



“They Never Did Fall Away”

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:

Can people change? Professor Lori Denning brings to life the story of the Anti-Nephi-Lehis through understanding the power of poetry, covenant, and conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Part 2:

Professor Lori Denning continues to explore the themes of conversion and sacrifice and how the Lord calls us each to different places and responsibilities to strengthen one another.

Timecodes:

Part 1

- 00:00 Part I - Professor Lori Denning
- 00:46 Background to the chapters
- 03:34 Bio of Professor Denning
- 04:28 *Come, Follow Me* Manual
- 05:46 Professor Denning shares a story about volleyball
- 08:39 Can people change?
- 10:23 Mormon's teaching moments
- 12:53 Power of stories on the human brain
- 16:54 Alma 23 - Literary techniques
- 18:49 Alma 23:1-2 - Resumptive repetition
- 23:15 Powerful first words and difficult missions
- 27:04 Alma 23:3 - King converted through love and a literary motif
- 32:47 Gathering Israel
- 35:21 Alma 23:6-7 - Never fell away after conversion
- 40:47 Professor Denning shares a personal story of a new ward
- 43:25 Alma 23:13, 25 - Laid down weapons
- 45:44 Abraham Lincoln story
- 49:20 Alma 24:7-16 - a speech and a new identity
- 52:18 A name change
- 56:33 Nicknames
- 58:02 Alma 24:16-18 -Burying swords
- 1:00:25 Professor Denning shares a story about using her powers for evil
- 1:06:15 Living in contention
- 1:09:00 - End of Part 1 - Professor Lori Denning

Part 2

- 00:00 Part II–Professor Lori Denning
- 02:08 The Anti-Nephi-Lehis strengthen us
- 04:04 Will they break their covenant and fight?
- 08:10 How covenants change them
- 09:50 Alma 24:30 - Nephite enemies are former Nephites
- 12:12 Professor Denning finishes volleyball story from pt. 1
- 14:02 The power in poetry
- 19:41 John shares a powerful personal moment
- 21:08 Alma 26:16 - Missionaries as instruments
- 23:11-12 - Ammon tells a story in a couplet
- 26:01 Dr. Sweat's translation exercise in Alma 29
- 32:37 Hank's translation of Alma 29:1-2
- 34:11 John's translation of Alma 29:1
- 35:51 A car without gas-the power of hymns

- 39:29 Psalm 22 and Jesus on the cross
- 40:44 Hank shares an impression about Alma 29
- 46:04 Professor Denning shares her testimony of Jesus Christ
- 49:26 End of Part II– Professor Lori Denning

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Biographical Information:



Lori L. Denning is a disciple of Christ and a card carrying scripture nerd. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in ancient scripture at Claremont Graduate University with a Master's Degree in Theology from Gonzaga University. She has written three books, including the "Real Heroes Series," and teaches at BYU. Lori also appears as a frequent podcast guest and hosts the video series "The Bible Brief."

Such a dedicated nerd, Lori even sings Biblical Hebrew for fun. A native of San Diego, her adventurous spirit is seen in her love for dirt bikes, karaoke, and chocolate. With an

identical twin (the cute one, she claims) and a mission in Barcelona, Spain, Lori's vibrant personality and diverse interests shine in everything she does.

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Literary Characteristics in Alma 23-29

Professor Lori's Quick Chart on Literary Features (these are just a few!)

Literary Characteristic	Description	Example	Explanation
Symbolic Numbers	Use of numbers with symbolic meanings.	Alma 23:9 - Use of the number 7.	The number 7 often symbolizes completeness or perfection.
Resumptive Repetition	Repeating a phrase or idea to link sections and emphasize continuity.	Alma 23:1 from 22:27 - "Sent a proclamation."	Connects sections and reinforces key themes or actions.
New Name with a New Identity	Receiving a new name as a symbol of a new identity or covenant.	Alma 23:16 - Anti-Nephi-Lehies; Mosiah 5:7, 18:8, 25:12, Alma 2:11.	Symbolizes transformation and commitment to a new way of life.
Symbolic Actions (Signs and Tokens)	Actions with deeper symbolic significance beyond their literal meaning.	Alma 24:17-18 - Burying weapons.	Represents the covenant of peace and rejection of violence, serving as a sign and token of their commitment.
Poetic and Rhetorical Techniques	Use of poetic structures and rhetorical devices to enhance meaning.	Alma 29:1-3 - Emotive language and parallelism.	Enhances the emotional and thematic impact of the text.
Symbolic Geography	Places with symbolic significance contributing to the narrative.	Alma 27:22 - Land of Jershon as a place of refuge.	Highlights themes of protection, sanctuary, and integration.
Intertextual References	Connections to earlier scriptures or prophecies that enrich the narrative.	Alma 25:15-16 - Fulfillment of prophecies; Alma 28:13 - "Thus we see..."	Provides deeper insights and continuity within the scriptural context.

Anataxis	Repetitive or redundant clauses for emphasis.	Alma 23:1-3 - "Behold, now it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation among all his people... neither should they cast stones at them... nor to plunder, nor to steal, nor to commit adultery, nor to commit any manner of wickedness."; Alma 26:29 - "And we have entered into their houses and taught them, and we have taught them in their streets; yea, and we have taught them upon their hills; and we have also entered into their temples and their synagogues and taught them..."	Creates a rhythmic and emphatic effect, emphasizing the decree and its importance, as well as the missionaries' extensive efforts.
Anaphora and Epistrophe	Repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning (anaphora) or end (epistrophe) of successive clauses.	Alma 24:7-14 - Repeated phrases "I thank my God," "that we might," "nor to," "neither should they," etc.	Reinforces the speaker's gratitude and moral teachings, creating a rhythmic and emphatic delivery.

Article: how the brain works on story

Reference: Speer, Nicole K., Jeremy R. Reynolds, Khena M. Swallow, and Jeffrey M. Zacks. "How Reading Stories Activates Neural Representations of Visual and Motor Experiences." *Psychological Science* 20, no. 8 (2009): 989-999. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2009.02397.x>.

Literary Characteristic	Description	Example	Explanation
Motif	A recurring phrase or theme.	"Relying on the mercies" - Alma 24:25, 26:28 (2x), 27:9.	Links ideas throughout the text and reinforces key concepts.
Motif	The phrase "Our great God" or "My great God" in King Anti-Nephi-Lehi's speech.	Alma 24:7-10	Emphasizes reverence and gratitude towards God.
Motif	Visual metaphor of stained and bright swords.	Alma 24:12-15	Represents the transformation from sin to purity and the commitment to peace.
Motif	The word "Joy".	Alma 26:1, 26:11, 29:9-10	Highlights the happiness and fulfillment found in God's work and blessings.



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| Hank Smith: | 00:03 | Hello my friends, welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name's Hank Smith, I'm your host. I'm here with my humble seeker of happiness, co-host John Bytheway, and our guest, Professor Lori Denning. |
| | 00:16 | John, let me talk to you first here, Alma 23-29, what comes to mind when you think of these chapters? |
| John Bytheway: | 00:24 | There's a lot of things. One of my favorite metaphors ever, the idea of burying our weapons of war, is a really cool idea in here. I also think we have Ammon's amazing mission, and then we have, boy, not only what happens to the converts here that is difficult, but the missionaries too. This earth life is a tough neighborhood, but we see how they all come through it and end up rejoicing at the end. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:46 | There's a lot of highs and lows in discipleship in these chapters. John, like I said, we have Professor Lori Denning joining us. We're in Alma 23-29 today, what are we going to do? Where are you going to take us? |
| Prof. Lori Denning: | 01:01 | Thanks, Hank. I think we're going to cover a lot of ground. There are some great stories in here, if we break it up into two parts that'll really help. What I hope to do is review the stories of joy of these missionaries, like John outlined for us. The first half we're going to go through all the stories, and that's what you alluded to with burying the weapons, and all the things that happened to the converts. And then in the second half we're actually going to go to the missionaries talking about their missions. |
| | 01:26 | It really comes back to a word that's used over and over again, similar to what the title that you gave to our humble seeker is, joy. As much as there's going to be some tragedy and some really terrible things in this, Mormon picked these to show us the joy that comes in following the Savior. |

Hank Smith:	01:42	We had a lot of fun with Lori last year. Where were we, Lori?
John Bytheway:	01:45	Yes.
Prof. Lori Denning:	01:45	Philippians.
Hank Smith:	01:46	Philippians, that's what it was.
Prof. Lori Denning:	01:48	Philippians and Colossians, yeah.
Hank Smith:	01:50	Oh yeah, we should link that in our show notes. We laughed really hard, and I think you brought a Roman helmet with you.
John Bytheway:	01:55	Oh good, yes, thank you.
Prof. Lori Denning:	01:59	I mean, I obviously have a thing now, so I wanted to make sure that we do historical assessments. So heavy, if you can see it, I'm wearing a helmet. This helmet's actually called a morion, morion. You'll see it like the conquistadors, but we're going to talk about their weapons of war, so I may have brought a few-
John Bytheway:	02:15	Look at that.
Hank Smith:	02:16	Wow.
Prof. Lori Denning:	02:16	Weapons. Like most women, I have quite a collection of arms and armor, so I brought some of those. If you're online, if you're listening to it, imagine a helmet and a sword.
John Bytheway:	02:28	All I brought was my humble sneakers, and you brought a helmet and a sword.
Hank Smith:	02:32	We have a lot of props today.
Prof. Lori Denning:	02:34	Fantastic stories. These are some of the most powerful, the most memorable, poignant, tear-jerking, heroic, exciting stories in the whole of Book of Mormon. I mean, I don't know how I was so lucky to get these chapters, but they are fantastic. I'm pretty excited. And I won't wear the helmet the whole time, but I might put it on a few times.
Hank Smith:	02:54	Hey, we don't mind. I love it when you do, it's awesome. And you mentioned part one and part two, we hope everyone will listen to both parts. I talk to our listeners who say, "I loved this one," and I said, "What'd you think of part two?" And they kind of look at me like, nah. I'm like, "Hey, stay."

Prof. Lori Denning:	03:11	That was too much of you guys, I just need to tone it down.
Hank Smith:	03:14	You got to go the distance.
Prof. Lori Denning:	03:16	Well, my very favorite chapter of all scripture, of all canon, is Alma 29. We're saving the best for last, so stick around to hear why, of all the super nerdiness that I've done in my whole life, this is truly my favorite chapter ever.
Hank Smith:	03:30	Yeah, wonderful. Make it through part two, everyone.
	03:34	John, we talked about how we had Lori on last year, but let's introduce her again for those who weren't with us.
John Bytheway:	03:41	Yeah, she's a well-known helmet collector, and she brought one last year too, a different one. Professor Lori L. Denning is Disciple of Christ and a card carrying scripture nerd. She's pursuing her PhD in ancient scripture at Claremont Graduate University, with a master's degree in theology from Gonzaga University. She has written three books, including the Real Hero series, and also teaches at BYU. She appears as a frequent podcast guest and hosts the video series called The Bible Brief. And I'll tell you, Hank, I was looking forward to this because I remember how much fun we had last time, so really glad to have you back, Lori.
Prof. Lori Denning:	04:21	I'm glad to be here, and I am going to start saying helmet collector in all of my bios from now on, so thank you, John.
Hank Smith:	04:28	Lori, let me read from the Come, Follow Me manual. Let's jump in, see where we're going to go. Here's what it says, it has three opening paragraphs that I love. It says, "Do you sometimes wonder whether people can really change? Maybe you worry about whether you can overcome poor choices you've made, or bad habits you've developed, or you may have similar worries about loved ones. If so, the story of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies can help you. These people were the sworn enemies of the Nephites. When the sons of Mosiah decided to preach the gospel to them, the Nephites laughed them to scorn. Killing the Lamanites seemed like a more plausible solution than converting them. But the Lamanites did change. Through the converting power of Jesus Christ, they were once known as a hardened and ferocious people, but they became distinguished for their zeal towards God. In fact, they never did fall away.
	05:18	"Maybe you have some thoughts or actions to change, or weapons of rebellion to lay down, or maybe you need to be a

little more zealous towards God. No matter what changes you need, Alma 23-29 can give you hope that through the atoning power of Jesus Christ, long-lasting change is possible." So well said, and I can think of things that I would love to change. That does give hope. Lori, where do you want to go here? Where should we start?

Prof. Lori Denning: 05:46

Thanks, I thought we could start with a story. And I'm going to leave it a little bit of a cliffhanger, just hold on and at the end of this we'll come back around and it may make sense. But when I was younger, I was 15, 16, I was about in 10th grade, and I signed up for the volleyball team. And at that point I had made the varsity soccer team and varsity softball team already, so I thought I was this really great athlete as a young high school student. You can't see me very much, but I am short and not very tall, and I have a vertical jump of about two inches even today. So I'm not a natural-born volleyball player, but in my mind I was this great volleyball player.

06:25

Most of you know I am an identical twin, so my twin and I both signed up for volleyball, and we had been JV, junior varsity, the year before, the junior team, and we make it, we make varsity. And about a week into the program we get dropped down to JV, because a friend of ours transferred from another school, she was an amazing athlete. They needed another slot, instead of dropping one of us, they dropped both of us. Well, my twin and I didn't take it very well. We got back to the JV squad and we moped around, and we scuffed our feet, and we hung our head and we complained. And we looked over at the other team and we looked at our friends who were the second squad on the varsity and we're like, "We're better than them," and we complained and complained.

07:08

About the end of that week our coach pulled us aside, and I'm like, finally, we get to tell our righteous indignation how we had been unfairly cut, not for the brilliant girl, but those other teammates, we were certainly better than them, and we already made it, and what dishonor. As a 15, 16-year-old, this was a super big deal. I look back now and think, I can't believe I was so worried about it, but I couldn't wait until the coach, "I want to talk to you two after practice."

07:34

We go back in the back room and she's like, "I am so disappointed in you two. You need to figure it out." And you're like, wait, this might've changed. She's mad, our coach is mad at us. And she proceeded to tell us, "Look, I had a choice of who to bring down to the team, and I thought you two would be great influences on the team. You're great athletes, you're fun, and

you'll play every game, on the varsity you wouldn't play any games, I thought you would really help the team. You're better than this, I know your parents, and I expected more out of you."

08:10 I was absolutely crushed. I remember being absolutely blown away and just hanging my head. She gave one more statement, she said, "Think about it tonight, but if you want to be on this team, you need to come back and you need to get rid of your bad attitude and you're going to play on the team, otherwise don't come back tomorrow." I had a lot of thinking to do. Was I going to change? Was I going to say, am I going to play with the JV or am I going to say, yeah, I should have been on that varsity team?

08:39 That is a little bit about what I think is going to happen in these stories. People have a chance to change, are they going to change? Do they believe they're going to change? How do they actually affect that change in their life? Now, they're not playing JV volleyball in San Diego, California, they're doing something so much greater. I haven't had experiences quite as serious as the people that we're going to meet, but that same idea, I think we look at the stories of when the Lord has invited us to change, invited us to become something greater, and what will we choose and how do we make that change?

09:10 These ideas are told in stories. The nerd word obvious because it's called narrative, right? We say they're a narrative, but they're stories, right? We don't get a laundry list of commandments, we're going to get these stories of these people, and they are historical events. But Mormon, if we think about it, has seen our day and said, this is what we need to see, these are stories that are just like our stories. I want us to look at the stories and say, how am I like this?

09:38 Here's one of the ways that I hope that we can do it as we go through these stories, and some of these stories you'll know pretty well, some of them you may not be as familiar with, but they're awesome. As we go through I want us to look at what's called point of view, and that's which character are you seeing the story through. When I was a kid, I always saw myself as the hero of the story, and as I've gotten older I've realized I'm a little bit more villainous than some of these stories, I'm not as good as I thought I was.

10:02 In these stories you're going to see people from all over, you're going to see the Lamanites, you're going to see the missionaries, you're going to see people that are converts, you're going to see the Nephites that are going to accept them

back in, and everybody in between. That's what I'm hoping to do, is take these stories and look at them through those lenses and maybe through fresh eyes and say, what point of view are we going to do?

- John Bytheway: 10:22 Awesome.
- Hank Smith: 10:23 We could also take the point of view of Mormon who's writing the story and seeing it from a distance.
- Prof. Lori Denning: 10:30 That's a really good segue, thank you, Hank. There are some of these literary techniques and I want to try to call them out. That's one you'll see, Mormon talks, and you know when he's talking when he uses this phrase called, "Thus we see," and he has about four of these in this scriptural block. It's like a little aside, in a movie or something when they turn to the camera and says, "And thus we see," he makes a little conclusion. These kinds of conclusions are popular in scripture, you see them in the Gospels, in John, and this is when the people didn't understand that Jesus was doing this. You see them in Nehemiah, you see them all over the place, that they do them. But Mormon, Hank, to your point, does them a lot. He's carefully selected these scriptures, and then in case you missed the point, he writes a little, "Thus we see."
- 11:16 A great challenge or a great project to do with your family, or yourself as you're studying Come, Follow Me, is go look for them and study them and see what conclusions Mormon is making from the story that he chose. Alma is also writing most of this, and Mormon's picking Alma's writings. You can also say, even though Alma isn't in all of the story, Alma the Younger is also one of the narrators of the story. He's telling his story and his friends' stories. That's a really great way to do it, and it kind of enlivens the story, let me look at it through a perspective.
- John Bytheway: 11:48 Some editors try to be invisible so you don't know that they're there, and maybe that's the goal of some kind of editing, but when we get a, "Thus we see," we're getting Mormon going, this is why I put this in here.
- Hank Smith: 12:02 John, you're right on there, Mormon frequently tells us, I can only write a hundredth part of what I have. And sometimes I think, you could have written us 200th if you'd stopped telling us you could only write 100th part.
- Prof. Lori Denning: 12:15 You could have slipped in something right there.

Hank Smith: 12:17 Yeah. When he tells us a story, in theory he didn't tell us 99 other stories. Each part of this has got to stand out. I noticed, Lori, that we're flying through history for a while, and then we get to Alma, it's the longest book, but it only covers 40 years of history, where you had a tiny little book of Omni that covered hundreds of years of history, here's this book where we really slow down. It's the first 40 years of the reign of the judges, and I guess that switch in government really changed society quite a bit.

Prof. Lori Denning: 12:53 It is, it's kind of a slow-mo, we zoom in and we get to know these characters. I think one of the things that's beautiful and powerful about the Book of Mormon is how much we actually get to know these people, and we get to hear their inner thoughts and they're going to write and tell us some of these things, and they're going to do some of them in poems and they're going to do some of them in their journals and speeches, and we'll do some of that in part two. That's a little unique. A lot of times, like John said, we don't always hear the voice or the narrator. In this one you hear Mormon, but you also hear Alma, you hear each of their personalities and what they're concerned about, and that is beautiful and powerful, I wonder why it's so different except that it changes me, I get so much more involved in the story.

13:36 There's a study, and I'll link it down in the show notes, because I really wanted to point this out, but there is a neuroscience on how stories work. Before we get into the story, this is pretty cool, all the ways that the Lord could choose to convey an idea to us, he's chosen stories. Stories make up probably 50, 60% of scripture, rather than poetry or speeches or some other kind of type of literature. Stories, in this neuroscience, this Dr. Zak's did a bunch of MRIs, and they did all these studies of people listening to stories, and it happens, only here, it doesn't happen if I give you a laundry list of thou shalt nots, but you envision yourself experiencing the story, and your brain acts the same whether you're hearing and envisioning a story as much as you're doing it. So like an athlete who's visualizing crossing the finish line or throwing a basketball, you are visualizing it.

14:30 By experiencing these events with Alma, or with Anti-Nephi-Lehi, the King, or with whomever in the story, our brain doesn't know the difference, so we are becoming stronger and better and we become more like them when we put ourselves in the events of the story. That's why we slow down. I think that's why we get this awesome peer into their souls and hear their thoughts and slow down and go through their lives with them, so that we can become more like Alma and Ammon and Amulek

and Lamoni and the oh so pithy name of King Anti-Nephi-Lehi in the story.

- John Bytheway: 15:14 I have learned by sad experience that if I can tell a story, I don't have to say you should, you ought, we need to. We tell a story of somebody who embodies a principle or a trait and then we can all just listen and go, wow, we will supply our own. I should be that way. If you're saying it, it doesn't work as well, but we love to hear stories of somebody that's heroic and then we can go, there's some traits in there that I like, so that's why I like stories.
- Hank Smith: 15:48 That's fantastic. Lori, I think you're right on here. I can remember stories I've been told decades ago. That's why I loved John Bytheway talks. I think everybody loved, what was it, John, Mafia to Mormon? I still can remember that talk.
- John Bytheway: 16:06 Mario Facione.
- Hank Smith: 16:07 Stories that President Monson told, and of course the Savior's parables, they have a lasting power. Whenever I train teachers I'll say that, if you have a choice between a lecture and a story, go with the story. In speaking to youth I've started to get into the lecture mode, and you can kind of see the energy drop. And all of a sudden you start telling a story, and that energy picks back up and they're engaged in, oh, you're telling me this story. And even youth years later will say, "I remember that story."
- Prof. Lori Denning: 16:41 Mm-hmm, that story. Today's about our conversion, about being true to covenant. And we can say, I've been practicing all along because I've been reading their stories and I want to be like them. Maybe we should jump into the story.
- 16:54 Let's jump into 23. There are lots of different ways the scholars approach these, mine is obviously what we call literary theory, or literary criticism, and that is how stories work. I'm going to pop in occasionally and show you some of these, and you might not have seen them before, but they're little techniques that authors use, things like repetition and rhyme and things, and there's some weird ones that you might not have heard about, but like we just said, thus we see, you'll see that one.
- 17:21 Some patterns, and I want to point them out, because once you see them, they can become more powerful. There's one kicker though, one cool thing about how literary techniques work, you don't have to know them for them to work, they just work. When we tell a story, we love a story, but if you tell a good

story, we just know it's a good story. But if we said, well, why was that a good story? You might not know. I'm going to point some out, I think it's a great way to study scripture. I think Mormon is a brilliant author, he is using these to help us remember, to help them sink deep into our hearts, to touch us on an emotional and spiritual level, I want to call out some of them.

17:58 Also, as a nerdy aside, I love that we find these ancient scriptural ideas and techniques in the Book of Mormon. There's no way that Joseph Smith would be like, hey, in 65 working days I snuck all these in, and I didn't even know they existed, and neither did literary theorists until 20 years ago, but I knew them and I snuck them in. No, we don't get a testimony of the Book of Mormon because they're here, but I sure love that they're here and find them endlessly fascinating. If I'm on the show, the nerd word of the day is literary. I made a chart of these as well, of some things that I found in the last few days studying this, there's not certainly all of them, and we'll put it in the show notes.

Hank Smith: 18:37 So everybody knows, John, I don't think I've said this in a while, come over to the website, followhim.c-o, followhim.co, and you'll find all the show notes over there, along with a bunch of extras, so come on over.

Prof. Lori Denning: 18:49 Let's jump to Alma 23, let's do one and two, and when we read it, I want to tell you two things I want you to watch for as we go through it. The first thing is it starts actually what's called a resumptive repetition. He's going to say, "There was this proclamation." We're picking up in the middle of a story, a resumptive repetition is a little clause that's like the parentheses is ending and you're going back to the sentence, and there was a proclamation that the Lamanite king was going to make, and then the chapter before it, like half of it is this aside, oh, blah, blah, blah, and this other thing happened. Okay, and back to the story, and let's jump in and just find out what's going on.

John Bytheway: 19:24 Alma 23:1, "Behold now it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation among all his people that they should not lay their hands on Ammon, or Aaron, or Omner, or Himni, nor either of their brethren who should go forth preaching the word of God in whatsoever place they should be in any part of their land. Yea, he sent a decree among them that they should not lay their hands on them to bind them or to cast them into prison; neither should they spit upon them, nor smite them, nor cast them out of their synagogues, nor scourge them;

neither should they cast stones at them, but that they should have free access to their houses, and also their temples, and their sanctuaries."

- Prof. Lori Denning: 20:03 We made a proclamation of a long list of things that you guys don't do. What do we think was probably happening to them? Every one of these things. Every one of them. The English here is really clunky, very listy, you could say comma and make a list. Here's a literary term for you, this is called **anataxis**, it's when you make a list like that and you put and in between, or or. So in the first one you'll see the brothers on Ammon, or Aaron, on Omner, or Himni. You could have just said the brothers, or you could have just said a, comma, but they put the or in there.
- 20:38 You'll see it a lot with and, and there are a lot of examples of these. And then you're going to see it again with this list of all the things they shouldn't be doing, so they sent a decree and they should not lay your hands, or bind them, or cast them, or spit on them, nor smite them, nor cast them, nor scourge jump, and you're like, okay, got it. No, got to do a few more, no cast stones. That's that listy thing.
- Hank Smith: 20:59 I sense in this one the repetition is, he could say, "Don't hurt him, you don't get to hurt him," but this is a list, and then each one becomes more pronounced with that little conjunction.
- Prof. Lori Denning: 21:14 Yeah, you're exactly right, the rhythmic effect kind of does an emphasis. It's, maybe this was the law, and we had to be very specific because they were jerks and they were doing all of those things to the four missionaries. What I think it does is it emphasizes and it builds and it's like, wow, this was really terrible. In this example they were doing this and this and this and this. One way to get the feeling, remember, we're going to get the feeling of these stories so it sinks into our heart and it changes us, is to read it out loud. Read it out loud, because you'll hear it and you'll feel it a little differently than if you read it in your head.
- Hank Smith: 21:52 Now you're a Hebrew Bible expert. If I remember right from our Old Testament year, they often told us, they're meant to be heard.
- Prof. Lori Denning: 22:01 Mm-hmm.
- Hank Smith: 22:01 It changes the feel of scripture when you realize a lot of this was meant to be orally transmitted. Does that fit here, Lori?

- Prof. Lori Denning: 22:09 Yeah, Hank, you're so humble, of course that is the answer, and you know that too because you're an expert as well. But remember, it's usually in a congregation or in community, they're read out loud and then you hear them and then you remember them. So one thing it does is it gives the emotion of it, and it also, it helps you remember it. You remember them because it's got this little rhythm to them. Let's say you're sitting down on the bench and you're a deacon, or whatever of the day, and you're sitting down there, you're like, and smite them, and, and, and. You're like, yeah, I got the list, right? I'm going to go home and I'm going to smite and beat you, you just know that's what you'd be thinking. So yeah, they would've been meant to be read out loud.
- 22:46 It also helps it to be heard, convey your voice to the back of the room. In fact, Hebrew and things like Arabic are actually chanted, they're sung, so they actually have a chant sing to them. The language itself has that rhythm to it, the rhyming sometimes at the middle of the words, but the rhythm of that anataxis. You'll see it a lot with and is the other one, that you're like in English it's an awkward phrase and we go, and Omner, and Himni. It's not very succinct, we don't like that, but they loved it.
- 23:15 Here's another one that I think is really powerful, it's the first word of the chapter. This is a word that helps us change your views. You think of watching a movie and the scene is going to change scenes. So you're watching a car chase and then you change scenes and now you're watching the driver's face as he's driving the car really fast, it changes the view, it changes the scene. Behold literally means look, check it out, check it. You'll see behold, or look, the angel talking to Nephi in the dream says look a lot, same idea, they're changing the narrator, Mormon or Alma in this case, this is probably Alma actually, but he's telling us to zoom into a new scene. Whenever you see behold, you're kind of changing scenes slightly, zooming in, zooming out, going into the past, going into the future, showing a different group. Or you'll see it sometimes with the prophet, he's trying to emphasize it, behold. When you see those, it's not just a weird archaic phrase of like, and thus he sayeth, it's check it. Think of it zooming in on a screen.
- 24:19 That's a lot of literary nerdiness, but I think it really helps us say, when we read these stories with fresh eyes, they can really sink into our hearts, or they give you a way to study it differently and say, I'm going to find all the beholds, I'm going to find all those little repetitive weirdness things and see how it makes me feel.

Hank Smith:	24:36	In my house, well, I have a lot of boys, we do some of the voices, some of the back and forth, "You be Anti-Nephi-Lehi and I'll be Ammon," and we'd switch that up back and forth so that it's easier to visualize. And I do the voice of Sherem who's like, "Brother Jacob, I wanted..." It just helps, I think, my kids visualize what's happening. Sometimes parents turn their personalities off when they read scripture.
Prof. Lori Denning:	25:04	If we were thinking of it like casting a movie, or making a movie of these, what would you do? And that's what Alma or Mormon is trying to do, is paint the picture and tell us. But if we read it like that, then you'd say, well, I would put this in a city. No, I would put this, there would be a montage of them being smitten and scourged and in prison, I would film it like that.
John Bytheway:	25:25	It doesn't really say in verse two that these things had all happened to them, but where else would he get that list? Okay, no more of this and no more of this and no more of this.
Hank Smith:	25:37	He looks over at the missionaries and they kind of nod, you got it, that was the list.
John Bytheway:	25:42	Thank you, get the don't spit on us part in there too, yeah, thank you, okay.
Hank Smith:	25:43	Yeah.
Prof. Lori Denning:	25:45	If you leave any opening, it's happened to him. But it does set an interesting tone. If Alma's telling this story, the first thing we get is what? Behold, this was really rough, this is a super challenging mission. Who wants to sign up for a mission where you're gone for 14 years and your people say, "You should just kill them, these people are impossible." Or, and you get there and then they just beat you up and they scourge you and they spit on you and they throw you in prison, wow, why would anyone do that?
Hank Smith:	26:16	On your list it would say, do not throw sandwiches at them.
Prof. Lori Denning:	26:22	Don't throw sandwiches with mustard that would hit them. Thank you for remembering my story, Hank.
Hank Smith:	26:26	That was from our interview last year, Lori was in Spain, right?
Prof. Lori Denning:	26:31	Yeah, yeah, Barcelona.
Hank Smith:	26:32	And got hit by a-

Prof. Lori Denning:	26:33	A flying sandwich. Yeah, I got stoned by a sandwich. I got stoned by a sandwich. It's not quite as gruesome as being thrown into jail, but it really hurt my feelings, and it ruined my shirt.
Hank Smith:	26:45	Everyone should go find last year's episode, and that was a story, look at that, Lori.
John Bytheway:	26:50	Yeah, we remembered.
Prof. Lori Denning:	26:51	And you remembered it, because it was a story.
John Bytheway:	26:52	"No more of that," says verse two.
Prof. Lori Denning:	26:54	No more of that. And then it prompts the question, if it's so terrible, why are they doing it? Who would go do this thing, and why wouldn't anybody do it? Because it sounds terrible, so that anataxis now this terrible, terrible, terrible, terrible. But here's why, and we're going to see something powerful of why. John, would you mind running us through verse three?
John Bytheway:	27:16	"And thus they might go forth and preach the word according to their desires, for the king had been converted unto the Lord, and all his household. Therefore, he sent his proclamation throughout the land unto his people that the word of God might have no obstruction, but that it might go forth throughout all the land that his people might be convinced concerning the wicked traditions of their fathers, and that they might be convinced that they were all brethren, and that they ought not to murder, nor to plunder, nor to steal, nor to commit adultery, nor to commit any manner of wickedness."
Prof. Lori Denning:	27:49	Awesome, thank you. After we hear all those terrible things that happened is the answer of why the missionaries and the king are willing to go to all this trouble is in there.
John Bytheway:	28:01	For the king had been converted unto the Lord and all his household.
Prof. Lori Denning:	28:05	Wow, and how did that affect them in the story, since you're our Book of Mormon expert. I mean, was that a big change for them? Was that kind of a no big deal? How would that story go?
Hank Smith:	28:14	This one convert changes everything about the mission. And if you even backtrack further, Lori, it was because this king saw the goodness, the love that Ammon had for his son, so that single act, that single moment where he says, "You really love my son," that turns into this.

Prof. Lori Denning:	28:35	Opening up the mission field, say that conversion, that change, that become something different is so monumental, and I'm reading between the lines here, I want that for my people. I'm not going to make you do it, you have to feel this, you got to meet these guys and understand that conversion, that change. Wow, you go, well, wow, what happened to them, and how do I get that from me? And that's when we meet a whole group of people.
	29:01	Jump in a little bit farther into the story here, we know that there is a section where the missionaries go out, the brothers, and they start to teach. They have this free pass now, now you can go teach, and they start teaching. They raise up some more teachers, they have some other teachers that they teach, the gospel goes like wildfire. People are being converted and they're building churches and they're like, wow, it's working, it's working. Isn't this the dream of every missionary, formal missionary, is that you're going to have an impact. That's what happens to these people.
John Bytheway:	29:33	I have a literary nerd thing at the end of verse three, the list of commandments, "Convinced they were all brethren, they ought not to murder, nor to plunder, nor to steal, nor to commit adultery, nor to commit any manner of wickedness." That same list in that same order is in King Benjamin's speech. So where King Benjamin says, "Neither have I suffered that you should be confined in dungeons, nor that you should make slaves one of another, nor that you should murder, or plunder, or steal, or commit adultery, nor even have I suffered that you should commit any manner of wickedness." Same phrases, same order, and John Welch noticed that and I thought, oh, that's pretty cool, that King Benjamin's speech is still having an impact.
Prof. Lori Denning:	30:20	Yeah, resonating. Mosiah 2:13 is that reference. That's also called a literary motif, if you're going to go through these nerd words where you see a phrase or a symbol thing and it's going to follow through. You're going to find these patterns, or motifs, and if they get bigger, they become a theme. As they get bigger and bigger these patterns of repeating, repeating, repeating, you're supposed to carry them through. If you see those, especially when they're weird phrases, sometimes they're odd phrases and you're like, well, that's a weird phrase, you can trace it. That's a brilliant call out, way to go Brother Welch on that one.
Hank Smith:	30:52	We should have all the, what'd you call them? All the literary nerds, come on to YouTube and also tell us if you are a literary

		nerd. I refuse to join this gang. If you're a literary nerd, come on to YouTube.
Prof. Lori Denning:	31:05	You can join our gang, that's right.
Hank Smith:	31:06	Yeah, let Lori know, Lori and John, let them both know.
Prof. Lori Denning:	31:10	It's like music, the words and the way they're written, and how they just change you, is this beautiful tapestry in the words. And we always get into the history, and we get into the commandments, and those are fantastic, there's nothing wrong, I'm not trying to downplay that. But this other part of it is how we receive the scripture, and I'm like, it's embossed on my soul, these words and these conveyance. Thank you, Mormon, for putting together such a beautiful story that can change me. I don't even have to go outside the house, I can just read this story and become a better person. Yeah, the nerd words are rad, and don't be downtalking them. So you could be part of our club anyway.
John Bytheway:	31:50	Yeah, and what's cool, this is Mosiah 2:13, here we are in Alma 23:3, and it also shows up in Alma 30:10, and in Helaman 3:14, and in Helaman 6:23, and in Helaman 7:21, and in Ether 8:16, that same list in the same order.
Prof. Lori Denning:	32:10	A literary motif.
John Bytheway:	32:13	A motif grew into, what did you call it? A theme.
Prof. Lori Denning:	32:16	It's a pattern that just keeps going and going. You'll see mostly with words, you can also see with images. We're going to see some with their swords, their swords are going to be stained and their swords are going to be bright, you're going to see that motif.
Hank Smith:	32:27	Wow, the Book of Mormon is turning out to be quite a theme park.
Prof. Lori Denning:	32:33	That hurt my eyeball. My teeth hurt now after that one. All right, the church grows, fantastic. So even though it was so challenging, it begins to take root, and they begin to be converted.
	32:47	No matter where we are in our lives, and I want to point out something about these stories before we go any farther. While these stories tend to take formal missionaries, however they did it in Nephite times, they're called, they go out, they don't come

home for 14 years. We often look at these and we only look at them from a formal missionary story, I was on a two-year mission, I was on a service mission, I was a senior missionary. The gathering of Israel isn't just formal missionary work with a badge on your chest, it's so much broader. So if you get to these chapters and you're like, well, I didn't serve a mission, or my mission wasn't great, or I never had a chance, whatever it is, these stories are for all of us, because missionary work, think of it as the gathering of Israel, which is much broader.

- John Bytheway: 33:32 You say to your 11-year-old, "You need to gather Israel." "Huh?" But President Nelson, that's been a theme, but then he gave this wonderful statement where he talked about anytime you do anything that helps anyone on either side of the veil, like how he expanded it, take a step toward making covenants, even take a little bit closer than they were yesterday, you are helping to gather Israel. That was that talk Hope of Israel in 2018. Anybody can understand that, anytime you do anything that helps anyone on either side of the veil even get a little closer, you're helping to gather Israel. And I'm glad you said that, we have a lot of service missionaries, my parents-in-law are on a senior mission having the time of their lives, they're helping people get a step closer. As President Nelson said, they're gathering.
- Prof. Lori Denning: 34:25 I love that, a step closer. That's really powerful, because I don't think that many times in our lives are we actually on a formal mission, or we even have an opportunity to be on a formal mission. We can apply these stories to whatever we're working on in our corner of the kingdom, maybe it's the primary lesson this week, maybe it's raising a child, maybe it's being kind to our coworkers, which really hard. Or maybe it's a formal mission, it's all of gathering Israel.
- 34:49 This is huge, and these stories, we can apply them anywhere. Here we say, hey, we might've been in a really tough spot, and you can think, when was I in a really tough spot where I was trying to help others come unto Christ and it was really tough, they were spitting on me, or whatever your story is, and then things got a little better, or how do I get there? How do I get them converted? And then we can read about that in the very next verse. In verse six we start to learn what's going to happen. Let's do six and seven. Hank, will you read that for us?
- Hank Smith: 35:21 Sure. Alma 23:6-7, "And as sure as the Lord liveth, so sure as many as believed, or as many as were brought to the knowledge of the truth through the preaching of Ammon and his brethren according to the spirit of revelation and of prophecy, and the

power of God working miracles in them, yea I say unto you, as the Lord liveth, as many of the Lamanites as believed in their preaching, and were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away. For they became a righteous people. They did lay down their weapons of their rebellion that they did not fight against God anymore, neither against any of their brethren."

- Prof. Lori Denning: 35:58 Whoa, that would be the best missionary homecoming talk, we don't have those homecomings anymore, but that's what you would come, you're like, "Well, the people I converted never did fall away and they became a righteous people," and you're like, "Wow, where did you go? That sounds amazing." What a promise. Who's talking here? It could be Mormon, and I think it might be Alma. It's one of the narrators, he's like, I lifted this story, hey, who was the Book of Mormon for? Was it for the Nephites? No, it's for us. I've seen you, I know your workings, and I am writing this to you right now. This is your story. Maybe the people that need to be converted that never fall away are ourselves.
- Hank Smith: 36:44 Yeah, the reader.
- Prof. Lori Denning: 36:45 Whatever the application, he's saying here is an amazing, miraculous story where this conversion sunk deep into their hearts and changed them so radically they became something new. They became a new creature, as Paul says. They're risen in life to something new and they never go back, and I'm like, oh, I want that. How do I get that? And he's going to show us how they did it in the next few chapters.
- 37:15 Now, here is a great exercise, go through and write anytime you see the word converted, or any of the blessings of the conversion. Those are going to be the hints of what made this so successful.
- John Bytheway: 37:28 We talked about it last week, but I love that the object of conversion is always to the Lord. It's not converts to the church, Book of Mormon doesn't use that language, and here I'm seeing it four times on this page. For those of you using ancient page versions, I'm on page 267, I see converted unto the Lord in verse three, converted unto the Lord in verse six, converted unto the Lord in verse eight, and converted unto the Lord in verse 13. The object of our conversion is to the Lord, and Lori, you said they became, verse seven. It's not even what you do, it's what we're becoming, as President Oaks taught us.
- Prof. Lori Denning: 38:02 Powerful.

Hank Smith:	38:03	John, you've mentioned that a few times on our show, and it really has hit me hard, that if you never want to fall away, if you're saying in your heart of hearts I hope I never fall away, I think Mormon is giving you the recipe here. You have to be converted to the Lord. There's so many things we could be converted to, we could be converted to the doctrine, we could be converted to the temple, we could be converted to the social setting, sometimes people are converted to the missionary. Those aren't terrible things, but it seems that conversion to the Lord is what has staying power.
	38:40	Occasionally when I have a friend who leaves the church, good people, very good people, occasionally I'll get a resume of someone who's left the church, I served a mission, I went to BYU, I served in the bishopric, I was Relief Society president, I read every manual. I have yet to hear someone say, I came to know the Lord through the Book of Mormon, and even I fell away. These are not bad people in any way, but it seems the staying power is I came to know the Lord, I had my own experience with the Lord. Because once you have your own experience, a person with an experience is never at the mercy of a person with an opinion. Once you have an experience with the Lord, and then you have those over and over, continuing experiences, you become converted to him. You feel like Joseph Smith, I knew it, I knew that God knew it, I could not deny it.
John Bytheway:	39:44	Hank, I love that so much. I've heard you say it in a different way another time, that I have felt the power of Jesus Christ in my heart, or in my life. That's being converted unto the Lord, the object of my conversion is my eyes are on Christ. When that happens, you can see all sorts of ups and downs and imperfections in everything else going around. But your conversion isn't on those other things, your conversion is to the Lord, and the Book of Mormon is so consistent with that phrase. That's a powerful thing to me, that the Book of Mormon is very consistent, our conversion is unto the Lord.
Prof. Lori Denning:	40:20	Beautiful. I love as well what you said there about becoming, and how those feelings, we can't really take away those ideas. Alma says it in Alma 5 a way I just absolutely love, he says, "Have you felt to sing the song of redeeming love?" And you think, oh, I remember those times, and maybe you think of those times. And then he says, "And can you feel so now?" And I always think that's a clue, I remember those experiences.
	40:47	Can I share a story? I had lived out of state, and then I'd moved to a different state, and when I got to that new state, I didn't really get attached to a ward. I didn't even know what ward I

was in, and I didn't know what time we met. It was before, this is how old I am, it was before the, you can log on and find a chapel on the website. It was easy to not go for quite a few months. I was living in northern California at the time. And finally one day I was like, I'd like to go to church. I figured out and I go to the ward. I'm sitting in the back, right? Because I'm like, I'm the heathen who hasn't been here, I'm sure my records have been here for a while, and I haven't been to church for a while. It wasn't like I was rebellious or something.

41:26 And I sat in the very back on that row, there's the big gap, so you're just like, I can flee at any moment if it just gets boring, or whatever. I don't know anybody, I'm sitting in the carpeted room that looks so familiar. I just don't feel at place. We get to the sacrament hymn, we sing In Humility, I feel the power of the Savior. All those feelings that I had had, and I still now sing that hymn with that feeling comes back of like, hey, you belong here. And I just remember singing, and I'm a terrible singer, and I'm singing in the back. And you know you don't really belt out the sacrament hymns, I was like, I remember, how did I forget this? Why did I think I didn't belong?

42:09 Even today, In Humility, it's my favorite sacrament hymn, because it teaches me of the Savior and that feeling of him welcoming me. Also, just because it tied back to all those feelings that I had built of the song of redeeming love from before, my conversion from before.

John Bytheway: 42:27 Isn't that a great question? He asks, you felt this, it made you want to sing, can you feel so now? It's a good gut check for all of us who are like, yeah, I was a little more fired up back in this time in my past, I need that fired up feeling again and think celestial and get on the covenant path, and it's such a good question, isn't it?

Prof. Lori Denning: 42:47 It's a good question, and one that I think we can always go back to. Link enough of those together and it's bright again.

John Bytheway: 42:53 "They became a righteous people," verse seven. They became, I love it.

Prof. Lori Denning: 42:58 They had to work at it though, right? That become makes me feel like there's something involved.

John Bytheway: 43:02 Yeah, we don't know how long that took.

Prof. Lori Denning:	43:04	There was something beautiful, beautiful. And it changes them. And this is part of the story that we know so well, that it talks about these, they're these seven cities. They're more than that, actually, before. It's a little poem in this next section, then it talks about the seven cities. The people, some of the people, not the whole city, but some of the people are converted, and it lists seven, which is literary. And there are a couple more cities earlier that it lists and it's like, well, maybe they didn't have people converted, but my guess is it's trying to remind us of that seven perfection, God's hand in it, that they were-
John Bytheway:	43:35	Fullness.
Prof. Lori Denning:	43:36	Fullness, they were fully converted. There's the idea again, fully converted right there. They go through and they tell us that they were converted unto the Lord, and then in verse 13, this most miraculous result of what happens to these people when they become fully converted to the Lord. Would you read that for us, John, 23:13.
John Bytheway:	43:57	"And these are the names of the cities of the Lamanites which were converted unto the Lord, and these are they that laid down the weapons of their rebellion, yea all their weapons of war, and they were all Lamanites."
Prof. Lori Denning:	44:11	What? There's a reference here in 26 about how when the brothers are going to go, and they say, "We're going to go do a mission," and they're like, "Hey, we want to go teach the Lamanites," and the Nephites, their family and friends, this is their response to that really great idea.
John Bytheway:	44:25	Alma 26:25, "And moreover they did say, let us take up arms against them that we destroy them and their iniquity out of the land, lest they overrun us and destroy us."
Prof. Lori Denning:	44:36	Well, it's not going to be a good mission. You would be more successful to go kill them. Those people are never going to be converted, never be converted. Then you go, oh, wait a minute, we go back to this story, and they are so converted that they are like, "We're going to set down our weapons." Our weapons, the thing that defined us. It's like our superpower skill that we have been developing for years and years, and we are willing to say that was wrong and we are going to bury our weapons.
	45:06	I love that. That change, I can't think of a lot of stories that have fundamentally changed someone so much that they took what defined them and gave it up. This is amazing, which gives me

hope that if they can change, so can I. The Lord can change me. Even the darkest corners, the places I hope no one finds about my worst habits, my worst thoughts, my worst behaviors, I can become righteous. If he could do it to them, he can do it to me.

- Hank Smith: 45:44 I'm sure both of you have heard this little Abraham Lincoln story. I don't know if it's true, it's on the internet so it must be true, right?
- John Bytheway: 45:52 Have you seen that thing on the internet that says, "Don't believe everything you see on the internet? -Abraham Lincoln".
- Hank Smith: 45:59 That was a good quote of his, I think that was in the Gettysburg Address.
- John Bytheway: 46:03 Yeah, four score and dot, dot, dot.
- Hank Smith: 46:06 It says that an older woman rebuked Lincoln for his conciliatory attitude towards the south. She felt that they should be destroyed after the Civil War, and Abraham Lincoln replied, "Madam, do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?" It kind of fits with what you were saying there, Lori, some people wanted them destroyed. They did, in theory, get rid of the Lamanites because they're no longer Lamanites.
- John Bytheway: 46:35 No longer enemies.
- Prof. Lori Denning: 46:37 Yeah, they become counted among the Nephites. Such a powerful story. I've often heard this story as we apply it as we're always looking at ourselves as the Nephites. And that point of view that we talked about at the beginning when we say, we're like the Nephites and we're the good guys. And then sometimes you're one of the missionaries, even though they're also converted, you're the good guys. I think the story is extra powerful when we look at it from those who were converted, whether they were Lamanites, or Lamoni, or Anti-Nephi-Lehi, the king, or the people, you think, you know what? That's my story, I have been converted, and what am I willing to do? And they spend so much time, we spend chapters learning about these people and hearing their voices and getting to know them, and I think, that's my story. I think I have a lot more in common sometimes with these people who have messed up and aren't really super successful than the ones who were awesomely successful.
- 47:32 If you think about the book of Alma and Mosiah, it's like 99% about people who screwed up and the Lord forgave and saved

them, from Alma the Younger, to the sons of Mosiah, to the Anti-Nephi-Lehis, Zeezrom, they're these people that rebound. I have an inkling, a little clue, that Mormon's like, hey, this story is your story. You're not a Nephite, Lori, you're a little bit like these converts, learning to become converted unto the Lord. Yeah, so pretty cool. But I definitely have some foibles, I'm still becoming, I'm still converting to the Lord.

Hank Smith: 48:09 We all, Lori, at one point in our lives we're all converted, whether it be a missionary comes into our life and we're a convert, as you might say, or we were born and raised in the church, but we still need to become a convert, and there are still things that you and I need to give up. What did you say? It's their identity, is that what you said? Their weapons represent who they are.

Prof. Lori Denning: 48:36 I feel like it is. If you think about it, these people are almost like professional warriors. They're like ninja warrior people. Some have theorized too that this was part of human sacrifice, it was part of their behavior. But whatever it was, their warring behavior and these murders that they say they committed, it was who they were so much to the core that they were like, wow, we have to give that up to become something new. I don't know how often that happens at this scale as far as the scope, how big it is in our lives, that we have to kind of redefine ourselves so completely that we have to walk away from everything that they were, or we were, we have to give up that portion of our identity for a new one. They changed their name.

49:20 Let's go on in the story, let's find out what they do next. It's certainly not something everybody has to do, but it's something that these guys decided to coincide with this change. The brothers go, raise up more teachers and priests and they do more teaching, and the church catches on, we read about these seven cities, and then wow, there's this whole group of people that have now joined the Lord and have been converted. And then they go, hey, as part of this conversion we got to change, we got to change something big about ourselves, and that's where we pick up the story.

49:50 Since we've been talking about different styles of writing there's this narrative that we've been doing, story, story, story, and some dialogue, there is a speech in 24:7-16, is a speech. We call that rhetoric. Those styles are different, so we have King Benjamin's speech, and this is King Anti-Nephi-Lehi. Such a catchy name that they've chosen here. He gives a speech to his people, a great way to study is to go and look at these different speeches and see their patterns and what happens with them.

King Benjamin has a speech, this is one of the most brilliant speeches I've ever seen, Samuel Lamanite has quite the speech, and then Third Nephi has a speech to the people. Captain Moroni, with his title of liberty, he gives an impromptu speech.

50:36 So you see these times when speeches come up, and they are brilliant, and they have their own cadence and their own style. Anti-Nephi-Lehi is doing the same thing with his people, we need to change, and he calls them to continue to make this change. Before we hear about his speech though, let's talk about they decide to change their name. Is that common, weird, strange? Remind us of anything you guys? Are there other examples of people in the scriptures changing their names?

Hank Smith: 51:10 Happens frequently.

Prof. Lori Denning: 51:11 It does, doesn't it, Hank? It's remarkably common. Why do we do that? Why are people changing their names? What about that coincides with this spiritual change that they've had?

John Bytheway: 51:23 Yeah, it's like a new start, a new identity.

Prof. Lori Denning: 51:27 Oh, new identity. It's about a change in our identity. When you get married a lot of times you'll change your name. When we take upon us the name of Christ, we become Christian, we become his sons and daughters. We take on a new identity. Oh, that's powerful, John, I love that.

John Bytheway: 51:45 We all love that verse of Fourth Nephi, "There were no more Lamanites and Nephites, they were the children of Christ," and it's this higher unifying identity that, it was President Nelson recently with the YSAs. We've said it a dozen times, right, Hank? You are a child of God, a child of the covenant, a disciple of Christ. That's how we introduced you, Lori, a disciple of Christ.

Prof. Lori Denning: 52:08 I hope so.

John Bytheway: 52:09 My dad had a wood shop and he could fix anything, and he worked on our cars every Saturday, and in the wood shop. And for years I thought my name was Intheway, because he always told me, "You're in the way, you're in the way." And then later I learned it was Bytheway, I thought, oh okay, I used to be in the way.

Hank Smith: 52:18 Used to be in the way.

Prof. Lori Denning:	52:18	The jokes aside, the people come and they say, "We have so radically changed. We've changed our identities, who we are, how we see ourselves, that we want to change our names." They meet with Ammon and it says, "And their priest." This is a spiritual thing. And they say, "What should we go by?" And then they come up with this in 23:17, "And it came to pass that they called their names Anti-Nephi-Lehies, and they were called by this name and they were no more called Lamanites." We don't want to associate with that.
	52:59	Lots of theories of what this means, if we said anti it would be like against Nephi-Lehi. In Egyptian the letters seem to be of, or bi, or something one of. Yeah, so something like they have very much Egyptian or none, something like of Nephi and Lehi. But I love they're going back to that original family, they're not Lamanites, it's a mouthful, I'm guessing in whatever language they spoke it was better, but maybe not.
	53:23	And then later the Nephites call them the people of Ammon. And I love that the King, Lamoni's brother, changes his name to the same thing, like his regal name, his covenant name. This is such a big difference, and I wonder how often we take those identities that we're given, daughter of God, child of Christ, member of the church, or our first names, our last names, member of the kingdom and say, that's my identity. My identity isn't what I do or my desires or what I ate this week or what football team I like, my fundamental identity is this, is my spiritual recognition to the Lord. Maybe I'll start signing my paychecks with that, Lori Denning, Disciple of Christ.
John Bytheway:	54:07	And when we take upon us the name of Christ, that's what we're representing. And I did some reading up on the Anti-Nephi-Lehi thing, and you're right, the Egyptian N-T-Y means he of, or the one of. It helped my students a lot, and me too, because I thought anti sounds like against, but how many names in the Book of Mormon are anti? Antiparah, Antiomno, the Mount Antipas. So Antiomno isn't I'm against those Omnos, that's a name, it's a proper name. So Anti-Nephi-Lehi, I think anti maybe is a name, that helps me to see, especially if that Egyptian interpretation is true, we are one of Lehi and Nephi.
Prof. Lori Denning:	54:48	Oh that's beautiful.
Hank Smith:	54:49	Taylor Halverson pointed out to me that remember one is a description, antichrist, it's not a name, one is an actual name, Anti-Nephi-Lehi.
John Bytheway:	55:02	Like Antiparah or Antipas.

Prof. Lori Denning:	55:04	Yeah, they have a lot of those, like Grace, Patience. There were a lot of virtues there for a while in the 1600s and 1700s, so their names were Thankful, Patience, Humility. I think those would always be really great wrestling names, is like Puffy Pants Denning or something, and you're like, sounds really tough, but it's goofy.
Hank Smith:	55:24	Puffy Pants Denning.
Prof. Lori Denning:	55:26	Flower Child Lori, and then you're like a tough guy.
Hank Smith:	55:29	So when you say thankful, it could be a description, but it also can be a proper name, and they're different things.
Prof. Lori Denning:	55:36	I love that.
Prof. Lori Denning:	55:37	My twin and I are adopted, and so we were given names at birth and then my parents when they adopted us, gave us new names. They pondered Stacey and Tracy. I'm glad they went with Lori and Lisa. There are lots of different names and then on my mission I was Hermana Denning. We just have different titles and I think about how those identities change and are given to us by different people where we take on the name of Christ. That's that ultimate definition of who we are.
	56:03	Like you said, John, it just brings us up a level. We're not Lamanites and Lemuelites, but we are children of Christ and that helps me understand what they were doing. They were trying to change who they were, name that reflected how they felt and what they had become as they became converted to the Lord. And so maybe if you did have to come up with your own name or just as an idea, I think it's a great thought exercise is to say, "Outside of being a child of Christ or a disciple of Christ, what name would you hope to give yourself?"
	56:33	Would you be Thankful Lori? Would you be Patient Hank? What would you be, Son of Thunder John? What nickname or identity are you hoping to be known by? Because these people picked something really strong and particular to them and they were so strong about it they said they were no more called Lamanites. They completely abandoned that definition of themselves because it didn't reflect who they were. That's how different this conversion was for them. How poignant joining the gospel of Jesus Christ was.
	57:05	The next thing then is the New King, Anti-Nephi-Lehi, he takes on that name and he gives the speech. After he gives a speech.

They're like, "You guys, we need to take a vow. We need to make a covenant that will keep us from falling back on these old behaviors." And the behavior and the issue or identity that they wanted to distance themselves from is war, they say murders.

John Bytheway: 57:28

Yeah. In verse 17 it says, "They took their swords and all the weapons which were used for the shedding of man's blood and they did bury them up deep in the earth. And this they did it being in their view, a testimony to God and also to men that they never would use weapons again for the shedding of man's blood, and this they did vouching and covenanting with God that rather than shed the blood of their brethren, they would give up their own lives. And rather than take away from a brother, they would give unto him, and rather than spend their days in idleness, they would labor abundantly with their hands."

Prof. Lori Denning: 58:02

There are a couple of things that just jumped out at me. Just little phrase in verse 18. In their view, a testimony, this was something that they didn't have to do. This was so important to them that they wanted to say this was a witness. This was a testimony of that conversion to God, but also to men. We are different. They're going to take their swords. I brought a sword today, this was the first sword I brought home from Spain from my mission. It was kind of tiny actually. It's called the Colander. I'm not sure. They had this kind of sword, right? They might've had an obsidian sword, but their weapons were so important to them that they were going to get rid of them so far that they couldn't go get them. They didn't keep them in the closet or sell them at the swap meet. They bury them.

58:51

They bury them, and I'm like, wow, what if though they have to go to war? What if something bad happens? These are like ninjas. This is their special skill. Maybe they could use it for good. And they're like, "No. No matter what happens, we will never do it again." And we're going to see over and over again where they're going to be tested immediately.

Hank Smith: 59:14

Lori, I see in this chapter that word deep, "They did bury them deep in the earth." I see it again 16 and 17. I have written in my scriptures here that part of repentance is trying or making it so that your sins are inaccessible. Here comes this war and they're like, "You know what? Forget about our promise. Let's get our weapons. Where are they?" "Oh, they're 30 feet down." My sin is inaccessible. They didn't hang the weapons on the wall and go, "We'll never use those again." Even if I am tempted, it's not available to me.

	59:51	I've had college students who struggled on their phone, whether with pornography or time-wasting, so they went and got a flip phone. They turned in their smartphone and got a flip phone and temptation is reduced quite a bit because it's not available. I buried it deep in the earth and people would ask them, "Hey, why'd you get a flip phone?" And they'll say, "I'm just trying to manage my time."
Prof. Lori Denning:	1:00:15	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	1:00:17	It's maybe not a weapon of war, I guess a phone can be a weapon of war, but I like the idea of they buried them deep in the earth.
Prof. Lori Denning:	1:00:25	Can I share a story about when I had to make a change like this? I don't come out looking great on these stories, just by the way. But before I served a formal mission in Spain, I was on the debate team, the speech and debate team. I had learned to argue and to use words and language, and I was good at it. I competed in college and got gold medals. And then when I got to Spain, I had always loved the scriptures. I remember them pretty well, and I was pretty good at Spanish. I'm like, "I've got these gifts that the Lord has given me so that I think I can teach." I started to get a little bit prideful.
	1:01:05	There was another group of people in our community from another religion that also proselyte. We started to talk to them. They would run into them all the time and they would talk to us, and at first it was just easy. Well, we started to debate a little. We used to call it bible bashing, and they told us, "Don't do it." And I was like, "Oh, well, I'm not doing it. I'm just talking."
	1:01:25	And then I started to get prouder and prouder of my debate skills and my Bible bashing so much so that I had notes, I started taking notes and practicing at home, even got some of their pamphlets and documents and I would mark them up and I was spending a lot of time, my free time in the evening, preparing for these Bible bashes on the corner. I thought, "I am defending the church. I'm doing this good thing."
	1:01:51	One day we meet down on this corner. It was a big plaza. There are some basically sister missionaries for this other Faith Community. We're out on a literal street corner in Europe and I've got my name badge on and I'm wearing my skirt and the whole thing, and I've got my scriptures and we're arguing and I'm like flipping, there's even times when I'm pounding with my finger into the scriptures. "That's not what that says." And then you're like, "This is what it says."

- 1:02:15 And they're like, flip, flip, flip, flip, flip. And I'm going and going and I'm like, "Man, I am debating. I'm navigating. Oh, I am winning every argument." Goes on for quite a while. I just remember looking down at my scriptures. I was so intense on these points I was making. In the meantime, the elders had shown up on the square because that's where we usually made street contacts that morning and they see what's going on, so they come over. I was so engrossed in the conversation that I didn't even know they were there. And I suddenly feel this insistent poke on my outside shoulder, poke, poke, poke. Then I say in Spanish, "Como? What? What?" And it's the Elder. And he says in English, "Hermana, Sister. She's crying."
- 1:02:58 And I look up and I see the woman, of the two women I'm talking to, just looking down and tears are just streaming down her face. And instantly I realized what I had done. I had taken my special gifts and I had weaponized them, and I had made someone else feel terrible. Come to find out she was a brand new convert to that religion, and she was so excited to go out and share about the gospel of Jesus Christ that she came over to just talk about it, and I lay into her.
- 1:03:41 As I realize and the guilt washes over me in just a second, I remembered kind of even tilting my shirt back like that name badge, I can't even represent him in this moment. How have I done this? All those skills that the Lord had blessed me with, I had used for bad, for evil, and I had taken someone's testimony of the Savior and shattered it.
- 1:04:06 I got home that night. "How did I do this? They told us not to do this. They said it never brings the spirit. It's never a good idea." Took all my notes and I took the pamphlets and we lived in a high rise apartment so I couldn't bury them deep, but I had a little pot and I took it out to our little balcony that's like one foot wide, and I burned them. I was like, "I am never going to do that again. I will never use those talents that the Lord has blessed me with to tear down someone's testimony of the Savior or their faith in God or anything like that."
- 1:04:41 Now, I have been tempted. There have been times social media love me that you're like, "Oh, I can answer that." Or someone's attacking the church that I would love to wade in, but I remember the vow that I made as I repented, "I will never do this again. I will never weaponize the skills and blessings that I've been given to tear down another soul."
- 1:05:09 This story really resonates with me. This is my story. This is what I did, and I'm not able to ever go back and find that woman or

talk to her. But I hope that I've used my skills for good and to build the kingdom rather than tear down someone else. When I look at these stories again, I'm not always Ammon. I'm not always Alma. I'm the person that has a weapon of war. Someone that brings contention, or a failing or, something that is harmful to myself or others, and I need to bury it deep.

1:05:46 I need to covenant that I'm not going to do that anymore and change. And the good news is through the Savior, I can become fully converted. I can change my very identity and I can become something new. Now, I'm a teacher of the gospel instead of a basher of others. And so he has made my weapons bright. Instead of being stained, they've become skills that I hope to continue to use.

Hank Smith: 1:06:15 It reminds me of Luke chapter nine, when there's a Samaritan village that refuses to let the Savior stay there and James and John turn to Jesus and say, "Hey, Let's command fire to consume them." Jesus gets upset, but he doesn't get upset at the Samaritan village and he says to James and John, "You know not what manner spirit you are of." It says simply, "They went to another village. Let it go."

Prof. Lori Denning: 1:06:45 We live in a society that's so easy to find contention. My social media feed finds negative things far more than it wants to highlight positive, right? It wants to get a reaction and a rise out of you. Pokes, and pokes, and pokes at all your weaknesses and builds and tells us, "Go after those things." And that's righteous, and you can beat people up online or do all these terrible things, and it's so easy to fall into.

1:07:09 And here Mormon has selected the scripture to say, "You can change too." There's great hope that these people that were, "We should go to war." "You'll have more luck with them if you had killed them." As the Nephites say, and then they're like the best ones, they're the best people. And you're like, "There's hope for me too." And that's the power of the atonement of Jesus Christ, that I can become a new creature.

1:07:33 I take on his name. I'm not the Lori that fought on that street corner. I'm Disciple Lori. I'm somebody new, and that is exciting. I can take that experience and say, "Don't do it again. Remember how you feel." But I am not that person. I'm positive I have never done that again. I've buried that deep. It's unlike swords. It's right here at the tip of my tongue, pardon the pun. I can't wait to debate. I can't wait to use it again.

1:08:00

I have to be really cautious. But I think these stories are for us and they tell us about how the Savior can change us and He can change our identity and our very Spirits as we become converted to Him, and that gives me great joy.



- John Bytheway: 00:01 Welcome to part two with Professor Lori Denning, Alma 23 through 29. I love what you both said, Hank. Thanks for pointing out deep in the earth. There's things that are so accessible in the latter days. I took a class at BYU called How to Get Published, and I wrote some articles for the New Era and some of them got published and one of them was about a pornographic magazine in the gutter when I was walking home from school. I stepped right over it, went, "What is that?" And then I realized and I went home, but for two weeks I knew that magazine was there and I still had to go to school every day and eventually it got cleaned up. I've shared this with some of my friends and students and I've told them that was my one encounter with pornography as a teenager because I grew up in a different time.
- 00:56 You talked about accessible, Hank, isn't it crazy? But I'd love to encourage them to say Heavenly Father knew the world he sent you to in 2024 and he knows you can do this. There are other things that are so accessible to our scriptures and our general conferences and everything else to help us to be strong in those hard moments because that was a different world. I mean, can you even imagine how different it is now for our young people growing up? If they have a phone, they have the whole world. They call it windows. They used to call it windows, and there's windows you should never look in that you can open now. Crazy times, but you can do it.
- Prof. Lori Denning: 01:36 You can do it. I love the symbol of them doing the physical token, the action of making that sign and that token of the covenant of burying their swords. I remember my sister-in-law, when she had little kids at the time, they were starting to use bad words at one point. She used this story and they wrote the bad words on pieces of paper and then they went on in the garden and they dead and buried them and they couldn't use them anymore, and I was like, "That's so cute." I'm like, "Maybe I should bury some words." Right? Maybe I can do something like this. But it's a great analogy.

	02:08	If we go back to the thing we learned in the beginning how stories affect our lives, we can replay this story and become stronger in our own covenants and our own changes by living through this story of the Anti-Nephi-Lehis and what they did, how they became fully converted to the Lord. If you're ever struggling, earmark this one. This is an amazing story of bravery and conversion and change. I want to meet them someday and shake their hand and say, "Thank you for stepping up and being such a good example of Christ. Wow!"
John Bytheway:	02:43	And Mormon doesn't say, "So you should do this." But it causes us to internally say, "Is there anything I need to go bury?" We hear the story and it's so powerful that we think, "What do I need to do?" Because like you said, Lori, "Maybe this is my story. What do I need to go bury deep in the earth?"
Prof. Lori Denning:	03:03	I bet you that every one of us who's listening today is thinking of something that they should bury. We might not want to look at it directly, but I bet every one of us is thinking about something that we're like, "I really need to bury that. That is my weapon of war. I need to get it become bright and remove the stain by coming through to bury it." Do it. What's holding us back? That's what the story's about. Go change and they are so happy when they're done that this story is about the joy that they feel from the change, not the suffering for how hard it is to make the change. I mean, that's the challenge. If you're thinking about it, go do it, quick.
Hank Smith:	03:40	I have students, I'll say, "How many of you have ever deleted an app because it was too tempting, took too much of your time?" Almost all of them will raise their hand and I'll say, "How many of you redownload that app?" And the most of them raise their hand and then I quote Peter, I think it's Peter, who said, "We return to our sins like a dog to its vomit."
Prof. Lori Denning:	04:04	I hope we feel the hope that they feel, the joy that they feel, the level of conversion to the Lord that they feel, so much so that the next story happens in which they are tempted sorely. The Lamanites of the area hear about all this and they are going to go kill them, so they march out to war. These stories, they evolve and we get deeper and deeper into them because this is real life. That isn't just, "I was converted and I never made a change again and poof I was done." Instead, they have to change who they are, they change their name, they take on this covenant, they bury their weapons as a covenant. Then, they are sorely tempted. People are coming to kill them. This isn't coming to chat with them or make them feel bad. They are

coming to kill them, and do you guys remember what they do in Verse 21?

- John Bytheway: 04:54 Alma 24:21. Now, when the people saw that they were coming against them, they went out to meet them and prostrated themselves before them to the earth and began to call on the name of the Lord and thus they were in this attitude when the Lamanites began to fall upon them and begin to slay them with the sword.
- Prof. Lori Denning: 05:14 There's something really shocking about this to me when I read this, that they leave their homes. They don't hunker down, they go out to meet them as a people. I'm not sure why they're doing that. I wonder if it's to protect their families to limit it or face it head on. "If this is what's going to happen, we're going to go out there and face it."
- 05:39 This is one of the bravest things I have ever heard about any people ever. I am so moved by this testimony. They saw they were coming and they went out to meet them and they called upon the Lord, I cannot imagine. I can't imagine. Who are these people? What kind of change has to have happened that you're willing to do this? Instead of saying, "Well, I can defend myself, surely. I mean, the Lord's not going to... Nope, I made a covenant and I won't do it."
- John Bytheway: 06:15 It's unusual. I don't think it's telling us that we should all do that, necessarily. This was in their view what they should do. We read in Verse 22, they did slay 1,005 of them. The thought that comes to mind is that famous statement of [President Spencer W. Kimball](#). "There is no tragedy in death, only in sin." We know they're blessed for they have gone to dwell with their God, but yeah, it is a knock you against the wall type of a story.
- Prof. Lori Denning: 06:45 Yeah, and I know in our modern times there were people that were followers of Gandhi in India that did the same thing, that they were so committed to this idea of not taking life or hurting others, that they go out in a group and get mowed down. We have people that are so devoted to their ideals. I think the story is in here to say that yes, this isn't necessarily a prescription for what we should all do, necessarily. We see that certainly they do other things in just a few chapters, but it is saying that when we take on covenants, this is the level of conversion and hope that we can have. This is the level of change that the Lord can make in us, and the story becomes beautiful.
- 07:29 They're killed, but then the Lamanites that are killing them, they're like, "What? These guys aren't even fighting back." They

stop. And then those people become converted. The more people become converted of the warriors than those that had died. Now, of course the deaths are tragic. We're not trying to downplay that. Their heroics and their commitment changed people and then generations of people, generations, and that's what our covenants and our commitments to the Lord can do. It's an amazing story. If I had a nickname, I would want to be called one of the people of Ammon.

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| Hank Smith: | 08:10 | Especially Lori, when you do what you told us to do, which is behold, see this, don't look away, see this story. If you'll just sit in this chapter for a minute, it can overcome you. Occasionally, I get to talk to a brand new convert, someone who's just been baptized and they're so excited and sometimes I've shown them that Mormon wrote a portion of his book for them and I will look at the Anti-Nephi-Lehis, say, "Look how wonderful things are. They've made new covenants, but then things get hard. Old friends and family might be really angry and they might come after you." And that can help prepare someone who has made a new covenant to change that difficulty is coming. Moses Chapter 1, you've had this awesome experience, Satan's going to come after you. |
| Prof. Lori Denning: | 09:06 | At the very end here, after this whole story, listen to this amazing story of conversion being fully converted to the Lord, having hope in Christ and this joy that they feel and the change that they can make. And then there's this underscoring, right? That we just read about the people who had fallen away that had known the truth and were not fully converted, that they left and they just become embittered and so terrible and Mormon wants to give us a "Thus We See." He wants to underscore it and highlight it and tell us cautionary tale. This story is for you in 2024, everywhere in the world. This is one of the things you want to be really cautious about, so he puts it in here on purpose to highlight. Let's read what that caution is. |
| John Bytheway: | 09:50 | This is Alma 24 Verse 30, and thus we can plainly discern that after a people have been once enlightened by the spirit of God and have had great knowledge of things pertaining to righteousness and then have fallen away into sin and transgression, they become more hardened and thus their state becomes worse than though they had never known these things. |
| Prof. Lori Denning: | 10:12 | Caution. If you've had that spirit of the Lord, keep it close, keep it close, but the whole chapters before were practices of how not to let that happen. We can let our weapons be stained again and we can fall. He's cautioning us. |

Hank Smith:	10:27	I see, Lori, a theme in the Book of Mormon. You told us to watch for themes. A theme in the Book of Mormon of the enemies of the Nephites are not usually Lamanites, it's former Nephite. They have a hatred towards the Nephites much more it seems than the Lamanites do. Do you both see that?
Prof. Lori Denning:	10:52	Oh, for sure. It definitely seems like the people that are closest to them are the ones that are the toughest. They really have a hard time. They don't just walk away. They cannot let it go.
John Bytheway:	11:05	We see that in church history too. Who caused the most problems for Joseph Smith? Was it people who weren't a part of the church or people who at one time were a part of the church?
Prof. Lori Denning:	11:15	Yeah. I often think about the stories of the individuals though who were really causing some of the most problems. Alma, Aaron, Ammon, Omner, Himni, they are the ones that were causing problems. Now, how much they knew and how much they'd fallen away. They're not quite like the order of Nehor, but they weren't good. They were definitely not trending neutral, and yet they're these people that make these changes.
	11:42	Mormon keeps trying to emphasize that the theme that you say, "Yeah, you don't want to fall away, here's how you become converted, but good news, when you do stumble, look at the good that you can do like Aaron or Alma or these people of Ammon." They become so converted that they are heroes of these stories and they change entire generations, so much so that none ever fell away. You're right about the theme and I think it's because a theme for our day. It's a theme for us.
	12:12	If I went back to a story I began with about volleyball, it wasn't a very serious story. It was serious to me then, but remember, I had to choose which side was I going to choose. Now, I was a pretty arrogant kid in my sporting history, but I was so chagrined, but what my coach had told me, "You can show up tomorrow and have a better attitude and play on the JV or don't come back at all." And it shook me up. I came back and I played. We were undefeated as a JV team and we had super fun and we made all these calls and these plays and we shared the gym with the varsity and I would look over across the gym and they were miserable. All they did, I swear, was laps because they were terrible and they lost every game and the coach was always yelling at them, and my little dear friends never hardly played because they were the bench warmers.

	13:03	And instead, because I chose to change my attitude and I had a coach that loved me and said, "Hey, you need to figure this out and I'm going to give you one chance." That I could be changed. Not quite like a conversion story. And yet there are times in our lives like these stories where we get face-to-face with our foibles and our flaws and we say, "Well, you got one more chance. When you come back. You need to do it the right way." So it worked out, and I had a really great JV league and I never played volleyball again, but I was not a naturally born volleyball player, so it wasn't a big deal. My professional volleyball skills were not at risk because of that JV year.
John Bytheway:	13:44	See, I want people to love me like that. Now, maybe there's a weaker kind of love, "Oh, I just love you." But for somebody to say, "You could be so much better."
Prof. Lori Denning:	13:56	Yeah.
John Bytheway:	13:57	That's the kind of love that I hope I will have in my life is people are willing to call me on things.
Prof. Lori Denning:	14:04	Great, so now we're headed out into a completely different kind of style of the chapters 26 and chapter 29, and that's more poetry, sometimes a little bit of a dialogue. These are stories and we've talked about how influential they are, and yet shockingly, we're back to basically, I'll just call them poems for the most part. So we're going to find the missionaries are recounting their experiences. Chapter 26 and 29.
	14:27	Let me start with a little occurrence that I had because this is shocking that I'm going to talk about poetry, which has become maybe my all time love and scripture. When I was in college the first time, I was not a superb student and I was in a Spanish literature class, so I'd returned from my mission. I went to University of Utah, and since I had learned Spanish, so many missionaries, at least take that section of my requirements out. But because you already had done the language, like learn the language, you're taking literature classes, you're reading books and poems and things just like you would in English class. You're just doing it Spanish.
	15:02	So I'm in a Spanish literature class to finish up these requirements, and my professor, who at the time was a TA, so we called him by his first name. I will always remember his name was David. Sorry, David and I hated poetry. I would be like, "Ugh, I just like stories. I don't get poetry. I certainly don't get Spanish poetry." It was that much more complicated. Even in class, I'll always remember one day he says, "So we're going

to do poetry even though Lori hates it." And I'm like, "Calls me out." I must have just complained about poetry and now, oh, to my everlasting, I love poetry and it's because I love music. I love the emotional connection we get with text.

15:42 We think of poetry like in English, it has to have rhyme, right? And it's usually the verses are all cut in. You can tell they're not chapter and verse, not like a paragraph anymore, they're offset. If you get something like the [Grant Hardy Oxford edition](#) of the Book of Mormon, he's offset some. [Donald Perry](#), Dr. Perry at BYU has an online where he has outlined the entire Book of Mormon, by the way, and it's free and you can go get the download of his work where he has taken it and redone it.

16:12 I like to take these when I find that there's a poem, I'm going to tell you how to discover them, and I just do them myself, but poems usually are different. They're like good German bread, they're heavy, they're dense, they're nutritious, but you got to kind of chew on them for a while and that's exactly what happens with a poem. You can't blow through it, but it's something you're going to sit with and you're going to meditate on or you're going to have to really think about it.

16:38 They're usually short, especially Hebrew style poetry. Ancient Semitic poetry is short and it's characterized by short little sentences of short syllables. Every word is usually impactful. Additionally, the ideas that are in there, they don't rhyme the way that we rhyme in English, they rhyme in ideas. They'll take an idea and they'll repeat it and repeat it and repeat it, work through it rather than rhyme. They're dense, they're short, and they usually have kind of what we call parallel.

Hank Smith: 17:10 Heavy, dense and short. I think I was called all of those things in High School.

Prof. Lori Denning: 17:16 If I think of poetry, I think of its impact and the place that I'm really impactful is song. There are some of our most powerful connections to things are when we are singing, and that's the form of a song is a poem. The most powerful emotional events, falling in love, having a child, losing your job, if you're in a country song, wrecking your truck. They're these most powerful things. Every time I say song, think poem and every time I sing poem, think song.

17:48 One of the things that's hard to sometimes express is spiritual experience or an emotion like love or feel the song of redeeming love. You're trying to talk about redemption.

Hank Smith:	17:59	I have difficulty formally bearing my testimony because I don't feel like there's words. When you say, "Oh, I think the gospel's amazing." Well, I thought that movie was amazing and they're not the same thing. Joseph Smith said that, "The prison of language can't express how I really feel." And then I was reading the Book of Revelation. We were studying in a class I was teaching, the Book of Revelation, and I saw how John uses symbols to teach like apocalyptic literature. I joined the nerdy club, used it.
Prof. Lori Denning:	18:37	You did, you just did. You used a genre name right there. Good work.
Hank Smith:	18:41	I tried to think of a way to express it in symbols, and I think I did. I said, "Have you ever been hiking and you come across a view that for a split second takes your breath away? Or, have you ever been holding a baby and the baby looks at you with those pure eyes, for a second, you're filled with some overwhelming love? Take all of those moments. Take all of those moments that you'll ever have in your life and combine them into a single feeling and that comes close to how I feel about the Lord, his resurrection, and the restoration, so difficult to put into words."
Prof. Lori Denning:	19:27	No, it was a perfect example because you're exactly trying to take something that's complex and deep and personal and make it solid and defined and you kind of can't. That's when you find poetry being used.
John Bytheway:	19:41	Noticing the words that Ammon says, "I cannot say the smallest part of which I feel." At the end of Verse 16, the words fail me. Right after my first child, my oldest daughter, Ashley was born, they took her. I can't even remember why now, but they didn't come back for four hours. When they handed her to me, the nurse said, "She's not very happy with us right now." And this little girl was four hours old and you know when you're crying and you can't stop? She was going like this. And I just melted. She's got me wrapped around her little finger ever since. That was one of those moments that I cannot say the smallest part of which I feel.
Prof. Lori Denning:	20:29	Love it and I think that's a perfect time to write a song. You're trying to capture it and convey that emotion. Thank you, guys. Those are fantastic examples. They can be little moments in our lives.
	20:41	Also, there's some other times when poetry is used and we've talked about some of them. One of them that I like is it can distinguish between something secular or worldly that is sacred,

so it could be an ordinance or it could be a sacred memory or event which sets something apart. This is different, so sometimes even in the text you're like, story, story, story, and then it's going to set something apart. Let me show you one of them right now.

- 21:08 Go to Chapter 26 and this is Ammon and he's talking to his brothers about all these amazing experiences and then in Verse 16, there's just this little poem right in the middle of it. He's been talking about how the missionaries have been instruments. One of the great blessings, one of the great joys that they've had is that they could be instruments in the hands of God, right? An instrument like a tool, something that God has deigned to use them for, and he says right before, "And we've been instruments in his hands of doing this great and marvelous work." These stories we just heard, and then right after that in 16 is a little poem. "Therefore, let us glory. Yea, we will glory in the Lord. Yea. We will rejoice for our joy is full. Yea. We will praise our God forever."
- 21:57 You can hear the cadence, it's short. it's compact, it has a little bit of repetition. Repetition is usually your key. If you find a lot of repetition of either words or ideas, it's probably a poem. "Therefore, let us glory. Yea, we will glory in the Lord. Yea. We will rejoice for our joy is full. Yea. We will praise our God forever." The parallels in rejoice, joy, praise, glory.
- 22:23 Let me read it again, "Therefore let us glory. Yea, we will glory in the Lord. Yea. We will rejoice for our joy is full. Yea. We will praise our God forever." He's trying to say this joy and this praising to him so profound. I have a hard time trying to capture it. I mentioned that in Hebrew poetry they actually chant, so scripture is chanted. It's the same with the Quran in Arabic as well, that the only formal way to actually read it is to chant it. Well, it has a sing-songiness, something that sets it apart. It connects on a different level. We think differently when we have to really ponder it and connect to it. We have these visuals. Like our dense German bread, we have to work on it a little bit. This isn't Wonder Bread that you eat and you're hungry in 10 seconds. This is going to fill you up, but it's going to take a little work.
- 23:16 It connects in a different level so that it sticks with you and one of those ways is with the cadence, the chanting. This is probably not Hebrew at this time and I certainly don't know how they would chant it, but you can kind of get the cadence. "We will glory. Let us glory in the Lord. We will rejoice for our joy is full, for we will praise our Lord our God forever." Probably times

when you're like, "I felt just like that. I know what he's trying to say." Sometimes it's easy to blow right past them.

23:40 There's another poem right before that. It goes on Verses 11 and 12, there's this funny little story. They're talking about how great it's been to do this missionary work, story, story, story. Ammon is like, "We have done such a great job." And Aaron had said, rebuked him and this is Verse 10, "Ammon, I fear that thy joy doth carry thee away unto boasting." And there's been a lot of boasting in the past about them being prideful and then going into war and I love Ammon's response because he's just always the guy. I mean, he is passing out with joy. Very extreme. He responds in a poem. John, would you mind reading for us, Verse 11 and 12?

John Bytheway: 24:18 Alma 26:11 and 12, but Ammon said unto him, "I do not boast in my own strength nor in my own wisdom, but behold my joy is full. Yea. My heart is brim with joy and I will rejoice in my God. Yea. I know that I am nothing. As to my strength I am weak. Therefore, I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God for in his strength I can do all things. Yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land for which we will praise his name forever."

Prof. Lori Denning: 24:49 Yeah, it probably doesn't look like a poem, but look at the middle of it in Verse 12, you'll see kind of a couplet, two lines that that's where they're going to rhyme. They're going to be kind of the same idea in both the subject and the object of it, so "I know that I am nothing" and then the second one, "To my strength, I am weak." It takes something bodily knowledge or strength. I'm nothing and I'm weak. You see how the beginning and the ends parallel? That is called parallelisms. I know that I'm nothing and the next one has three little parallels. "Therefore, I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God. For in his strength, I can do all things." Like little stairs on this one. I won't boast of myself, but I will boast of God and for in his strength I can do all things. Building, building, building on the idea.

25:38 And the next one for behold, there's our change, your view, a second, "Many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land." Part one. Part two, "For which we will praise his name forever." It's very psalm like there that at the end we give God the praise. He starts saying, "I'm not boasting, I am praising, I'm praising." It's a little song.

26:01 I learned another technique by [Dr. Sweat](#). I know he's one of our favorites. He's one of my favorites too. He says, "Sometimes, when we can't quite connect to text." And this is a

little bit hard to connect to, "If you're having a hard time connecting to these poems, translate them. Write them in your own words. Take this verse and translate it." You're like, "Well, I don't boast in my strength. I wonder what he's saying there?" And then you could try it.

26:25 In fact, I'm going to have us try that in Alma 29. I want us to try it, but you could try to translate it. What is it saying? What does it mean? And write it in your own words. It's one of the most powerful things, experiences that I've had is I was teaching an institute class and he had taught that on a video I watched. I was like, "Hey, you guys, let's try this." And we were doing the Old Testament at the time a couple of years ago, the students loved it and they were trying to do a rap or they were trying to do it like they were real modern or something and I was like, "Whatever. It connects to you." And then they got super into it. Just pick one verse and just write it in your own words. You don't have to make it rhyme, you don't have to do anything like that. Write what you would say. This may become more powerful, so keep that in mind and then let me set the stage.

27:11 That was Ammon and the brothers all through this story. Then suddenly Alma shows up, so it's been 14 years since the compadres have seen each other on their missions. Alma's been in Zarahemla and we've read about the brothers this whole time and they show up and they don't know if they're still converted to the Lord. They don't know the status, they don't know any of these stories. They meet, they're so glad that they're all still disciples of Christ. Then Alma finds out, "Hey, we've heard about these Anti-Nephi-Lehis. And they're like, "Yeah." He's like, "They're totally true. It's totally a true story."

27:43 We have this little aside from Alma, think for a second. Mormon, he's got rooms full of play. He has to choose what to pick. We're not just doing history and he's chosen a whole chapter on Alma and Alma's feelings. Can you think of any other scriptures that really tell us how people are feeling? Maybe the psalms, but they did a thing and then you're like, "Oh, why did they do that? I don't know." Like you said, there was this big story hundreds of years and then a few years and then an experience and then we super slow down and we're right into his mind and his heart and we're just going to sit there for a minute and Mormon's like, "I really want you to sit with this for a minute."

28:27 This is a gift. This is my all time favorite chapter of scripture because it is powerful. It was my missionary plaque scripture, "Oh, that I were an angel and I could have the wish of my

heart." That we see into his soul, we feel what he's feeling. We can just feel the power of his testimony in these verses and I think Mormon wanted that to sink into our hearts. Take this chapter and sit with it.

29:01 We're going to take a few minutes and I want you to do Verse 1 and I want you to translate either word for word, whatever you think in your own language, what he's trying to say or if you would use your own example. He's going to explain what his wishes were. I think of it like this. You've probably heard this one. If you had a superpower, what would it be? People are like, "Flight." "Invisibility." Alma wants to be an angel. He wants to be a preaching angel, right? That's the superpower that Alma wants, and I'm like, "Well, I've never picked that one before." I'm always doing the flight or invisibility or whatever too, but he's like, "If I had the wish of my heart, this is what I want more than anything else, more than riches, more than health, more than anything is to have the experience that I had and to give that experience to other people."

Hank Smith: 29:54 He knows a thing or two about angels. Right?

Prof. Lori Denning: 29:57 He knows a thing or two about angels and he's saying, "You know what, if I got any gift, I would want the gift that I was given and I want to give it to others." So maybe, in your translation, it's what you wish more than anything else. The gift that you had. Here's what he says, and I'm just going to read a couple verses and I just want you to listen for the passion, listen for the emotion that he's giving. "O that I were an angel and could have the wish of my heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with the voice to shake the earth and cry repentance unto every people. Yea. I would declare unto every soul as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption and they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth."

John Bytheway: 30:56 Oh, That I Were an Angel. I always think of that song and then I also think of what you both said, Alma's thinking my life was profoundly changed by angel. Once when I was knocked flat and another time when I was coming out of Ammonihah and the angel told me, "Lift up your head and rejoice. You have great cause to rejoice and go back and go get your companion Amulek here, we have a surprise arranged for you. You're going to find a new companion." I want to do that. I want to do what they did.

Hank Smith:	31:29	The Book of Mormon just passed its 200-millionth copy. Can you imagine telling Alma at this moment? "You got it. You are shaking the earth."
Prof. Lori Denning:	31:40	That's getting me. That's amazing. You're right. He has this desire. He's like, "Oh, but it's too much to ask." And Mormon's like, "Hold my root beer. You're going to change the world." That guy that was walking around destroying the church has become this voice that changes the earth. Wow, beautiful.
	32:03	Here's your exercise. You're going to take just a couple of minutes. You can just take the first couple verses if you want or a couple at the end of we're just doing one and two and I want you to translate it in your own words. You can translate the meaning or this is into words that make sense to you and then you guys are home, put it on pause, and try it yourself or as you're driving around or doing laundry or whatever, try it in your head and see what you come up with. It is worth it. Ready, set, go.
	32:31	All right, gents, so what did you guys come up with? Are you willing to share?
Hank Smith:	32:37	I did the assignment, Alma 29, one and two and I added a little bit of three. I was trying to say the same thing that Alma said because I feel the same way. "If I could, if the Lord would give me the go ahead and the thumbs up, I would get the entire world's attention. I would somehow open their hearts to want to believe. I would teach them all that I know and tell them all that I've experienced. I would use the right words. I would have the perfect dose of humor. I would have sweet timing. I wouldn't go over my time and I would get them all to feel how I feel about the Lord and then in that moment I would turn them to him and they will hear him as I have heard him, they would become close to him as I have become close to him, but I need to be satisfied with my role in his kingdom, religion professor, podcaster, Mapleton sixth-ward gospel doctrine teacher, minister to the Barlow and Bell families, husband of Sarah and father of Maddie, Mason, Elijah, Rockwell, and Steele."
Prof. Lori Denning:	33:40	Amen. I love it.
Hank Smith:	33:42	That was my little translation.
Prof. Lori Denning:	33:44	I love what you did because it's very you. Hank, does it change anything about his? How you reflected on your own? What do you see in Almas now that you didn't before?

Hank Smith:	33:54	I think that the hope is not, "Oh, these evil people. I want them to repent." It's, "Oh, I have something to offer that I think you'll love."
Prof. Lori Denning:	34:07	I love that. Thank you. Cool. Very cool. Amen.
John Bytheway:	34:11	I didn't get as far as Hank did, but I'll tell you what I've got. "I want to be part of something that can make it incredibly obvious that a loving father has a plan of happiness that can destroy all hurt and heartache."
Prof. Lori Denning:	34:27	That is a great superpower. That's beautiful. I love how you focused on relieving like the sorrow. You liked that motif, that theme.
Hank Smith:	34:36	I think people would want to hear that in Barney Fife like, "Oh, that I were in New York."
Prof. Lori Denning:	34:41	Yes.
Hank Smith:	34:42	"Well, I never go anywhere without the old Roscoe, the old blue-scale baby."
Prof. Lori Denning:	34:50	So funny. John, is there anything now that you've had a chance to kind of reflect on what the wish of your heart is that you see in Alma that you didn't see before or you would call out?
John Bytheway:	35:01	It always has been a wish of mine that it was more obvious to people and I like that he says that, "If I had a voice that could shake the earth, that would really get people's attention and then maybe I could tell them what I know and it doesn't have to be this hard. It doesn't have to be this sad. It doesn't have to be so sorrowful. If you would just hear me." That's what I hear him saying.
Prof. Lori Denning:	35:30	Love it. That's an exercise I hope you continue. You don't have to do it on poetry, you can do it on anything. We try it from time to time. We naturally do it, right? We kind of paraphrase and do things, but if you want people to really get into it, go get into it, and a great exercise is to just translate it in your own words. If you speak another language, translate it into the other language and see what you come up with.
	35:51	I wanted to share a couple other things about how we think this poetry works, and I know I keep mentioning it and maybe it's a little hokey. At the beginning of this section, I talked about how

with my Spanish literature class, David's like, "And Lori hates poetry." And now I'm like, "I love poetry."

36:08 In one of my very last classes in PhD school, I have to teach a class. I was teaching on the Dead Sea Scrolls and so I have three hours of lecture to graduate students. I did the first half on what they are and how they work, but I think the power of the scriptures, when we're in an academic setting, we never talk about it, right? It's like we get a brand new car and we don't put gas in it. We don't talk about what I think that it means. I was going to change that.

36:36 I learned to chant in Hebrew, I chanted a number of these songs. There are a bunch of different tunes that people sing today, but if you ever go to a synagogue or you go to a mosque, that's what you hear is them singing. It captures that spiritualness like Hank you said, "I want them to feel what I feel and that's how I feel." And they're trying to convey it in song. I'm not a great vocalist, so less that distract. If you're okay, I was going to chant, see the difference by making the scriptures a song, like you said, John, "Oh, That I Were an Angel." But since it's not in Hebrew, I have to pick a Hebrew scripture. I was going to do Numbers 6.

37:17 Numbers 6 is what's called the Aaronic Blessing. You probably know it from another hymn. "The Lord bless you and keep you." Let's read it in English first so you know what I'm going to do. It's the last couple verses of Number 6. There's a famous John Rutter arrangement of the hymn, "The Lord bless you and keep you." So the Tabernacle Choir has sung it and it was said at the beginning and the end of every day at the sacrifice. This is the blessing that the priests are giving out to the people. "The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace." [foreign language 00:38:02] Does it change anything to hear it in chant?

Hank Smith: 38:42 Oh, yeah.

Prof. Lori Denning: 38:43 I think so too.

John Bytheway: 38:44 Did I hear Shalom at the end?

Prof. Lori Denning: 38:46 Yeah, "And give you peace." It ends with peace, Shalom.

Hank Smith: 38:49 Yeah, so cool.

Prof. Lori Denning:	38:50	Good ear and then they don't usually say the name, Lord, right? So you hear Adonai.
John Bytheway:	38:53	Adonai.
Hank Smith:	38:53	Adonai, yeah.
Prof. Lori Denning:	38:57	[foreign language 00:38:56]. That's the power that I think the hymns give, that these poems can have, when we kind of sit with them and dig in. I think that that is something that the Lord's inviting us and the beauty of the Book of Mormon is it's all in here too. Sometimes we miss it and we're like, "Well, I just blew right past it." But if you watch for repetition, you watch for these little parallels, you watch for these little dense ideas, the Lord spoke in these same poems, when he was on the cross.
	39:29	We're familiar with the story where he says, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" That is a direct quote from Psalm 22 . For thousands of years, his people had been singing or praying that Psalm, "My God, my God, where are you? Have you forgotten me?" And there, on the cross, he responds, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" He hasn't at all. He has been there all along and this was his plan all along that he has been there to redeem and sacrifice for us all along.
	40:05	The Lord spoke in poetry, Alma speaks in poetry, Ammon speaks in poetry and you better believe they all do. So as you go through these chapters, you find these little pockets of things just like the Savior where he is trying to convey something really powerful and spiritual to us. It's such a blessing to have them, to sit and ponder them.
John Bytheway:	40:25	I love it. I hope that it's just one more level of meaning in the Book of Mormon that some may not have heard of before that makes it more complex and beautiful and deeper and more complicated, but more beautiful than they may have even known.
Hank Smith:	40:44	That's such a great place. Can I tell you, guys, the experience I had just the other day? And then, Lori, I want to ask you a final question. I was on my way to campus, BYU, and I was actually going to go through this chapter, Alma 29. As I was thinking about it on the way over, I had a distinct impression. This doesn't happen to me every day. I don't want to give the idea that everywhere I go, I'm getting specific direction.

- 41:10 In fact, the reason I'm telling this story is because it's unique. It doesn't usually happen, but I'm on my way over and I think it was the Spirit. Either that or it was breakfast, said to me, "You need to talk about something with Alma 29, something specific." I made a quick mental note that I would do it. I wanted to share it with you and our audience, and this is what the Spirit, I hope, told me to say.
- 41:35 Alma, the younger is much like our college-age girls who don't serve missions, they stay home and they do the Lord's work at home. The sons of Mosiah are the college-age girls that we have, the young single adult girls, who go on missions and that they both do important work. We covered Alma's work from Alma 5 to Alma 17. Then we covered the sons of Mosiah's work from 17 here to 29, and that they both do important things.
- 42:11 Now, it's very likely, I told the girls in my class, the girls who hadn't served missions, they prayed about it, thought about it, and the Lord said, "Nope, you're staying home and doing... This is your part of the vineyard." I said, "It's likely going to be that the sons of Mosiah are going to get the fanfare, right? The wow factor." I called it the, "Whoa, you brought Laman? You changed Lamanites? That's unbelievable. That is crazy." And Alma could be in the back going, "Yeah, yeah, that's great. I went to Zarahemla, a couple people changed. I went to Gideon, some good things happened there and Ammonihah was a dumpster fire."
- Prof. Lori Denning: 42:52 I'd give up the ruling seat because it's so bad here.
- Hank Smith: 42:57 Yeah, there was just a moment there, I hope. Anybody who's listening who the Lord said, "You're not going." I know many, many incredible young, single, adult girls who, for one reason or another, didn't serve a mission. And I remember when [President Monson](#) made that announcement how excited everybody was and it felt like everybody was going on a mission. But I've had girls say to me, "I feel kind of like a second class citizen."
- Prof. Lori Denning: 43:29 Not everyone's been or wanted or had the opportunity to be a formal missionary or liked their missions even if you went. We don't all have these experiences. You don't have to skip these chapters. You grow where you're planted, you serve where you're called, you don't have to be a formal missionary. We need everybody in the kingdom. I often think of the idea of Zion. There were no poor among them. I think that means we valued everybody for what they brought. We valued all the skills that came rather than they just didn't have any cash. If you're a

musician, we value that. If you're a teacher, we value that. If you're an accountant, we value that. Good at gardening? You got it. Good at administrating? Fantastic. Good with kids? We need that too. Can you drive a car? We need that. We need people that can do everything. It's a kingdom after all, Zion's everybody, we value, there were no poor among them, and I put an insert because we valued everybody.

- Hank Smith: 44:29 Love it. Don't you love that and how excited Alma is for their success. He doesn't see himself as less than because he didn't go among the Lamanites. He says, "I fulfilled my role. I played the role that the Lord wanted me to play." And even though that people might be yelling and screaming and giving parades to the sons of Mosiah, right? He doesn't feel one bit diminished by that. In fact, he is, as John pointed out, he says, "I'm even more happy when I think of the success of my fellow servants."
- John Bytheway: 45:03 Good for them. I'm happy for them attitude, and I'm thinking of Third Nephi 28. Jesus shows up with the 12 and says, "What is it that ye desire of me after I'm gone to the Father?" And they all spake, save it were three saying, "Well, we want to come quickly into thy kingdom." And then he says, "Okay, when you're 72 years old?" That'd be scary to know.
- 45:30 And then the other three, "What do you want me to do?" And Verse 5, "They sorrowed in their hearts for they durst not speak unto him the thing which they desired." He rejoiced because they were both great desires, but they were different and that was okay and I'm glad for that little story right there that it wasn't like, "This is the right desire and that's the wrong one." But it was they were different and I love it because you rejoice in the thing that you desired and they're both good things, so whew. And Hank, you've said it before, that beautiful phrase in the New Testament, "She hath done what she could."
- Hank Smith: 46:04 Yeah, one of my favorites. Lori, let's say I am walking to class or I'm driving home from college to see my family or I'm folding laundry or whatever people do when they listen to our show. If you're doing something, come onto YouTube and tell us what it is you do, while you listen? What do you hope I walk away with?
- Prof. Lori Denning: 46:28 I hope that people see themselves in every point of view in the story that supports a testimony of the Lord, right? You don't need to be the Amalekites or something like that, but I hope that you look at yourself and see how is the story about you, about Alma or Ammon or the King Lamoni or the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehis. I hope that everyone says, "These stories are my stories and I can see myself in them and I can see how the Lord

has worked in my life." And then I hope they share that with somebody. Maybe it's put it in the comments, share it with somebody you love, tell your roommate, your spouse, somebody, but say, "I feel like I'm a little bit like this. I think Mormon and Alma wanted us and see ourselves in them and reflect on that, how that's like Christ, and share it with somebody else." And you can do that with the whole book.

47:20 One of the powerful elements of the Book of Mormon is that it changes us. We talked about how that conversion unto the Lord happens, I think that more than anything else brings us closer to Christ and we know him and we become something better. We become. I spend a lot of time studying scripture and a lot of ancient scripture and mostly the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament. It helps me be scholarly. It helps me untangle a knot of text and language and nerdy things.

47:52 This book changes me. This book changes how I see the world, and it gives me hope, and I get closer to Christ and I know him better through this book than the others. One book makes me a scholar and the other makes me a saint, and that's why I love it. There is no better book in the world. It's powerful, it's wonderful, it's insightful, it's exciting, it gives me joy, and I know it can do the same for everybody else. It makes us disciples of Christ.

Hank Smith: 48:25 So well said. Awesome. Awesome, Lori, thanks for spending your time with us. With that, we want to thank Professor Lori Denning for being with us today. We want to thank our Executive Producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen, and every episode we remember our founder, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We're coming up on Korihor on followHIM.

HARD TIMES ON HARD FLOORS



- Hank Smith: 00:02 Hello, everyone. Welcome to another followHIM Favorites. John and I are sharing a single story to go with each week's lesson. John, we are in Alma 23 through 29 today, Anti-Nephi-Lehis, Ammon, Aaron, kind of the end of their mission. And I have a story I thought fit really well with Alma 26, when Ammon is looking back over his mission and he says, "When our hearts were depressed, we were about to turn back, the Lord comforted us." He says, we have traveled house to house, relying on the mercies of God. We've entered into their houses and their synagogues. We've been cast out, mocked, spit on, hit, stoned, cast into prison. I wonder if Aaron thought at that point, "I was cast into prison, not we."
- 00:51 So, I thought of a story. This comes from Elder H. Ross Workman. This is from a 2003 New Era, and he talks about his mission. He was a member of the 70 when he told this story. This was a long time ago. He was in college. He had a good part-time job, he was engaged and was going to be married in just a couple of months. Life was good. The future looked bright. He says, "I was very surprised when my stake president pulled me aside on a Sunday morning and said, "The Lord wants you to serve a mission." He said, "I felt powerfully impressed that this call was from God." I acted upon that impression and committed to serve. I was called to serve in the Southern States mission. I quit my job, I left the university, I postponed my wedding for two years.
- John Bytheway: 01:42 Wow.
- Hank Smith: 01:43 I said goodbye to my loved ones. I was leaving everyone and everything that mattered to me. Here's his first few days. I traveled by train many hours to Atlanta, Georgia. Two missionaries picked me up and drove me to meet the mission president. He greeted me for a few moments and then told me I must leave immediately by bus to Montgomery, Alabama where I would be given instructions about my area. The same elders who had picked me up took me to the bus station, handed me a piece of paper with an address on it. They told me to meet the

missionaries in Montgomery, they would tell me what to do. All right. So, he walks tentatively to the bus station, bought a ticket and got on the bus. It was getting dark and I was feeling very alone. I found an empty seat next to a window and tried to ignore the growing discouragement from not knowing where I was going or what I would do.

02:38 When the bus driver took his seat, he stared at me in the rear view mirror. He walked to where I was sitting and shouted, "What are you trying to do, boy?" I was shocked that he would shout at me with all the people on the bus watching. I had no idea why he was angry. I barely whispered, "I'm just trying to ride the bus." He yelled, "Are you trying to start something here?" He then pointed to a white line on the floor of the bus that I hadn't noticed. He told me to sit in front of that line or he would put me off the bus. I was terrified and I moved immediately. I did not know until much later that in those days, the white lines divided the areas where the White and Black people could sit.

03:22 There was segregation in that area, and the driver thought I was trying to start a protest. All right. So, things are not starting off super well. He said, "I rode for several hours huddled in the bus, trying to fight off fear, loneliness, and now embarrassment." By the time I reached Montgomery, my trembling hands could barely lift my suitcases. The bus arrived late at night. The bus station was empty. There was no one there to meet me. The only information I had was an address that the missionaries had given me back in Atlanta. I had no idea how to find the address. There's no GPS, there's no map.

John Bytheway: 03:59 There's no Google. Yeah.

Hank Smith: 04:01 Like, what street are you on? I don't even know. He said, "I awakened a taxi driver who was sleeping in his taxi and asked him if he could take me to the address on the paper. He was irritated. He told me how much it would cost. I promised to pay the fee even though it seemed outrageously expensive." Right? I mean, what other options do you have? I want a thousand dollars. All right. Listen to this, John. He then drove me fewer than a hundred yards and announced, "You're here."

John Bytheway: 04:34 Oh, man. No tip for you.

Hank Smith: 04:38 He demanded his fee and left me and my suitcases in front of a small white house. The house was dark. I carried my suitcases to the porch, knocked on the door. Nobody came to the door. I knocked loudly. After a few minutes, a very sleepy eyed

missionary opened the door. "Who are you?" He asked. When I told him who I was and why I was there, he said he didn't know I was coming and he didn't invite me in. Well, I apologized and told him I was just doing what I was asked to do. "We don't have any room for you," he said. Me, still on the porch, "What do you want me to do, Elder?" I cried.

John Bytheway: 05:20

Probably in the middle of the night.

Hank Smith: 05:23

"I've been sent here, I have nowhere else to go." He finally invited me into the house and told me I'd have to sleep on the kitchen floor. Then he disappeared into his bedroom. Never had I felt so alone, unwanted, and discouraged. I put my suitcases on the filthy kitchen floor and turned off the light. I was too discouraged to sleep, so I stood at the door and peered out the window. I could see the bus station that I had left only a few minutes before. I could just walk there and buy a ticket home. I had enough money left. All of my joys, hopes and dreams were back at home. People there loved me. I could have my old job back, I could go back to my school, I could see my family and I could get married. Over and over again I thought, "Go home. Nobody here cares about you. Nobody here wants you."

06:20

Then I asked myself, why did I come here in the first place? My stake president's words came back to me, "The Lord wants you to serve a mission." I had felt a powerful impression when he said that to me. I had had that feeling so strong I postponed my wedding. I quit my job. I had left my school so I could serve a mission. I had known that the Lord wanted me to serve. Then he said, "Being in the mission field was not at all like I thought it would be. Looked like nothing on the videos. I had been sure once, but now when I needed divine reassurance the most, those powerful feelings were just a memory. I was in the process of making a very important choice. It was a choice between what I wanted and what the Lord wanted. It was the first time in my memory that I had recognized so clear a choice. I spoke to myself."

07:10

So picture him, John, looking at the bus station, middle of the night. Nobody wants him there, no one seems to care, and he says, "I will never, never quit the calling I have accepted. No matter what happens, I will stay on this mission. As I said those words, peace came to my heart for the first time since arriving in the mission field. I will always be grateful for the blessings of that choice. It changed my life forever." And I think immediately of the Sons of Mosiah, we have suffered every privation.

John Bytheway:	07:46	And in the hard moment, they made a great choice. That's what it sounds like. So, I love that story. The hardest moment, a great choice brought in peace.
Hank Smith:	07:54	I have basically burned the boats behind me. I am here. Now John, it's very important that we say, this was about him having a very difficult time, being treated poorly. This is not about his mental health. This wasn't about his sicknesses or anything like that, because we have many people listening who perhaps couldn't serve their full anticipated time because of some sickness or mental illness, and that's not what we're talking about.
John Bytheway:	08:23	Right. That's a decision they prayerfully make with their mission leaders. The fact that they were willing to serve, that's what's important.
Hank Smith:	08:33	Yeah. That's what matters. I hope anybody listening doesn't feel some sort of negative feelings or bad feelings about this story because perhaps your mission didn't turn out the way you thought it would be. You served the mission the Lord wanted you to serve. What this is about is a commitment to something you know the Lord wants you to do. Remember how he talked about that, John? Never had it been so clear. I knew what the Lord wanted me to do and he made that commitment. That's fantastic.
	09:05	Wherever you're serving, whatever you're doing, when you know what the Lord wants you to do, commit yourself to doing it, just like the Sons of Mosiah. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get a podcast. We're with Professor Lori Denning this week. You're going to just love her. She loves to laugh. She loves to point out fun insights, really moving insights in these chapters. And then come back next week, we'll share another story for followHIM Favorites.