



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:

How do we recognize anti-Christian rhetoric? Dr. Brent Top examines the sophistries and anti-familial tenets advanced by Korihor and how the Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ for the Latter-day Saints.

Part 2:

Dr. Brent Top continues discussing the sophistries of Korihor, the dangers of self-righteousness, and the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to cut through the wiles of the Adversary.

Timecodes:

Part 1

- 00:00 Part I - Dr. Brent Top
- 02:55 Dr. Brent Top's bio
- 04:54 Introduction Kori's horrible decisions
- 06:40 Promises about Book of Mormon
- 10:40 followHIM Favorite story about football
- 13:33 Alma 30 - Obedience is protection against Kori's
- 14:33 Alma 30:12-18 - Temple experiences vs. Kori's
- 16:25 Alma 30:8-12 - Beliefs and behaviors
- 19:57 Alma 30:13 - Kori's tactics
- 24:23 Dr. Top shares a story about the Southern Baptist convention
- 27:53 Alma 30:13, 27 - Kori's paints himself as liberator
- 32:41 Kori's makes an intellectual caste system
- 36:38 Alma 30:15 - Countering Kori's tactics
- 38:11 Discovering and recognizing truth
- 40:02 Alma 30:17-18 - Kori's teaches that man is greater than God
- 46:39 Unwittingly adopting Kori's philosophies
- 52:07 Alma 30:12-17 The Articles of Faith
- 56:13 Can you vote to decide true north?
- 58:47 A consequence stick object lesson
- 1:01:32 Alma 32:20 - Anti-family is anti-Christ
- 1:06:54 - End of Part 1 - Dr. Brent Top

Part 2

- 00:00 Part II- Dr. Brent Top
- 00:53 Alma 30:35 - Kori's contradicts himself
- 2:09 Alma 30:44 - An object lesson
- 06:50 Elder Ballard's questions about service and tithing
- 08:24 Alma 30:27 - Kori's lies about bad behavior
- 11:38 The music of the gospel
- 13:10 Alma 30:60 Satan won't uphold his children
- 14:49 The evidence of testimony
- 15:58 Preying on the spiritually weak
- 17:38 Alma 31- Alma's sorrows over unrighteousness
- 19:20 Alma 31:5 - The power of the word
- 26:12 The word has more power than an alarm clock
- 28:53 Mission presidents and a Rameumptom
- 30:46 Never mildly surprised
- 32:00 Do we have personal Rameumptom?
- 34:59 Alma 31:32-38 - Alma's beautiful prayer
- 38:27 Alma 31 - A lesson in prayer

- 41:44 3 Nephi 5:5 - A disciple of Christ
- 43:40 Alma 31:35 - The Lord is on Zeezrom's side
- 45:59 Alma 31:17 - A Korihor echo chamber
- 49:05 D&C 45 - The Mediator
- 52:29 Jesus shatters doubt and fear
- 53:09 Dr. Top shares his personal testimony of service and Jesus Christ
- 59:45 End of Part II– Dr. Brent Top

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Biographical Information:



Brent L. Top is Professor Emeritus of Church History & Doctrine at Brigham Young University and former Dean of Religious Education. Immediately prior to his retirement from BYU he was the Richard L. Evans Distinguished Professor of Religious Understanding at Brigham Young University. In his thirty-five years on the Religion faculty at BYU, Brent has authored or co-authored more than 20 books and numerous articles on doctrinal, scriptural, historical, and sociological subjects. A popular speaker and presenter, Dr. Top was a regular presenter at BYU Campus Education Week and Women's Conference, along with many other conferences and symposia. He and his family lived in Israel when he taught Old and New Testament at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near-Eastern Studies. Most recently, Brent served as mission president/site leader at the Mormon Battalion Historic Site in San Diego (2022-2024) and previously was president of the Illinois Peoria Mission (2004-2007). Since returning from their most recent mission, Brent and Wendy have settled into the retirement lifestyle at their home in Ivins, Utah. Brother Top is currently serving as a sealer in the St. George Temple. They are blessed to be the parents of four children, 25 grandchildren, and 3 great-grandchildren. **SHORT BIO:** Dr. Brent L. Top is Professor Emeritus of Church History & Doctrine at Brigham Young University and former Dean of Religious Education. During his 45 year career in the Church Educational System, he has authored over 20 books and numerous articles on doctrinal, scriptural, historical, and sociological subjects.

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- Hank Smith: 00:00:03 Hello, everyone. Welcome to followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with my precious co-host, John Bytheway, and our guest, Dr. Brent Top. John, we're taking on two very interesting chapters in the Book of Alma. We've been talking about Alma going on his big reactivation tour, we've gone through the sons of Mosiah going on missions, and then the book takes a little bit of a turn as we talk about apostasy. What are you thinking as we head into these?
- John Bytheway: 00:00:34 I'm just amazed at how the Book of Mormon has these different sections like you just mentioned. Here's how you talk to people who don't know anything about God and here's how you talk to people who know but who are slacking. And then we're going to encounter somebody who says there is no God, and then we're going to go see the Zoramites who say, "Well, there is a God, but he's like this." One of the huge questions is what is God like? What is his nature? And one of the things that I hope we all are coming to learn is about a loving heavenly father that is like at the top of everything. I look forward to these because, in one way, you might think, "Why did they include this? I thought it was really hard to engrave on plates. You're going to tell us the story of an anti-Christ?" I'm looking forward to talking it through.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:21 Yeah. And not just telling a little brief, "Hey, there's this guy named Korihor."
- John Bytheway: 00:01:27 It's one of the long chapters.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:28 Everything he taught. Here to help us, John, is Dr. Brent Top. Brent, what are we going to talk about today? You and I talked about this a couple of months ago. You said something interesting about choosing you as the guest here.
- Dr. Brent Top: 00:01:43 I thought immediately when you asked me to do it that I was being typecast that you thought, who do I think of when I think of Korihor? That was kind of my first reaction was, "Well, do

John and Hank think I'm an expert on apostasy? Why me? Why couldn't I have Alma 32 instead of 30 and 31?" I think these two chapters probably illustrate as well as anything else in the Book of Mormon of why the Book of Mormon was written for our day. That, to me, is the value of these two chapters.

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| Hank Smith: | 00:02:25 | Absolutely. Everyone, I hope, will pay attention to what Brent teaches us today. Go all the way through part one and part two, because you and your children and your grandchildren are going to meet the Korihors of this day, the Zoramites of this day, and you need to be prepared. They need to be prepared when that happens. Not if, but when. John, Brent hasn't been with us in a couple of years. He's been on a bit of ecclesiastical vacation. John, introduce him to us. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:02:55 | Dr. Brent. L. Top is a professor emeritus of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University, former dean of Religious Education, and, listen to this, during his 45-year career in the church educational system, he's authored over 20 books, numerous articles on doctrinal, scriptural, historical, and sociological subjects. We were talking about one of Dr. Top's books that has really blessed my life, Glimpses Beyond Death's Door. People who have lost a loved one, it's so encouraging and faith-building. Most recently, Brother Brent was the mission president and site leader at the Mormon Battalion Historic Site San Diego. That's the Southern California vacation he joked about and, before that, was the Illinois Peoria Mission. Now, what most people don't know is he had to walk from Illinois to San Diego to kind of a reenactment type of a thing. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:03:48 | Exactly. And back. |
| Dr. Brent Top: | 00:03:50 | Oh, John. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:03:51 | We're really glad to have you. We'll get some teaching done in between the laughing, I think, hopefully. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:03:58 | Yeah. |
| Dr. Brent Top: | 00:03:58 | I am so glad to be with you. Thank you so much for the invitation. Whether you think I'm Korihor or not, I think we can learn some valuable lessons from these two chapters. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:04:11 | In all seriousness, I didn't ask Brent because he's an expert in apostasy. I actually thought of Brent because I don't think there's anyone, John, who can top. Did you see what I did there? Who can top the breadth of experience that Brent has. |

John, how many people you know that's been mission president twice?

John Bytheway: 00:04:33 Yeah.

Dr. Brent Top: 00:04:34 That are still alive...

John Bytheway: 00:04:37 And live to tell about it.

Dr. Brent Top: 00:04:38 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:04:40 Stake president, dean of the religion department, and this isn't to say Brent is above us all. Wow, it's just he has this experience in so many different areas of the church that I thought he could really bless some lives here. Here's how the Come, Follow Me manual starts. "The accounts in Alma 30 and 31 clearly demonstrate the power of words for evil or for good. The flattering, the great swelling words of a false teacher named Korihor threatened to bring many souls down to destruction. Similarly, the teachings of a Nephite dissenter named Zoram led a whole group of people to fall into great errors and pervert the ways of the Lord.

00:05:18 In contrast, Alma had unwavering faith that the word of God would have a more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword or anything else. Alma's words expressed eternal truth and drew upon the power of Jesus Christ to silence Korihor and they invited his blessings on those who went with him to bring the Zoramites back to the truth. These are valuable examples for followers of Christ today when false messages are common. We can find truth by trusting, as Alma did, the virtue of the word of God." What a great takeoff into these chapters. Brent, where do you want to go?

Dr. Brent Top: 00:05:57 Let me share with you a theme for the whole discussion as to why these two chapters are so important to us, like you said, to children, grandchildren, to future generations, and members of the church and those not of our faith, because the world in which we are living is so deteriorated in so many ways. We go back to 1986 when we would have what we might call the Book of Mormon Reformation Project or the Book of Mormon Renaissance by President Ezra Taft Benson that returns our whole mindset back to the Book of Mormon.

00:06:40 I want to share with you a prophetic promise from President Benson that is so remarkable. He said, "You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid

deception." That's what we're talking about right there. "You will find the power to stay on the straight and narrow path. When you begin to hunger and thirst after those promises, increased love and harmony in the home, greater respect between parent and child, increased spirituality and righteousness, these are not idle promises but exactly what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said the Book of Mormon will help us draw nearer to God."

00:07:34 And then most recently, we're all familiar with President Nelson's prophetic promise on the Book of Mormon. I know you've referred to it over and over again, but I think this becomes kind of the context for why understanding the modern-day Korihor is so important for us. President Russell Nelson said, "My dear brothers and sisters, I promise that as you prayerfully study the Book of Mormon every day, you will make better decisions every day. I promise that as you ponder what you study, the windows of heaven will open and you will receive answers to your own questions and direction for your own life. I promise that as you daily immerse yourself in the Book of Mormon..."

00:08:32 Now, here comes another prophetic promise about, what, 30, 40 years later almost, but the same concept he says, "I promise that as you immerse yourself daily in the Book of Mormon, you can be immunized against the evils of the day." That's what we're talking about, evils of the day, not just a historical narrative of Korihor and his efforts among the Nephites, the Zoramites, and others. It is really the message of our time. We see the prophecies of Satan's tactics in the last days are really new packaging of the same old, same old. That's one of the reasons why we need to remember when Korihor is talking and he's so smooth, this is nothing new. That's why Alma is not so rattled. I love that.

00:09:39 Go down and cross out 74 BC and put 2024. I remember another thing President Benson said, got the whole church back into the Book of Mormon, as you said. When he said the Book of Mormon brings people to Christ through two basic means, and one of them was it teaches the gospel, the doctrine of Christ in a plain way, faith, repentance, being born again, and it exposes the enemies of Christ. I've always thought that was so interesting that it would have both of those things in it. Like you said, that we just have new sophisticated sounding words for some of these same arguments that Korihor is going to use here. As I have asked my kids, my friends, "Why is this in here?" usually somebody will, "Well, maybe you can see what the enemy's playbook is." I remember, Hank, you told a story on a

followHIM Favorite of when you were playing football in St. George that was so perfect to illustrate. Why would we give Korihor space on plates?

Hank Smith: 00:10:40 Yeah. I think it was for Jacob. I think we did that one for Jacob. Maybe our listeners don't know, John, but the followHIM Favorites, you can get them the same place you get our podcast. I've had people say, "Oh, aren't those just clips of the podcast?" No, they are stories that John and I tell that go with each week's lesson. You can use them for seminary or institute or Sunday school or maybe just family nights together. John and I love telling stories.

John Bytheway: 00:11:05 Five minutes, they're usually short.

Hank Smith: 00:11:06 Yeah, five minutes telling a funny story or something that will get you thinking. Brent, you probably haven't heard, so I'll tell you this story briefly. My high school football coach, Bill Jacobson, he would have me and a couple of others on the team watch game film before we'd go play a high school on Friday night. He'd say, "Come to my office. We're going to watch this other team play and try to figure out what they're going to do." There was this one point where he said, "Hank, I want you to focus on this left tackle. What would happen when this left tackle lined up on the scrimmage line?" If he was going to be a running play, he would put a lot of weight on his hand because he was going to run forward. But if it was going to be a passing play, he would just kind of dangle his fingers on the grass.

00:11:53 He said, "Your job, Hank, is to line up on him every time and yell out if it's going to be a run or a pass based on his stance." They come out, there he is, and I line up next to him and he's got his hand, a lot of weight on his hand, so I yell, "Run," our whole defense gets ready for a run. And then the next play, he just barely touched the grass with his fingers and I yelled out, "Pass," our defense set up for a pass. I tell John more of the details on the followHIM Favorites, but we just annihilated that team because we knew what they were going to do before they did it. Knowing that, anybody who's played competitive sports, if you know what they're going to do before they do it, it's such an advantage. I think, Brent, that might be what you're telling us about the book is that the Book of Mormon can show you what's an anti-Christ or an anti-faith person is going to do before they do it.

Dr. Brent Top: 00:12:52 Yeah. In fact, what you're describing in a sports way is tendencies. When a player has a tendency to do certain things,

you're watching for those little tendencies, and I think we're seeing that here with Korihor that he has a tendency to do certain things and we should immediately, just like you said, "Okay, it's going to be this," and it becomes somewhat of a spiritual armor for us so that what comes next out of his mouth and mind isn't going to have as much impact because we've seen the tendency and say, "Oh, I know where this is going."

00:13:33 As we begin the study of chapter 30, we also have to pay particular attention because we get so caught up with Korihor. But look at verse three. "Yea, and the people did observe to keep the commandments of the Lord, and they were strict in observing the ordinances of God." Am I living such as that I observe to keep the commandments of God and am I strict in observing the ordinances of God? Because that becomes one of the greatest safeguards to us when exposed to any anti-Christ person, philosophy, or action.

Hank Smith: 00:14:20 Brent, I love that. I've never seen it, verse 3. Keeping commandments and observing ordinances. You called that a protection against the Korihors of today. That's a beautiful insight.

Dr. Brent Top: 00:14:33 Let me give you an example. Yesterday, Wendy and I went to the St. George Temple and did some initiatory ordinances for some of our ancestors, and there were things said in that beautiful ordinance there about protections. Today, just before I came on board here to do this interview, I did my shift as a sealer in the St. George Temple and then I got to perform a wedding sealing for a young beautiful couple. The contrast of the feeling in spirit and emotion and love, love of God, love of family in that sealing room, it was so remarkable.

00:15:19 You listen to that ordinance of what God promises that bride and groom in contrast to what Korihor is going to be saying to us, there's no comparison. Verse 3 is like what I experienced in the temple yesterday and today. Verses 12 through 18 and then in 31 with Rameumptom is like what we experience in the world of anti-Christ around us. But when we keep that verse 3 foremost in our lives, verses 12 through 18 can't have the same power. Just an idea.

Hank Smith: 00:16:10 Doesn't that sound a lot like Moses chapter one? Moses has had this experience with God, then Satan shows up and he says, "I can tell a difference. Where is your glory? I have felt this. How come I'm not feeling anything with you?"

- John Bytheway: 00:16:25 I love how the story unfolds. We've got this man in verse 6 that came into the land of Zarahemla who was anti-Christ. We don't know his name yet. And then verse 7, "There's no law against a man's beliefs." Verse 8, "Choose ye this day, whom ye will serve," so you have to have a choice. Verse 9, "If you believe in God, it's your privilege to serve him. If you do not believe, there's no law to punish him." But then look at verse 10. It's all behaviors. I put in my margin what are beliefs and what are behaviors. If he murdered, that's a behavior punished to death. If he robbed, if he stole, if he committed adultery for all this wickedness, he was punished. But back to verse 11, there was no law against a man's belief. This society was good in that you had freedom of thought. What Korihor is going to attack is what they're believing and telling them, if they could abandon, that they could change their behaviors.
- Dr. Brent Top: 00:17:21 That is exactly what Korihor is trying to do is to say, "If you don't conform, you're out of it. You are a country bumpkin that knows nothing about the real sophistication of the world." You jump down into verse 12, 12 is really where we start seeing Korihor's tactics unfold. It said he began to preach unto the people that there should be no Christ. That is certainly common in the world. A lot of times we, as Latter-day Saints, will have friends and acquaintances that are not wearing black T-shirts with big bold red lettering saying anti-Christ, but that they're saying things that would diminish the power of the atonement of Jesus Christ. They're not saying, "Oh, there isn't a Christ," even though we encounter that. But it said, look in verse 13, "O ye that are bound down under a foolish and vain hope." Vain, empty hope.
- 00:18:34 In fact, I just saw a post on social media that one of my friends had shared that I thought was a wonderful, beautiful post that was a father being asked by a child saying, "Dad, what if it's not true?" And the dad went through and talked about all of the blessings that had come into their family. What if it is true because of what I've experienced and observed in my life? How has this affected me? Let me give you an example here. I have family members that don't believe in Christ, that maybe have reached the point where they think that maybe Jesus existed, but there really is no such thing as a savior or salvation, that there really maybe isn't a God. And they probably look at Wendy and me and say, "Why in the world would you do what you've been asked to do by the church? Maybe being hoodwinked or taken advantage of by the church to render so much service and give so much of your time and talents and means?" But they have no understanding of what that service has done for me, how it has changed me, how it has taught me.

- 00:19:57 That's one of the things that we're seeing with Korihor here is he wants to skirt the issues of what you have become, what you have experienced. I have, in my margins, here, John, I have three different tactics. First one he says is, "Foolish, vain hope. Why do you look for Christ?" And right at the end of verse 13 is something that we see over and over and over again in scriptures and in history. "No man can know of anything which is to come." There can be no prophecy. There cannot be any such thing as prophecy or prophets or knowing the future of the world, the signs of the times. You can't know any of those kinds of things. Number one, I think we would say describe it in lots of different ways. I would call it empiricism or rationalism.
- 00:21:05 Now, don't get me wrong. I've done a lot of research and work that's empirical. I do believe in empiricism. I do believe in rationalism, but I reject it when you say that's the only way you can view things of God. You can't know of anything to come. Man, we hear that all the time. And in fact, it even comes from religious people. Bob Millet and I had a very unique experience years ago. We were talking with a Christian pastor. He was familiar with the Book of Mormon and he said, "I just think Joseph Smith must have made it up." And we said, "Well, why do you say that?" And his response took me aback and he said, "Because there is too much Christ in those early chapters."
- 00:21:57 Now, this is from a Christian pastor who loves and has devoted his life to Christ. I would not characterize him as anti-Christ, but he is using a typical anti-Christ tactic by saying, "Well, wait a second. Christ hasn't come yet and how could they know so much detail about Christ so many centuries in advance?" Here it was, an anti-Christ philosophy creeping into a very genuine theological discussion. That's how Korihor is working. That's how Sherem worked.
- 00:22:37 Number one would be you can't know of anything of the future. I can only trust that which can be empirically tested and observed, measured by the five senses. That's number one. Let me give you an example of that. We think of the Renaissance, think of the reawakenings. I love those terms because it talks about we are expanding our horizons. Yes, they were expanding horizons of empiricism, rationalism, and scientific inquiry, and all of that plays a very significant role, but just as Nephi warned and Jacob warned in the earlier chapters of the Book of Mormon, "To be learned is good if..." And that's the tactic of an anti-Christ is to leave out the if, leave out the "if you will hearken to the precepts of God." To be learned is good, but also to be learned in the things of God adds even greater value to that in that regard. What is unreasonable is to think that I can't

use reason plus spiritual experience and observation. That's what the anti-Christ is doing is to discount and say, "If it is not within this little box of evidence, it cannot count towards knowledge of truth."

00:24:23 Let me give you one more quick story. Many, many years ago you'll remember that the Southern Baptist Convention held their annual convention in Salt Lake City and there was a lot of attention as to how the official church would respond and how church members would respond. President Hinckley was very hopeful that we would be good Christians. During this period of time, there was a very popular news anchorman on Channel 2 news by the name of Rod Decker. Rod Decker used to have a point and counterpoint type thing where he would invite people in to almost debate certain issues. During the Southern Baptist Convention, he invited a Baptist pastor that was there at the convention, was considered very knowledgeable and so forth.

00:25:18 Bob Millet was serving as dean of religion at the time and they invited Bob to come in and be on this little point-counterpoint and have a little bit of a debate. And the next day, Bob gets a phone call from another Baptist pastor, and the Baptist pastor said, "I was embarrassed that this guy represented us so badly and that it made it look like that Mormons know more than we Baptists and that isn't right. I need to come and talk to you Brother Millet." He invited this minister to come into his office and, if you remember, Brother Millet's office had books everywhere and he's lost more books than most of us will ever have in our library.

00:26:08 This pastor came in and Bob invited me to come in and I contributed to the story by saying things like, "Yeah, that's right." That was probably my major contribution to say, "Yeah, amen." But Bob would go through early Christian history, early Christian philosophy, going through so many things. We had this really great discussion about history of Christianity, early theological discussions. We went through so many issues for several hours. When we got to the end, we had to agree to disagree, but this Baptist minister said something that I don't think he realized how profound it was. He said, "I just can't believe that the two of you believe what you believe, knowing what you know."

00:27:04 Now, do you see what an interesting statement? The whole discussion was beyond the area of what has been taught, what is empirical, what can we measure, what can we reason about, what have we read, what is history, what is out in the academic world. All of that. And then it was we know things beyond the

things that were just on the bookshelves. That's the first category and that is the how can you know of anything that you can't measure with your senses? How can you accept it when there's no empirical way to prove it?

- John Bytheway: 00:27:53 When I look at verse 13, I think Korihor was a very efficient writer or speaker. Notice how many insults he could get into so few words, "O ye that are bound. You're foolish. Your hope is vain. You yoke yourselves with foolish things." One of the things I heard Robert Millet say that I thought, "Oh, I see that," he said Korihor is painting himself as a liberator. "I'm going to liberate you from all this. You guys have no freedom. You are bound. You are yoked. I'm going to deliver you from all this." In fact, later on he's going to say in verse 27, "You're not enjoying your rights and privileges and I'm here to liberate you." We hear that sort of thing today. "You guys have no freedom. You can't do anything."
- Dr. Brent Top: 00:28:43 Then he is saying, "Let me put you in this little box of rationalism and empiricism."
- Hank Smith: 00:28:50 Brent, in the history of our church, we've got some pretty educated people. When you think of the John Widtsoe and James Talmage and Henry Eyring Sr, these aren't your... what did you call them? country bumpkins who would believe anything you'd tell them.
- Dr. Brent Top: 00:29:06 Absolutely. And in fact, speaking of empiricism or things that you could measure, in a lot of the sociological research that I've done on LDS youth and families and parents in major studies that are done every year, national studies, not Latter-day Saints studies... We have colleagues at BYU that are continuing to build upon and recounting these, but every year they'll do studies on education levels. Latter-day Saints usually are the second-highest educated religious population of all that are studied. So it's not just the James Talmage, John Widtsoe, Russell Nelson. We could go down the list, but the rank and file member of the church generally has higher levels of education than other religious communities or non-religious communities.
- 00:30:08 It's not like we, of all people, are saying, "Oh, let's not even look at reason." There is strong correlations between education level and retaining your faith. Korihors today would have us believe that only nincompoops believe the gospel, but in reality, the more educated a person becomes, we're talking generally, not anecdotally, we're talking statistically, the more faithful they become and vice versa. I did studies with my late colleague in sociology, Dr. Bruce Chadwick, where we found that Latter-day

Saint youth that were more religious did better in school, and when they do better in school, they are more religious. Of course, Satan's going to want you to think you're not very sophisticated, you're not very knowledgeable if you believe, and if you believe in something that cannot be measured, then it's just foolish tradition.

- Hank Smith: 00:31:32 I have a couple of quotes I brought today if you don't mind if I share. I've noticed, Brent, as you showed us, step one with Korihor is there is no Christ. Step two is, "I need you to feel foolish." That's the attack. John said all the insults. "You are foolish," he says in verse 13. Verse 16, "It's the effect of a frenzied mind, deranged of mind." If someone believes in God, you are foolish. Brent, wouldn't you say, if I can get you to feel foolish, now you're vulnerable?
- Dr. Brent Top: 00:32:07 Oh, yeah.
- Hank Smith: 00:32:08 If I can get you to feel like you're the dumb one in the room, then all of a sudden you're, "Oh, I don't know."
- Dr. Brent Top: 00:32:15 You're right, Hank, to say, "You're just not sophisticated. You just can't quite get it." Let me just give you an example, too, that we encounter a lot of times is that... They don't say it this way, but it is implied and makes me feel this way, "Oh, if you were just as smart as me, you couldn't believe that."
- Hank Smith: 00:32:40 If you knew what I knew...
- Dr. Brent Top: 00:32:41 "If you were just as smart as me..." And it creates this intellectual caste system and an anti-Christ... One of the tactics of an anti-Christ is you cannot be intellectual unless you criticize the brethren. You can't be intellectual unless you are on the fringe in this way or that way, because that shows a non-conformist approach which is more sophisticated. If you're not critical, then you are brainwashed, you're blindfolded, you don't know anything that you're talking about. How could this Baptist minister say, "I can't believe that you believe the things that you do, knowing all the things that you know"? None of us want to be called fools, but I sure love in the scriptures when Paul and others, a term that we use that were fools for Christ. People can call Paul a fool, but, man, he had an awfully good education.
- Hank Smith: 00:33:59 I'm pretty sure they told Jesus himself, "You have a devil."
- Dr. Brent Top: 00:34:02 It's almost like this "foolish traditions of your father's frenzied mind." Can any good thing come from Nazareth? Same thing.

		How could anybody be able to know anything and they come from St. George? Jeff Holland's a pretty bright guy.
Hank Smith:	00:34:25	He's done okay.
Dr. Brent Top:	00:34:26	Pretty bright guy.
Hank Smith:	00:34:27	I'm glad you brought him up, Brent, because I have a quote right from him. He said exactly what you said, so it's the Second Witness. April 2013, general conference, a talk called Lord I Believe . He says, "Sometimes, we act as if an honest declaration of doubt is a higher manifestation of moral courage than an honest declaration of faith. It is not." Somehow, would you say you're intellectual if you doubt?
Dr. Brent Top:	00:34:54	Or that you have somehow wrestled with hard issues and hard questions, harder than a person that believes, which may not be true at all. A person that is devout and faithful, I would hope that I could even put myself in that category. I have wrestled long and hard with tough issues. I have searched and studied. It is not like I am dismissive of learning or knowledge, but I know what I know and I know what I choose to believe. You can see how Satan is going to try to put young people particularly, but others as well out on the fringes, because when they're out on the fringes feeling lonely, you know what happens in wildlife when those animals that are out on the fringes away from the body is you can pick them off so much easier, isolate to make them feel like, "Well, if I'm the only person that believes this gospel, there must be something wrong with me because all of my friends believe this. So I'm the one that's wrong," not the possibility that maybe others have not paid the price that you've paid.
John Bytheway:	00:36:28	When I was a student at BYU, they had a letter from the editor. I stuck it in my Alma chapter 30 file. I want you to listen to this. "Just think of the character it takes to let your bishopric and triple combination make all your life's decisions for you. That way, you don't have to waste any time pondering those important life questions like whether or not you should get married, have your kids, or pierce your ears more than once. Divine revelation is there to do it for you. I'm being serious now when I say I'm kind of jealous about the other myriad of benefits of having all your decisions made for you. How nice it must be to have the honor code right there to instruct you in some manners."
	00:37:09	I laughed and I thought, Korihor lives no freedom. That's what it's saying, and you're foolish because you can't even make your

own decisions. But I do love the question that Korihor asks in verse 15, "How do ye know?" I hope it's one we ask ourselves. When I was a bishop, I would take notes on every testimony, every month in testimony meeting. I began to notice the answers of how people said that they knew, and I divided it into feelings, exalted feelings they had like you just expressed there in the temple, and I've had those, but there's also been experiences. Sometimes, you ask the Lord, "Tell me that this is true," and he doesn't tell you in words. He tells you in an experience and it takes a year or two. Evidences, fruits of the gospel that they have noticed, that nobody can take away from. They're right there.

00:38:11 Lastly, there are some things that seem to make sense. I called it logic so that it would spell feel: feelings, evidences, experiences, logic or reason. Things like at the title page of the Book of Mormon where it says, "Manifesting himself unto all nations." Yeah, it just makes sense that Jesus would go other places and visit his people. To me, that's logical. So I like the question, "How do you know?" It helps me to ask the next question: is there a way to know truth outside the scientific method?

Dr. Brent Top: 00:38:47 I really think that's what Alma 31 is going to tell us. We have to add the word that you read there in verse 15, "How do you know?" Then the key phrase there of their surety. One of the things that I found when I was serving as stake president in Utah County is that there was a movement in some circles to not say I know, that it was almost juvenile or immature or totally unreasonable to ever bear testimony with an I know. I would hear a lot of testimonies of, "I believe..." That's great. I'm wonderful with that. "I have a conviction of," or "I want to believe," or things like that. While hopefully it was never intentional, but for some people it was like Korihor was doing here was shaming those that said I know into wondering whether or not you could really know, not whether you did really know but could really know.

00:40:02 Let me give you a second one where you see in verse 17. When it says there he was telling him many more things, I wish we had the many more things. Holy cow, can you imagine how many more episodes we could do on that? There could be no atonement made, so he's setting the stage here. He's saying that there's no Christ, so there could be no atonement made, and so in reality it's up to you, which then creates what I put out in my margin here, humanism. Humanism is both a strength and a weakness. It is a strength when we care about one another, when we understand a little bit about the human condition, and

we try to elevate and lift others in the human condition. When we understand that human beings have their own frailties and we all have frailties that we can strive to be more human to one another, that's a positive thing. But humanism in the negative sense here when he says, "Every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature."

00:41:20 Now, I want you to stop there for a second. I mean, we know what he's saying there. You're going to only get ahead by what you do, but notice I love the word... And again, I don't know exactly how Joseph translated the Book of Mormon and how these words all came to play there, but I think it's interesting where Korihor says, "Every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature." The word creature jumped out at me in that verse. I immediately thought of King Benjamin's words about the natural man, the creature that was not a divine daughter or son of God but as a creature, and you're driven by your own evolutionary impulses. You don't have any say. And in fact, when I was doing sociological research, one of the studies that we looked at was from a Harvard professor, sociologist that claimed that parents had no influence upon their children other than in genetic code of giving their kids either height or good looks or athletic ability, because in reality parental influence didn't really exist. It was the management of the creature.

00:42:54 Now, we look at that and say, "That is the stupidest thing I've ever heard," and you can see evidence otherwise. But Korihor is saying to these people, "Hey, it doesn't matter. There is no need for an atonement because you have to fend for yourself in this world. This is the dog-eat-dog world." Look at this next phrase here that really bugs me as well too. "Therefore, every man prospered according to his genius." You got to outsmart people. Not out-nice people, not out-kindness people, not out-serve people, outsmart people, and then conquer according to your strength. That, to me, is what I call humanism. The implication is you cannot look to God for anything. You've got to do it all yourself. You cannot expect an atonement, because, one, there is no Christ is what Korihor is saying. You can't expect that because you... It's all upon you.

00:44:12 You begin to see sometimes, and this is going to lead me to my last point in this chapter too, is when we have motivation speakers. Now, the three of us have been known to be motivation speakers in our own way. Some people might say, "Top is a no-motivation speaker. He's an unmotivated speaker." But the idea is there is Korihor philosophies that creep into our lives sometimes when we begin to think the same thing as he's

advocating is, "I've got to do this all myself. I've got to fare both academically, intellectually, socially, parentally, as a son or daughter. I've got to do everything according to my genius and my strength." What a terrible burden to carry. Like you were saying, John, that Korihor is saying he's going to be the great liberator. That is the great bondage to think that I am totally dependent upon my own efforts, my own skill, my own genius man, my own talent, my own good looks.

00:45:43 No wonder I feel doomed and depressed if that's how I have to measure up. So then if you have that thrown at you, then you have the third point is right at the end of verse 17 sets the stage or is the tactic of the anti-Christ. The verse after is the byproduct of it, "Whatsoever a man did was no crime." No sin, had no real meaningful consequences, doesn't matter, and thus he did preach unto them leading away the hearts of many, causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness.

00:46:39 Now, I'm going to say something I hope is not controversial. I want to point out, again, the difference between adopting even unwittingly anti-Christ philosophies, and I think we need to check your thoughts, your words, your actions. King Benjamin warning us about those things that, I think in our vocabulary, even as we teach the gospel, even as we teach our children and young people that we don't give opening to Korihor-like teachings. Now, here's what I'm going to say to you. Whatsoever a man did was no crime. None of my missionaries down in San Diego would say there was no atonement, but there was maybe a temptation at the other end of the continuum to say, "Because there is an atonement and because Jesus loves me and because grace is free, it doesn't matter what I do."

00:47:52 Now, that is a form of false grace or cheap grace. The point I'm trying to say there is, yes, we need to live the gospel, no, we don't have to do everything on our own, but let's also understand the Atonement, not dismiss the expectations of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the gospel commandments and covenants and ordinances by having grace be our strength that then becomes a weakness if we're not careful. God loves me, that I know for sure, but I also know for sure that I cannot continually offend him without there being some consequence. And that's what Korihor is saying to him and he's leading them along to basically say, "It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter," when in fact it does.

00:49:05 It's hard doctrine because I am such a devout, strong believer in grace. I've seen with my missionaries so much focusing on the

love of God and the love of Christ, which is absolutely the great inviter to the gospel. But if we are not careful, instead of it inviting us unto him, it basically says, "Because of him, I'm there," and I don't think that is ever the intent of Christ's gospel.

- John Bytheway: 00:49:41 That's a good point. Yeah, thank you, Brent, for that thought. I hadn't really considered that before. I'm thinking about the way we started. These ideas are ancient but they're modern. I'm looking at verse "you cannot know things you do not see" and today we would say seeing is believing, even though Polar Express taught us believing is seeing. Okay. And then "every man prospered according to his genius, every man conquered according to his strength." Oh, survival to the fittest. That's how we'd say it, right? "Whatsoever a man did was no crime." Oh, yeah, well, there's no real right and wrong. That's just consensus. We just made up some laws. And then "when a man is dead, that's the end thereof." There's no judgment, there's no accountability for our choices that negates the light of Christ and everything, and you could see how that philosophy is restated in more modern words today.
- Dr. Brent Top: 00:50:35 Yeah. You can see in verse 18 as well, it becomes relativism and it's like how many times we hear today when people talk about my truth, not the truth.
- John Bytheway: 00:50:52 The truth.
- Hank Smith: 00:50:53 Yeah.
- Dr. Brent Top: 00:50:54 That is another example of a Korihor philosophy that tells us that truth and the standards of God, the knowledge of God, the acceptance of the things of God are totally and completely idiosyncratic, and it can be whatever you want it to be. It sounds so magnificent and so inclusive, but in reality it is not. Korihor is saying there really is no truth and you cannot say that you know the truth, you cannot say you abide by truth, because there is no truth. And I can do my truth even if my truth transgresses upon you and yours. To me, I see these Korihor philosophies and tactics around us today. They're insidious. They're insipid. They're sometimes difficult even to recognize until it's too late.
- Hank Smith: 00:52:07 Brent, can I add a couple of second witnesses to everything you've taught us? Basically Alma 30:12-17 are the articles of no faith. You can list them out one by one. As you said earlier, we don't worship at the throne of academia, of education, but if you did, if you thought, "Well, can someone be educated and a believer..." You mentioned President Nelson. There's a litany of

people who are leaders of this church who have gone to some pretty good schools. You have Elder Oaks who has a law degree. You have Henry B. Eyring has a PhD from Harvard. You have Elder Holland who has a PhD from Yale. You have Elder Gong. I don't know if either of you have looked at Elder Gong's academic background, but a PhD from Oxford, a Rhodes Scholar, of Elder Bednar, a PhD from Purdue. I could keep going. We could go down the line that you can be educated and a believer. There is absolutely no question about that.

00:53:20 The other thing you mentioned, Brent, which struck me is the swinging to that side of the pendulum, which is, "Hey, if there's an atonement, then grace will cover whatever I do." And I thought of this way back in the year 2000. [Elder Holland](#) talked about that idea of, "Well, why can't I just do what I want to do if the Savior offers me his grace?" And he says, "Please never say, 'Who does it hurt? Why not a little freedom? I can repent later.' Please don't be so foolish and so cruel. You cannot, with impunity or without thinking, crucify Christ afresh or crucify him again." He said, "The suffering of the savior of the world was incalculable both in body and spirit. We owe him something for that. Indeed, we owe him everything for that." So the idea that this grace is so easy to come by when it caused the savior of the world incalculable suffering.

Dr. Brent Top: 00:54:34 Yeah, that's so beautiful. And it also reminds me of a statement from even longer ago than that from Elder Neal Maxwell when he talks about our relationship with the Savior. And that's where we're talking about we want to have a good relationship with the Savior. We want to have the knowledge of the personal, intimate, and infinite blessings of the Atonement in our lives, but not take it too casually. [Elder Maxwell](#) talked about where he said, "Any discussion or estimation of where we stand in relationship to Christ tells us that we do not stand at all. We kneel." If we understood the gospel of Jesus Christ, we kneel in adoration and appreciation. We don't view the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God as a giant circus safety net for the careless trapeze artists, but rather as a covenant path, an iron rod that leads us away from the dangers of the world and leads us to that fruit that is sweeter and whiter and better than anything anybody can imagine. Korihor is trying to, in any way possible, diminish our true understanding of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

John Bytheway: 00:56:13 Speaking of relativism, there's a place where Nephi says, "He must press forward." I like to ask my students, "Everybody point forward to where you're sitting. Look, we're pointing in opposite directions." You might think that means forward is

whatever I decide it is, but Nephi doesn't leave us wiggle room. He says, "He must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ," so forward is Christ-ward. I know that Stephen Covey used to do something I just thought was so brilliant. He'd be in a business seminar setting and he would say to the group, "Everybody cover your eyes and point north," and usually they're in an unfamiliar conference center. And he said, "I would have people pointing in every direction, including straight up." And then he would say, "Okay, uncover your eyes and look around the room," and they'd all laugh. "Oh, I came up the elevator. I don't know where I am," and they'd all laugh and everything.

00:57:02 And then I just thought, "Wow, this is brilliant." He would say, "Well, why don't we just vote," and they'd kind of squirm like, "Well, north isn't subject to popular opinion. I mean, you might be right, but you might not." "Oh, okay, well, why don't we have the strongest person in the room decide then? We'll have an arm wrestling tournament. They choose what north is." "Well, it's good to be strong, but they could be wrong." "Okay, well let's have the wealthiest person in the room. That's the golden rule. If you got the gold, you make the rules." And they'd all kind of laugh at that, too, and then he would say, and I thought, "Wow, this is very 2024." "Just decide what north is for you," which would kind of ensure that everybody's lost. After he kind of showed... Well, it does work if you're on the South Pole. I thought about that one, then it works. If you're right on the South Pole, it works.

00:57:52 But then he would say, "See, none of these work. Popular opinion doesn't work, money doesn't work, power doesn't work, relativism doesn't work." He would pull something out of his pocket and you know what it is? A compass. And he would say, "This is an external reality. It's not up to me. It's not up to you. It's similar to we hold these truths to be self-evident. It's time-honored. We must align our lives with true north principles." I love that idea. Christ is our true north. Such a good argument against relativism or whatever you think. Is there such a thing as absolute truth? Korihor says, "No, there's no such thing. Whatsoever a man did was no crime." [Elder Maxwell](#) said, "Denying absolutely the existence of absolutes."

Hank Smith: 00:58:42 Denying absolutely the existence of absolutes, that's great.

John Bytheway: 00:58:47 Hank and Brent, I was looking in the manual and it says, "What object lessons can you think of to better understand the difference between the Savior's teachings and Satan's false imitations?" I used to have this on my desk when I was a bishop. My dad said once, "When you pick up one end of the stick, you

pick up the other," and I thought, "That's really brilliant, Dad. Thank you so much." I wanted to test this. I went to Home Depot and I bought a piece of wood. I even put black and yellow crash dummy testing stuff on it.

Hank Smith:	00:59:20	"I wanted to test this." Okay.
John Bytheway:	00:59:22	I wanted to test the theory. Here you go. If I pick up one end of the stick, do I pick up the other? Now, I always had a deacon. I can do it. Okay, but you get the idea. You pick up one end of the stick, you pick up the other. When I read Korihor, "Whatsoever a man did was no crime. When a man is dead, that's the end thereof," I see him saying that there's no consequences. And this is what this whole little stick thing means. When you make a choice, you get a consequence. Korihor is covering up this part and saying, "You can do whatever you want. There's no consequences." Now with my kids, I told them, "Finish this sentence. What happens in Vegas..."
Hank Smith:	01:00:09	Stays in Vegas.
John Bytheway:	01:00:10	That's saying there's no consequences. We have a whole world that's trying to provide a way for particularly breaking law of chastity, no consequences. It causes people to make what I call Korihorrible decisions.
Dr. Brent Top:	01:00:23	That's right. Good. I like that. I like that a lot.
John Bytheway:	01:00:28	When I see that verse, and I think there really are consequences... Verse 18, "They lifted up their heads in wickedness and they committed whoredoms." The record doesn't tell us how many broken hearts, how many broken homes, how many consequences were there. I think it's so interesting. We're talking beliefs, beliefs, beliefs, beliefs, and then verse 18 is behavior. "They lifted up their heads in wickedness..." Scripturally, you both know better than I do that scriptures use body parts a lot. To have a stiff neck means you're stubborn. Well, you lift up your heads in wickedness, you're not embarrassed, you're not ashamed. This was the end result of what Korihor was teaching him. They went right for that commandment there. I've often wondered what happened after that to all of those families. And thankfully, there is an arm of mercy extended.
Dr. Brent Top:	01:01:26	I love President Packer's statement, "You better really want the consequences of what you really want." When I was a stake president, I try to teach the bishops to teach people and

transgressors and especially the youth when they talk about it is so hard to live the gospel, that I would say living the gospel is not hard. Living with the consequences of not living the gospel is hard. That, I think, goes along with that idea of relativism that you think you can defy gravity but not splatter at the bottom when you jump off a building. It just doesn't work that way.

John Bytheway: 01:02:17 What you said, the gospel, I like to say, is the easiest way to live, and I have people get downright upset. I didn't say it was easy. I said it's easier. It's the easiest way because it's easier than going through the consequences of not living it. My kids, when we were raising them, thought consequence was a bad word. "Do I get a consequence?" But it can be a really good thing. And there are fruits. We call them fruits in the scriptures. And then there's one more side to my stick and that is if-then. These awesome if-then statements we have in the scriptures, the three of us are sitting here today because of an if-then. If any of you lack wisdom, then let him ask. The then is implied. King Benjamin, "I would desire you consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. If they hold out faithful to the end, then they're received into heaven, that they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness." And Korihor's trying to say there are no consequences for wickedness. I tried it with this stick from Home Depot and I empirically decided, no, there's consequences for everything.

Hank Smith: 1:03:27 Can I share something with both of you that was pointed out by one of the best leaders in the history of the church, Julie Beck? She pointed to verse 18 that Mormon points out that Korihor led away the hearts of many, specifically, Mormon says, leading away many women. [Julie Beck](#) highlighted this at BYU Women's Conference back in 2009. We're fans of Women's Conference here at followHIM.

1:00:59 She says, "Korihor thought he was an original, and the people who are preaching these things today also think they are original and clever. They are not original or clever. Their teachings are pirated from the leader of darkness and are taught by failed leaders. Korihor was a failed leader who did not prosper. He was called an anti-Christ. We should never forget, sisters, that anti-Christ teachings and principles are always anti-family and anti-family teachings are anti-Christ. Satan knows that he will never have a body, he will never have a family, so he targets women who create the bodies for future generation."

1:04:46 Julie Beck, if you want to go through her teachings when she was serving as President of the Relief Society. I had never really

seen that before, but she highlighted it as an important point made by Mormon.

- John Bytheway: 1:04:59 And Mormon did, yeah. There's a question that often comes up. If there is no law against a man's belief, then why, in verse 20, could they take Korihor and bind him and carry him before Ammon? I think that to quote Camille Fronk Olson, "We're being a little naive if we don't think that Korihor was right in there with them committing whoredoms."
- Hank Smith: 1:05:23 Back in verse 10, "You can be punished for crimes."
- John Bytheway: 1:05:27 Yeah, and causing others to do the same thing. I thought, Oh, good point. Maybe for that reason they could take him and bind him.
- 1:05:35 One of the things that I loved about verse 22 is the high priest, his name is Giddonah. He only gets quoted for this one spot in the Book of Mormon. "Why do you go about perverting the ways of the Lord? Why do you teach this people that there shall be no Christ," and listen to this phrase, "to interrupt their rejoicings."
- 1:05:57 If we believe in Christ, what should we be doing, and how is the gospel described throughout the scriptures? "Glad tidings of great joy." We should be rejoicing. There's only one time in the entire Book of Mormon when the word "interrupt" is used, and it happens to be Giddonah, right here. Fun little factoid. But the idea that Satan wants us to feel like living the gospel is just making us feel guilty all the time. But if we really love the gospel and love the plan and love the doctrine of Christ, it is reason to rejoice.
- Dr. Brent Top: 1:06:34 The modern day Korihors, why do you take such great delight in tearing down everything that is valuable to me and sacred to me? We do not teach our missionaries to tear down, but as President Hinckley used to say, "Bring all the good that you have." And yet, Korihor wanted to pervert the ways, destroy the rejoicing, tear down anything that brought good and happiness to others. How do people live with themselves who tear down all the time and delight in making others feel horrible? It just doesn't jive with everything that we understand Christ to be.
- Hank Smith: 1:07:34 Thank you for that, Brent. Thank you. It's, "By their fruits you shall know them."

John Bytheway:

1:07:40

Now, it's interesting that Alma is going to say the same in verse 35. "Believest thou that we deceive this people, that causes such joy in their hearts?" That joy is a fruit of the gospel. It should be.



John Bytheway:	00:01	Welcome to part two with Dr. Brent Top, Alma 30 through 31.
Hank Smith:	00:06	So Brent, we've looked at Korihor and now we have Alma's response. What do you want us to see here?
Dr. Brent Top:	00:13	Like John said earlier, there may be more to the story that's not in the Book of Mormon record as to Korihor's arrest and what crimes he had committed that would warrant his, I guess you'd say, arrest or being brought before the high priest and the chief judge. I do like the way that Alma reasons with Korihor and says, "Okay. You say this. You tell me why you say this and you have brought about so much pain and suffering. Why are you doing that?"
	00:53	Then we come and see right here, verse 35. Alma says, "Why sayest thou that we preach unto this people to get gain?" Now I found that interesting once again. So now he's throwing out a whole new thing. He's contradicting his own philosophy. Well, if it doesn't matter what people do, if they want to prosper according to their own skill and talent and ability, why do you care whether I prosper?
	01:24	And now, believest thou that we deceive this people that causes such joy in their hearts. Are we the ones that are causing the suffering there? But I love that Alma then said, Okay. Will you really deny? Will you deny God? Will you deny the Christ? And he says, Yep. I will. I will. And he says, What evidence do you have that there is no God? You've been saying everything has to be by evidence, by rationale and empiricism reason, science. And now Alma says, "Well, what evidence do you have that there is no God?"
	02:09	And I love it that Alma says, "You've got nothing. Look at what I've got." And he gives the litany of all the different evidences that all things denote there is a God over in verse 44 there. All these things testify that there is a God. I have these witnesses. I have the scriptures. I have the holy prophets. I have these, your

brethren that testify. If I were going to give that defense, I would say I have all of these things plus the things that I have experienced and seen with my own eyes, heard with my own ears and felt with my heart.

- 02:55 John, you said, "I don't want this to be sacrilegious, but you say you wanted to have a Korihor object lesson." Alma's got the best object lesson for Korihor of all. When Korihor says, "Give me a sign." It is that Alma is saying, "You will not believe anything else. You have perverted the ways of the Lord. Father in heaven, do with him what you see fit and bring a sign upon him."
- 03:32 I've often thought this is where my irreverence gets in the way sometimes, but sometimes I think it would be great if God just struck down people immediately when they did these terrible things. And then I start thinking, "Oh, I'm glad he doesn't because I might be in that category where I'm deaf and dumb and all of those kinds of things with a sign, or I get stricken with leprosy."
- 03:57 I think that this becomes an example of consequences. As a mission president, and again, I use this example and every mission president can tell you their own stories of this and of trying to work with and redeem and to help a young struggling missionary to abide by the rules, to have a good mission, to feel the Spirit, to get along well with others, and teach the gospel and help others to love them, and you work with them, you work with them and you work with them.
- 04:35 In reality, as my wife says, neither a missionary nor any human being ever runs out of time. They run out of desire. Alma is giving Korihor every opportunity to repent, every way to change, reasoning with him from the scriptures, giving him the evidences, but he was saying, "I love you, Korihor. I want you. You have so much potential."
- 05:12 We can hear all the things we've said to others as we've counseled and yearned for them to get on the covenant path, but as a mission president, as a bishop, as a stake president, sometimes as a parent where you reach a point, where they reach a point with their behaviors and their lack of desire where we cannot save them from the consequences.
- 05:41 I can tell you, I have witnessed in my ecclesiastical, family, professional lives, there are worse things that come as a result of sin and disbelief than not being able to speak or hear or see.

While this is maybe a sign of a very graphic nature, I think it is in a way merciful by comparison.

- John Bytheway: 06:13 I love that he shifted the burden of proof. First of all, as soon as you accused Alma of he uses the words, you'll glut yourselves off the labors of their hands. He has to come up with a motive. Why would somebody serve for that long with such energy and give so much? He has to come up with the reason. I think about the 12, our first presidency that are called to that position until when.
- Hank Smith: 06:42 Yeah. Yeah. And maybe not even then, right? It probably continues. Here's your new assignment, right, when thinking of the other?
- John Bytheway: 06:50 I'm reminded of a time when I was at a dinner of some kind and Elder Ballard got up to speak and he said I was with President Packer. We were in talking to the New York media about the sesquicentennial. So guys, this was 1997, the sesquicentennial and the pioneers came to the valley.
- 07:10 Elder Ballard said there were two questions, which no matter how hard we try to answer, the reporters were not satisfied. How do you get people to pay tithing? How do you get those young people to go on missions?
- 07:23 See, Korihor has to come up with a reason. There must be some other thing. You're glutting yourselves with the labors and Alma's like, "Just a minute, Bucko. That's not going to stand." He tells him, but then I just love, as you said, how he says, "Where's your evidence?" And the hierarchy of testimony here, you have my testimony, the testimony of thy brethren, testimony of the holy prophets, the scriptures and all things denote there is a God.
- 07:48 There's a great witness. I love what you said, Brent. He's got nothing. I have all of this. I'm reminded of Steve Young recently wrote a book called The Law of Love, and he quoted a man who studied the human genome, the DNA code and was a scientist but had such a hard time because of the beauty and the symmetry and the design in the DNA code. He became a believer. He said, "I had to look at creation as an option here because how could this have happened?"
- Hank Smith: 08:24 One thing I notice in these chapters is that Korihor seems to be calling out Alma's behavior when he himself, just on the previous page basically said, "There is no bad behavior. There's

no such thing as bad behavior." Yet he comes to Alma with, "You're behaving badly." Korihor's argument to Alma is that you're keeping people in bondage. I'm scared of this narrative for my children, which is you are the victim. You're always the victim. You have no freedom. That scares me. Verse 27. What have you seen with that?

Dr. Brent Top:	09:02	I have family members that just think, "How is it possible that Brent and Wendy would do all these things and they can't do this and they can't retire and do all that." And could it not be possible that this is what I choose because of what I know and what I've experienced.
	09:24	It is not bondage when I choose. And I knowingly choose because of the blessings that have come into my life. It goes back to that how can you believe the things you believe knowing what you know? How can I not believe the things that I believe? How can I not do the things that I do? How can I not be what I'm striving to become knowing what I know and what I have experienced?
	09:59	One of the things that I tried to do with missionaries I've tried to do in my own life, and I remember when Wendy and I were young newlyweds and we were on a walk and started to do this and it became such a great blessing.
	10:14	President Eyring has talked a lot about this gratitude is to think about all the ways that you have seen the hand of God in your life. How have you seen God in your life? How has Christ, his love, his sacrifice, his teachings, how has it been manifest in our lives?
	10:44	I have extended family members that are not in the church that think that our family is charmed in some way, that our life is charmed in some way, and they don't know of the problems or challenges we have, but they look at us and think that somehow all of these blessings and all of the things that have come to us as a family just spontaneously erupted into our lives with no causation.
	11:19	No. There is a law irrevocably decreed in heaven and I have seen it over and over and over again in my life. How can I not believe to be knowing what I know?
John Bytheway:	11:38	I saw a poster when I was a student at BYU and I just loved this idea. And it said, "Those who danced were thought to be quite insane by those who could not hear the music." Since that time,

		I've heard a couple of conference talks about hearing the music of the gospel. And Korihor has to explain. It must be you're glutting yourselves or something because he can't figure out why anybody would be so dedicated to this. Well, you hear the music of the gospel.
Hank Smith:	12:08	Brent, you've probably heard this quote before. You've pretty much quoted it in different words. This is an evangelical pastor said, "Real Christians do not carry their religion. Their religion carries them. It is not weight. It is wings. It sets them free from fear, discouragement and sin. Those are the enslavers of souls." What you just described there is not a weight of the gospel but the wings of the gospel.
Dr. Brent Top:	12:40	That's beautiful. I like that. I like that a lot. And in contrast, we started out on chapter 30 of my contrast of the Korihorism of the world today with what I've experienced the last couple of days in the temple with sealings and other ordinances. What a contrast between Alma and what his testimony is there that we've read of all of the different evidences and signs that he had.
	13:10	Then you look and see at verse 60, the end of the story, if you will. "Thus, we see that the devil will not support his children at the last day, but does speedily drag them down to hell."
	13:27	Unfortunately, I have seen people dragged to hell on earth because of choices that they have made, philosophies they have espoused, things they ridiculed that would have protected them in so many ways. Being dragged down to hell is not just an eternal end product. There are those that being speedily dragged down to hell on earth.
	14:05	And again, like I said, my wife has said it so beautifully that people do not run out of Christ's love. People do not run out of Christ's mercy or grace. They do not run out of time. They run out of their own desire.
Hank Smith:	14:25	I think Elder Maxwell said those who over-celebrate their ability to feel will eventually lose their ability to feel. That's a living hell.
John Bytheway:	14:36	I love when Alma shifted the burden of proof and said, "I know there is a God." And how he started with personal testimony, and then went to the testimony of brother and the scriptures and all things in nature.

	14:49	And it reminded me of a time I was up at, a then especially for youth in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. There were a bunch of college students having a semi-friendly discussion with a bunch of counselors and they were arguing about the Book of Mormon and archeology and evidence. One of these counselors walked up, whose name was Nate Pinnock and he changed the entire tone of the discussion.
	15:14	He said very sincerely, "I have read the Book for Mormon. I've read every word of it and I have prayed about it and I know that book is true. And if you'll do the same thing I did, you can know that it's true too." The whole discussion changed and the tone and everything, and I thought, "You learn that from Alma." You start with this is how I know.
Hank Smith:	15:38	I'm reminded of our discussion on Second Nephi 27. It can't be about the evidence, it has to be about the text. The evidence may convince you, but the text converts you. Brent, you made the side comment earlier, the Korihors of today prey upon the weak, the sick, and the young.
	15:58	Well, I was in a meeting where Sister Kathy Andersen shared a story. Her husband is Neil Andersen of the 12. She said that years earlier, she and her husband had been on a safari in Africa and this was one of the moments where John would say, "You have to listen with your spiritual ears."
	16:19	She said, "We were on a safari in Africa and we came across this scene." She said, "There was a big group of baboons and they were all silent staring at this scene. And there was a lion walking through their midst who had a baby baboon in its mouth and he was walking away." And then she said, "You could only hear one sound. And it was two adult baboons in that crowd screaming."
	16:54	And Sister Andersen is telling this story with tears running down her cheeks. And it wasn't about the animals here. It was about what we see when the Korihors of today take a young or a weak or a sick soul and take them from those who love them most.
Dr. Brent Top:	17:15	You're going to see in chapter 31 where Mormon is going to teach us the condition that led to the Zoramites and the Rameumptom, and that's one of those things that I think you would see as evidenced how they fell into grave errors.
Hank Smith:	17:34	Well, that's a great segue then, Brent. Take us to chapter 31.

Dr. Brent Top:	17:38	Okay. I can relate to it. And it goes along with the story that you told. You see down here at the end of verse one, to begin to see Alma's feelings about what he has experienced with Korihor and what impact it has been having upon the people and from Zoram as well.
	18:00	He says, right at the very end he said, "His heart again began to sicken because of the iniquity of the people." And then in verse two. "It was the cause of great sorrow to Alma to know of iniquity among his people, therefore his heart was exceedingly sorrowful because of the apostasy, the dissension."
	18:29	You've flattered me with your introduction of my many experiences in the kingdom, but mine is nothing compared to those that we love and sustain as prophets, seers and revelators. And I have had enough experience to know that I have had similar Alma experiences and it makes me appreciate and sorrowful for those that preside over us with what they must know and what they must feel when they see the world and the conditions of the world ripening in iniquity and the impact that it has not only on the world and Heavenly Father's children in general, but on families.
	19:20	If we jump to verse five, thought of this passage in a lot of different contexts. The preaching or the teaching, the discussing, the studying of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just, and it had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword or anything else.
	19:45	Now I'm just going to stop there and then I'll come back to that part of the verse that is so familiar to us. Every mission president, every ecclesiastical leader encounters some problems and some challenges and there may sometimes be a culture within the unit or in the mission that isn't one of obedience and righteousness.
	20:10	One of the things that I encountered, on our first mission, was how in the world do I get the missionaries not to motivate them to be their emotional and spiritual cheerleader, but how can I get them not just to obey the rules, to get them to work and go out and put in the hours that they're supposed to put in, but how can I get them to be disciples of Christ and change the inner man and the inner woman?
	20:44	It was interesting that we went out in 2004 just as preach my Gospel was being introduced, and one of the things that we saw this scripture and President Packer's statement about the study

of doctrine will change behavior more than the study of behavior will. All of those passages or those statements that are very familiar to us, I was really struggling with the mission at one time and really I guess you'd say somewhat similar to Alma, sickened by iniquity or lack of obedience or lack of commitment.

- 21:23 And Wendy said to me, "Believe in the promise." And I said, "What do you mean believe in the promise?" And the promise was Alma chapter 31 verse five. And that President Packer had used that passage to talk about what impact the preaching of the word would have.
- 21:46 We focused a great deal of attention on studying doctrine, studying the gospel and the scriptures and focusing on the scriptures. And we saw a dramatic change in the mission, not statistically, not necessarily by any program way, but the dramatic change was that when they came to understand the virtue of the word of God, that it made all the difference to them in their own lives.
- 22:24 How often as a mission president that I hold up the little white handbook or now the standards book. Like this is my sword to try to get you to do something when in reality the power of the word is what changes missions and missionaries and brings about greater conversion. And that can only come from within.
- 22:51 Alma says that it was expedient, that I, they, the missionaries and the sons of Mosiah, that they should try, not experiment on this, but to really give it the work. To try the virtue, and in fact the word virtue in many contexts and in Greek and Latin is often synonymous or similar to power. It is the power. Try the power of the word of God.
- 23:35 Immediately say just like when we sing, "to Nephi, seer of olden time", and we sing the song, the iron rod is the word of God and we think the word of God is scriptures. Well, it is that and it is the preaching of the word, but more than the scriptures. The scriptures themselves testify and Jesus himself testifies that he is the word of God. He is the word.
- 24:09 And so I don't think Alma is merely saying as we sometimes are led to assume by our lessons or talks in the church that it was expedient. Absolutely essential, the word expedient is far stronger than necessary. It is absolutely imperative. It is essential that they work with the power of Christ.

	24:41	The power of Christ. It's not saying the power of the scriptures, even though I believe with all my heart that there is indeed a great power in the scriptures. But that which is going to change and transform us as we come to know Christ. That is what is more powerful than anything. It is not fear of hellfire and damnation that caused us to go on two missions when it wasn't necessarily a comfortable, convenient time.
	25:18	It isn't hellfire and damnation or a sword that causes us as parents to want to teach our children the principles of the gospel and strive to have meaningful standards and lessons of life in our homes. It's our love for the Lord.
	25:39	When we have the love for the Lord and we try the power of Christ in our lives and in our actions, in our ministering that is more powerful than anything else. And that's what we saw change more in anything else in our mission service was that when the missionaries found Christ inside themselves. I didn't have to do a lot after that.
	26:12	I had a young sister on our most recent mission and she's still out in her proselyting field and I won't mention her name even though I'd love to give her a big shout-out and hopefully get a member meal for her somewhere. I know where she is, but she'd had a really, really difficult childhood, very difficult circumstances, and had been raised by a grandma because of the difficult things that she had had to encounter in her life.
	26:43	And when she said to me on one occasion, she said, "Because I love Jesus so much, I want to be a good missionary." That's more powerful than the white handbook, a mission president. It is more powerful than a companion yelling at you to get up at 6:29. It is more powerful than anything when we utilize the power of Christ in our own lives and in the lives of those we love. That makes all the difference.
Hank Smith:	27:31	I can see someone teaching the lesson on this section using one question from the manual, which Brent just exemplified for us. How have you seen the word of God lead people to do good things? That's one question from the manual that I think you could take up an entire lesson just with the experiences like you've shared.
Dr. Brent Top:	27:55	Absolutely. I'm not in any way minimizing the word of God is scriptures because the word of God of scriptures should teach and testify of Christ and motivate us to incorporate that in our lives. I have to tell you, I'm not sure Leviticus has transformed

		my life that dramatically. I think that's why we look at it that the power, the power of the word that is what changes us.
Hank Smith:	28:27	And the beginning was the word.
John Bytheway:	28:30	I put John chapter one verses one through three in my margin and that virtue, meaning power. I remember reading about that same idea of virtue being power when Jesus perceived that virtue had gone out of him when the woman touched the hem of his garment. Those are great synonyms to look at it. Try the power of the word of Christ.
Hank Smith:	28:53	Now, Brent, you've served as mission president twice, we've talked about that. This is quite the mission that they are sent on. Let's go to the Zoramites, who are in a pretty dark place.
Dr. Brent Top:	29:07	I could not have handled it as well as these brethren were handling it. Can you imagine walking in and seeing that Rameumptom worship that very first time? I have to tell you because it's so stunning to me that when I was a young seminary teacher in Arizona, I wanted my students to experience how stunning and how ludicrous, how revolting this whole experience is.
	29:39	I mean, this is your object, I guess, you'd say. If we want to focus on an object lesson, that when we got to this point in teaching, I actually offered the opening prayer in our seminary class standing on top of the desk in front of the room without giving them any notice whatsoever. I jumped up on the desk and started in on it with my modern-day version of the Rameumptom Prayer. And they were absolutely blown away.
	30:13	And speaking of frenzied mind, they were ready to haul me away, but then when I sat down and said, "Let's turn to Alma 31." They could relate to that because it was such a stark contrast to the way that we have been instructed to worship. The Rameumptom story is setting the stage for Alma's great teachings in Alma 32.
John Bytheway:	30:46	I have noticed in the Book of Mormon, nobody is ever somewhat surprised, very mildly. "Oh, that's interesting." They are always some level of astonished. I've researched it. There's one case of being less astonished at a sign or wonder after Samuel the Lamanite.
	31:01	Nine cases of being astonished, one case of being more astonished, two cases of being greatly astonished, nine more

cases of being exceedingly astonished, or astonished exceedingly, but my friends, there is only one case of being astonished beyond all measure. We can't measure it. It's off the charts and that is after they hear this prayer on the Rameumptom.

Dr. Brent Top:	31:25	Got to be.
John Bytheway:	31:27	And if we ever get to see the events somehow of the Book of Mormon, I am so excited to see what that looks like to be astonished beyond all measure. What did we just see? And maybe that was your students that day in seminary.
Dr. Brent Top:	31:45	Well, I think there were some of the sweet, humble, young sisters in the class that were crying by the time I got a-
John Bytheway:	31:53	Yeah. What is he doing?
Dr. Brent Top:	31:55	They were astonished beyond measure.
John Bytheway:	31:57	All measure.
Hank Smith:	32:00	Brent, I love how you've related that. Could this be us? We look at it and go, oh, man. I'm glad that's not me, but could we get together once a week to talk about how much better we are than everyone else? And then we go home and we don't talk about God again until we're back together again to talk about how great we are.
Dr. Brent Top:	32:20	And that God has chosen us and nobody else. The way you said it, Hank. It makes me think, "Oh, is it I? Is it I? Have I done that, that I've left the impression to my children or to others, to my non Latter-Day Saint friends that somehow I am a Zoramite and that I've left that impression that I am better than everybody else?"
	32:49	And you're absolutely right. This chapter is astonishing beyond measure to me. Look at verse 30. "Oh, Lord God, how long wilt thou suffer that such wickedness and infidelity shall be among this people? How long?" I mean, we of all people ought to understand when a prophet is saying, "How long, oh, Lord?" The conditions are pretty bad.
	33:20	And Alma is saying, "How long are we going to allow this to happen?" And then look at this. "Oh, Lord, wilt thou give me strength that I may bear with my infirmities. For I am infirm, and such wickedness among this people doth pain my soul." It's not

I'm an infirm man because of the fall of Adam and I've got a bad knee and a bad back. It is this pains my soul to the point that I am sick. I am absolutely sick with this wickedness. Then that gives us his prayer that I think is so beautiful.

34:10 When you see it in that pain, that prophetic pain because of the wickedness of the world. "Oh, Lord, my heart is exceedingly sorrowful. Wilt thou comfort my soul in Christ. Oh, Lord, wilt thou grant unto me that I may have strength, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions."

34:37 What's his affliction? His affliction is ministering to this wicked people and seeking to reclaim them from this terrible condition. Grant me that I may have strength, that I may suffer with patience because of the iniquity of this people.

34:59 Verse 32. I love these passages. I love them as a missionary. I love them as a leader, as I've loved them as a father and as a preacher. "Oh, Lord, wilt thou comfort my soul and give unto me success and also my fellow laborers who are with me." Then come down after giving the names of the four sons of Mosiah and Amulek there of course.

35:27 And he said, "Wilt thou comfort their souls in Christ?" He's not saying give them great missionary skills. Yes. I know that Amulek has just been reactivated. Give him some extra skills. Give them comfort in Christ.

35:49 33 and 34. "Wilt thou grant unto them that they may have strength, that they may bear their afflictions which shall come upon them because of the iniquities of this people?" Oh, little did Alma know at the time when he was offering that prayer what was going to beset them. Wilt Thou grant unto us that we may have success to bringing them again unto thee in Christ.

36:19 Oh, Lord, verse 35. And this is back to their souls are precious like all the others. Oh, Lord, give unto us power and wisdom that we may bring this our brethren again unto thee.

36:38 Then that beautiful setting apart in verse 36. The laying or clapping his hands upon their heads, setting them apart for this incredible mission, this incredibly difficult mission. This one has got anything that I've ever experienced by a long shot. And when I was set apart the first time as a mission president, President Packer laid his hands on my head and very simply after giving me the keys and setting me apart, said, "I bless you that you will not panic when you have every reason to panic."

	37:18	And holy cow, look at what the sons of Mosiah and Alma and Amulek are facing. And Alma's praying for them to have success. Then look down in verse 38. The moral of the story here, if you will. "And the Lord provided for them that they should hunger not neither should they thirst, yea, and he also gave them strength that they should suffer no manner of afflictions save it were swallowed up unto the joy of Christ. That is the kind of missionary work and the ministering work and the parenting work and the grandparenting work and the neighborly work. That's the kind of success that I have, that I have no manner of affliction concerning the souls of those that I love, save it be swallowed up in the joy of Christ.
Hank Smith:	38:27	Brent, you pointed out the difference between these two prayers. Don't you think that could be a lesson of Alma 31, compare this prayer to this prayer and you're going to learn a lot about prayer.
Dr. Brent Top:	38:39	I think you're right on target there. Alma's contrasting prayer not only is such a astonishing beyond measure contrast to the Rameumptom prayer, but it also serves as a great example for Amulek and the sons of Mosiah as they go forward and are going to face unbelievable afflictions on their missions to see the prayer of their file leader, if you will, of their mission president, and we see the blessings that will come by reason of their faith when they quote Zenos and Zenock and the prayers.
	39:29	The upcoming chapters I think highlight that, but it reminds me of in the New Testament when the disciples said to Jesus, "Teach us to pray." I think they knew how to pray, and they certainly had the Psalms and knew how to pray in the traditional way that they had been taught in synagogue. I think they were saying, "Teach us to pray as you pray."
	39:58	You think of the most powerful prayers in the Book of Mormon. Alma's here has got to be one of the greatest, but those most powerful prayers come in time of great need and great suffering. The anguish of the soul thinking of Nephi getting up on the roof of his house and crying out his heart and soul. Think of Nephi pleading with the Lord as his brothers were going to kill him. Think of all of the great prayers, but most of all think of the Savior's prayer among the Nephites and the Lamanites and among the children especially and when people said they could not even record or utter the greatness of his prayers.
	40:52	I think we get a little bit of a glimpse of that with Alma's prayer in Alma chapter 31. Clearly, it is a contrast with the Rameumptom and I have to admit. In our family, we've had

probably more Rameumptom-type blessings on the food than Alma's soulful prayers of petitioning. You think of some of the prayers that we have that are just wrote prayers. I mean, we can mock the Zoramites all we want, but we may not stand up on a Rameumptom, but sometimes we blow through prayers as if we think that God has chosen us above all other people of everything and we don't need to plead with him for our souls or for anything else.

- John Bytheway: 41:44 I really like the idea of let's not laugh at these silly Zoramites because we might see ourselves in these. And I mean, this year the youth scriptural theme is the Third Nephi 5:5. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- 41:58 The youth program is to create lifelong disciples of Christ, not part-time disciples of Christ or one-time disciples of Christ or Sunday disciples of Christ, and that phrase there in verse 23, they prayed after this manner, then returned to their homes, never speaking of their God again, change your church clothes, your church music, mid-video, whatever. Never speaking of God again until they'd assembled themselves together to the holy stance. You're right, Brent. There's a little bit of, is it I?
- Dr. Brent Top: 42:31 The root word of religion and it's the L-I-G portion in the middle there is the same root word of ligament. The ligament that holds it all together and gives it strength. What the Zoramites are experiencing or what we may be like that way of that we think religion is only attending church, is it's not holding everything of our lives together.
- 43:03 It's not true religion, undefiled, if you will, when it is that ligament that gives my knee strength. That without that ligament I cannot function. That is different than church attendance or church affiliation. Religion in that sense is that it is the very way of being that holds every aspect of your life together. I think that's exactly what we're learning from that Rameumptom prayer.
- Hank Smith: 43:40 John, I've heard you talk about Zeezrom. Remember way back in Alma 12, where he talks to Zeezrom. Alma doesn't seem to have an us versus them mentality. Look at Alma 31:35. "Behold, oh Lord, their souls are precious. I'm concerned about them." Do you remember what he said to Zeezrom?
- John Bytheway: 44:02 This was the plan?
- Hank Smith: 44:05 Yeah. That's what I'm thinking of.

John Bytheway:	44:06	Look, Hank and I have done this podcast so long we know what each other's thinking. He said to Zeezrom. This was the plan of thine adversary, which was so interesting to me. Not the adversary, but Zeezrom he's against you too. This was the plan of thine adversary. Don't get confused about who's on your side and who isn't on your side.
	44:28	I've always loved that. I'm on your side, Zeezrom. And thankfully, Zeezrom is one of those that goes from gotcha questions to golden questions and there's a place coming up where when they're thrown in prison and listened to the words of Alma and Amulek and Zeezrom, all three of those guys had an interesting past. How cool is that?
	44:52	Amulek was living beneath his privileges. Alma was trying to destroy the church. Zeezrom was being a clever lawyer and now look at him. Pretty cool.
Dr. Brent Top:	45:03	What is the difference between Alma's dealing with Zeezrom and Korihor? Why is Zeezrom redeemed, if you will, and Korihor even after he said, "I've always believed, I've known, but I didn't know." It makes you wonder, and it has to be that idea of desire and of a willingness to even take those next steps towards Christ.
John Bytheway:	45:39	Isn't it interesting that right after Korihor who says, "There is no God. There is no Christ." He was an anti-Christ. We have the Zoramites who say, "There is a God." But right in their prayer, you have elected us. We're not saved by atonement. You just chose us arbitrarily, and you've made it known unto us there will be no Christ.
	45:59	And then listen to this phrase in verse 17, very Korihor. "Oh God, we thank thee that thou hast elected us, that we may not be led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren, which doth," what's the word? "Bind them down to a belief in Christ." That was a Korihor thing. You're bound and yoked and frenzied and foolish.
Dr. Brent Top:	46:18	And it's almost as if they have been in their own little Korihor echo chamber and that they listen to Korihor and listen to each other and pat each other on the back and give each other awards and they stand up and recount how wonderful they are, but they do not see the hand of God anywhere else in their lives.

John Bytheway:	46:45	I think this becomes huge when Alma asks them to plant the word. Who is the word? Because they said in their prayer, we don't believe in Christ and it's a lesson in faith, but what they have to plant is Christ in their hearts.
Hank Smith:	47:04	You know what you could do if you wanted to set these two prayers side by side with the Savior's parable of the Pharisee and the publican.
John Bytheway:	47:11	Yeah.
Dr. Brent Top:	47:12	That's a good example.
Hank Smith:	47:13	They're very similar side by side.
John Bytheway:	47:17	I fast twice in a week. I give tithes of all that I possess.
Hank Smith:	47:21	I'm pretty amazing. Aren't you glad I'm on your team?
John Bytheway:	47:26	Let me outline a few of my accomplishments for you.
Dr. Brent Top:	47:29	Well, and it goes back and again, I don't want this to come across as being too diminishing of it. We hear this phrase all the time. You are enough. You are just so wonderful. We are always doing that. Let's just be careful and recognize you are enough because you have been bought by the blood of Christ.
	47:51	You are enough. You have the strength to do anything, not just because you're wonderful but because you've been redeemed. You've been given, you have divine DNA within you. That's an example of the Zoramite, Korihor philosophy that if we are not careful can creep into and become a little bit of a sandstorm that would blind our eyes and cloud our focus on the rod of iron and the tree of life. Even though I like to be told I'm wonderful and all that type of stuff, I think I recognize that I'm not wonderful enough to overcome my afflictions, my trials, and tribulations and certainly my fall of Adam existence by just being, quote, "enough." If that makes sense to you.
Hank Smith:	48:53	What was it that Lehi said to Jacob? I know that thou art redeemed because of the righteousness of your Redeemer.
John Bytheway:	49:01	Your Redeemer, not because you've been such a good boy.
Dr. Brent Top:	49:04	That's right. That's Doctrine & Covenants section 45. That's the example of the Mediator. When we read in section 45 where the Savior goes before the father and is mediating on behalf of

the people. He said, "Father, behold thy son." And basically is saying, Save these people because they have believed on me, but because of me. Save them because of me and my blood and my redemption, not just because they're neighbors, not just because they're wonderful folks, save them because of me and they have believed on me.

Hank Smith:	49:53	I had forgotten about that, Brent. That's section 45. Listen to him who is the advocate. John, what do you say? Don't look at them. Look at me.
John Bytheway:	50:02	He's not talking about what you did.
Dr. Brent Top:	50:06	Yeah. He's not presenting him to the Father as being so wonderful. He's standing humbly before the father and says, "Behold my sufferings. Behold what I have done and these are they who have believed on me."
John Bytheway:	50:22	Yeah. Yeah. I think Elder Christofferson quoted verses recently in General Conference too. Section 45 verse 4. "Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased, behold the blood of thy son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified."
	50:43	He's not talking about what we did. He's talking about what he did. "Wherefore father spare these, my brethren, my sisters that believe on my name that they may come unto me and have everlasting life." And I think that means something to him when he sees us witness unto God that we are willing to take upon us the name of his son.
	51:07	And think of that, it has some sacrament language in it. We are not just willing but honored to take upon us the name of Christ in that place.
Dr. Brent Top:	51:16	It goes along with some of the things we talked about with Korihor in chapter 30. Taking upon us the name of Christ and also in contrast to the Zoramite, Rameumptom prayer. Those faithful disciples, there is a phrase that Nephi uses where he says, "They have endured the shame of the world. They have endured and carried, borne the crosses of the world."
	51:47	There's no shame in enduring Christ, but there is difficulty in trusting in the Lord when others are shaming us. And I think that's what we learned of having Christ as the central focus of our lives that will swallow up those moments of shame and

difficulty and tribulation and maybe even those times when we wonder if Korihor might've had it right, that it is Christ that will then shatter that illusion.

- Hank Smith: 52:29 When you get one of these Korihors or Zoramites in your life and they start to rock your faith and you feel like you're not unshakable like Jacob, come back to Christ. He'll shatter that doubt and that fear that comes.
- 52:44 What we've been talking about today brings up one of my favorites from [Elder Maxwell](#). This was 33 years ago, but it still applies today. He said, "Yes. It is a time in which the things of the spirit look like foolishness to more and more people on this planet, but those who know, know that they know."
- 53:09 Brent, this has been wonderful going through just two chapters. I feel strengthened and I hope to strengthen my family against the apostasy of today. I think our listeners would like to know Brent, whether they're out folding laundry or whether they're walking to class or maybe they're even a missionary out in San Diego or Peoria and they're listening.
- 53:36 You have so much breadth of experience. The dean of the Religion Department, mission president twice, stake president. You've had personal interactions with the leaders of the church. What should I walk away with? What do you hope we see? Why should our listeners believe?
- Dr. Brent Top: 53:57 I have had a lot of wonderful experiences. I have had a lot of opportunities to serve. I have had a lot of challenging assignments and difficulties, and I've had my share of challenges with trying to be a good parent. I've had my share of challenges of heartaches when things don't turn out the way that you think they should, but what warrants my belief is my knowledge that my life is better when I seek to follow him.
- 54:42 I have enough experience, whether you call it a breadth of experience, a depth of experience or not learning from experience. I have enough to know that I know. Today when I married this young couple in sealing room number one in the St. George Temple with grandmas and grandpas and fathers and mothers and friends and missionary companions and loved ones all around them. As you listen to the promises and the blessings that are pronounced in that sealing ordinance, that crowning ordinance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I'm a believer because those are the promises that matter to me.

	55:40	And all the other stuff, and it means stuff. All the other stresses, doesn't mean they're not real or painful or not legitimate in some way, but they pale in comparison to all of those blessings pronounced upon my head. That is my testimony.
	56:08	Now it may not be reasonable to some, for others it may resonate, but for me, it has given me strength and it has been my joy to follow the Master. And while I have not always been perfect and while I have not always been what I would want to be in all the areas of my life, I have the absolute assurance that the atonement of Jesus Christ will make it as though I always have been.
Hank Smith:	56:49	Brent, thank you for your time today.
Dr. Brent Top:	56:51	Thank you. Well, I love you guys and you do such great work, so I like to tell people I knew you before you were famous.
John Bytheway:	57:04	My life is better because you talked to us today. Thank you.
Dr. Brent Top:	57:07	Well, thank you. It was my privilege to be able to ponder and think about two chapters in the Book of Mormon.
Hank Smith:	57:15	Yeah. If you're listening and want Brent to know where you're listening from, come on to YouTube and tell us where you're listening from. It's fun to show our guests where their voice has been heard throughout the world.
	57:27	With that, we want to thank Dr. Brent Top for being with us today. It has been wonderful. I don't want it to end. We want to thank our executive producer Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen. And every episode we remember our founder, Steve Sorensen.
	57:44	We hope you'll join us next week. We have more of the Zoramites coming up on followHIM. Before you skip to the next episode, I have some important information. This episode's transcript and show notes are available on our website. Followhim.co. That's followhim.co. On our website, you'll also find our two free books, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament and Finding Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Both books are full of short and powerful quotes and insights from all our episodes from the Old and New Testaments.
	58:15	The digital copies of these books are absolutely free. You can watch the podcast on YouTube. Also, our Facebook and Instagram accounts have videos and extras you won't find

anywhere else. If you'd like to know how you can help us, if you could subscribe to rate, review and comment on the podcast, that will make us easier to find.

58:33 Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, and Annabelle Sorensen.

58:45 Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Turn to him. Follow him.

OHHH... OLDER THAN DIRT



Hank Smith:	00:03	Hello, my friends. Welcome to followHIM Favorites. John and I are sharing a single story to go with each week's lesson. John, we're in Alma 30 and 31, the stories of Korihor and the Zoramites.
John Bytheway:	00:14	Yes.
Hank Smith:	00:15	The anti-Christ's of the Book of Mormon. You've told me you have a story for this section, so we're going to turn it over to you.
John Bytheway:	00:24	I really love how Alma switches things up on Korihor and says, "What's your evidence that there is no God? Show me your evidence." And then he says, "I have my own testimony, the testimony of my brethren, the testimony of the prophets, the testimony of the Scriptures." And then there's this line in Alma 30:44, "All things denote there is a God; the Earth, all things that are upon the face of it and its motion, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator." And Hank, a long time ago, my parents gave me a book. I was 13, and it was called Goals. And there's a little story in there which had a big impact on me about looking up at those stars. This is the story.
	01:07	One well-remembered day several years ago, I stood knee-deep in the Virgin River and looked up in awe at the 1,000-foot rock cliffs of Zion's Park on either side. The Park Service brochure said the rocks were more than 200 million years old. I compared my age to the age of the rocks and felt very young and very unimportant. It got dark early in the narrow canyon. By late afternoon, I could see stars in the narrow slice of sky above. I recalled reading that scientists had discovered seven times 10 to the 13th power stars. The article went on to dramatize the magnitude of that number by saying, "If there were seven times 10 to the 13th power playing cards pressed together face-to-face." Okay, so 52 cards is a normal deck of cards, like that. "If

there were seven times 10 to the 13th power playing cards, the line they form would go around the world 600 times."

Hank Smith: 02:05 Oh my word.

John Bytheway: 02:06 I thought to myself, "I am one tiny speck on one tiny world going around one of those seven times 10 to the 13th power stars. How small and totally insignificant I am." And that's the end of the story. No, I'm just kidding. Then he continues, that night as I unrolled my sleeping bag, a thought hit me with great impact, "I am older than the rocks, for my spirit is eternal. I am more important than all seven times 10 to the 13th power stars, because I am God's son and they are only his handiwork."

Hank Smith: 02:45 That is beautiful. That's a moment.

John Bytheway: 02:49 And I like camping because I'm in Salt Lake City, and the lights... I don't see the stars. But when I can get up in the mountains and I see those stars, it's really hard for me not to think about God and the universe and everything when you see a display like that. And maybe that's what Alma was saying, "Look, look at that. There's evidence that there's a God. Look at that up there."

Hank Smith: 03:09 There's a reason at Young Men's Camp or Young Women's Camp that we tend to be more spiritual, that we get out there and we look at the vastness of creation and we start to... Yeah, it's like Moses. Wow.

John Bytheway: 03:24 I've wondered, Hank, if that's what happened to Enos. He went hunting. He was out in the wilderness, lost all interest in hunting, started thinking about God because he was out in the beautiful nature.

Hank Smith: 03:35 Yeah, which is probably where he lived as well, but.

John Bytheway: 03:38 Yeah, that's true.

Hank Smith: 03:40 Enos is like, "I got to get out of the city."

John Bytheway: 03:43 Once you've got your steak, then yeah.

Hank Smith: 03:46 You're like, "The campfires are just too bright. Can't see the stars." John, that's a great moment. That had an impact on me, just thinking that, "Wait, I am older."

John Bytheway:	03:58	I'm older than the rocks. My spirit is eternal. I am more important than all the seven times 10 to the 13th power stars. I am God's son. "I'm a beloved son of God, and he has a work for me to do," the young men say every week. Right?
Hank Smith:	04:14	Yeah, that is wonderful.
John Bytheway:	04:15	Or I'm a beloved daughter of heavenly parents with a divine nature and eternal destiny. Yes, that's it.
Hank Smith:	04:20	The heavens and the earth shall pass away. My word shall not pass away.
	04:26	We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcasts. We're with Dr. Brent Top this week. He's been away on some missions, so we haven't had him on the podcast in a while, and he is really fun. So come over and join us there, and then come back next week, we'll do another followHIM Favorites.