 Broadly, anyone that's not Israel, but when Nephi in his vision, which he's building on here in his vision back in 1 Nephi 11 through 14, the Gentile nations he talks about are really clearly European nations. He's talking about the place where Christianity grows and develops until people come from that place to the promised land.
- Hank Smith: 00:36:44 I should probably think of myself or at least say, okay, "If I'm one of those Gentiles he sees, can I see some of these things in myself that I'm not seeking the welfare of Zion?" The laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion, not for money, for Zion. Would you say that's okay, Joe, for me to look for those things in myself?
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:37:05 Yeah, totally. In fact, when we get to chapter 28 a little further on, that's where Nephi, after having laid out the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, will start to talk about what it's like in that day. He's going to circle back to all these kinds of themes, but

it's a chapter, I think, we have to read with exactly the spirit you just mentioned, Hank. We have to read it with the kind of Lord, is it I? spirit. How do I deny the Holy Ghost, and preach up my own learning? How do I stop believing that God is a God of miracles? How do I say, "Eat, drink and be merry?"

- Hank Smith: 00:37:34 I think I might have a tendency in 2 Nephi 26:29 to get gain and praise of the world. Whose kingdom are you trying to build? The Lord's or Hank Smith's kingdom? I see that in myself, and that needs to be more holiness give me. Like John said earlier about 25, not how much can I sin and get away with, but how much can I be changed by the Lord's work so I can be holy and labor for Zion, truly labor for Zion? Joe, before we get out of 26, you've got this great verse that you mentioned in verse 33, that the Lord invites all to come unto him. He doesn't deny anyone black and white, bond and free, male and female. When I read that phrase black and white, to me, that's all inclusive. Yet, I've heard from some that the Book of Mormon is a racist book.
- 00:38:27 I've heard you talk about this a couple of times. I know you say you're not the expert on this. I love the humility, but I think you have something you can offer us. What would say about that situation?
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:38:37 There's a lot to say. The short answer looks something like this. I think if we read especially Jacob 1 through 3, that sermon that Jacob gives at the temple when the people are going off the rails after Nephi's death. There are other ways people have read this for sure, but it seems to me that he is calling out Nephites for racism. He talks about them hating the Lamanites, and talks about what seems to be developing as a kind of culture of hatred toward the Lamanites among the Nephites, that you've got prophets calling that out. I think the best way to make sense of the Book of Mormon on this score is not either to say there's no such thing as race here, there's nothing to see here, or on the other hand saying the Book of Mormon is baldly racist.
- 00:39:17 I think the right tack is to recognize that what you have here is a history of a people who in fact had problems of racism and of prophets struggling from within that culture against it, but I think that's also self-illustrative. It's hard for prophets even, all human beings, prophets included, raised in a culture with prejudices and biases. It's hard for even a prophet to work out of that to be able to hear God clearly, and then speak clearly about what needs to change. When I'm teaching this, and when I think about this issue in the Book of Mormon, I often think of this passage in an interview with Spencer W. Kimball where he was asked about the revelation on sending the priesthood to all

worthy males, but he says, "I wanted to be sure about this. I had gone my whole life with the attitude that black people would never hold the priesthood, and I had much to fight myself mostly, because I had this idea."

	00:40:15	That, I think, is a beautiful statement from a prophet of God to get into the place where he could hear clearly that God wanted to change this situation. He had to fight his own culture that he'd grown up with so that he could realize what God was calling for. I see Nephi and Jacob and other prophets in the Book of Mormon, I think it's wrong to call them simply racist. Now, that's not the picture, but they are working from within a culture that has biases and prejudices, and they are trying hard to hear God clearly. When they do, man, they say it clearly. God denies none, black and white. Don't hate them. "This is a commandment from God," said Jacob. "Don't you hate them because of the color of their skin."
Hank Smith:	00:40:56	Cherry-picking verses out of the Book of Mormon to say, "Oh, look, this is what the Book of Mormon is," is a pretty dangerous way to go-
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	00:41:04	Really dangerous.
Hank Smith:	00:41:05	... because you're not getting a picture of what that prophet is actually saying.
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	00:41:10	It's funny to me that people read a passage from Nephi, and say, "This looks racist." I'm like, "He also wrote that one in 2 Nephi 26," so there's a more complicated story one way or another, right?
Hank Smith:	00:41:20	There's a lot going on here, and it does take paying the price like you have to really see what's going on.
John Bytheway:	00:41:27	I call it drive by scripture study when... I think of Isaiah as a forest, and you have to get the big picture first, but if you drive up, look at one leaf, and read what it says, and drive on. You're not getting the picture, and in the same way, drive-by scripture study takes one verse, and draws a conclusion. Like you just said, we've got to take all of this together. We need to be students of everything in the standard works, and then we get a much better picture, which requires some work on our part, but it's so wonderful and so exciting.
Hank Smith:	00:41:56	John, this is a big reason why we have the FollowHIM podcast is to get people like Joe to come and show us some of the things

that we haven't seen, so I can say, "Wow, he's seeing a lot here that I had never seen before. Now, let me go in, and pay that same price to find that kind of depth."

- John Bytheway: 00:42:14 Yeah. When I was at BYU Provo, I had an office by Brother Dale LeBaron. He was the mission president in South Africa when the 1978 Revelation came. You can find it. It's a BYU devotional, speeches.byu.edu, called All Are Alike Unto God, one of the last phrases there in the last verse of 2 Nephi 26. Boy, I invite anybody to watch that to broaden their view of all of this that we're hearing, because it's so interesting and so exciting about what was happening in Africa before the missionaries even went in. The whole congregations who had nothing but a Book of Mormon and a pamphlet about Joseph Smith were formed and were operating.
- 00:42:59 I like to compare it to the seed growing secretly in the Book of Mark that God already had this thing going on before we officially discovered it, which was fascinating to me. I just want to give a shout-out to Brother LeBaron because among other things, we have the same birthday.
- Hank Smith: 00:43:17 Before we go on from this, one thing I remember from our Doctrine & Covenants year, John, was learning how human these people were, because what did Elder Maxwell say? Sometimes we wipe all the dirt off their faces, and make them saccharine saints with tinsel traits. The miracle isn't the people. The miracle is that God takes these people, and does this incredible work. That gives me hope that he can take someone like me, and use me in his incredible work. Joe, isn't there a power in realizing, like you just said, that Nephi, Jacob, and all of these people are very human? Yet, look at the beautiful Book of Mormon that comes out of their lives.
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:44:00 Again, the Psalm of Nephi, right? You've got Nephi wondering out loud whether it might be his own hard feelings that have caused this trouble. The fact that he's willing to put that right on the page is something.
- John Bytheway: 00:44:12 Right on the title page even. If there are faults, they're the mistakes of men. Never did any of them come out and say, "I'm perfect." I'm glad you brought up Nephi, "O, wretched man that I am." I would love to be as wretched as Nephi.
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:44:24 Right.
- John Bytheway: 00:44:27 Love to be large in stature too, but that didn't happen.

Dr. Joseph Spencer:	00:44:30	Yeah. Here we are.
Hank Smith:	00:44:33	Joe, you've been telling us how great chapter 27 is. So without further ado, let's let you loose in chapter 27. I'm excited to see what you see.
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	00:44:44	This is one of my favorite chapters in the Book of Mormon, and it's a unique chapter, because it's one in which someone in the Book of Mormon reflects on the Book of Mormon, and at greater length than we find anywhere else. So, this is, I think, a really remarkable chapter. I'm going to do some close reading here. Interrupt me, but I could easily talk for five hours straight on this. Chapter 27 opens, notice, by him sort of coming back after his tirade. He had that long tirade on the Gentiles, gets back on his feet here, "But behold, in the last days," so he's coming back to ok I'm prophesying about the last days. Remember that we saw in 26:14, he gave another name for the last days. He does it again, but he's changed it. Chapter 27 opens with, "But behold in the last days or in the days of the Gentiles."
	00:45:26	That's interesting. In chapter 26, the last days of the days of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, but now as he reboots, they're the days of the Gentiles. For a couple of verses here, we'll largely skip over the next few verses, but up through verse five, he uses more of the language of Isaiah 29. He's describing just how rotten things are in the day of the Gentiles. The day of the Gentiles is not a good day. There is bad. There are problems, et cetera, et cetera, and we've already of course been dwelling on some of those in chapter 26. So, what's striking is that when he comes to verse six, after reflecting on all this bad, here's his prediction, "And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book."
	00:46:06	So, here's God's way of responding to the day of the Gentiles. All these problems, the solution is the words of a book. The solution is the Book of Mormon. What he's going to do here for the next, well, really the rest of the chapter is he's going to get involved in Isaiah again for the last time. He's going to give us a few verses in chapter 30, but really, this is his last serious engagement with Isaiah. For much of this up through about verse 20, he's going to be interacting with just two verses of Isaiah. He's going to take two verses, and just blow them up. Kind of goes nuts here in a really good way. The two verses, of course, are Isaiah 29: 11 and 12, Latter-day Saints know them very well. We tend to read them as a straightforward prediction of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. I don't think that's quite how Nephi sees them.

- 00:46:52 I think he sees them as Isaiah talking about things in Jerusalem, but again, Nephi's doing what he always does. He's likening to what he's seen in his own visions. So, he takes these couple of lines about words that are sealed, and you give it to the learned, and the learned say it's sealed. You give it to the person that's not learned, and they say, "I'm not learned." He takes those and develops them at great length. We want to read these, I think, really carefully. To do that, the very first thing we've got to do is recognize that there's a distinction running through these verses that's easy to overlook. Notice that in verse six, he says, "What's going to come forth is not a book, but the words of a book." All through these next 15 verses or so, he'll keep this distinction clear. There's a book, and there are the words of the book.
- 00:47:36 You can see over just the next couple of verses, it's pretty clear that the book he's referring to is the gold plates, the actual material physical artifact that was buried in the ground, and dug up and hauled around and put in a bean barrel and all those things. The gold plates themselves, that's the book. The words of the book are then the words that can be translated off of the plates. So in some sense, the words of the book is the Book of Mormon, the actual text that you can print on the page. You can bring up on your phone. You can read out loud. Those are the words of the book. I think we want to keep that distinction clear, because Nephi is going to do some really interesting stuff with what's going on with these two things. Back to verse six, "So, it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book."
- 00:48:19 He's going to bring the Book of Mormon forth. They shall be the words of them which have slumbered, which is clearly a metaphor for death. These are the words of the dead Nephite prophets. In verse seven, "The book shall be sealed. The gold plates are sealed up, not available, and in the book shall be a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof." It's a sealed portion of the Book of Mormon, as we call it, the vision of the brother of Jared. Verse eight, he says, "Wherefore, because of the things which are sealed up, the things which are sealed shall not be delivered in the day of the wickedness and abominations of the people. Wherefore, the book shall be kept from them."
- 00:48:52 The gold plates are not going to be circulated themselves, because there's this sealed revelation in it, but verse nine, a story, "But the book, the gold plates shall be delivered unto a man." That's got to be Joseph Smith, "And he shall deliver the words of the book, which are the words of those who have

slumbered in the dust, and he shall deliver these words unto another." What we seem to have in verse nine is a description of the translation process. Joseph has the plates, and he's delivering the words of the book. He's delivering the Book of Mormon and text to another, so it's almost like a nice little Nephi's description of what that looks like. He's just giving these words to his scribes. Notice that in verse 10, the words which are sealed, he shall not deliver. Neither shall he deliver the book.

00:49:40 The book shall be sealed by the power of God, and the revelation which is sealed shall be kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord. That'll come forth eventually. We'll skip to verse 12 here, "Wherefore, he says, at that day when the book shall be delivered unto the man of whom I have spoken", so when Joseph gets the gold plates, the book, the gold plates themselves shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it, save it be that three witnesses shall behold it by the power of God. We go, "Oh yeah, clearly, Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer," three witnesses who see the actual plates. At the end of that verse, they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein.

00:50:17 In verse 13, "There is none other which shall view it." That is the gold plates themselves. "Save it be a few according to the will of God, to bear testimony of his word unto the children of men", and here we go, ah, yes, eight witnesses," and Mary Whitmer too. We've got various people who see the plates, but the vast, vast majority of the human population, no access to the plates. They're only going to get the words.

Hank Smith: 00:50:38 This distinction between the book, the plates, and the words of the book, the actual text itself that's in front of me that I'm holding, understanding that distinction is crucial to this chapter.

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:50:50 Yeah, I think we can't follow it at all without it, and especially what's going to happen starting in verse 15. So, distinction's clear. Stage is set. He tells a story in verse 15, "But behold, it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall say unto him to whom he shall deliver the book." So, that's got to be Joseph Smith, because he's got the plates. He'll say to him, "Take these words which are not sealed, the words, and deliver them to another that he may show them unto the learned saying, "Read this, I pray thee." The learned shall say, "Bring hither the book, and I will read them", et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. We go, "Ah, Martin Harris." Martin Harris goes off to New York City. He visits with Charles Anthon, gets a certificate that then Anthon tears up, because Anthon wants to translate the book himself.

- 00:51:28 We know the story, and we tend to read this as just a straightforward prophecy of that event, but I think it's more than that. Here's why. Notice that at the end of verse 15, the learned shall say, "Bring hither the book, and I will read them," and now because of the glory of the world and to get gain will they say this. The learned is plural, and that shows up again in verse 20. "Then shall the Lord God say unto him the learned shall not read them for they have rejected them." The story that Nephi tells here in verses 15 through 20 is a story about the learned plural, not just about Charles Anthon, though Charles Anthon is a kind of a good symbol for what he's describing, but what I want to do for a few minutes is read verses 15 through 20 as about all of the learned rather than just the reception that happens in Charles Anthon's office.
- 00:52:19 That is a question then that I think many of us have to think about. It's not just I can make fun of Charles Anthon for being too egg headed and arrogant to listen to Martin Harris. I have to do a, Lord, is it I? kind of thing here too. Where does my learning get in the way? How do I respond to the Book of Mormon given my own, whether it's academic background, if you're a scholar, but also just the fact that you've got Wikipedia in your pocket, and more information than any member of the church has ever had available to you and so on. We are the learned collectively. So, let's read through these verses carefully, and see what happens with the book, the words of the book, and the learned. Verse 15 again, "But behold, it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall say unto him to whom he shall deliver the book."
- 00:53:02 So again, to Joseph Smith, "Take these words which are not sealed, and deliver them to another." That could be Martin Harris, but it could be a missionary. It could be whatever way these words are getting circulated, "That he may show them unto the learned." So now, the words come before the learned saying, "Read this, I pray thee." There's the plea. The plea to the learned of any form, "Read. Read the words. Read the words of the book." So, read the Book of Mormon, and the learned shall say, "Bring hither the book, and I will read them." The response of the learned is, "Give me the plates. I want proof. I want evidence. Show me that there's a material artifact. You give me actual intellectual evidence, then I'll read your words."
- 00:53:50 I think Nephi has pegged the Latter-days here to a tee. This is the reception of the Book of Mormon for the last 200 years. Give me proof, and even believing members of the church. If you go on social media, and say, "I really liked this verse of the Book of Mormon," you get two or three likes. But if you go on

and post some sort of evidence for the Book of Mormon, it gets retweeted or reposted or whatever. People are excited about evidence in a way. We're not about just the words of the book.

- Hank Smith: 00:54:15 Joe, would it be okay for me to say it can't be about the plates. It has to be about the words, and people would say, "Why didn't Joseph just show the plates to everyone? Everyone would've been convinced." Yes, but no one's converted. The words convert.
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:54:30 Exactly.
- Hank Smith: 00:54:30 Plates might convince, but the words convert.
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:54:33 Precisely. Watch how this unfolds, because that's exactly what Nephi is going to do. Verse 16, you get Nephi's explanation of the motivation behind this demand for evidence. Now, because of the glory of the world and to get gain will they say this, and not for the glory of God. Here's a gut check moment then, Am I demanding evidence? Am I asking for proof? Am I going through doubt, et cetera, et cetera about the Book of Mormon, because it's for the glory of God, or is it as it most often is because I don't want to look stupid? It's for the glory of the world. It's because I want to make sure I don't look like an idiot who doesn't belong in the profession. Nephi is holding their feet to the fire on this.
- Hank Smith: 00:55:15 Joe, let's stop here just for a second, because this is crucial. If I'm taking a Lord, is it I? approach, I'm so drawn to these arguments of evidence, because not for the love of the Lord and His work, but because now I can say, "Look, I'm smart. Look at all this backup evidence," and that is a gut check moment.
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:55:38 I think any scholar who's a believer experiences this. Someone will be like, "Do you really buy this stuff?" I have to say like, well, you were probably raised in this is what they'll say. I want to be like, "Look, I have a PhD in philosophy. I've thought through this, okay? Back off," because you don't want to be caught out. You don't want to look like you're just some fool, but this is Gentile culture. This is what the European dominant culture has done to the world, evidence first. Science is the lingua franca of the world. Everything's going to be interpreted through that prism.
- John Bytheway: 00:56:12 This is so good. Let me restate. I'm in verse 15. Take these words, the Book of Mormon. Deliver them to another, another application, missionaries. They'll take them to the learned, the

world, and the learned will say, "Well, bring hither the book", the plates, because the Gentile culture demands evidence first. I love this.

- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:56:34 It sounds like Korihor who says, "Give me a sign, then I'll believe." So coming back to the text then, in verse 17, we get this. The man shall say, this is whether it's a missionary or Martin Harris or whatever. The man shall say, "I cannot bring the book for it is sealed." That's an interesting response. It's as if God has put a divine seal on all of the knockdown evidence regarding the Book of Mormon, which is true. We've got lots of evidences. They speak to believers. They don't speak to unbelievers. They confirm the faithful, but they're not the kinds of things that prove to the world that the Book of Mormon is true. We've never dug up a sign that says, "Welcome to Zarahemla," or found a cave or Nephi scratched in the wall, and said, "Nephi was here." We just don't have those things.
- 00:57:17 So, we have suggestive things, but it's as if as it's worded here, God has sealed all the evidence for a reason of His own. The learned response to this in verse 18 then is, "I cannot read it." That's the learned response. Fine, you won't give me evidence. You won't play the scientific game. Forget it. Then this book is not worth my time. This is blind faith. Then verse 19, which is interesting because now we get the other side of the story. "Wherefore, it shall come to pass that the Lord God will deliver again the book and the words thereof to him that is not learned." Notice that the not learned person here, and this has got to be Joseph Smith. He's got the book and the words of the book. He's got every scholar's dream. He's got the plates, and he's got the translation. That's what I want.
- 00:58:01 He's got it all, but it's all given to Joseph, and he is not learned, and the man that is not learned shall say, "I'm not learned," which I take it as Joseph's response saying something like, "What am I supposed to do with this? Make a dictionary? Who am I? I'm not a scholar." In verse 20, here's God's response to Joseph. "Then shall the Lord God say unto him, the learned shall not read them for they have rejected them, and I am able to do mine own work." There's the line you were quoting earlier, John. "I am able to do mine own work. Wherefore, thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee." God's response to Joseph is, yeah, you are not a scholar. Put the plates on the other side of the table. Read the words. This is not a scholarly affair. It's not an academic endeavor. This is not a technical translation.

- 00:58:47 This is I'm giving you the words. You give those words to the world, and the world won't have access to the plates. They've got to deal with the words alone. The question I think that leaves us with, and that Nephi has got to grapple with here is what on earth is God doing? Why on earth would God give us the words without any decisive evidence at all? What kind of crazy move is that, especially in the modern scientific era? Does God not recognize what's going on? Nephi answers this. He's quoting God. Here's God's answer, "For behold", he says, "I am God, and I am a God of miracles, and I will show unto the world that I am the same yesterday, today and forever, and I work not among the children of men, save it be according to their faith."
- 00:59:36 There's several things he says there, but let's take them in reverse order. The last thing he says, The only way I'm going to work with the children of men is according to faith, not science. It's a deliberate rejection of the Gentile culture's model of coming to knowledge. You're not going to do this through evidence. This is not a laboratory experiment. You have got to trust the words of the book first. That's the first question. Then notice what he says right before that. God says, "I want to show unto the world that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever." I take it, that has something to do with what he's saying about coming to the Book of Mormon and faith. It's not just that we only get the words, it's that we only get the words, but there are witnesses who have seen the book. That should sound really familiar to any Christian.
- 01:00:22 This is exactly the situation with Christ's resurrection. Early Christians are going around saying, this guy rose from the dead. They're like, really? Where's the evidence? Well, some people saw the body. It's exactly our situation with the plates. We have 12 men who saw the plates, Joseph plus three witnesses, plus eight witnesses, 12, and a woman named Mary, exactly the situation from the New Testament. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. It's the exact same situation. So, God seems to be rebooting Christianity through the plates. Just as there's an empty tomb, there's an empty box at Cumorah, and you have to take these witnesses' words, and then go read the book and see what happens. Then the first thing that he said at the beginning of 23 is he wanted to show that he's a God of miracles.
- 01:01:10 The question is, if you read this thing in faith and you buy it, what happens? Do you start to see God working? It's the same kind of thing Moroni's talking about in Moroni 10, if you pray in the right way about this thing, he says, then you're going to be knocked flat by the power of the Holy Ghost, and then he goes

on to list all the gifts of the spirit. This is what you're going to see. You're going to see prophecy and tongues and healing, and it's the same kind of picture here. The way Nephi is explaining it, God is deliberately trying to overturn the Latter-day intellectual culture. That's the very words he uses in verse 27. Now, he's quoting from Isaiah. The people who complain about the Book of Mormon say, surely, your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay.

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| | 01:01:51 | The Book of Mormon is supposed to turn things upside down, or as it's put in verse 27, "The wisdom of their wise and learned shall perish." It's maybe worth noting there, Nephi quotes that verse exactly as it stands in Isaiah, except that he adds the words and learned. The learned are getting overturned. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:02:08 | Wow. I can see why Chapter 27 is one of your favorite chapters. It's becoming one of mine. John, are you loving this as much as I am? |
| John Bytheway: | 01:02:17 | Absolutely. I'm already wanting to make a chart. Here is a fulfillment of Charles Anthon, Martin Harris and so forth, Joseph Smith. Here is a broader way to apply this. Look at every missionary that goes out and tries to give the words of the book to the learned, and look what happens. I love the idea of God's going to say, "No, I don't do this by evidence. I'm the same yesterday, today, and forever." That's really cool that he comes out and says it that way. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:02:46 | So Joe, as I read chapter 27, can I become so entrenched in this Gentile culture that I become the learned? I have so much information, like you said, at my fingertips. I am now the learned, and the Lord God says, this is verse 20, "The learned shall not read them, because they reject them." So, that could be me. |
| Dr. Joseph Spencer: | 01:03:10 | Yeah. I'll have experiences on occasion where a student will come to my office and say, "I'm in a faith crisis over the Book of Mormon. I read this thing online about this or that issue about the Book of Mormon that suggests it's not historical." Then I say, "So tell me about that issue. What have you learned?" 99 out of 100 times, the response is, "I mean, I don't know anything about that. I just read this thing, right?" Whoa, slow down, slow, slow down. But they're like, "Well, but it's evidence." But you don't know anything about the... You're not even playing it scientifically yet", but also then I try to take them back to this, and say, "Careful. Nephi saw this problem long, long in advance." |

	01:03:49	That is not how to read the book. We don't need evidence first. That's to become the learned in this picture. We've got to respond to it with the kind of humility that apparently Joseph Smith exhibits, "I'm not learned. What am I supposed to do with this?" Read the words.
Hank Smith:	01:04:03	The words, it's all about the words. If I'm relating this to the Lord, like you said, the two empty boxes, I can reject the resurrection. Once I reject the resurrection, I'm rejecting everything the Lord has to teach me. Same way with the book. Once I reject the book, I'm rejecting all the wonderful things, the marvelous, wonderful things that could happen.
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	01:04:25	I think that there's a kind of ironic implication in all this too then, is that, as believers and defenders of the book, we have to be very careful about our defense of the book. If we're defending it always on intellectual grounds, trying to show that it's defensible only on those grounds, we have missed the boat. We may need to make those arguments on occasion. It's being attacked, and we've got to make a response, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. That's not reading the evidence right," but boy, if we start to think that the task with the Book of Mormon is to show that it's intellectually defensible, why was there a restoration? This is a book that's supposed to change me, bring me to Christ, trigger the redemption of Israel.
	01:05:04	We can get lost. That's a rabbit hole you can disappear down, and never come out of. But boy, we've got to actually read the words.
Hank Smith:	01:05:11	Joe, let me see if I can articulate this then back in 23, where the Lord says, "I work according to the children of men, according to their faith." It's almost as if he'll wait. "I will not work with you on the basis of evidence and science and this Gentile culture. I will wait until you're ready to work by faith. I just won't work any other way."
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	01:05:35	It sounds like Moroni again in Ether 12. Well, why don't we make this book perfect? Why don't we get it so it'll just knock the Gentiles over? says Moroni, and God's like, no. Those who are humble, those who are meek, who will not take advantage of your words, those are the ones that I want to reach. God is willing to have the book not be scientifically verifiable so that it will gather the kinds of people who will approach it in faith.



Gentile Culture Wars

GUEST: JOSEPH SPENCER



- Hank Smith: 00:01 Welcome to part two with Dr. Joseph Spencer, 2 Nephi 26 through 30.
- 00:07 Later on we're going to hear Alma say, I just love this phrase, "If you will give place." And that's that, I'm going to set the evidence stuff aside for a second and I'm going to give place, even if I can no more than desire to believe. Could this possibly be true? Which demonstrates a humility in the faith, instead of evidence. I love that phrase, I got to give place. And maybe that's what you're talking about, Hank. We could be in danger of not giving place if we get too evidence intellectually-based on the whole thing.
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 00:41 One way I've taught this to students on occasion, or especially like one-on-one settings where a student will come in saying, "But what about, what about, what about?" I'll say, like, stop. Stop. Stop. Let's just talk about an analogy for a minute. There are other things that work like Nephi is describing here. Think about love. Imagine a marriage in which you are constantly demanding signs that the other loves you before you will believe that they do. Imagine a relationship in which you are constantly trying to measure it in scientific terms. You will kill love so fast. Love is the kind of thing that you have to open a space, and it's vulnerable and it's complicated and it's messy, but you can do the kind of thing that happens in Alma 32 and measure your feelings as they develop. Faith works like love, not like science. You have to be carefully attuned, open, listening, not the kind of thing that you just pull out the microscope and the particle collider and see what you can detect. It's not how it works.
- Hank Smith: 01:41 Does that tie into, Joe, what Jacob says, "To be learned is good?" Like there's nothing wrong with having that scientific evidence-based mind, if you hearken to the counsels of God and the counsel of God here in 2 Nephi 27 is "I work according to faith."

Dr. Joseph Spencer:	01:57	Exactly. Science is incredible, but it's got its place. This is the threat of Gentile culture, I think as Nephi sees it is, science becomes the common measure of all things, that's killing us.
John Bytheway:	02:08	That's really good. I have found, Joe, what you're saying to be true, in that, when I get in these evidence-based discussions, they can be fine. I don't hate them. But when I think about my experience with the Book of Mormon, it seems light years beyond evidence-based. It's fine. Like I'm not saying it's not interesting. But my experience with the book has been, I think what the Lord describes in verse 26, "I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people." It's not a scientific work. It's a marvelous work. And that's how I describe it. I enjoy those discussions, but what my experience has been with the Book of Mormon, has honestly been light years beyond an evidence-based discussion.
Hank Smith:	02:55	Yeah, my experience is very similar. I've loved the things I've read that sift through evidence for the Book of Mormon. I've been instructed and sometimes it illuminates the text in really remarkable ways. But man, a serious close reading of the text and what it reveals about God, God's nature, the life of faith. I'll take that any day over all the evidence in the world.
John Bytheway:	03:17	Joe, I've heard you talk about Hugh Nibley before, one of the greatest scholars in our Latter-day Saint history. I remember you saying something like, the first half of his Book of Mormon research was that evidence-based, but he seemed to put that away after a while.
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	03:32	He did. This was from the mid-40s until the mid-60s, so for about 20 years, he felt like the Book of Mormon was under a very serious attack and an answer was needed. And so he went looking for evidence. I think the way he used evidence was more nuanced than he's often read as being. But he was. He was looking for evidence. Can we make a case on something like scientific grounds that the Book of Mormon can't be excluded from the possibility of truth? But yeah, by the mid-60s, I think he felt like he'd kind of done what needed to be done in that regard, to quiet down the critics and he was very explicit about this.
	04:04	He says, "Now it's time to do the real work." And he spent the rest of his career reading it. And especially for him, what really drove his interest is the way it talked about questions of poverty, questions of consecration, questions of how cultures grow and develop and mature and then fall apart. These are the things, how it talks about war and peace. He was absorbed with

those themes for the rest of his life. He said, "Evidence is fine, fine, fine. We did all that." Now he says, "We've got to find out what this book is telling us to do and how to repent."

- John Bytheway: 04:34 And that's the power of the words over the power of the Book, the plates. And I think most of our listeners have had those moments where they've sat with the Book of Mormon, and something clicks, something they zone in and, all of a sudden, the words become like your one reviewer said, "Three-dimensional, and you're seeing new things and you're feeling new things and your view is being enlightened and changed." You can say something like, out of chapter 27, that the words are the marvelous part, not the plates.
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 05:09 Yeah. Let me just finish out that thought, and to quote Alma again, and it's discernible, it's light. That sometimes something happens that gets close to evidence, because you can tell, "Well, something is happening to me. I'm enlightened. It's a discernible thing and ..."
- Hank Smith: 05:30 Once you've had an experience with the Book of Mormon, other people's opinion about the plates, it doesn't have as much impact. "Well, what about the plates? What about this?" Yes, those are important questions, but I've experienced the Book.
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 05:44 Right, and I feel that way about the Pearl of Great Price. A lot of chatter about the evidence for the Pearl of Great Price, but read the words. It's incredible. Read the Pearl of Great Price, it'll blow you away. What's in there is, the words are out of this world. It's so good.
- Hank Smith: 06:04 So Joe, you've blown us away with chapter 27. Are we done with it or should we spend a little bit more time here?
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 06:10 Let's just say one final word maybe by way of wrapping it up, and that's notice that we haven't had to say a whole lot about Isaiah along the way. We've mentioned places where Nephi is picking up words and phrases from Isaiah, but this feels very different from the Isaiah chapters coming before this. And that's maybe worth reflecting on just a little bit.
- 06:27 Obviously Isaiah is still here, but notice that he's not front and center. This is the first time in Nephi's record where he's quoted substantially from Isaiah and not told you that's what he's doing. Every other time he says, "Okay, now I'm going to quote the words of Isaiah." And then boom chapters, but this is the

first time that he subtly starts picking up Isaiah's language and weaving it in.

06:47 And it feels to me almost like what we've got in first Nephi and in second Nephi up through chapter 24 or so, we've got Nephi doing scales, but now he can just play. He's been walking you through Isaiah, making sure it's possible to liken him and so on. He's quoting lots and lots of it, getting you familiar with it, but now it's just smooth as butter. It's weaving back and forth between Isaiah's words and his own prophecy. He's doing the likening in real time, rather than giving you Isaiah and then likening it.

07:18 This is Nephi at his virtuosic best. That's really something. We don't have to pause and say, "Okay, what was going on with Assyria at the time to read this chapter?" We can, but here, Nephi, it's become so integral with what he's doing. We don't have to dig into the details and the history and the Hebrew. We can just watch Nephi work.

07:38 That's the really beautiful thing, and shows us maybe what our own goal might look like with Isaiah someday, right? Can we get to the point where the words are just there and available and natural and we can weave them into the gospel as we have known it and felt it? That's where Nephi is trying to get.

Hank Smith: 07:56 For a long time, Joe, and I still do, I really like understanding the context for Isaiah, but I noticed Nephi isn't overly concerned with, "Here's what's happening with Assyria, here's what's happening with the southern kingdom, the northern kingdom, the kings, during Isaiah's time." He seems to think, "Yeah, you probably know about that, but you don't necessarily need that background to give that something-"

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 08:20 I think that's absolutely right. Maybe this is what he means by likening. Sometimes when we read second Nephi 25, we'll say, "Oh, here are the keys to understanding Isaiah." And one of them is, you got to know some geography, you know some history. It's immensely helpful. I spent a lot of time doing that, so it's helpful.

08:35 But Nephi also goes on to say, "I didn't teach that to my people." And here he is copying chapters of Isaiah for them. He's very explicit. If we're going to do likening work, you don't have to be an Isaiah scholar. Watch for the patterns, watch for the phrases, watch what we can do with them. Yeah.

Hank Smith:	08:51	Wonderful. Yeah, there's nothing wrong with understanding those things. In fact, it can be very helpful.
John Bytheway:	08:56	Right.
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	08:56	Yeah, totally.
Hank Smith:	08:58	Oh, man. So that chapter 27 just blew me away. How many times did you have to read that and how slowly did you have to go?
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	09:09	This is my life.
Hank Smith:	09:11	I can't imagine how slowly you had to go just to get that, "Wait, there's a difference between the words and the book."
John Bytheway:	09:17	I love it.
Hank Smith:	09:17	Me too. Me too. I'll never see that chapter the same again. I bet you both know this. What did Elder Maxwell say? "These are like rooms with fireplaces yet to warm us?"
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	09:29	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	09:29	You think you've seen the room.
John Bytheway:	09:31	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	09:31	You think you've been in chapter 27. No, you actually haven't been in that room as long as you need to yet.
John Bytheway:	09:38	That expanded view of it, it could really bless a lot of missionaries to know this is par for the course, this is what you're going to encounter, and that's prophesied. It could happen this way, but there will be some who will give place and will plant that in their hearts and that message of Christ in their hearts. I can't wait to share it with my son on a mission.
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	10:00	Yeah. I love the fact that Nephi, we tend to think of ourselves as very sophisticated 21st century individuals who see these problems of faith and science. Nephi saw this 2,600 years ago. Like he's laying this out. He sees the challenge that missionaries are facing way, way, way in advance, and here we are patting ourselves on the back for being very sophisticated modern individuals.

Hank Smith:	10:19	Joe, would one of the keys be to be humble enough to say like verse 19-
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	10:23	Yeah. Got to be-
Hank Smith:	10:25	"I am not learned. I have information, but I don't know if... I am not learned." What does the Lord say in Isaiah? "My ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts."
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	10:37	I like that. Getting to the point where we can actually confess I am not learned. I like that way of putting it. I mean talking about slow reading and how carefully one has to read to see this kind of thing. It's easy when we read the Book of Mormon, especially. When we're reading the New Testament, we're like, scholars, give me information. We're reading the Pearl of Great Price. Yeah, someone's got to help me with this Egyptian stuff. Old Testament, whole other story. But the Book of Mormon, even the Doctrine & Covenants, we need that Joseph Smith papers team to tell us what's going on here.
	11:01	But the Book of Mormon, we tend to be like, "I know this, I know this." But the result is, that we don't read slowly, we don't read carefully. We tend to move too fast, and there's a certain sense in which we're saying to the Book of Mormon, over and over, "I'm learned. I already know this. I already know what's going on here." But boy, if we can get to the point where we say, "I am not learned, I don't know what this is saying." Then man, we might actually slow down and it'll teach us.
John Bytheway:	11:25	Boy, this podcast has taught me that, in an exciting way because every time I sit down in front of this camera, I think I can't wait to see what I'm going to learn today.
	11:38	And you brought up Hugh Nibley and there was a video they made about him called Faith of an Observer, and at the end, he says, "None of us is very smart. None of us knows very much, but the things the angels envy us for is we can forgive and we can repent."
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	11:50	We can repent, yeah.
John Bytheway:	11:51	And it's a Hugh Nibley saying, "None of us knows very much. No, we're not very smart."
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	11:56	Yeah.

John Bytheway:	11:57	We just go, okay, if Hugh Nibley says that, what am I going to say?
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	11:59	Right.
Hank Smith:	12:02	Yeah. That kind of humility is what the words will then come to light.
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	12:05	Yeah, I think that's exactly it.
John Bytheway:	12:07	What do they say when they go visit the Zoramites? "Well, we begin to have success among the poor." What could that possibly mean? When we get to that part, I always ask the returned missionaries, "Does this sound familiar?"
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	12:21	Yeah, right.
Hank Smith:	12:23	I remember once I was being trained as a teacher, and a guy said something that I haven't forgotten. He said, "You can tell a powerful spiritual experience has happened is, people don't want to leave." They're like, "Let's just stay a little bit longer and just sit in this a little bit." And that's how I feel about chapter 27, what we've just experienced. I don't want to leave this. It's been so good.
John Bytheway:	12:46	I have to throw in an FSY reference. The research coming back from these FSY conferences, most people would not expect this, but when they have asked the youth, "What did you love most about it?" They don't say the two or three dances. They don't say the activity, they don't say the games. You know what they all say by far? "Thursday night testimony meeting." And when the dance starts, they don't want to go that way. It's fascinating to see that the spirit is a beautiful comfortable place and we want to stay there. And there's so many applications of that.
	13:21	I remember being in a youth conference once and after the testimony meeting, we're sitting in the chapel, the DJ was eager to start up the music in the gym. And I remember seeing the fallen look on the countenances of some of the youth who wanted to stay in this place. And I couldn't resist. I leapt up to the pulpit and I said, "Did you notice? Did you notice how that felt? How many of you just went, ugh, back to the world?"
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	13:50	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	13:51	Thank you for that, Joe. That was quite an experience, one I'll always remember. What do we have left to see, 28, 29, 30?

Dr. Joseph Spencer:	13:58	As we said earlier, these next three chapters which constitute our second original chapter in this block of text, the rest of this is Nephi reflecting on the stakes of the story he's already just told us. In some ways, all of this feels very natural after what we've done, right? In chapter 28, we have Nephi saying a bit about what that day looks like, and the temptations of the culture we've been discussing. The different directions it'll go and God's countering of it over, and over, and over again. Maybe the most beautiful of these comes in chapter 28, 29. "Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the Word of God and we need no more of the Word of God for we have enough."
	14:35	No, no, no. You need more words. You need words, so that you can dwell with them. And then God's beautiful response to this in verse 30, "Thus saith the Lord God, I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept. Hear a little, there a little. Blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts and lend ear unto my counsel. They shall learn wisdom. And unto him that receiveth well, I will give more." And then all of chapter 29 reflects on that question, the response to the Book of Mormon being, a Bible, a Bible? We've got a Bible, we don't need any more of that. And God saying, Are you kidding me? I'm going to give you every word I can. Dwell on this, too. Stick with that also. Make every space you can for this. You can see he's just sitting with what we've been talking about.
	15:22	And then chapter 30 is his final word. This will all turn out all right in the end. There will be a final redemption. Gentiles and Israel and everyone together. He uses some of Isaiah's most beautiful words to talk about that day and sends us off.
Hank Smith:	15:37	Back in 28, it seems that there's a continuation of the discussion. Verse two, "The things which shall be written out of the book, shall be of great worth unto the children of men." That's how I feel about what you've shown us so far, and yet here comes the words into this culture, seven and eight, "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die." Eat, drink, and be merry. Fear God. He will justify committing a little sin. Would you say that's also Gentile culture?
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	16:04	Yeah. The key line for me is verse five, they deny the power of God, the holy one of Israel. And they say unto the people, hearken unto us and hear ye our precept. And here's the precept, "There is no God today. The Lord and the Redeemer hath done His work and He hath given His power unto men." That's the kind of culture that's going to say, "Eat, drink, and be

merry. Tomorrow we die." God did His work once upon a time, God is dead today. God doesn't have much to do with our everyday lives. Come back to the real world, we tell return missionaries so perversely. Come back to the real world, as if the work of building the kingdom weren't the real world. But that's the kind of picture when like, Nah, chill out. God's going to be fine with all this. There's nothing much to worry about here. We don't need to take religious things so seriously. That's the kind of situation to which the Book of Mormon has to come and correct.

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| Hank Smith: | 16:52 | You are right in that Nephi's vision from 11 through 14, way back in first Nephi, still seems to be coming up. Verse 18, "The great and abominable church must fall." He seems to be leaning on that initial vision still. That make sense? |
| Dr. Joseph Spencer: | 17:09 | Yeah. So you see this as well, yeah, in chapter 30 in verse five, for instance, "The gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them, the remnant of our seed. Wherefore they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers." It's almost a direct quotation from the earlier vision. This goes on in this vein. You can see it right at the very end in verses 17 and 18 of chapter 30. "There's nothing which is secret save it shall be revealed. There's no work of darkness save it shall be made manifest in the light. There's nothing which is sealed upon the earth save it shall be loosed. Wherefore, all things which have been revealed unto the children of men, shall at that day be revealed and Satan shall have power over the hearts of the children of men no more for a long time. And then I end my sayings." |
| | 17:50 | This is the same move he made with his vision. Everything's leading up to that last moment and they're like, "Oh, I can't tell you anything else, that's going to be for John to do." But he does it here again. Yeah, he's walking us right back through his vision. |
| Hank Smith: | 18:02 | What do you think his message is here, Joe, if you had to rephrase it? I'm reading verse 15 of 28. "Oh, the wise and the learned and the rich that are puffed up in the pride of their hearts." He's like, "Oh." It doesn't seem to come across as a, "You better watch out because God's coming for you." It's the, "Oh, this is exhausting." |
| Dr. Joseph Spencer: | 18:24 | Yeah, I think that's right. And Nephi's got that tendency. I mean think of that passage, it's in the reading for this week as well. It's in chapter 26, where he talks about having seen his own |

people destroyed. This is chapter 26, verse seven, "Oh, the pain and the anguish of my soul for the loss of the slain of my people. For I, Nephi, I have seen it and it well nigh consumeth me before the presence of the Lord. But I must cry unto my God, 'Thy ways are just.'" Yeah, Nephi seems exhausted, overwhelmed at the wickedness he sees and, yeah, I think this in chapter 28:15 is a perfect example of it.

John Bytheway: 18:55

Joe, so I want to take a Lord is it I? attitude at this. How do I personally overcome my Gentile culture? This is all I know. I haven't lived in another culture. I've visited other cultures, but it's permeated throughout the world.

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 19:15

This is honestly one of the reasons that ancient scripture matters. We love modern scripture for all the right reasons and we love modern prophets for all the right reasons. There's something about a culture that is completely foreign and me wrestling with trying to understand how they're talking and how they're thinking, that can help break my world open. I can be trapped in, this is just the way things are, isn't it? But then I'm trying to read Genesis and I got to go, "So they think there's water above the ... What is going on here?" Right? But it's enough to make me go, "Okay, I can't think about this in modern scientific terms, so what am I doing?"

19:53

Or I'm reading Isaiah talking about God in ways that make you wonder if human beings have agency, and then you have to go, "Whoa, okay, so agency is really important. That's clear. But how much have I let my picture of agency be shaped by a modern culture?" Reading ancient scripture matters sometimes to get us out of our modern Gentile context.

20:13

When you read Alma responding to Korihor and he said, "Look around you, everything testifies of a God". No modern person would talk that way. But you read Alma and you go, "Whoa, there is a totally different way of living in the world than I experienced. Could I actually inhabit the space where even looking around, I see God?" And that gets me out of Gentile mindset.

Hank Smith: 20:34

Wow. And that's where the scales of darkness begin to fall from your eyes, you start to see new things.

John Bytheway: 20:42

I love second Nephi 28, verses 21 and 22. "Others will He pacify." What do you put in a baby's mouth when they're fussy? A pacifier. And then, "You'll lull them." What do you sing to a baby? A lullaby. "Into carnal security." Was it President Harold B. Lee that talked about the test of gold, of abundance that we'll

have? And then in this, I guess what he means by carnal security, "All is well in Zion. Zion prospereth." And then this frightening line, "Thus the devil cheateth their souls and leadeth them away carefully down to hell." They don't know what's happening. They're being led away carefully. They don't realize it's happening. And like you were saying, Hank, I don't want to be that person that gets caught up with the Gentile culture with which I'm surrounded and starts doing the same thing. When the devil cheats their souls, I think the best kind of con is when you don't know you're getting conned.

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 21:41

Exactly.

John Bytheway: 21:42

That's what Satan does, leads you carefully. You don't even realize it's happening.

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 21:47

Yeah. Mormon puts this on display in the Book of Helaman. In a lot of ways I feel like this is what the whole point of the Book of Helaman is, at least as regards the Nephites, because we get the Lamanite conversion and we get Samuel preaching. But the scene we get, every vignette we get of the Nephites, there is them not even aware.

22:02

I love that scene where you got Nephi praying on his tower and the people are walking by, and they run into the city and say, "You got to come see this." Why? Like who cares some guy's praying on a tower. But it's explicit on the text. They are astonished that someone could be so upset, and that's why they go gather a crowd. That's a scary moment where they have no idea how bad their situation is. And that's what Nephi is describing perfectly. They're thinking, Zion is prospering, that all is well. This is the best we've ever seen in Nephite culture, and Nephi's going, "You are lost." Scary.

Hank Smith: 22:38

Joe, you mentioned the Lamanites and I've heard you talk about this before. Is this something that Nephi sees, this redemption of the Lamanites? I know as I've heard you talk about this, it's helped me see the Book of Mormon differently, because the Lamanites, often as we read are Nephite's good, Lamanites bad, and they've become a background character against this main story of the Nephites. But you've swapped that sometimes in your mind, right?

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 23:02

I think that's the only way to read the Book of Mormon as it's trying to teach us, right from the title page. The book is about the remnant of Israel and what great things the Lord has done for their fathers.

	23:13	<p>Their fathers are the Lamanites. This is supposed to be a story about the redemption of the Lamanites. Nephi's small plates are telling us the story very clearly of how Laman and Lemuel, we've been talking about this, gets separated from the presence of God. And now we get these prophecies about them being brought back. You get into Mormon's historical books and it's the story of the rise of a church, and then its first waves of Lamanite converts. Then the total conversion of the Lamanite nation in preparation for Christ showing up. The story Mormon is telling at the macro scale, is the story of the redemption of the Lamanites anciently. And then Moroni writes and tells the Gentiles, "You'd better repent because the Lamanites are going to be redeemed and you may not be if you don't repent."</p>
	23:53	<p>The whole Book of Mormon is about Lamanite redemption. You're exactly right. We tend to read it as like Lamanite's bad, but if we were to read the Book of Alma carefully, there is literally, not a single military conflict in the Book of Alma that's started by a Lamanite. They are all Nephite dissenters, every one of them. Every one of them. This is not a story about bad Lamanites versus good Nephites. It's bad Nephites versus good Nephites. That's the story. Lamanites are basically just being forced into military conflicts through it. But over and over and over again, this is a story about Nephite problems and Lamanite redemption, 100%.</p>
John Bytheway:	24:31	<p>I put an Amazon logo up on my PowerPoint, because Amazon says, "From A to Z." And I said that Captain Moroni had enemies from Z to A, Zarahemnah, Amalickiah, his brother Ammoron. And then it gets messed up with the Kingman, so it's Zach. But like you said, they're not Lamanites, they're Nephite dissenters that caused the most problems.</p>
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	24:56	<p>Yeah, the Zoramites, the Amlicites, you name it.</p>
John Bytheway:	25:00	<p>Joe, as I'm reading the Book of Mormon and I'm looking for this Lamanite redemption, where should I be careful as I walk through this? The war chapters you've talked about. Where else where I can go, "Oh look, I can see this redemption?"</p>
Dr. Joseph Spencer:	25:13	<p>It's a different answer whether you're reading the small plates or Mormon's abridgement of the large plates. When you're reading the small plates, if we take the focus to be on prophecy, which is what Nephi is doing, then this all comes right out. When we take the focus of Nephi's record to be a series of illustrations of how to be good, or how to be bad, then Nephi looks good and Laman and Lemuel look bad. But if we take him to be telling a story about how we ended up with a division</p>

between these two nations, and then a bunch of prophecy about how that would be overcome already with his vision, and then further into second Nephi. Laman and Lemuel are going off the tracks. But the point is they're going off the tracks and that's the beginning of a scattering, and then we've got to watch for their redemption.

25:54 We have to read it prophetically, rather than just narratively, or as a series of vignettes. When we're reading Mormon's record, I think we have to keep the really big picture and then we see what's happening. In the Book of Mosiah, for instance, King Benjamin amazing, King Noah disaster, and those are clearly being set side by side. But King Noah's disaster situation also forces into existence this new church on the borders that is going to outlast Benjamin's people's covenant that only last a generation. And this church is going to persist and it's going to be the church that opens the door to Lamanite conversion.

26:30 500 years without any Lamanite converts until suddenly there's a church and now they're converting? That's not accidental. What's happening with that church? Why is it that a church divorced from the Nephite national identity opens the door to Lamanites? For the first time to become a Christian is to become a Christian, not to become a Nephite. So even the rise of the church and the way that's all being told in Mosiah, is opening that space for the Lamanites and then Alma. The Nephites are barely hanging on, but the Lamanites are converting in droves, and then Helaman, the Nephites are falling apart and Lamanite conversion. All through that story, we've just got to keep an eye on the Lamanites, and then the story gets clear all the way through it.

27:10 Moroni is a little different because Moroni, he adds a couple chapters at the end of Mormon. And his Book of Moroni, though it's important I think to note that the Book of Moroni, he explicitly says he wrote for the Lamanites. But then the Book of Ether is his book about unto Gentiles. So the Book of Ether is kind of a unique book. It's about the Jaredites, but the Jaredites are not Israelites. They come from before Abraham. Moroni seems to be trying to write about Gentiles and then warn Gentiles, "Look, you've got no promise. You can go down like Shiz and Coriantumr if you don't repent. So you've got to be like the brother of Jared." right? That book is the one part of the Book of Mormon that's not obviously going to tell us much about the Lamanites, but the rest of it, all of it, it's all there.

John Bytheway: 27:46 Great overview. It's really helpful. I want to look at this idea of being the covenant people of the Lord, and how He decides

who are His covenant people, because I love this verse in 2 Nephi 30:2, how do you become a covenant person of the Lord? I wondered if you want to comment on that.

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 28:04

Yeah, I think this is crucial. I think verses one and two together give us really important context. Verse one opens, "And now behold, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you." So there's a transition suddenly. He's been talking, even though within the same original chapter here. He's been talking about one thing and here he makes a kind of turn. So when Nephi says, "My beloved brethren." Who's he talking to? And if you go through his whole record, Lamanites. He'll speak of his children and his brethren. Here, he seems to be turning suddenly to Lamanite readers and says, "I would speak unto you. For I, Nephi, would not suffer that ye should suppose that ye are more righteous than the Gentiles shall be." So he seems to be looking to the last days and saying, "All right, Lamanite readers of the Book of Mormon. Just because I've been railing on the Gentiles for chapters, don't you suddenly start patting yourself on the back, for behold, except ye shall keep the commandments of God, ye shall all likewise perish."

28:55

And because of the words which have been spoken, "Ye need not suppose that the Gentiles are utterly destroyed. They can repent. And then he gives us verse two, and it's worded very carefully. "For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord, and as many of the Jews as will not repent, shall be cast off. For the Lord covenanteth with none, save it be with them that repent and believe in His son who is the Holy One of Israel." But at a broad level, clear what he's saying. "You got to keep the commandments. You're not just in it automatically because of a covenant."

29:23

But it's also I think important, the way he words it is still lopsided. "As many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord." So he doesn't say the covenant doesn't matter. What you've got to do is become the covenant people, which is exactly what you were saying, John, right? How does one become the covenant people? "And as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off." Salvation, redemption is still always in the Abrahamic covenant. It's always in Israel. It's just a question of who ends up in Israel. Gentiles repenting can be, Nephi's usual way of saying it is, numbered among the house of Israel.

30:01

And, of course, Israelites can boot themselves right out of that. They can eject themselves from the community as the whole

law of Moses tells us constantly. But it's still in the covenant, so whether Gentiles find their way in and Israel finds its way out, it's always still in the covenant, but there's nothing automatic about that. There is a question of who will believe in His Son, repent and be a part of this?

- John Bytheway: 30:23 Who's eligible to be covenant people of the Lord? Those who will repent and believe in His Son.
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 30:31 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 30:32 Gentile seems to refer a lot as we've talked to European nations, but if I go get my patriarchal blessing and I discover, "Oh, I'm one of those lost tribes." Then I'm part of a covenant people of the Lord, I have a portion of that in me as far as lineage, but not as far as where my heart is. I have to repent and believe in His Son.
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 30:51 Yeah, that's beautifully put. This is a question a lot of students raise is, they'll be like, "Wait, so the Book of Mormon keeps talking as if I'm a Gentile, but I got a patriarchal blessing." I think the way you put it is really quite beautiful. Even if in terms of lineage, I'm Israel, there's a question of where my heart is.
- 31:06 I find it very interesting that in the Book of Mormon, it's clear that Joseph Smith is portrayed as both a Gentile and an Israelite. On the title page, he's called a Gentile. "The Book of Mormon is going to come forth by way of the Gentile." But in 2 Nephi 3, he's a direct descendant of Joseph of Egypt. Beautiful. Joseph is by lineage, an Israelite, but by culture, by nationality, by what he's inherited, he's a Gentile.
- 31:32 That's my situation. I've got a patriarchal blessing that ties me to Ephraim, but in terms of culture, I've inherited Gentile culture. I have to get my heart right.
- John Bytheway: 31:41 So good.
- Hank Smith: 31:44 That's how we become a covenant people.
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 31:46 Yeah, that's what it looks like.
- John Bytheway: 31:48 Joe, this has been a phenomenal experience. I'm having a hard time finding the right adjectives to describe, at least what I've experienced the last couple of hours.

31:58 Before we let you go, I would love for you to try to articulate, I know this is difficult, what the Book of Mormon means to you, what it's done for you, the way you think about it.

Dr. Joseph Spencer: 32:09 It is a hard question. My bread and butter is the Book of Mormon. I'm literally a Book of Mormon scholar. This is my day job. And as a result, it's so woven into everything I do and everything I think about.

32:22 But I think I would say this. The way that Moroni words his promise in Moroni 10, I absolutely love. He doesn't promise to us that we'll know whether the Book of Mormon is true. That's not how he words it. He says that the truth of it will be manifest. I like that because, one, I think the truth of something is way bigger than whether it's true or false. The truth of it sounds like I've got a lot more information than that and a lot more depth.

32:48 But two, I just really love the word manifest. The work I've done on the Book of Mormon for 20 years now, it's crazy, and pushed harder and harder and harder against this book in every way I can, whether that's historical, or theological, or practical, it pushes back. And the result is that for me, the truth of the Book of Mormon is manifest. It's plain, it's apparent, it's obvious. But it's also been really crucial to me that that is something that becomes manifest after so much work.

33:23 We were talking earlier about not beginning from a scientific position on the book, beginning instead from faith, and that's very much how it began for me. I felt things about the book, and so I read the book earnestly and seriously. I began from a position of faith, and then the more I have worked on it in an attitude of faith, the more its truth is manifest. For all the reasons we've been talking about, like, "Oh, is this Gentile culture clouding my understanding of the Book of Mormon?" I have an intellectual testimony as well as a spiritual testimony of the Book of Mormon, but I don't think it's a Gentile culture-driven one, because it inverts the attitude that Nephi attributes to the Gentiles.

34:05 What you have there is, "Give me the book, then I will read the words." I feel like it's gone the other way around for me. I began with the words, and somewhere along the way the truth of it, the evidence, is just right there in it. Korihor is wrong to ask for a sign and then say he will go on to believe, but Jesus Christ Himself says, "Signs follow those who do believe." That's what it's felt like with me for the Book of Mormon. Reading it, studying it, pushing harder and harder, reading closer, and

closer, asking the hardest questions of it, and then seeing what I can find when I read it in earnest. And it turns out over, and over, and over again, I feel like it's sign after sign after sign after sign, but all as sort of byproducts.

- 34:47 What I was looking for was just understanding. But man, the conviction just deepens, and deepens, and deepens. I feel like I've come to the point where the Book of Mormon is the surest thing I know. It's certainly the window on to Christ, the window through which I first saw Christ and the window through which I still view Him, so that Christ's solidity in my life is dependent entirely on the Book of Mormon's solidity. And I'm amazed at just how solid it is.
- Hank Smith: 35:18 Joe, I just don't have the words to tell you how wonderful it's been to have you walk us through these chapters and to hear your testimony.
- 35:25 John, I honestly can't think of the word. The title of the lesson is A Marvelous Work in Wonder, and those are close words to what we've experienced.
- John Bytheway: 35:34 I can't wait for people to hear this. I can't wait to share it myself, particularly about 2 Nephi 27. That's really ...
- Hank Smith: 35:43 Yeah. Joe, thanks for spending your time with us this morning.
- Dr. Joseph Spencer: 35:47 Yeah, happy to do it.
- Hank Smith: 35:48 We love having you. We want to thank Dr. Joe Spencer for spending his time with us today. We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen, and our founder, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week as we finish up 2 Nephi on followHIM.
- 36:09 Before you skip to the next episode, I have some important information. This episode's transcript and show notes are available on our website, followHIM.co. That's followHIM.co.
- 36:20 On our website, you'll also find our two books, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, and Finding Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Both books are full of short and powerful quotes and insights from all our episodes from the Old and New Testaments. The digital copies of these books are absolutely free. You can watch the podcast on YouTube. Also, our Facebook and Instagram accounts have videos and extras you won't find anywhere else.

36:43

If you'd like to know how you can help us, if you could subscribe to, rate, review and comment on the podcast, that will make us easier to find. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, and Annabelle Sorensen.

President Russell M. Nelson: 37:04

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

MOHAWK BOY



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| Hank Smith: | 00:03 | Welcome to followHIM Favorites. John and I are bringing out a single story from this week's lesson. John, we're in 2 Nephi 26 through 30, and you told me you have a great story, so I'm going to turn it over to you. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:14 | My wife and I were newlyweds. We were called immediately to be Sunday school teachers for the teenagers. We were thrilled with that calling. We met our students and everything. I can't remember how many weeks, how many months into our new calling, a kid came in that we didn't recognize, sat down in the class, and he had a bright red mohawk and some piercings and whatever. And I tossed whatever lesson that I thought I had and I spent the time on, there's a God who loves us and he's real. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:46 | John, I got to tell you that. I love that. I wish I could pull that off. Well, not off his head but my own head. I wish I could put it on my own head. I don't know. There's just something about the color. I like it. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:00 | Yeah, it was bright. We didn't need to turn on the lights in the room. It was intense. And the next week he came back. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:07 | Awesome. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:08 | And again, I just thought I'm going to stay on this other lesson. I started to learn more about what was going on, and this time his mohawk was kelly green, totally green. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:18 | Kelly green? Okay. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:18 | Yeah, Kelly green, bright green. I just kept telling him, we're so glad you're here, so glad you've come to our ward and we're really glad to have you. Really want to make sure you feel welcome and everything. And the next week he came back and his mohawk, Hank, it was leopard skin. I don't know how he did that. I know it doesn't come out of the bottle that way. I don't know how he did that. |

Hank Smith:	01:38	Kelly green to leopard skin.
John Bytheway:	01:41	To leopard skin. And he was there and, "Hey, we're so glad you're here. Just really want to make you feel welcome and thanks for being here." And the next week he was gone. I didn't know what to say, but I said to my teenage students there, "Listen you guys, it's one thing if the teacher is all nice and loving and welcoming, but he's at your high school and I don't know who's in your friend group, but you guys, if we don't put our arms around him, literally, figuratively, we will never see him again. You guys have got to do this." And I'm so proud of them because they did. And he came again and he came again and again. And I never ever got out a dressing grooming lesson or anything like that. I just kept doing what we were doing. And the other hair grew out a natural brown shade. The piercings came out. I never said anything. It was awesome. He became my home teaching companion.
	02:34	And what I love about this was there's these lines in 2 Nephi 26 that are repeated. I feel like Nephi saying, "Are you getting this message?," because he keeps saying the same thing over and over again. 2 Nephi 26:24. "He doeth not anything, save it be for the benefit of the world, for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto Him, wherefore he commandeth none, that they shall not partake of this salvation." Okay, first time. Second time, verse 25, "Doth he cry to any saying, 'Depart from me'? Behold I say unto you, 'Nay.' He says, 'Come unto me all ye ends of the earth. Buy milk and honey without money and without price.'"
	03:15	Now he's going to say it again, third time, "Hath he commanded any they should depart out of the synagogues or out of the houses of worship? Behold I say unto you, 'Nay.'"
		Okay, fourth time, verse 27. "Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? Behold, I say unto you, 'Nay.' He hath given it free for all men and hath commanded his people that they should persuade all men to repentance." Fifth time, verse 28. "Behold hath the Lord commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness? Behold I say unto you, 'Nay.'"
Hank Smith:	03:42	I feel like he's trying to tell us something, John.
John Bytheway:	03:44	It seems like he's trying to get through to us here. And I just love that idea and I read it four times and I go, "I think Nephi's trying to say that the Lord never said, go away." And then I was reading, Hank, in 3 Nephi, which I know you do too all the time. Jesus comes physically in 3 Nephi, chapter 11. They hear a voice before that. But in 3 Nephi 11, he's there. He teaches them in

12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, he says, "I have to go." They beg him to stay with their eyes. So he does. And in 3 Nephi 18:25, he says this. You ready for this? "And you see that I have commanded that none of you should go away, but rather have commanded that you should come unto me, that you might feel and see. Even so shall ye do unto the world." And I thought, That's where Jesus comes back. And after all that day he says, "Did you notice I never told anyone to go away, but I told them to come and see? and do that to the world, be that way with the world." That's why I was so proud of my students because that is exactly what they did.

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| Hank Smith: | 04:53 | That's fantastic. What a great story. Sometimes we don't tell people to go away, we would never do that. But sometimes by our tone and the way we treat people, we're saying, "We don't really care if you're here." What a great lesson and what great Sunday school class you had. |
| John Bytheway: | 05:13 | I was so proud of them because I thought, "It's one thing if the old guy teacher is this way, but you guys have to do this, and I don't know who your friend group is at your school or what you think it is, you've got to do this. This is so important." And they did. They were wonderful. So I loved my teenage students. |
| Hank Smith: | 05:30 | One day an apostle is going to stand up in general conference and say, "I was that boy with the leopard skin mohawk." |
| John Bytheway: | 05:38 | The leopard skin mohawk. |
| Hank Smith: | 05:41 | Hey, we hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcasts. We are with Dr. Joe Spencer this week, and it is unbelievable. Make sure you come join us and then join us next week for another followHIM Favorites. |