



Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

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

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

Podcast Episode Descriptions:

Part 1:

What divine priorities are woven into this text that the Lord and His servants want us to understand? Dr. Nathan Williams examines how the voice of Jesus Christ is present through His servants' voices and how the Lord delivers all His people.

Part 2:

Dr. Nathan Williams explores how Alma and King Mosiah discover how to break the Pride Cycle and effectively eviscerate anti-Christian rhetoric.

Timecodes:

Part 1

- 00:00 Part I - Dr. Nate Williams
- 01:31 What to expect from this episode
- 02:24 Bio of Dr. Nate Williams
- 03:11 *Come, Follow Me* manual introduction
- 04:21 Dr. Williams bears his testimony of the power of the Book of Mormon
- 06:06 Grant Hardy: The Book of Mormon as gift from God
- 10:03 Mosiah 29:19-20 - Question 1
- 12:43 Saints being delivered today
- 17:49 The power of prayer
- 23:13 Alma the Elder's deliverance
- 25:57 Mosiah 29: Question 2
- 31:12 Did Jaredite history play into governmental changes
- 32:34 Mosiah 23 - A fourth possibility
- 37:23 Mosiah 25 - Alma's people relate their story
- 38:58 Mosiah 29:38 - A prophet's request
- 41:16 Question 3
- 45:42 Anti-agency = anti-Christ
- 48:48 Nehor's four arguments
- 53:02 Affluence
- 55:18 Mosiah 29:16
- 57:57 End of Part 1 - Dr. Nate Williams

Part 2

- 00:00 Part II—Dr. Nate Williams
- 00:07 Question 4
- 04:52 Question 5
- 08:40 Micro Nehor and Macro Order of Nehor
- 09:57 Question 6
- 13:47 Intentional parallels
- 14:51 Question 7
- 15:50 Alma 3:19 - Curses
- 16:43 Elder Christofferson "The Sealing Power"
- 20:14 Alma 3:26-7 - Choices and consequences
- 22:36 Elder Corbitt "Race and the Priesthood"
- 25:24 Question 8
- 30:01 Question 9
- 32:52 Sister Eubank on charitable gifting
- 36:58 Alma 4:11-12 - Iniquity and inequality
- 38:14 D&C 38:26-27 - A parable
- 41:25 Question 10

- 45:00 Alma 4:15 - The Lord won't fail us
- 45:12 How to measure success?
- 50:31 Dr. Nate Williams' testimony of Jesus Christ and the Book of Mormon
- 57:16 End of Part II– Dr. Nate Williams

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Biographical Information:



Nate Williams was born in Rexburg, Idaho. He and his wife, Laurie, have five children and one grandchild.

Brother Williams served in the Colorado Denver Mission. His favorite church calling is primary pianist.

He attended Ricks College, and was on the basketball team in 1990 where he claims he was the leading scorer in warm ups because he never misses when no one is guarding him. He also attended BYU, Idaho State University, and the University of Idaho.

He has taught in the Church Educational System since 1992.

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Mosiah 29-Alma 4 Part 1

GUEST: NATE H. WILLIAMS



- Hank Smith: 00:04 Hello my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name's Hank Smith, I'm your host. I'm here with my steadfast and immovable co-host, John Bytheway, and our guest, Dr. Nate Williams.
- 00:17 John, we are in Mosiah 29, and then we're jumping to the big Book of Alma. I know you love the Book of Mormon as much as I do. Mosiah 29 through Alma 4, what jumps out at you?
- John Bytheway: 00:31 I think one of the things that's really interesting here is a change of the form of government, going from a king. We've had some really wonderful kings, we've had some really bad kings. When King Mosiah has this problem of all his sons wanting to go on missions, he has to come up with a new system. What's always fascinated me is he talks about accountability being with the people with this new form of government. So I'm looking forward to talking about that, going from a system of kings to a system of judges.
- Hank Smith: 01:02 Excellent. I love it. Like I mentioned before, John, we have Dr. Nate Williams with us. Nate, what are we looking forward to today? Where are you going to take us?
- Dr. Nate Williams: 01:13 That's a great question and I've been thinking about that. And I thought, "Who wouldn't be interested in talking about political reform, Antichrist, civil war, and a little bit of the failings of the church." Though those subjects in some ways are incredibly interesting, I think what we're going to find today is that they can also be incredibly edifying, to delve into some of these passages of the Book of Mormon and find things that can still give people hope, and still give people some very interesting but sometimes difficult discussions and challenges to consider for the early Nephite political and religious situation that they find themselves in starting the Book of Alma.
- Hank Smith: 01:57 Oh, I love it. Yeah. As you listed off those topics, I thought "That's not something I generally go to to be edified." But I love

how you introduce that. I really like looking at Alma's decision here where he's got to decide between chief judge or high priest. I'm interested in what you both think about what he decides to do there.

	02:19	John, Nate is new to our podcast. Let's hear a bio.
John Bytheway:	02:24	Absolutely. We've got Dr. Nate Williams. He was born in Rexburg, Idaho. He and his wife, Laurie, have five children and one grandchild. He served his mission in Colorado, Denver mission. His favorite calling is the primary pianist. And he attended Ricks College. We all remember Ricks. He was on the basketball team in 1990, so maybe we'll call him Hoops Williams today. He said he was a leading scorer in warmups because he never misses when no one is guarding him. And he also attended BYU, Idaho State University, and the University of Idaho. And he's been teaching in the church educational system since 1992. We're really happy to have you here. Dr. Williams, thanks for joining us.
Dr. Nate Williams:	03:09	Thank you.
Hank Smith:	03:11	Nate, let me read from the Come, Follow Me manual and then let's jump into these chapters and see what happens. The Come, Follow Me manual says, "Some might seek King Mosiah's proposal to replace kings with elected judges as merely a wise political reform. But to the Nephites, especially those who lived under wicked King Noah, this change had spiritual significance too. They had seen how what an unrighteous king had influenced his people and they were exceedingly anxious to be free from such influence. This change would allow them to be responsible for their own righteousness and answer for their own sins."
	03:46	John, you mentioned that.
	03:47	"Of course the end of the reign of kings did not mean the end of problems in Nephite society," and Nate you mentioned that.
	03:54	"Cunning people like Nehor and Amlici promoted false ideas. Nonbelievers persecuted the saints and many members of the church became prideful and fell away. Yet the humble followers of God," I think that's the three of us, "remained steadfast and immovable despite what happened around them."

	04:15	All right, Nate, what a great introduction to these chapters. Where do you want to start? How do you want to walk through this?
Dr. Nate Williams:	04:21	Before we jump in, the first thing I could say is how much I love the Book of Mormon, and how much I believe it is the Word of God. I'm so grateful for how it's blessed my life, and brought peace, and comfort, and strength, and insight to me from the early days when I was an Aaronic priesthood holder, till days later that I'm maybe a little more advanced in life. And a grandpa, and that continue to nourish and strengthen and inspire me. From the Book of Mormon, I've really come to know the truth in 2 Nephi, that by feasting on these words, you can really come to be guided in your personal life. You can be healed, you can become strengthened, you can give hope, and an infinite number of things.
	05:08	In fact, every time we open up the Book of Mormon, we open up ourselves to the influence of Jesus Christ. That's been my experience. And so I'm always grateful for any opportunity to open up the words of Christ with anybody, or the Book of Mormon. And the influence of Jesus Christ that can come by His Spirit through His servants who've written a long time ago. So thank you for this great privilege and I think anytime we can do that with one another, with those who are listening, we open up ourselves to not only the influence of prophets, but influence of the Savior and His Spirit, which is something I know I sure need.
Hank Smith:	05:45	I'm with you Nate, and I know John is there too. Every time I think I cannot be more impressed with this book, it impresses me yet again.
Dr. Nate Williams:	05:55	Yeah, it really is something that you just can't ever seem to quite get to the bottom of in so many different ways spiritually, or even scholarly.
Hank Smith:	06:05	Inexhaustible.
Dr. Nate Williams:	06:06	I was reading this week a very interesting article. And the author here, Grant Hardy, asked this question, "What would it look like to read the Book of Mormon as a gift from God? In which every word and phrase was potentially significant, where its basic structure was seen as an integral part of its message. How might things be different if our approach to this sacred text focused more on divine priorities rather than our personal needs and desires?" Now, that caused me to pause a little bit

because I have been blessed so personally, from my needs and desires that I have brought to this text.

06:47 But it was an interesting and challenging statement to get me thinking about, "Well, what are the divine priorities that are woven into this text that the Lord and His servants like Mormon, or Nephi, or Moroni would like me to be seeing? Are there additional things that maybe I haven't discovered and appreciated?"

07:07 Hardy goes on to say, "The close study of this revealed text and the entirety of its length and form can bring us closer to God. Nephi, Jacob, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni are some of the wisest, most thoughtful, most spiritually mature voices in our religion. By coming to know them through a detailed study of their struggles and encounters with divinity as conveyed in their writings and editing, we can come to know Christ. The Book of Mormon is one of the most miraculous events and elements of the Restoration." And then Hardy calls it, "A self-revelation of God that apparently could not be adequately conveyed in less than 500 pages."

07:52 Now I know personally the Book of Mormon has answered a lot of my personal priority questions that have stretched me sometimes, or even called me to repentance. I've developed a list of about 10 questions as I've looked over this blog, and I was wondering if we could use those to guide us in our discussion today. That might have a couple of questions for each chapter that I could throw out there, and we could all discuss and share various thoughts and perspectives on.

Hank Smith: 08:20 Sounds good. I love it.

John Bytheway: 08:21 Yeah, it sounds wonderful. I really like what you said there. I think sometimes we look at, "Read your Scriptures," as an end in itself and, "Read the Book of Mormon," as an end in itself, but it's the result of that. It's, "Read your Scriptures so that you can become closer to Christ, so that you have the Holy Ghost guiding you more." Just reading the scriptures so we can check a box, that's great if you do that, but the outcome is what we're after.

Dr. Nate Williams: 08:49 Yeah, the Book is really the means, isn't it? To experience Christ and it can be a detriment to people's faith if it becomes the end. And one never gets the chance to fully see what it's trying to help you experience. As I thought about this statement that I read, it seemed to invite me to approach my study of the Book of Mormon, not leaving I think my personal needs and concerns,

but maybe in a way to approach my study like the Savior suggested to His disciples. Where you lose yourself in trying to think, and feel, and understand like Mormon did, and then trusting that in the end you'll come to find yourself even more. That there can be this moment where I lose myself, and their world, their problems, their way of seeing and thinking about things. That stretches me, and challenges me, even surprises me, and maybe looks like a foreign country. I hope we can do that. I hope we have a little bit of experience trying to do that today. It's fun to try, and especially with such, again, friendly bright minds that I get to be with today. So thank you.

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| Hank Smith: | 09:55 | We're wondering who the friendly and bright minds are who get to be with you. We're looking around going, "Is there someone else? Is there someone else here?" |
| John Bytheway: | 10:03 | It could be somebody. |
| Hank Smith: | 10:03 | Yeah. So Nate, let's take on these 10 questions that you've brought. I'm excited to take this on this way. |
| Dr. Nate Williams: | 10:09 | This'll be fun. My first question comes from Mosiah 29. In fact, the first couple of questions come from Mosiah 29, and this one is a little bit of a decontextualized question, but let's go with it. It comes out of verse 19 and 20, and it's a pretty simple question. Why might Mosiah 29:19-20 possibly be considered one of the most important passages in Scripture? I can read that, and maybe you two can think about it and give all the great answers. |
| | 10:41 | Here we go. Mosiah 29:19-20, "And were it not for the interposition of their all-wise Creator, and this because of their sincere repentance, they must unavoidably remain in bondage until now. But behold, he did deliver them because they did humble themselves before him, and because they cried mightily unto him, he did deliver them out of bondage. And thus that the Lord work with his power in all cases among the children of men, extending the arm of mercy towards them that put their trust in him." |
| | 11:19 | What thoughts either of you have? |
| John Bytheway: | 11:22 | I think in verse 19 when it talks about the interposition of their all-wise Creator, we have a God who intervenes. And during Old Testament, that was an impression I kept having over and over again was that we don't have a God that is uninvolved, but we have one who wants to be involved, who intervenes. And what |

did Elder Kearon say in the last general conference? Who was relentlessly in pursuit of us, loves His people, wants to be involved with bringing them back. He interposed Himself because we repented. And I like that cause and effect there.

- Hank Smith: 11:55 I thought of something Joseph Smith said. I'll use a small portion of the quote. He said, "The Lord knows the situation of both the living and the dead." I noticed that in verse 20, "The Lord works with his power in all cases among the children of men." He knows every single person's situation. And then Joseph Smith said, and I think I've used this before on the podcast, John, but I love it. He said, "The Lord has made ample provision for their redemption, the living and the dead, everyone. He has made ample provision for their redemption." It seems very similar to me. "The Lord works in His power in all cases among the children of men, extending the arm of mercy towards them that put their trust in him."
- Dr. Nate Williams: 12:43 One of the classes I've been blessed to teach at BYU-Idaho for the last 25 years is a class called Introduction to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It's for people who are pretty limited in their understanding and experience with the Church of Jesus Christ, and its teachings and practices. As you were sharing, it reminded me of yesterday a conversation I had with a young girl from Poland who was trying to figure out college, trying to figure out what classes to take, what classes to drop, and a lot of things about college life. And she says she believes in God, she tells me. I was asking a little bit about her religious background, but not necessarily any particular religion. She's a transfer student that just come to BYU-Idaho this semester.
- 13:34 It's made me think as you two were sharing insights about this, how she's living this even though she might not know it. She said at her last university experience, she had quite some challenging experiences that brought her into deep levels of depression and discouragement. And she decided during this time there's one thing she wanted to make sure she did, and that was to pray. I guess in the language of this scripture, cry out to God, for deliverance from the things that she was feeling emotionally, or spiritually, or academically.
- 14:11 It was a beautiful reminder to me, not only in all cases, but all people, how kind God is to her, and His guidance and helping her have hope. She seemed to be having hope. And even while I was visiting in that dialogue with her, she got a text that she had an interview at Chick-fil-A for a job. And I can't tell you how happy she was that she could pay for part of her college experience, that her dad back in Poland wouldn't have to be the

sole provider. She said, "I pray." Man, I got so inspired by her, and her willingness to live this Scripture, and to do her best to find God's mercy and His delivering power in her life.

14:54 I was also thinking as you two are speaking about this great theme of deliverance that Nephi begins his small plate record with, and encouraging us to look for these tender mercies of the Lord over all those whom he had chosen, making them mighty even to the power of deliverance because of their faith. And I wonder to some degree how much those small plates may have influenced Mormon as he prepares to write a Book of Mosiah that seems to be so filled with numerous examples of bondage and deliverance in so many different cases or scenarios. And does Mormon like this editorial ending of someone who seemed to grasp what had happened among the people for the last 40 years.

John Bytheway: 15:43 Yeah, that's a great insight. We had Alma's people that escaped after the trial of Abinadi. Then we had Limhi's people, that Ammon the scout showed up and they had to get delivered. And even back to the very beginning of the Book of Mormon, where Nephi's remembering Moses and, "Let's be strong like Moses," and, "We have a God who's known as a deliverer."

Hank Smith: 16:05 John, I love that. Nate, there are still stories every day, right? of deliverance. I think of students who perhaps have a pornography addiction or problem or compulsion and cry mightily that he can deliver them out of that addiction. The Lord will work in his power in all cases, extending the arm of mercy unto those who put their trust in him. I see that as a continuous thing. It's in the book and it's around us today.

Dr. Nate Williams: 16:38 I've often felt that if a person can do nothing spiritually except pray, at least they've got some conduit connecting them to God that's making them spiritually have a little bit of life, a little bit of a spiritual heartbeat and pulse going. And I think a scripture like this reduces some things down to, can you try to be humble and cry mightily to God and start activating his delivering power? Where I think later, would be Amulek who would say that once you cry out for mercy, immediately the great plan of redemption is brought into your life. You've activated it through agency, through prayer, that is not coercing the grace of Christ upon you, his goodness and power and strength. But through that prayer, you've activated a power that will begin to change your life for as long as you want to keep petitioning the Lord.

Hank Smith: 17:39 Keep at it, keep crying mightily unto him and he will come through. Don't quit. Do not quit. I love it.

John Bytheway:	17:49	I can't remember who, but a Sunday school teacher, a church leader, when I was young taught me this little rhyme. See what you think. "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees," or, "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon her knees." And I always liked that idea because we learned at the end of second Nephi, what is it, 32, that it's the evil spirit that will teach you not to pray, but the Lord will always teach you to pray. That's why Satan doesn't want you to do that because suddenly you have an access to the one who can deliver you when you pray, even if you don't feel like it. Even, say what Nephi did, you have a commandment to pray, "Here I am. I messed up, but here I am." And Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his or her knees.
Dr. Nate Williams:	18:36	I don't know if there's anything more powerful we could do to definitely invite the influence and power of the Lord in our life in prayer. And we know from scriptures to Joseph Smith that there seems to be this binding influence upon Satan and his power when those children of God do pray and can restrict his influence.
John Bytheway:	18:57	Brigham Young said, "If the Devil tells you you cannot pray when you're angry, tell him it's none of his business and keep praying until that species of insanity has left the mind." Something like that. None of your business.
Dr. Nate Williams:	19:11	Keep praying until you feel like praying. Another part of this scripture that maybe I could take a minute to highlight is what it reveals about the merciful arm, as well as the powerful arm of Jesus Christ being revealed to those who trust in him. And it makes me think of another passage later that will be in the Book of Alma where they quote this likely brass-plate prophet, Zenock, who says, "Thou art angry, oh, Lord, with this people because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy son." And it's such a interesting thing to me to think that of all the things God would be angry about, it would be that people wouldn't understand that he is such a merciful being and not harshly judging them, but desiring to help them. And I love what you've all highlighted in helping us realize the nature of God along with the power of prayer in these verses and that Mormon feels is a good ending to his Book of Mosiah.
John Bytheway:	20:17	Nate, I have missed the meaning of that for so many years because I knew what Alma and Amulek were doing was telling the Zoramites that God would have a son. That verse, "Thou art angry, oh Lord of this people because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of

thy son," so I was like, "Oh, that's a proof text showing that God will have a son." But then listen to what you pointed out, "Because they will not understand thy mercies." And I think, "Whoa, there's a difference between will not and cannot." Sometimes we refuse to understand how mercy ... It doesn't make sense to us perhaps or we struggle to forgive ourselves. I've loved that verse. That's the Lord saying, "Please understand my mercies and understand they come because of the son."

Dr. Nate Williams: 21:05

I like that. Thank you. You started us on a list of examples of this scripture throughout the Book of Mosiah. Maybe I could share a couple more, how they were delivered from the contentious environment in Zarahemla under the leadership of King Benjamin and were brought to establish peace. Maybe that could be viewed as a form of deliverance from social turmoil. I thought about the number of Lamanite wars that the Nephites had had early on before that peace was established, that was to a degree I think a form of deliverance, of righteous, faithful people trying to live in peace in the land of Zarahemla. It's interesting to think about King Benjamin's people in a form of deliverance, who gather at the tower and receive a forgiveness of sins and get delivered from that bondage. And for potentially having impure hearts, that they could have that power of Jesus Christ bring about in that case a form of deliverance.

22:07

We certainly have talked about Limhi's people and the struggles they had to get out of bondage that came about by King Noah's influence and other traditions and the righteous influence of Gideon. We have Zeniff's people in the middle of the book who have numerous battles with the Lamanites and they continue to pray for the strength of God. We see certainly deliverance from the wicked unrighteous influence of King Noah, thanks to Abinadi's message. Some people get delivered. Alma gets delivered from his sins and gets to break off, and gets to start a new group that gets deliverance not only politically but also spiritually as they find the Lord out in the waters and wilderness of Mormon. Later on, we'll see the Lamanite bondage, Amulon and Lamanite bondage of Alma's people. People who've already in a way been delivered, but God lets them have another experience with bondage and deliverance to help them become more authentic in their witness of Christ's ability to deliver.

23:13

I know the covenant I've made and they also know the covenant that they need to stand as a witness. And maybe God's helping them be a little more authentic in having an experience that allows them to be delivered by his power, temporally and spiritually. Certainly there's the great example of Alma, the Younger, who gets delivered. Not by an angel interposing, but

an angel who interposes that sparks the interposing of Christ when Alma cries out for mercy that we'll learn more about later on. And it's interesting to see Alma's father get delivered from the bondage of ignorance when he doesn't know how to judge the rising generation.

23:58 Mormon wants us to see the first-person answer that Jesus Christ gives him to help him know how to righteously judge those who are struggling, who have left, who have rebelled in the land of Zarahemla. This looks like it's a pretty important scripture, certainly in the Book of Mosiah, from what I too appreciated from each of you in Heavenly Father's plan. This is a beautiful inspiring passage.

John Bytheway: 24:27 Yeah, I love this and I love what you introduced, Hank, because we're seeing some physical deliverances from armies and other peoples. All of us need sometimes other kinds of deliverances from our own problems and habits and sins, but the God who can deliver from one can deliver from the other as well and wants to. I like that you've put those two together.

Hank Smith: 24:50 Nate, as you walked us through all those deliverance stories, I was struck by how they're all just a little bit different, deliverance from this problem, or this problem, or this problem. Almost as if we're getting into the head of Mormon here, who's trying ... I think you've shown us that Mormon in this book is saying, "Think about any problem that you have that you need deliverance from, it's probably in this book." Right? Go and find that problem that you're having, the deliverance story that looks most like yours, study it and see if there's some answers there for you. Because I think of our listeners and the many struggles that people are dealing with, from sickness and illness and death and children making decisions that break our hearts. All of us need deliverance in some way or another. And you've shown us that this book can provide that hope.

Dr. Nate Williams: 25:45 Yeah, it certainly can inspire with the knowledge and truth that would guide a person to act upon it and eventually get that power and influence from the Savior.

Hank Smith: 25:57 All right, let's go to question two, Nate.

Dr. Nate Williams: 25:59 Another Mosiah 29 question that I've been very interested about as I've read this chapter, why would Mormon be interested in concluding the Book of Mosiah with a lengthy assertion of King Mosiah's letter, which primarily describes the need for political transition from kings, the monarchy, to judges? Why end such an inspiring book with this letter

describing political reform from three kings that have served the last 40 years to now the transition to the reign of the judges?

- John Bytheway: 26:36 One of the things that I found interesting is the fact that he teaches us this principle. I don't know where else you see this, but this idea of it is not common that the voice of the people or the majority will choose anything contrary to that which is right, but it is common for the lesser part to desire that which is not right. I'm in verse 26. And then in verse 27, this sounds like he's not teaching us, but he's giving us a prophetic warning perhaps, "If the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity," inspired translation, brace for impact. Right? Here it comes, "Then is the time the judgments of God will come upon you, then is the time he'll visit you with great destruction." It's interesting when we get to Helaman ... What is it, guys? Helaman 5? It takes you back here because there's a comment that Mormon makes, "Well, the voice of the people was choosing iniquity," and it's like, "And here it comes."
- Dr. Nate Williams: 27:38 I remember thoughts from Clayton Christensen in his time in Harvard University and discussing about the relationship between political freedom and popular morality. He has some pretty strong, I think, insightful thoughts about the needs for republic to have people who govern themselves in most of their decisions, without having to be governed by the law. And we've heard thoughts from Elder Christofferson and others that if you have this proliferation of laws for an unchecked natural man, it becomes very difficult to create a free society for people to enjoy.
- John Bytheway: 28:19 I could probably shoplift at Walmart and get away from it. I think I'm clever enough. I could probably figure out how to do it, but it's wrong. And there's something inside of me that's been taught all my life, "Well, that's wrong. It's wrong to steal." That governs me more than fear of the police, right?
- Hank Smith: 28:37 Nate, when you asked the question about, "What is chapter 29 doing here?" I thought, "Maybe it's a natural flow out of chapter 28." Mormon mentions that Mosiah had translated the plates that he got from King Limhi. Now, we don't have that full translation, but we do have an abridgment of it in the Book of Ether. And if you read the Book of Ether, it reads as a horror story of king after king after king who destroy people's lives. So I wonder if Mormon is saying, "Look, Mosiah took everything he understood, King Noah, his sons and also what he read, and said, 'We have got to make some changes here.'" Chapter 29 is Mosiah applying the scriptures that he's read. Almost as if he's

saying, "Look, I've read this, and if we don't make these changes now, we are going to be in serious trouble. I know it's huge, but we're making big changes."

Dr. Nate Williams: 29:35

Sometimes I think it's easy to forget how big this change was. It looks like, going back 400 or 500 years, the monarchy begins with Nephi. And continues on down through these years to Mosiah and Benjamin. And then Mosiah, here in the land of Zarahemla, this is not just reform of three kings, this is a reform too of hundreds of years and we could probably go back to maybe saying thousands of years of their Jewish history, years of having kings in the reign of Saul and David. I wondered how hard was it for people from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh to ever think they could become kings when it's always been of the lineage of Judah for people in the southern kingdom? And was that a little shocking for Nephi to consider that he would be a king? Probably being aware of Davidic promises and certainly the historic past of the South, but somehow they feel that it's not just a lineage promise and power, but for them it's a wise way to organize themselves politically with Nephi as the king, and it looks like it goes on for a long time. So this looks like it's a really big reform that, like John pointed out earlier, I think some really interesting spiritual possibilities that I'm not sure if I'm fully aware of, one of them being that if we shift to this form of government, people become more accountable for their own sins.

31:12

That's an intriguing thing that I'm not sure if I fully understand what things were like in these unrighteous king environments, or even in their righteous king environments where Mosiah seems to be so moved by what's happened recently with more refugees from Limhi and Alma that he's saying we're changing. We're changing things politically and we think it's good spiritually if we make this change where people will be able to express a willingness to answer for their own sins. I love what you pointed out. I think it's a great summary, Hank, of these verses. This quotation is, there's a lot of factors coming to play on Mosiah. I love that you highlighted he has translated a record that has quite a horrifying story about the unrighteous reign of kings in the Jaredite record. He has three sons that would rather preach the gospel, and he points that out, than to continue on this lineage-based monarchy. And he worries that if we somehow had somebody else outside the lineage or maybe outside the firstborn, we could create our own little political chaos and crisis.

32:34

And third, we have a horrifying story in our own history of King Noah, of people who went back and they have a tragic story to

tell. I would like to show a fourth possibility. If you'll go back with me to Mosiah chapter 23. I was recently very intrigued with this heading of Mormon that sets this section apart, an account of Alma and the people of the Lord who were driven into the wilderness by the people of King Noah. Alma and his people flee from the land of Mormon, they take their new covenant disciples to a land that they'll eventually call the land of Helam, and they gather there and they don't want to gather and organize themselves spiritually in a covenant, they want to organize themselves politically, and they want Alma to be their king. And Alma gets a really long quote about being anti-King. And I'm really intrigued by this quote that Mormon puts in there at the beginning here of this last section in the book of Mormon. He bookends it right here with an anti-King message from Alma and he ends it with a change in kingship by Mosiah.

33:56 And I wonder, as a fourth possibility, Hank and John, if Alma had a powerful impact upon Mosiah's change about how things could be established spiritually a little better if we didn't have a king, and if you just read, if it's all right, some of Alma's first-person argument, why the covenant people of Christ who are fleeing in the wilderness, why they shouldn't have a king. It's going to sound a little bit like King Mosiah's letter, I think. It begins here in verse seven, right after their request that he should be their king. "Behold, it is not expedient that we should have a king for thus saith the Lord. Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another or one man shall not think himself above another. Therefore I say unto you, it is not expedient that you should have a king. Nevertheless, if it were possible that you could always have just men to be your kings," That sounds very Mosiah like, "It would be well for you to have a king. But remember the iniquity of King Noah," That's certainly in Mosiah's letter.

35:01 "And his priests and I myself was caught in a snare and did many things which were abominable in the sight of the Lord, which caused me sore repentance. Nevertheless, after much tribulation, the Lord did hear my cries and did answer my prayers and has made me an instrument in his hands in bringing so many of you to a knowledge of his truth. Nevertheless, in this I do not glory for I'm unworthy to glory of myself. And now I say unto you, you have been oppressed by King Noah and have been in bondage to him and his priests and have been brought into iniquity by them, and therefore you are bound with the bands of iniquity. And now as you have been delivered by the power of God out of these bonds." That's our Mosiah scripture about deliverance in captivity. "Yea even out of the hands of king Noah and his people and also from the bonds of iniquity,

even so I desire that you stand fast in this liberty wherewith you have been made free and that you trust no man to be king over you, and also trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister except he be a man of God walking in his ways and keeping his commandments."

36:10 And it seems to suggest to Mormon that the political arrangement of things has tremendous spiritual possibilities about how you view other people, about how you act in accountable ways towards God. And I'm not sure I completely understand that because I don't know that I know all the dynamics of the world they lived in with kings, but it's interesting that that's what they saw and that this was a necessary change that had to take place, which also is a great segue into Alma knowing, okay, we're in reign of judges. We got this letter. It's clearly helping us formalize this transition about why this is a good ending.

Hank Smith: 36:50 What a fantastic connection, Nate. I wrote that right at the bottom of my scriptures, Mosiah 29. Did Alma give him this idea? And then go back to Mosiah 23, 7 through 14. I love the idea of Mosiah and Alma sitting down and counseling through this. Here's Mosiah saying, "I read what becomes the book of Ether," And Alma saying, "Yeah, I lived it." And the two of them counseling back and forth and then having this inspired change.

Dr. Nate Williams: 37:23 It's very interesting to think about, isn't it? How much influence Alma's people inspired when they returned to Zarahemla and told their story in Mosiah 25. Mosiah certainly seems to be deeply impacted. He trusts him, he wants to put him over the church, divesting himself of that authority. And interestingly, and maybe ironically, he's going to become the first chief judge. As if maybe the powers tried to get separated but they quickly pulled back together, and as Hank, you were mentioning at the first, how this section will end with Alma divesting himself intentionally of the political so he can focus more on the priestly duties that have been given to him by Mosiah, the king, who seemed to hold both of them.

John Bytheway: 38:13 I've often oversimplified it and thought, "Okay, here's King Mosiah. Let's see. I'm going to pass the kingdom to one of my sons. Oh wait, they all wanted to go on missions. Let's see. I have nobody to give the kingdom to. All my princes are gone. Let's start a new form of government and we'll call it reign of the judges. Alma, you were unconscious the longest. You are the first chief judge," Right? The four go on a mission to the Lamanites, and then as we're going to see by the end of today's lesson, Alma is going to say, "I want to go among my own

people on a mission, but among my own people." The four sons of Mosiah went among the Lamanites, Alma steps down to go among the Nephites, his own people. And it's such, interesting how this all plays out.

- Hank Smith: 38:58 Before we look at your next question, Nate, I'm hoping we can take a quick look at Mosiah 29:38. This isn't a word that comes up often in the Book of Mormon, "Therefore they relinquished their desires for a king..." And basically changed their views to align with what Mosiah is hoping to do. I've thought about that before. When you've got a prophet in front of you asking you to do something that is new or difficult or against everything you've lived before and saying, "Okay, I'll make that change. I will relinquish my desire for this thing and get on board with what you've asked me to do."
- Dr. Nate Williams: 39:41 I love it. I wonder how many people they represented. We're going to find, really quickly, not everybody is on board with this change in government, and some will want to revert back to kingship. We're going to see that constant wrestle throughout the whole book of Alma, that feels like this was not necessarily everybody's decision, that we're willing to make changes even to years of what looks like pretty good tradition when there's a better way to do things. An inspired leader that makes an inspired adjustment and being able to be flexible I think is part of the power of what the doctrine of Christ can do for every one of our hearts, and keeping us being able to be soft and flexible so that when things are changing, we find ourselves being able to be influenced by them and the spirit and the Lord still.
- Hank Smith: 40:38 I don't know if you guys have ever seen a prophet come into that role as president of the church and make some changes. Maybe both of you have experienced that, I don't know, in the last five or six years where President Nelson came in and adjusted things and I relinquished my desire to use the term Mormon. I relinquished my desire to stay in the old home teaching format. I relinquished my desire for three hours of church, although that wasn't very hard to relinquish. I like that principle. Thanks.
- Dr. Nate Williams: 41:16 All right. Our next question. What does Nehor do or teach that would cause him to be labeled an antichrist? I was wondering if we could read a couple of passages that introduce him. One of the things, as I read this, my head coming to my mind, is so many times I've been taught about these three Antichrists in the book of Mormon. They can often state them too, Sherem, Nehor and Korihor. But what I found intriguing then as I read this is Nehor never really says there's no Christ. I was wondering

if we could read these that kind of introduce his behavior and his teachings, and maybe we could have a little conversation about why might he be considered an antichrist based upon these phrases when he doesn't seem to directly come out and say, like Korihor, there is no Christ. So let's go to Alma chapter one, and why don't we pick up the story, this introductory story in Alma chapter one in verse two. We'll just go for a few verses here.

42:21 "And it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of Alma in the judgment seat, there was a man brought before him to be judged, a man who was large and was noted for his much strength. And he had gone about among the people preaching to them that which he termed to be the word of God, bearing down against the church, declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular and they ought not to labor with their hands, but they ought to be supported by the people. And he also testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice for the Lord had created all men and had also redeemed all men. And in the end, all men should have eternal life. And it came to pass that he did teach these things so much that many did believe on his words, even so many that they began to support him and give him money, and he began to be lifted up in the pride of his heart and to wear very costly apparel and began to establish a church after the manner of his preachings."

43:35 As I read that and I thought about, what's he doing? What's he teaching? I was drawn back to my list of three antichrists and wondering what exactly might Nehor be doing or saying that would constitute him or lump him into the category as an antichrist?

John Bytheway: 43:55 I like the question because he never says, as others do, that there's no Christ. Like, the Zoramite prayer says that in Alma 31, Korihor says there's no God. What I see here in verse four is, "All mankind will be saved. They need not fear or tremble. They might lift up their heads and rejoice. The Lord created all men, redeemed all men. In the end, all men should have eternal life," But it never mentions how that happens or how that works. One of the definitions of antichrist is another way to be saved without Christ, and it's absent there. Maybe that's one way, is there's no acknowledgement that there has to be a savior and a redeemer. He does use the word there redeemed, but there needs to be a redeemer that does the redeeming, I guess.

Dr. Nate Williams:	44:44	Yeah, that's interesting, this substitute form of salvation where there is no savior.
John Bytheway:	44:49	And we see what happens next with Gideon is evidence that this philosophy has some real flaws to it.
Dr. Nate Williams:	44:59	I really liked what you said about our Heavenly Father's nature, or that He desires and loves all of His children and wants them all to come unto Him and be partakers of His glory and His goodness. He also has a competing interest that honors the agency of His children. And through His beloved Son, He has been able to preserve that agency so that you can choose liberty and eternal life, or you can choose captivity and death, or you can choose somewhere in between, and He'll perfectly match you as far as you want to come unto Him with the grace from His beloved Son.
	45:42	It is a subtle anti-Christ approach to be anti-accountability now, or certainly in the next life, agency, but we don't always attach those together to be anti-agency as to be anti-Christ or to be anti-consequences. Could that be pondered upon as maybe anti-Christ? And then John, you bring up such an interesting thought connecting Gideon in here, which will be part of another question. As I've heard different thoughts in the church by various leaders and people and scholars, sometimes I'll interpret, what does it mean to have that hypothetical possibility that Satan could destroy agency?
	46:28	Some will go with an interpretation and explain things like, well, that's going to be Satan forcing everybody to do right. And others would maybe go with more of a Book of Mormon Nehor model, which is eat, drink, and be merry approach, and in the end, God will save everybody. Well, we won't coerce people, but we will remove consequences. As a psychological lie, because I don't think you could ever actually destroy agency being the children of God that His sons and daughters are, but you could at least try to plant these ideas of coercion and inconsequential lives.
	47:10	John, what's so interesting is it looks like Nehor's got both of them. It looks like Nehor is this great relativist, which is part of my next question, which is how could you really be this universal salvationist and ever be upset by somebody who believes differently? How could somebody who has such universal hopes of saving all of God's children ever come down so violently upon Gideon? Coercion.

	47:43	Here, you have no consequences turning into coercion, and that is a scary world to think about. A scary world to think about a promotion of an ideology that minimizes consequences. Alma will talk about it being destructive in nature to the well-being of His people. So, whichever destroying agency argument you might hear, it looks like Nehor wants to manifest both of them in his anti-Christ teaching and behavior.
John Bytheway:	48:16	I've got in my margin, there's no agree to disagree here. There's just, I don't like what you said, Gideon, so I'm going to kill you. I mean, and if there's no consequences, then I'll just eliminate that voice. We just heard Elder Renlund's words repeated again in General Conference that God does not want us to do what is right, He wants us to choose to do what is right. Such an interesting extra word that involves He wants us to have the agency to choose to do what is right.
Hank Smith:	48:48	I noticed in Nehor's arguments, there's no need for four things. Faith, repentance, baptism, or the gift of the Holy Ghost.
John Bytheway:	48:59	There's no doctrine of Christ. Maybe that's a good way to say it, Hank, is that's anti-Christ because where's the doctrine of Christ?
Hank Smith:	49:05	Yeah. You don't need any of those things that the Savior seems to think are pretty consequential. Faith and repentance. And then, when you're first met by an opposition that your first response is violence?
Dr. Nate Williams:	49:19	To me, there seems to be an insecurity in logic and belief if you have to turn to violence really quickly to hold up your ideals.
Hank Smith:	49:28	Exactly right. I loved what you said there, Nate. For a guy who thinks everyone is going to be saved, why care what Gideon says?
John Bytheway:	49:36	Yeah. Elder L. Tom Perry said something about Nehor's philosophy, and I love these two words. Elder L. Tom Perry said, "Nehor's words appealed to many of the people. They were easy words because they required neither obedience nor sacrifice." I thought, oh, how interesting. No obedience, and sacrifice is part of the gospel, maybe sacrificing what we want and repenting and trying to get in line with what God wants. I love, Hank, that the doctrine of Christ that we've heard talked about a lot recently in General Conference is missing from verse four.

Hank Smith:	50:16	Yeah. If someone is anti-repentance, like you said, Nate, I would say they're anti-Christ.
Dr. Nate Williams:	50:22	Here's an interesting list that overlaps a lot with what you've said. I've generated a few thoughts, and part of it stems out of a quote I recently shared with my students in a Religion 200 class on the eternal family, where Sister Julie Beck says, "To be anti-family is to be anti-Christ." Here's a couple of possibilities. If I am anti-church or I bear down against the church of God, is that possible to be then called anti-Christ if I'm contending against His authorized organization? A lot of these are just questions to think about.
	51:01	We read that the priests and teachers sought to become popular. Alma will later drop on the word priestcraft to describe this. Is priestcraft anti-Christ, or doing anything that draws attention to me as a source of salvation or goodness or significance versus Him, a subtle form of potential for being anti-Christ? We learned that they labor for money and for the well-being of their own lives instead of the people for God is that focus that takes them off of others and off of Him, a form of His true identity and purpose and becomes anti-Christ.
	51:46	We talked about anti-repentance, anti-faith, I love that, where that is being anti-kind or being coercive in nature uncivil. Is that a form of being anti-Christ in His treatment of Gideon? Certainly, pride is anti-Christ, who always does the things that his father wants him to do. Again, maybe those are harsh kind of sounding phrases to say that, but sometimes, I think we do need to remind ourselves of the need of all of us to overcome the natural man. And even points of anti-civility. Where you're not listening or talking in ways that are respectful and healthy with others, but you turn maybe to persecution behavior or you turn to violent behavior as a solution. I wonder if there's some elements of being anti-Christ there.
Hank Smith:	52:42	Nate, the automatic thought I would have is I'm going to look around in my life, the influences in my life, and see if they're, like you said, anti-church, anti-faith, anti-repentance. Maybe I didn't think of those things before as anti-Christ, but maybe that blindness can be cleared up a little bit.
Dr. Nate Williams:	53:02	I think one that stirs me as I read these is living in such an affluent world and the use of my wealth. Not that I have a lot, or the use of riches or the use of my means. Am I using them in a way that are contrary to the nature of God? I think these chapters stir us to ask some really hard questions about what the children of God in the church of God do with their

prosperity. They invite all of us living in quite an abundant affluent culture. What do we do with our excess and could some of that be destructive and harmful to us spiritually, and maybe in a harsh way, be anti-Christ? So, we will get to some of those passages too, but certainly the Nehor group profession, they seem to be really passionate about not only being popular, but having nice things and outwardly showing them.

Hank Smith: 54:05

Yeah.

Dr. Nate Williams: 54:06

Our next question, what makes Nehor's rival religion such a danger or threat to the safety of Nephite society? Why are they so concerned about what this is introducing among the people that it could even lead to their destruction? In another way, we said it and have answered it is why would someone embracing Nehor's teachings ever become angry or violent towards somebody who opposed them? That's taking the second part of it into the coercive behavior.

54:40

I don't know that we need to do anything else other than knowing that... I love the reminder of Joseph Smith that no power or influence can or ought to be maintained just because of your priestly position or by virtue of the priesthood. Only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness, by meekness, by love unfeigned, by kindness and pure knowledge, which will greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy and without guile. Nehor seems to be the opposite of that. He does not seem to want to operate under those Christ-like principles of conversion and of persuasion.

Hank Smith: 55:18

Verse 16, there are a lot of people who love the vain things of the world, and so they accept these false doctrines. Nate, you asked what's so scary or threatening about this, and that is when people are not in a good place spiritually, they're vulnerable to be taken by this kind of message. It makes me nervous for teenagers, young people that I teach, that when they're not in a place where they're close to God, false doctrine can become tempting. To someone who there might be some incongruity with the way I'm living or the way I believe in the Lord's way, that leaves me vulnerable. To answer your question, I think that can be threatening to the Lord, His church, and obviously to our children, grandchildren, and our friends even.

Dr. Nate Williams: 56:10

When you say the church also, Hank, I think we're going to see in these upcoming chapters how the doctrine of Nehor sneaks into the church and the danger it is when... Here, it looks like it's a pretty clear separation that's taking place here between these two different orders, the profession of Nehor and the Holy

Order of God. But we're going to see this subtle merge that's going to inspire Alma eventually to give up the judgment seat and try to reclaim the church that's being impacted by this, that it's bigger than just this one incident.

Hank Smith:	56:46	For a guy who gets a half a chapter, he keeps coming up over and over.
Dr. Nate Williams:	56:51	He does. In fact, keeps coming up in the next chapter, the next chapter. The whole Ammonihah people are characterized as the order of Nehor.
John Bytheway:	57:01	The desolation of Nehor's, yeah, in Alma 16. Yeah, he comes and goes in one chapter, but his influence lasts for a long time.
Dr. Nate Williams:	57:10	Yeah, which seems to be the religion of the natural man. That's hard to overcome without the atonement of Christ.



Mosiah 29-Alma 4 Part 2

GUEST: NATE H. WILLIAMS



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| John Bytheway: | 00:01 | Welcome to part two with Dr. Nate Williams: Mosiah chapter 29 through Alma 4. |
| Dr. Nate Williams: | 00:07 | The next question I have, how is the Order of Nehor different from the Holy Order of God? It really looks like in chapter one, Mormon wants to make sure you parallel or juxtapose the profession of Nehor as opposed to what's going on in the church or the Holy Order of God. |
| | 00:29 | One of the first things I observe is that the profession of Nehor is prideful. It's motivated by riches. Mormon wants the reader to understand that those in the Holy order of God are humble and they impart the word of God one with another, and he even says, "Without money and without price." |
| | 00:47 | A second comparison may be to see between those two, a stark difference, those following Nehor's plan, his beliefs, they persecute believers. But we read in verse 21 that those in the Order of God have a very strict law in the church forbidding that anyone should arise and persecute those that do not belong to the church, or even among themselves. |
| | 01:13 | Sadly, though, the ideal doesn't always hold up in the church. We see in those chapters there is still sometimes some contentions and persecutions even among the people of God's church; which is a reality we all deal with where there are firm clear laws, but the challenge is that, do the people of God always measure up to the ideal? |
| | 01:33 | A third parallel I saw is that the people of Nehor are committed to satisfying the desires of the natural man, or in the words of Mormon, indulging themselves in all manner of wickedness, while those who stand fast in the faith of God, we're told in verse 25, are immovable in keeping the commandments of God, and bear with patience the persecutions heaped upon them. |

	01:57	A couple more parallels; the Order of Nehor creates a culture interested in clothing themselves in costly apparel, which is contrary to that of those in the church of God who are characterized by not wearing costly apparel, in verse 27, he clearly wants to let you know that, and that they're neat and comely.
	02:18	A final parallel; the Order of Nehor does not believe in the repentance of sins. That's not something we're going to read directly in here, but I love how Hank read between the lines of those verses. But later on, in Alma 15:15, we'll read about Ammonihah and others who say they're after this order and they clearly do not believe in the repentance of sins; contrasted by those who abide in the holy order. They believe that salvation comes to those who exercise faith in Christ unto repentance.
	02:52	Ironically, the Holy Order of God and the steadiness in that order, verse 29, creates an abundant world filled with riches; maybe a temptation for the saints of God to remove their focus from him and from others to the abundant blessings and making that their God. It seems to be kind of a critical challenge for those in the Holy Order of God to stay there by keeping their focus still on Christ and an imparting of their substance.
	03:26	So very interesting conclusion to chapter one as the Mormon draws parallels to clearly let you know we have really a rival church, an order that is very unhealthy and destructive to this people.
Hank Smith:	03:41	It's a great contrast, isn't it, Nate, to go, here's Nehor's way, here's the Lord's way. Let's put them in the same chapter side by side so you can really see the differences.
John Bytheway:	03:51	I love what you did: the profession of Nehor and the Holy Order of God. Or you could say priestcraft versus priesthood.
Hank Smith:	04:00	Yeah.
John Bytheway:	04:01	That's a great way to look at that chapter. I love it.
Hank Smith:	04:04	And I've always thought, Nate, what you said in verse 30, the pride cycle, they broke it. They broke the pride cycle. You would think, "Oh, they're becoming prosperous. I know what's going to happen next. They're going to become prideful." And yet they don't. They don't send away the naked, the hungry, the sick. They don't set their hearts on riches, even though they have

them. It's easy to give away something that your heart isn't set on.

- Dr. Nate Williams: 04:29 It's amazing, a lot sad, that in a few years things could change so differently from this group that seems like they're really succeeding, they're really doing well. They're really staying on the humble cycle, the top of it, and truly being liberal to all, no respecter of persons and ...
- Hank Smith: 04:50 It falls apart on them. Yep.
- Dr. Nate Williams: 04:52 I'm really curious on this question. How do I read the Amlici narrative, chapter two through three, differently if I connect it with Nehor?
- 05:03 It appears they were originally part of one chapter. The author Mormon wanted us to lump them all together, even though we might look at them as three different chapters. And I wondered, if I gave a paragraph summary of the Amlici narrative, and then I'd love to hear any thoughts you might have about how's that different viewing this work of Amlici as an extension of Nehor versus its own separate little isolated incident?
- 05:32 It begins in chapter two with contention in the land because of a very cunning man named Amlici, and we're told he's part of the Order of Nehor; clearly wants to make us sure that the thoughts and ideas that are driving him come from Nehor.
- 05:48 This man's very popular. He had much people following him and had obtained great power by these numbers among this Zarahemla community. The community of followers wanted him to become a king, which is not only a rejection of Alma, rejection of Alma as a high priest and his teachings, but a rejection of Alma and Mosiah and the transition of the reign of the judges. And it looks like, for some reason in their political policy, they have to have a vote, even though it was quite alarming to many people in the church that Amlici could arise to have such great power, because the people in the church were a little bit extra worried because he had an intention to destroy the church of God.
- 06:36 The vote was taken. I'm sure all the people in the church of God were really happy that Amlici's people did not obtain the victory. But Amlici's people, driven by anger, a degree of rebellion, still go ahead and consecrate him as a king, a rival political power.

	06:54	Now not just a rival religion, we've got a rival political power with Amlici. And this rebellious political revival, now known as Amlicites, prepares and leads them into a civil war. They start to then grow an army. And both groups prepare for conflict and eventually engage in war. Both sides are noted for their great strength. Amlicites flee after they start becoming beaten, destroyed, losing in this battle. And then we get numbers. The 12,500 and something Amlicites were slain and 6,500 Nephites were slain.
	07:31	They're hunting and chasing them into the wilderness, but eventually they get away. And they send some spies after them, some spies to see what's really going on with this group that's wreaking such havoc among our people. And the spies come back with an alarming report: "These people have united with the Lamanites and they're attacking our brethren in lands north above the land of Zarahemla, and we have got to come to their rescue."
	08:01	Alma and the Nephite armies go to the area, engage in another battle of this numerous army of Amlicites and Lamanites. Eventually a one-on-one combat ensues between Alma and Amlici in which Amlici is slain. Eventually, the Lamanite king briefly engages, but then retreats from Alma into the wilderness with his people, and lots and lots of people die.
Hank Smith:	08:29	Poor Alma the Younger. Man. He gets these two jobs and he's attacked in both his jobs. One is the high priest, other is the chief judge.
	08:40	I noticed something as you were explaining this. Never thought about this before, Nate, but we've got a micro look at Nehor, how it looks coming from a person, and then we've got a macro look at the Order of Nehor, what it looks like coming from a group of people. It's very similar.
Dr. Nate Williams:	08:57	Oh, interesting. Yeah. The individual moved into ... Yeah.
Hank Smith:	09:01	A group of people.
	09:03	In fact, Mormon says they met in the valley of Gideon, almost like it's and Gideon again, right? Going ...
Dr. Nate Williams:	09:10	I know. Isn't that interesting?
John Bytheway:	09:14	That's a great insight. It's the same thing, but now it's a group. And like Nehor, there's no compromise here. The voice of the

people said, "No, thanks", and Amlici said, "Okay, well, then I'll force you."

	09:25	I don't know a whole lot about ancient warfare, but I know that in modern warfare, the leaders, the king, they stay back and they send the privates and the corporals out in the front. And here is Alma, fought with Amlici with the sword face-to-face, in verse 29. And I think that the kings went to battle at the front of their armies perhaps instead of in the rearward.
	09:52	I don't know if that's true or not, but that's sure what it sounds like here.
Hank Smith:	09:57	I love in both of these that Alma is taking this on. I think of the prophet today who does not shrink back from teaching the truth and meeting it head-on.
Dr. Nate Williams:	10:11	Yeah.
	10:12	If I was to now interject the description of a person, I'd be curious who you would think about from our reading today and study. Who might this be describing?
	10:22	"A wicked man, an idolatrous man, a man of many words who did speak much flattery to the people. Therefore, he led many people to do after the manner of his iniquities. He became a great hinderment to the prosperity of the church, stealing away the hearts of people, causing much dissension among the people, and giving a chance for the enemy of God to exercise his power over them, going about to destroy the church of God."
	10:58	I think we got a couple of really strong possibilities from today's reading.
Hank Smith:	11:02	It's Alma himself, right? Alma the Younger himself.
John Bytheway:	11:07	Crazy to think about that it looks like his experience was only a few years ago, if I'm doing the math right. The Book of Alma might be this incredible record of Alma dealing with even some of the past challenges that he may have been a part of himself at one time, but no longer is; maybe reminding us that you can change through Christ and you don't have to be a Nehor forever. You don't have to be a Corianton. You don't have to be a Zoramite or an Amalekiah; another person who was called a wicked man in the scriptures, Alma and Amalekiah.

	11:50	We sometimes go into a new chapter and quickly forget that this was Alma's world a few years earlier. And I think not only does Amlici linked with Nehor change it, but maybe also Alma linked with Nehor and Amlici, but no longer linked. Now he's in a completely different setting in his mind and heart because he cried out for the atoning blood of Christ to be applied to his soul and got deliverance.
	12:20	So it's maybe showing quite a contrasting Alma that no longer is condemned at all, but is still dealing maybe with consequences that ... It seemed like it's, at least for me, easy to oversimplify that everybody in Zarahemla is all on board with the new government, with the new leadership, but it looks like it's not quite as simple as that.
Hank Smith:	12:44	I love what you're doing getting in Alma's life here. He's not a black and white figure who was once bad, now he's good. His life is much more complicated than that: "I was wicked once, now I'm good and everything's fine." These are some complex issues. And you're right. What if he is facing some of the very things he caused?
Dr. Nate Williams:	13:07	Yeah. Maybe seeking to make things right. Or we read in the Book of Mosiah, how they went about zealously striving to repair all they had done wrong. What if the Book of Alma is a lot about zealously striving to repair anything that might still be lingering on from things I taught, things I did, things I was a part of?
	13:29	And I don't know. I don't know to what degree Alma and Nehor ... But by that description in the Book of Alma, it looks like they could have been at least cousins spiritually until there was a great change.
Hank Smith:	13:42	Our friend Joe Spencer, he pointed out to me that Alma 1 starts with Nehor, Alma 2 and 3 goes into the Amlicites, and then he says it starts over again with Korihor in Alma 30, a single chapter about Antichrist, that then moves into the Zoramites. So almost as if Mormon is paralleling these stories.
Dr. Nate Williams:	14:08	Yeah. The intentionality, so amazing.
	14:11	And I'd like to maybe, a little later, point out a couple of other of those parallels. One of them being with the prayer of Alma in deliverance before he engages with Amlici, and the prayer of Alma before he engages in deliverance among the Zoramites.

		That Mormon seems to want to give you prayers, one only being a verse long and one being a little longer.
Dr. Nate Williams:	14:36	But maybe in a minute we can bring that additional parallel up.
	14:39	I love that. It just invites me to take every word and phrase more seriously when you see some of these parallel accounts and intentional repetitious things taking place in the book.
	14:51	Question number seven, we learned that in Alma chapter three, as this first chapter comes to a close, that Mormon wants to give a little excerpt about the curses of God that come upon people. And this is a very difficult and challenging part for people even today, the modern reader, to try to understand in an edifying way, things about God's curses. So the question I was drawn to think about in a broad, simple way, what do I learn about the curses of God from the Amlicite experience?
	15:27	There's a few things that maybe we can take away that might still be difficult, but still possibly edifying. And then realize there might be many things that we still don't know about Book of Mormon history and curses, that we're going to have to be patient with till God gives us more understanding about them and about Himself, and His own dealings.
	15:50	It's a difficult topic. It's challenging at once, but it seems like towards the end of Alma 3, we have about a dozen verses where Mormon wants to talk about God's curses. He begins the thoughts with this, with, "Amlicites who choose to mark themselves..." In verse four, "... with red in their foreheads after the manner of the Lamanites." That they really want to look differently, outwardly because inwardly, they know they're on different pages than the Nephi. So they choose to mark themselves with red in their foreheads and they say that it's after the manner of how the Lamanites choose to mark themselves.
John Bytheway:	16:35	Like verse 19 that says, "Every man that is cursed brings upon himself his own condemnation." It's not an arbitrary thing.
Dr. Nate Williams:	16:43	Recently, John, I would be curious to hear what you think about this, I was reading the Elder Christofferson's conference message on The Sealing Power. He talked about, briefly, the wrath of God. And I don't know if you could ever substitute wrath for curse of God, but he gave a quick definition and he said, "Wrath, in this context, may be understood as the natural

consequence of widespread disobedience to the laws and commandments of God."

- 17:12 And it made me think a little bit about a curse. Could it be the natural consequence of disobedience to a law or a commandment of God, versus what Hank was saying about some arbitrary pattern that God chooses to like or dislike certain people?
- Hank Smith: 17:30 It's interesting that the Amlicites choose to mark themselves, and then Mormon sees that as the Lord set a mark upon them.
- Dr. Nate Williams: 17:40 Well, it's interesting, in that verse, they do it after the manner of the Lamanites. There's so much recent scholarship on this that swings that pendulum. The last 100-page article I read out of the Interpreter, somewhere, was strongly suggesting their argument that the Lamanite mark was an intentional physical dark mark put upon individuals who chose to distinguish themselves. And one of their examples that I remember still from the article is when the Nephites have to look for a Lamanite to take the alcohol over to them during the time of war. And they have to look around to find them. It's not a clear, easy, physical, "Oh, you're completely of a darker skin nature. You must be a Lamanite." That was one of many episodes where they were trying to make an argument of a localized, intentional, individual, outward mark that was viewed as a curse of God even though it wasn't individually or personally placed upon them.
- 18:44 To me, one of the things too, that really stands out here, that goes along with what John said on the personal choice nature of curses in God's plan is verse 14, when Mormon quotes something given to Nephi that we don't have cited anywhere else in the Book of Mormon. Verse 14, "Thus the word of God is fulfilled for these are the words which he said to Nephi. Behold the Lamanites have I cursed and I will set a mark on them and they and their seed may be separated from thee and thy seed from this time henceforth and forever. Except they repent of their wickedness and turn to me that I may have mercy upon them." I love that whatever these curses are, they're conditional. This is not something that's foreordained or predestined or punishing long-term children of God. These are things that can all be overcome with any kind of generational attitude where someone chooses to repent.
- Hank Smith: 19:51 The Amlicites becoming like the Lamanites, the curse being cut off from God because you seek to destroy other people. That

choice of, I want to hurt people who are not like me. I want to injure them, I want to kill them, even. That itself is a curse.

Dr. Nate Williams:	20:14	I like how Mormon concludes this whole chapter one, which is in our reading, chapter three, when he says in verse 26 and 27, "And in one year were thousands and tens of thousands of souls sent to the eternal world that they might reap their rewards according to their works. Whether they were good or whether they were bad, to reap eternal happiness or eternal misery according to the spirit which they listed to obey. Whether it be a good spirit or a bad one, for everyone receiveth wages of him whom he listeth to obey. And this is according to the words of the spirit of prophecy. Therefore, let it be according to the truth."
	21:01	Your choices do matter and your choices do bring consequences. And hopefully we can all be wise because I think all of God's children, we want to have a happy life filled with blessings and that there is truly a right way to live and be happy.
Hank Smith:	21:18	Everyone chooses a prophet. Sometimes we think, oh, I'm not choosing President Nelson or I'm not choosing the current president of the church, but by not choosing one, you are choosing another. Everyone has a prophet.
Dr. Nate Williams:	21:33	Mm-hmm.
John Bytheway:	21:34	We had an earlier guest, Hank, who said, "We're all disciplined by somebody." And I thought, "What an interesting idea." And I remember President Eyring saying, "When we choose to say we are independent of the Lord's influences, we're not really independent. We're choosing another influence."
	21:53	We can talk, and we do a lot in our dialogue about, this group makes me matter. That group is like this or this group... But our second article of faith is, we'll be punished for our own sins. Verse 19, "Every man, every individual that is cursed brings upon himself his own condemnation." And then in verse 27, "Every man..." These are talking about individuals, "Receives wages of him whom he listeth to obey." I heard a comedian say once, "The wages of sin is death, but after taxes are taken out, it's just a tired feeling."
Dr. Nate Williams:	22:36	I'd like to share a quote from Elder Ahmad Corbitt of the Quorum of the Seventy from a series of these essays that he wrote about Race and the Priesthood a few years ago that

seemed very relevant and inspiring to me as I tried to wrestle and ponder upon this thought about curses and marks.

22:55 Elder Corbitt wrote, "We see that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is uniquely able and divinely destined to become the most unifying global organization in the history of the world. Clearly, the Savior's church and gospel it administers, transcends race, ethnicity, culture. The church exists largely to gather and unify the Father's children from every nation on the earth as brothers and sisters. Our church is uniquely empowered and destined to achieve worldwide peace, harmony, and unity among all the peoples of the earth through His atonement. Jesus Christ transforms the way we view ourselves and the entire human family. He transforms the way we see the church, its leaders, its gathering and saving mission, its members, and the restored gospel in general."

23:53 And then this thought really grabbed me, "The Book of Mormon is the most racially unifying book on earth. Another way of saying that the Book of Mormon gathers scattered Israel is to say that it invites and unites people of all races and ethnicities as brothers and sisters. It unites all people who accept the gospel in a common covenant with God, our eternal Father and Jesus Christ, our eternal Savior. The gathering also unites all the children of Adam and Eve into the common covenant family of Abraham, another microcosm of God's universal family.

24:34 All these forms of unity are fully accomplished as individuals, and families receive and keep all the ordinances and covenants of the gospel of Jesus Christ offered by the Lord's authorized servants. He invites anyone to read the Book of Mormon with an eye toward understanding its role and power as an instruction manual for unifying God's earthly children of all races and ethnicities. God, Himself, is bringing to pass for the salvation of His children in the last days through the restored gospel of Jesus Christ."

25:13 I love that and I believe that.

Hank Smith: 25:15 Elder Corbitt, he's been on our show before.

Dr. Nate Williams: 25:18 And most importantly, he's an alumni of the great Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho.

Hank Smith: 25:24 John told me, Nate, that you played basketball at Rick's College?

- Dr. Nate Williams: 25:29 I did. Yes. I spent way too much time in my life throwing a ball in a dumb hole. All right. This next question maybe takes us a little bit back into our previous chapters, but it's one that intrigues me before we move on to our last couple of questions in the last chapters. Back to chapters 1 through 3, I was intrigued by how Mormon chooses to use first person quotes, even if they're brief. The question that I'm asking here is what do we learn about Alma or about that Mormon and the use of Alma's words from the two times he has Alma directly speak in this one chapter?
- 26:16 We get two quotes from Alma. They seem to have significance. And I think part of what got me thinking about this question was a book I've been reading recently called *The Art of Biblical Narrative* by a man named Alter. And in his book, one of the chapters is about biblical dialogue. And he writes this, "The biblical scene suggests that what is significant about a character can be manifest almost entirely in the character's speech."
- 26:49 Now, I don't know of any way that Mormon would have been directly impacted to write like biblical authors, but let's assume and pretend that when he has a character speak, he really wants it to reveal a lot about an idea and maybe even about the person. That's what they're suggesting about biblical narrative. He goes on to write, "In any given narrative event, and especially at the beginning of a new story..." Which we're at, we're at a new book, we're at a new story, we're at a new chapter. "The point at which dialogue first emerges is worthy of special attention, and in most instances, the initial words spoken by a personage will be revelatory concerning that person's character."
- 27:38 If we could go back quickly and look at two times Alma is allowed to speak in the storytelling of Mormon, and say, "What does he want me to think about Alma? What does he want me to think about this idea?" We're going through the war with the Amlicites. We get to the point of a critical moment when Alma and Amlici are going face to face in chapter 2:30. "And it came to pass that Alma being a man of God, being exercised with much faith, cried saying..." I guess we could put quotation marks here in our scriptures. "Oh Lord, have mercy and spare my life that I may be an instrument in thy hands to save and preserve this people." Now, when Alma had said these words, he contended again with Amlici, and he was strengthened insomuch that he slew Amlici with a sword.
- 28:35 He could have summarized that. He said he prayed really beautifully, powerfully, but somehow he wanted those words to

teach us something about Alma. It may be in a spirit of Elder Rasband, "Words matter a lot. They're the bedrock of how we connect."

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| John Bytheway: | 28:52 | I'm so glad you pointed this out, because he wants to be an instrument in the hands of God to save and preserve this people. Any reader of the Book of Mormon can say Alma has been an instrument in the hands of God to help them. But yeah, he could have summarized that. "Spare my life so that I can be an instrument," that's a window into the character of Alma. |
| Dr. Nate Williams: | 29:15 | Yeah. That's wonderful. It was beautiful. Is it a foreshadowing of the rest of the book? Let's talk about a man who got his prayer answered, not once, but for the rest of his life he gets to be this ministering instrument of God to bless and preserve people. |
| John Bytheway: | 29:32 | Mormon would want to preserve that, and we don't have quotation marks in the Book of Mormon. There's a few places where you could insert them and I guess that's one of them, huh? |
| Dr. Nate Williams: | 29:41 | Yeah. I love how the Book of Mormon chooses at different times to actually give us the prayers, like Moroni abridged in the book of Ether will give us the prayer of the brother of Jared. Not to tell us he prayed. He'll actually let us read his words. |
| | 29:55 | What do you think if we wrap things up with two last questions? |
| Hank Smith: | 29:58 | Yeah, let's do it. This is great. |
| Dr. Nate Williams: | 29:58 | Question number nine. Let's jump to chapter four for these questions, these last two. Two things seem to be happening in chapter four. On one hand we see the church in verse four, getting established more fully, thousands of people uniting the church through baptism. And then on the other hand, we see the church failing in its progress. It's hard to believe and imagine in one simple chapter you've got such extreme things happening, a church that is getting established, a church that is failing. |
| | 30:38 | I guess the first question, because we want to end on the positive today, is in these chapters, what does it look like for the church to fail? What are some of those distinguishing characteristics of a failing church? |
| John Bytheway: | 30:57 | One might be that we're striving for unity. If you're not one, you're not mine. There's this Zion ideal that we're striving for. |

And when I see verse 12, "He saw great inequality among the people," that is the opposite of the Zion idea that we're trying to get to.

- Dr. Nate Williams: 31:18 I was thinking on your observation, John, with inequality. We have the idea of inequality coming up again in other places in the Book of Mormon, one of them being 3 Nephi before the Savior comes and the church seems to be struggling and the phrase is something like there was great inequality in the land insomuch that the church is broken up", associating a struggling church with prevailing inequality or attitudes or behaviors that promote inequality. And focusing on this note for a second, I am so grateful to belong to the Savior's church that is committed to overcoming any unrighteous inequality wherever it exists in the world.
- 32:07 A little plug for BYU-Idaho. This is a school that admits almost every single applicant. I'm grateful to be a part of it. The list could be innumerable if a person was willing to ponder about the ways Jesus Christ is directing his servants to overcome all inequality, and the list will be staggering if you start to ponder that, about what is happening. And that is a reminder of "by their fruits, you shall know them." Personally institutionally about a failing, struggling church.
- 32:52 A couple of months ago, we were fortunate to have come to BYU-Idaho campus Sister Sharon Eubank. In her role as a humanitarian leader and director organizer in the church, she gave a stirring talk to the student body at a forum. And I was so grateful it was transcribed so I could see if I remembered what she said correctly. And in regard to maybe again, the spirit of talking about inequality for just a second in a struggling church, she said this: "I'm occasionally asked, 'Why doesn't the church spend more money on humanitarian work? Why doesn't it stop building expensive temples and focus its resources on relieving the poor?'" I think sometimes chapters like this stretch us and stir us about that.
- 33:45 She says, "This is a legitimate question for the church of Jesus Christ. But is it money that solves society's ills? The world has poured \$2 trillion into addressing chronic issues in Africa. Why isn't the situation better? Because money isn't really the issue. Lasting progress comes through trusted relationships, infrastructure, reducing corruption and the ability of people to work together. Money doesn't necessarily create those things. They must be developed alongside resources and frankly, it's much harder work."

	34:23	This is certainly coming from somebody who's been in the trenches and knows about the challenges and messiness of that. She goes on to say, "I will never discount the one thing this church does that lifts entire communities in rapid development." Maybe everybody could think, "Well, what is that?"
	34:39	"It invites men and women of all social classes and backgrounds to enter sacred buildings and make the most binding and important promises of their mortal lives. In those buildings, they promise not to steal, not to lie. They promise to be faithful to their spouse and children and they vow they will seek the interest of their neighbors and be peacemakers and become devoted to the idea that we're all one family, all valued and all alike unto God. If those promises made in holy temples are kept, it transforms society faster than any aid or development project ever could. The greatest charitable development on the planet is for people to bind themselves to God and mean it. Thank goodness the church builds 335 temples and counting. It's the greatest poverty alleviation system in the world."
	35:43	That's the phrase I was drawn to. Like did I hear that right? Did I hear somebody who's really in the trenches, in the temporal as well as the spiritual, the greatest poverty alleviation system, make a covenant and really mean it? And like John said earlier, they're committed to this Zion-like truth that we're going to be one heart, one mind. We're going to dwell in righteousness and there's not going to be poor among us. And they find people right around them, even though they're worried about the whole world, that at least find people right around them that they can start administering to, they can start imparting of their substance to.
John Bytheway:	36:22	Oh, I just want to know, is that a published source? I love that so much.
Dr. Nate Williams:	36:25	Yeah. That's why I had to go online and find her forum. And I was so glad they had a transcript of it so that I could make sure I was hearing it right and I could quote it right. It's very stirring, very thought-provoking.
John Bytheway:	36:37	Was it at BYU?
Dr. Nate Williams:	36:39	It was at BYU-Idaho. Let's make sure we know that.
John Bytheway:	36:43	I love the idea that Jesus ministered one at a time, that hearts are changed one at a time. And we're going to change the

world. It's going to be one at a time, which is going to take a while.

- Hank Smith: 36:56 I noticed in Alma 4:11 and 12 that iniquity and inequality, those two words are really close together. And I wonder if they have the same etymology that if not we could say that iniquity and inequality are closely linked.
- Dr. Nate Williams: 37:16 I think so too, and I think it's an interesting mystery to ponder on, how iniquity creates selfish, unequal societies. It was a little surprising to me a few years ago when somebody pointed out what they called the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. Many of us have maybe stereotypical thoughts of that. And this person went to the Book of Ezekiel and read from chapter 16 and said, "This was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom." And then the list goes on, pride. We see that a lot here. Fullness of bread, abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and the needy. And none of my list of these sexual transgressions or other things seemed to surface in Ezekiel's recounting. But there were elements of pride and abundance that is turned away from the least of these.
- 38:14 There's a fascinating parable in the Doctrine and Covenants about inequality. I'm intrigued by it. It stirs me. I'm not sure if I completely understand it. It's the story in section 38 in this revelation where saints are wrestling with imparting of their substance going to New York to Ohio literally, or also from those who maybe have in Ohio and need to give. But God gives this parable. And before he gives the parable in section 38, he says, "Let every man esteem his brother as himself." And then this one verse parallel, "For what man among you having 12 sons and is no respecter of them and they serve him obediently and he saith unto the one, 'Be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here,' and to the other, 'Be thou clothed in rags and sit thou here.'" It seems like a strange Lord. "And looketh upon his sons and saith, 'I am just.'"
- 39:18 I think everybody would look at that parable and say, "That is not a just father. That is not a just king." The commentary Jesus gives to this parable, "Behold this I have given unto you as a parable, and it is even as I am." And then he goes on to say the phrase most of us know, "I say unto you, be one. And if ye are not one, ye are not mine." This is how I see this, and I certainly stand to be corrected by anybody.
- 39:51 Jesus is not into creating unequal situations, but he has given us a really unequal situation in mortality. There are a lot of

situations where every single person could say, "That's unfair," and probably be accurate. So how could that be like Jesus? Well, this is where I read a little bit between the lines, knowing other scriptures.

40:17 What about that is like Jesus? Jesus is fully committed to helping us overcome any inequality that stands between us and Heavenly Father. He is the great act of one who overcomes inequality so that we can become like him. There's a big, big gap between us, and he's willing to do everything he can to help us become one with the Father. And if you're not one, you're not mine. And he invites us in a number of ways to engage in this opportunity to overcome temporal spiritual inequality, to become one like him, to practice what he does through his power, through his infinite condescension and atonement to help people reach a higher level of living than they could on their own.

Hank Smith: 41:13 What did you say? There's the ultimate distance of inequality, right? We're trying to be like Jesus, but we have a long ways to go.

Dr. Nate Williams: 41:23 There's a big gap.

41:25 So the last question really is something we've already talked about, but it's more on the positive. A church that's getting successful and getting established. How do we best measure success, progress or spirituality in the church of Jesus Christ? Are there outward indications that are better than others or are there any outward indications of progress that we're really making a difference in people's lives that would help somehow be a tangible outward measurement of how we're doing with inward spirituality, inward commitment, inward growth, inward coming unto Christ?

42:06 Because here in these chapters, it looks like the one indication they mention when the church is getting more fully established is baptism. There were people getting baptized. And baptism hopefully outwardly symbols a lot of stuff that's happening inside with the doctrine of Christ. And maybe like baptism, something that we've mentioned is the sacrament. Is the sacrament, is an interest to participate in ordinances and covenants, at least somewhat of an outward symbol that we hope something's going on inside with the spiritual lives of people connecting to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?

	42:48	Are there other thoughts you see in this chapter that you would think about with how do we measure progress in the church in effective ways?
John Bytheway:	42:58	That last general conference was so focused on the temple, people using those temples. And boy, what Sister Eubanks said, I can't stop thinking about, going and making covenants with God about how we're going to take care of each other. Could be an outward measure. And we're using the temples, and going to the temple, is the temple getting into us you might say.
Hank Smith:	43:23	I'm impressed with Alma's example here in chapter four. One, he's aware of these situations. He's mindful of what's happening. Two, the inequality really touches him. It says he began to be very sorrowful. And then three, he knows he can't do it all. What is it that Elder Oaks said once in that talk good, better, best? The number of good things we can do far exceeds the time available to accomplish them. He cannot do everything he would like to do. So he focuses in on bearing pure testimony. He gives up what I think would be a job with more perks, the chief judge spot, and he decides to focus in on teaching.
	44:14	I find it interesting that as chief judge, he could probably make new laws to make people be righteous, I mean pile on some laws that will maybe corner you or force you into fixing what's wrong. But he wants people, like we talked about earlier, he wants people to choose what's right, not be forced to do what's right. He knows out of the two roles he has that it's the high priest's job that is actually going to make a difference in changing people's hearts and persuading them to use their agency to choose equality. So maybe to answer your question, am I like Alma in all of these ways?
John Bytheway:	44:57	I had a sister once raise her hand in a class and talk about how much the end of verse 15 meant to her, where it says, "He began to be very sorrowful. Nevertheless, the spirit of the Lord did not fail him." And she wept with that verse. That He won't fail you, He didn't fail Alma, he won't fail us.
Dr. Nate Williams:	45:20	One of the experiences I had that I think reinforces what we've been talking about for me is a discussion I had with a leader of the church once when I asked him the question, "How do we measure success effectively?" And I think there are a lot of possibilities, and I've enjoyed exploring possibilities with you today on how do we measure if faith's working, how do we measure if repentance is working? Do you have any hope that we got a finger on the pulse? It was such an intriguing, instructive answer this leader gave me that I've been pondering

upon and I find it very scriptural so I feel comfortable sharing it. He alluded to the time period that he was a stake president and he would visit various wards, and had that kind of question in mind like, "How's this ward doing? Do we have any indication besides positive reports about how they're doing? Do any of our many, many numbers really reflect anything about the spiritual pulse of a people or a ward?"

46:22 And I was struck by his quick, clear answer. He said, "When I want to find out the spiritual well-being of a ward, I look at their fast offering contributions." And they're like, "Oh wow, that's it?" You look at their fast offering contribution. So I can go to the temple without paying any fast offerings. They don't ask me about my fast offerings. They ask about do I pay tithing? But again, I wonder maybe tying back to Sister Eubank's thoughts, if I really understand and take those covenants seriously, do I find myself generously giving in a lot of different areas of my life because of the abundance of mercy I find flowing from the Lord into my life as a result of that? And it seems like here, those who are getting it and those who aren't getting it in the church are those who seem to be yoked with Christ, serious about that covenant and that relationship, and let that spill over into so many generous areas of their life in other ways, in their relationships with all kinds of people that they might have the blessing to experience or encounter life with.

Hank Smith: 47:42 I love that, Nate, because a fast offering is between you and the Lord. It's not, "Oh, I want to go to the temple, so I am going to do this." It's, there's a spiritual check there. I want to use my agency to choose equality in my sphere, in my little piece of Zion.

Dr. Nate Williams: 48:04 Not spelling it out, not micromanaged, a free-will offering of what you feel there is appropriate for your situation. And maybe that goes with what thoughts President Nelson was thinking about when he said one of the easiest ways to identify a true follower of Jesus Christ is how compassionately that person treats other people. And is that some degree that Christ is working in us when we are compassionate, when we're generous, when we are committed ourselves to being overcomers of inequality wherever they might manifest themselves, unrighteously, in our lives.

John Bytheway: 48:47 We have a hymn about that, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples." Could have been a lot of different measures, but this is how you know. This is what Jesus said. If you have love one to another, that's interesting.

Hank Smith:	49:02	This discussion has reminded me of a quote from Joseph Smith I'm sure both of you recognize. He said, "The nearer we get to our Heavenly Father, the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls. We feel that we want to take them upon our shoulders, cast their sins behind our backs. If you would have God have mercy on you, have mercy on one another."
Dr. Nate Williams:	49:27	I love that. To me, one of the things that I see in the ministry of Joseph Smith is the power of Jesus Christ and the mercy that he wanted to extend to others. I know there were times Joseph was frustrated and upset, and maybe harsh in his language towards some, but think about the return of WW Phelps after times of apostasy. I think about other moments where Joseph himself is being stretched to forgive not only apostates, but maybe others who persecute and to transcend this world through love. The power of the Savior that invites even his prophets into that painful path of discipleship that helps you overcome through Christ, and become a being of love.
John Bytheway:	50:17	He didn't burn bridges. What's the beautiful WW Phelps, "Friends at first are friends again at last, come now dear brother for the war has passed and friends at first are friends again at last." Is that what it was?
Dr. Nate Williams:	50:29	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	50:31	Nate, this has been wonderful. I loved how you formatted this with, "Let's go question after question after question." We've never done that before on this show. That was really fun. Before we let you go, let's say I'm on my commute or I'm washing dishes or I'm folding laundry, or I'm out on a bike ride and I'm listening to the show. What do you hope I do differently? What do you hope I walk with?
Dr. Nate Williams:	50:59	As we introduced things today, we talked a little bit about where these chapters ended, with Alma committing himself to the Holy Order of God and preaching the word of God, leaving the judgment seat, turning it over to a really good man, Nephihah, but committing himself to the preaching of the word. In a way, every one of us gets the word through a messenger, whether that be Mormon, whether that be Alma, whether that be Joseph Smith, we've talked about today, or most importantly today, whether that be President Russell M. Nelson. And I would hope that there would be a spirit to deepen and seek and treasure the relationship you have to God through his servants that have written scripturally, and that live today and mediate

Jesus to us, until He mediates that relationship through His spirit.

52:04 And personally, I love the thought from Joseph Smith when he says, "Whenever men can find out the will of God and find an administrator legally authorized from God, there is the kingdom of God." It's pretty simple. I am grateful for God's spirit that has helped me find those true messengers in the Book of Mormon, that were really preparatory to anchoring me in the living legal administrator of God, a living prophet, that the book is good to the degree it helps you find the living oracle, the living vessel that can administer Christ to me, knowing that in the oath and covenant of the priesthood, if you don't receive the servant in all honesty and truth, you can't receive Christ. And I hope that's something to think about and continue to ponder on and let this book be a great catalyst in your connection to Jesus, and to his living authorized servants on the earth today.

Hank Smith: 53:10 Thank you, Dr. Williams. What a joy. What a joy. BYU Idaho is blessed to have you there. Occasionally, I think President Meredith might tune into our show, so President Meredith, if you're out there one, BYU Idaho is absolutely amazing. We should send our children to Rexburg. And two, take care of our Dr. Williams, Elder Meredith. He's a great soul.

Dr. Nate Williams: 53:42 Thank you so much. You two have made me feel so comfortable. What an amazing experience it is to go back to this text, read it 100 times in this last month, and to see how shallow you still are. And that there are still a lot of pathways and corridors you haven't really explored yet in the Book of Mormon. Been quite a blessing. So thank you both of you. I look up to you, I admire what you do and the influence you have. I was doing the math in my head and getting a little petrified thinking of the number of people that actually listen to this, thinking, "I'm quadrupling 30 years of teaching experience in three hours." It's always a privilege to talk about the Book of Mormon.

Hank Smith: 54:26 Really is.

Dr. Nate Williams: 54:27 It's not a burden, just get over yourself. That's what I got to remember. So thank you.

Hank Smith: 54:33 Our listeners all over the world have been blessed today. And those of you listening, come over to YouTube and let Dr. Williams know where you're listening from. It's really fun to show our guests the reach they're having.

John Bytheway:	54:48	Thank you so much. I just wish that we could find maybe a videotape of that alley-oop you did when you were on Ricks College basketball team.
Dr. Nate Williams:	54:58	Hey, there was no alley-oop, it was a one-handed, wide-open dunk that barely made it in. I'm still calling it a dunk, but it may have rattled a little bit in the cylinder there, but there was definitely no alley-oop.
John Bytheway:	55:14	Well, I've had a dunk.
Dr. Nate Williams:	55:15	My hand was barely above the rim.
John Bytheway:	55:17	Yeah. My dunk was on a rim that said Fisher-Price on the back, so it's just not the same.
Dr. Nate Williams:	55:25	I hope you pulled the backboard off, hung on it for a little while. Feels good.
Hank Smith:	55:30	Well, not to be cheesy, but today was a slam dunk. It was excellent. It was excellent. We want to thank Dr. Nate Williams for being with us today. It has been a joy to walk through these chapters. We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen, and we always, every episode, we remember our founder, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We're going to start Alma's Reactivation tour on followHIM.
	56:04	Before you skip to the next episode, I have some important information. This episode's transcript and show notes are available on our website, FollowHim.co. That's FollowHim.co. On our website, you'll also find our two books, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament and Finding Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Both books are full of short and powerful quotes and insights from all our episodes from the Old and New Testaments. The digital copies of these books are absolutely free. You can watch the podcast on YouTube. Also, our Facebook and Instagram accounts have videos and extras you won't find anywhere else.
	56:38	If you'd like to know how you can help us, if you could subscribe to, rate, review, and comment on the podcast, that will make us easier to find. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra and Annabelle Sorensen.

President Russell M. Nelson: 56:59

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

THAT CHURCH RUINED MY CHILDHOOD



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| Hank Smith: | 00:03 | Hello everyone. Welcome to another followHIM Favorites. John and I are sharing a single story to go with each week's lesson. John, we're in Alma 1-4. I think we tagged on Mosiah 29 with that as well. You've told me you have a story for Alma 4. What is it? |
| John Bytheway: | 00:19 | You know how in Alma 4:10 it says, "The wickedness of the church became a great stumbling block," and what is that? It's something we trip over it. It impedes our progress, right? |
| Hank Smith: | 00:29 | Yeah. I can't move forward with it in my way. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:31 | Yeah, and President Hinckley told this story in the April 2006 conference. I have to warn you first, it's a bit of a gut punch, but so is that verse. The wickedness of the church becoming a stumbling block. Hey, that's not what we're after. So this is what President Hinckley says about a young man who was not a member of the church, and he says his parents were active in another faith, and he recalls this young man that when he was growing up, some of his LDS associates, okay, get ready for the gut punch, belittled him, made him feel out of place, poked fun at him. He literally came, these are President Hinckley's words, he came to literally hate this church and its people. He saw no good in any of them. Then his father lost his employment and had to move. In a new location at the age of 17, he was able to enroll in college, and for the first time in his life, felt the warmth of friends, one of whom was named Richard, asked him to join a club. |
| | 01:28 | And he said, "For the first time in my life, someone wanted me around. I didn't know how to react but thankfully I joined. It was a feeling that I loved, the feeling of having a friend. I had prayed for one my whole life, and God answered that prayer." And then he talked about having a tent partner in a summer job. I don't know what that means. I guess you have a job where you work in a tent. |

	01:49	Clearly a very intense job, okay. So he said he noticed this friend Richard reading a book every night and one night asked, "What is that book?" And he said, "It's the Book of Mormon." This young man said, "I quickly changed the subject and went to bed. After all, that is the book that ruined my childhood."
Hank Smith:	02:09	Oh.
John Bytheway:	02:09	See how many gut punches? I asked, why was he reading that every night? I couldn't stand this unanswered question in my head. So one night I asked him what was so important in that book? What was in it? He read about Jesus and about his appearance in the Americas, and I was shocked. These are his words, "I didn't think that Mormons believed in Jesus." Ouch.
	02:32	On a subsequent occasion, this young man and his friend were traveling. Richard handed him the Book of Mormon and asked if he would read it aloud, and he did so, and suddenly the inspiration of the Holy Spirit touched him. Time passed, faith increased, and he agreed to be baptized. Which is great. President Hinckley said that is the end of the story, but there are great statements in that story. One is the sorry manner in which members of the church treated him. Next is the manner in which the newfound friend treated him totally opposite from his previous experience. It led to his conversion and baptism in the face of terrible odds. So it's just kind of saying, don't be a stumbling block, right?
Hank Smith:	03:16	Yeah.
John Bytheway:	03:16	Be a stepping stone, and we don't want Alma 4:10 to become true of us.
Hank Smith:	03:21	Oh, I love that. I remember once President Hinckley said, "Our kindness may be the most persuasive argument for that which we believe."
John Bytheway:	03:30	Yeah. That's got to be the fruit of what we believe is the way we treat people.
Hank Smith:	03:35	Knowing what we know, we ought to be some of the kindest, happiest, most hopeful people. I've noticed in verse 11 of that chapter you mentioned John, Alma 4. Alma saw that the example of the church began to lead those who were unbelievers from one piece of iniquity to another.
John Bytheway:	03:56	It's another gut punch.

Hank Smith:	03:58	Yeah. Bringing on the destruction of the people. I think we can all, like you said, John, we can decide that's not going to be us. That's not going to be us.
John Bytheway:	04:08	And not everybody's going to join the church, but we can always let them know, "Yeah, I knew a member and they were kind."
Hank Smith:	04:16	Yeah. So one of the kindest neighbors I ever had...
John Bytheway:	04:19	Yeah, something like that.
Hank Smith:	04:20	... was a member of that church. You never know if that seed might grow into something later.
	04:26	We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcast and then come back next week. We'll do another followHIM Favorites.