



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 does discovering Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon strengthen your testimony? Professor John “Jack” Welch explores how the discovery of Hebraic poetry increases testimony of the power of Jesus Christ and His Atonement.

Part 2:

Professor Welch continues to explore how discovering chiasmus helps strengthen testimonies of Jesus Christ and His power and love, which is evident in the Book of Mormon.

Timecodes:

Part 1

- 00:00 Part I - Professor John Welch
- 06:58 Guest bio
- 08:44 Scripture Central
- 11:12 The depth of the Book of Mormon
- 14:01 Alma teaches his sons to avoid discouragement
- 18:39 Was Alma translated?
- 20:08 Satan abandons his followers
- 23:43 Chiasmus in Alma 36
- 28:56 Chiasmus in Mosiah 5
- 34:45 What is chiasmus?
- 39:22 Jesus's Atonement overcomes our pain
- 42:43 Professor Welch and Dr. Hugh Nibley
- 49:23 Chiasmus video on Scripture Central
- 53:28 Alma 36:1 and Alma 36:30
- 55:45 Alma 36:27-29 - Trust in God
- 56:52 Alma 36:3 and Alma 36:26 - Born of god
- 59:55 Alma 36:24 - Alma brings souls to God
- 1:02:07 Alma 36:10 and Alma 36:23 - Strength
- 1:05:04 - End of Part 1 - Professor John Welch

Part 2

- 00:00 Part II– Professor John Welch
- 02:52 Evidence convinces but this converts
- 06:05 *The Starry Night* by Van Gogh
- 10:32 Alma shares his conversion with Shiblon
- 13:42 Neal A. Maxwell on King Benjamin
- 18:53 Show Notes contains references
- 22:20 The errors in the Zoramites' prayer
- 22:56 Professor Welch shares his testimony of Jesus Christ
- 32:11 End of Part II– Professor John Welch

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Biographical Information:



John W. Welch is a co-founder of Book of Mormon Central and serves as the Chair of its Board of Directors. He is the Robert K. Thomas Professor of Law at Brigham Young University and was for 27 years editor-in-chief of *BYU Studies*, the premier Latter-day Saint scholarly journal. Welch practiced law in Los Angeles with O'Melveny & Myers, at which time he founded the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS). From 1988-1991, Welch served as one of the editors for Macmillan's *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. He also has served as the General Editor of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley for 25 years. He organized the bicentennial conference for Joseph Smith at the Library of Congress in 2005 and has served on the executive committee of the Biblical Law Section of the Society of Biblical Literature.

Welch is among the most prominent pupils of Hugh Nibley, having made several important discoveries and advances regarding biblical studies, LDS scholarship, history, culture, and thought. His publications cover a wide range of topics, including Roman and Jewish laws in the trial of Jesus, the use of biblical laws in colonial America, chiasmus in antiquity, and commentaries on the Sermon on the Mount and King Benjamin's Speech.

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- Hank Smith: 00:00:04 Hello everyone. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name's Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with my co-host, John Bytheway, who I describe as having an everlasting hatred for sin and iniquity, Alma 37:32. We're also here with our guest, Dr. Welch.
- 00:00:23 John, we're moving on from the Zoramite mission. We are looking at these lessons that Alma is teaching to his son. It's the first of two lessons. What are you looking forward to today? What do you see in these chapters?
- John Bytheway: 00:00:38 I love this break in the storyline because there were some Zoramite converts, some that weren't. They were afraid they would enter into an alliance with the Lamanites, which is exactly what they do. So in between that, it's like I've got to talk to my sons, and then what happens? The war chapters. Wow, look at that.
- 00:00:56 First of all, he talks to Helaman in Alma 36:37, and this Alma 36 I'm sure we're going to talk about is this masterpiece of chiasmus, and sometimes if you're like me, I get so excited about the form, I forget about the content, and then I get dazzled by the content and then I get dazzled by the form again. I'm sure we'll talk about that.
- 00:01:18 Then Alma 37, the importance of the records. Why are we doing all of this work and engraving these records and how will they help us and why do they need to be preserved? Some great counsel there.
- 00:01:29 And then Alma 38, Shiblon. He doesn't get a lot of time from his dad, but we hear some great things about Shiblon and some great advice there at the end. That's all we're covering today, is those three.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:42 That's fantastic. What a great description, John. I'm really looking forward to this because one, I do want to talk about

chiasmus because it has a serious impact on Book of Mormon scholarship, and we have the master of that here today, so we do need to spend some time there, but like you, I'm looking forward to looking through the text itself and what it teaches us about Christ.

- 00:02:05 Dr. Welch, we're excited to have you. What do you want to do today? From start to finish, what are we going to look at?
- Prof. Jack Welch: 00:02:13 Well, I think we're going to look at the first two blessings of Alma to his first and second son, but there's a third son as well, Corianton. He needs a lot of correction, but what it tells us is that Alma, he even gives more to Corianton than the other two. He recognizes that Corianton needs and will receive that help. He was a young man, but had a lot of opportunities and a lot going for him, and Alma doesn't give up on him.
- 00:02:46 So, we've got all three of these very different sons. I really think it's important for people to read this week's lesson and next week's lesson together because you don't get the full picture until you get all three of these blessings. They, of course, were different sons, but after all, Alma had served himself. He knew what it meant to be a wayward son. He had been one. He also knew what it meant to wear various hats. He was at one point the high priest, the chief judge, and the commander-in-chief of the army, so we had all three branches of government under his responsibility.
- 00:03:29 If he could juggle that and balance that by uniting it under the gospel of Jesus Christ and the knowledge that Jesus Christ would come and that that would change everything and could bring together all people, well, I think he's the best person to tell us about the gospel of Jesus Christ from his own personal experiences like that. I think that's partly why it's so rich, but his own revelations, I mean, who else could tell you about Jesus Christ other than someone who had been stopped on the road with his four friends? I hope people will look at it from a broad perspective, personal, inspired, there's so many different ways to read these texts.
- Hank Smith: 00:04:15 They are magnificent. Really, everything that Alma's given us, a mind-expanding set of sermons, that each chapter one after another.
- Prof. Jack Welch: 00:04:25 How do you see Alma in terms of what he is expanding upon his background, and you start putting in a few factors. How did Alma get to be this way? How did he learn these things? Who was his father? Sometimes we think that our kids aren't

listening, and I suppose Alma the Elder had his reasons for thinking Alma wasn't listening, but he was and he had his objections.

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| | 00:04:54 | That's another thread in this story that Alma, he is true to his heritage, true to his family, his father. All of that makes him true to his heavenly father and his eternal heritage. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:05:09 | Yeah, I love that you said that. Where does he get all this? These are chapters that you can study. They're inexhaustible. You could study them over and over and over and you can't get to the bottom of them. |
| Prof. Jack Welch: | 00:05:21 | Do you think Alma knew the scriptures? Do you think he knew the Book of Lehi? Of course, he doesn't know the Book of Mormon, doesn't exist yet, but is there evidence that he actually knew the scriptures very well and would that be something that would help us understand how he could give us such a masterful set of sermons and blessings here? |
| | 00:05:46 | Well, there is one place in Alma 36 where Alma says, as he then received this great joyous relief when he felt he was going to be destroyed, "Methought I saw even as our father Lehi had seen, God seated upon his throne, surrounded by numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God." Where's Alma getting those words from? |
| Hank Smith: | 00:06:15 | Yeah. |
| Prof. Jack Welch: | 00:06:16 | 1 Nephi, what chapter? |
| Hank Smith: | 00:06:18 | One. |
| Prof. Jack Welch: | 00:06:19 | Chapter 1:8, and there are 21 words there that Alma has quoted verbatim, precisely. Now, this says a lot about the nature of the translation, and we often comment on that, but it also tells us a lot about Alma's scriptural training. He was the chief judge. He knows the law. He has spent his time learning the Book of Leviticus, the Law of Moses, and we see him quoting and using those passages too. What a background to launch into here. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:06:58 | Yeah, that's fantastic. Thank you for that. |
| | 00:07:01 | John, Dr. Welch is not new to our podcast. He joined us last year, but there might be someone who said, "Who?" Introduce him to us. |

John Bytheway:	00:07:12	I'd love to. Dr. John W. Welch, who goes by Jack, he's well known in the wide world of Book of Mormon studies. Hank, some of us plant seeds, Jack planted a FARM. He planted FARMS. So, some of our listeners will remember FARMS. It used to go by the name of FARMS, The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, and what a blessing that has been to all of us. He brings to the conversation extensive academic and personal experiences in ancient languages, travel, law, biblical studies, and church history. And on a personal note, Hank, I got to go on a cruise years ago and Jack and Janine sat with us, were so kind to my wife and me. It's one thing to know somebody's smart, but then you learn how kind and gracious they are, and I'm so grateful to have him back on the program again and want to say thank you for your impact on my wife and me, and thanks for joining us again.
Prof. Jack Welch:	00:08:13	Well, John, it's always a lot of fun and a pleasure, a privilege to be able to come and learn from you and talk together. Let's see what comes out this time, because it will be exciting, I'm sure.
Hank Smith:	00:08:25	As a young seminary teacher, if you would've told me I'm going to know Jack Welch, we're just going to talk online, I probably would've asked you what online means, but then I would've just been so excited. It's a pleasure. It really is. It's an honor.
John Bytheway:	00:08:44	Now, Hank, I mentioned FARMS, and just today Hank, because I got to teach today, I showed a video clip from bookofmormoncentral.org about the Law of Moses in the Book of Mormon. I hope people become acquainted with that resource. That is just one of the fruits of this farm you planted called FARMS, is bookofmormoncentral.org .
Prof. Jack Welch:	00:09:08	Well, thank you for mentioning that, John, and as it is available on the web, worldwide, on YouTube, lots of social media channels, reaching as you do millions of people, one of the things that we offer that will be really helpful to most people in their study of the Book of Mormon is what we call the Book of Mormon Central archive. There, we have now over 13,000 books and articles, all kinds of resources, and you can go on and you can search for all kinds of things, and search for Alma 36, search for whatever you're working on with a particular question or lesson. Up will come full texts of all these articles and resources, and you can also then switch and see a lot of it in English, as well as in Spanish and in Portuguese, trying to be a central worldwide for Book of Mormon scholarship.
	00:10:06	We also have Scripture Central, which deals with the New Testament, Old Testament, Doctrine and Covenants. So, we do

all of the four standard works. It's a wonderful team. We have a great time bringing this out, and we have supporters, we have volunteers.

00:10:24 When [President Benson](#) once said, "We should flood the Earth with the Book of Mormon," you might remember that, I was actually out washing my car when I heard him say that. I had the radio on and I was holding the hose on my car and I thought, "Well, this isn't much of a flood," but I said, "We're going to do this someday." Now, with all these translations and so many people doing so many wonderful things all over the world, that invitation by President Benson has truly been fulfilled and come to pass.

Hank Smith: 00:11:00 That's wonderful, and it's been fun from the sidelines to see that grow, Book of Mormon Central. What does that tell you about the Book of Mormon? There's 13,000 books and articles on one book.

Prof. Jack Welch: 00:11:13 Well, it does tell us all that the Book of Mormon is going to wear us out a long time before we will wear it out. It speaks about so many subjects, temporal and eternal, personal and collective, political, literary, you name the discipline, the need, and the Book of Mormon will speak to you on these subjects. It is so rich and so true. We are truly blessed to have it, and I've spent a lifetime working in and around it, I never cease to be amazed at what it does, no matter what I'm talking about.

00:11:54 I work in the temple, so many things are temple related in the Book of Mormon that we haven't even realized until quite recently.

00:12:01 I'm a law professor and I go through and look at all the reports of these legal cases, and as you'd expect, Alma himself was the chief judge. He includes things that are legal dependent, like the trial of Nehor, and how that turns out and why, like the trial that occurred in the city of Ammonihah and the legal consequences of that, and Korihor. Korihor is brought before Alma. He's being tried for blasphemy and other crimes. And if you don't understand the law as it existed in Alma's day, then how are you going to put all that together? Well, that's just another layer, dozens of them that are wonderful.

00:12:51 You can make a lot of points about that. That's the way a classic text is. It reflects reality and history and all of this richness. The Book of Mormon ranks right up there with the classics of the world, but how did it get that way? There's a reason. God did not give us this book just to give us another volume along with

Homer's Iliad. We've been given this book because it has a special mission to testify of the truthfulness of Jesus Christ. That through this book we will know that Jesus Christ is the son of God, the very eternal father, and that his gospel is true. When it comes forth, it will be a sign that the Lord is open and willing and going forth in the world to anybody, to the Isles of the Sea. There's no book like it, really.

- Hank Smith: 00:13:45 My friend, [Bryce Dunford](#), I remember him saying, "This book understands the human condition," and I thought about that for a long time, "This book understands the human condition." It speaks, like you said, Jack, to every facet of our lives.
- 00:14:01 Jack, you've probably seen that the [Come, Follow Me manual](#) does a great job of outlining these lessons for individuals and families. I'm going to read from the opening paragraph for this week's lesson, which is called Look to God and Live. It says when Alma saw wickedness around him, he felt deep sorrow, tribulation, and anguish of soul. "Wickedness among this people," he said of the Zoramites, "Doth pain, my soul."
- 00:14:26 He felt something similar after returning from his mission to the Zoramites, he observed that the hearts of many of the Nephites began to wax hard and that they began to be offended because of the strictness of the word, and this made his heart exceedingly sorrowful. What did Alma do about what he saw and felt? He didn't simply become discouraged or cynical about the state of the world. Instead, he caused that his sons should be gathered together, and taught them things pertaining unto righteousness. He taught them that there is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ. "Behold, he is the word of truth and righteousness." With that, Jack, we turned first to Helaman.
- Prof. Jack Welch: 00:15:09 Helaman was the first son. That's a wonderful introduction to these chapters, not just the three chapters for this lesson, but the four chapters that follow, where the blessing to Corianton is given. In the Jewish tradition about the Exodus, there was a day on the Jewish calendar, kind of a season of Passover, where everyone celebrated. According to the Law of Moses, you had to do this. You had to celebrate the deliverance of God who brought Israel out of Egypt by miracles. Moses, of course, led the children of Israel out into the wilderness. Alma will refer to being delivered and being brought out, being freed from the captivity and bondage. Those are words that relate to the Passover. Saying those words were kind of little bells that went off in my mind when we were thinking about putting this into a

Passover setting. You don't have to say very much about Wise Men or mangers, and you know I'm talking about Christmas.

00:16:20 So, many of these words, if we know enough of about Passover, we recognize that there may be a Passover connection here. And one of the things that of course was done in Judaism, we can't date it way back into the time of Lehi and Nephi and so on, but one of the things that is part of the celebration of Passover is that a father would gather all of his extended family and you know how at Christmas people will play Mary and Joseph and a shepherd, well, they would have three sons, and they would pick the three boys, and they each had a line out of the Torah,

Prof. Jack Welch: 00:17:00 and they would come and recite that line and they were questions, and then the father would answer those three questions. One of the sons had to be and play the role of a very righteous son. Another son had to play the role of an ignorant or unknowing son, but an okay guy and the third son had to play the role of a wicked or rebellious son. Then the father would give them instruction, maybe what Alma is doing. We know from the introduction that he was torn apart by the problems. He went to the land of Antionum hoping to convert the Zoramites and help to make things better, and he comes home rather sad, I think. He had not been successful. It's true that he converted a lot of the poor people there. The Zoramites will go and make an alliance with the Lamanites, and they will be fighting now to undo what Alma has tried to establish.

00:18:11 He's very sober and wanting to reinforce his son's testimonies about the gospel they were teaching, about what they were doing as missionaries. I don't know if Alma knew this at the time he's giving these three blessings, but he will leave. We don't know whether he leaves because he's sick and dying or whether he's translated or whatever, but we never hear of him again.

00:18:54 These three blessings become his farewell statement to his sons, and no wonder they saved them. Helaman, of course, will become the leader of the stripling warriors, how important he is on continuing the lineage of Alma. And Shiblon will be righteous to the very end of his life at the end of the book of Alma. And of course, Corianton will take off with Hagoth and other people. So it's interesting that the Book of Alma really concludes once we know that the three sons of Alma are gone or dead. The Book of Alma is telling the conclusion of Alma's whole life, and the middle of the book are these three blessings.

Hank Smith: 00:19:41 What an introduction. This is fantastic.

John Bytheway:	00:19:44	Yeah. Alma 63:10, Shiblon died also, and Corianton had gone forth to the land northward in his ship. So he's talking about what each of these sons, verse 12, all those engravings in the possession of Helaman were written and sent forth. So those three sons of these next chapters, 36 through 42 are all wrapped up here at the end of Alma. I never thought of that before.
Hank Smith:	00:20:08	John, Jack, I have to say that I'm excited that we are talking about a parent child relationship. Here's Alma speaking to his sons, and I have memories, I'm sure you both do, of my father pulling me aside at certain points of my life and teaching me lessons. One, I'll always remember, if you don't mind if I bring it up, is as I read through what we're going to do today, Alma 37, "Teach them an everlasting hatred against sin," this is to Helaman. "Preach repentance and faith. Withstand every temptation of the devil. Don't be weary of good works. Learn wisdom in thy youth." This sounds like my dad, but he would tell us this story so often that when he was in high school, he went to Granger High. There was a high speed chase through Salt Lake. There was some college age student who was on a blind date with this girl and he picks her up.
	00:21:08	He's on a motorcycle, he was speeding. The police tried to pull him over and he had some outstanding warrants, didn't want to be pulled over. So with this girl he barely knows on the back of his motorcycle, he takes off on a high speed chase. This girl is mortified and she's holding on to him as the police are chasing them. The kid somehow figures out he cannot get away with this girl on the back of his motorcycle. He has got to get rid of her, so he takes a hard right with his right arm, just elbows her off the bike and launches her into the street, and she rolls onto the sidewalk and he's able to take off. I was obviously mortified.
	00:21:59	He would tell us this story and I'm like, "Dad," and then he would say something I think to what Alma's going to say to his sons, which is that's what Satan will do to you. He will take you for this ride and you think everything is great, but then he doesn't need you anymore, and when he doesn't need you anymore, he will leave you on the side of the road beat up and almost dead. And I remember us being like, "Okay, dad." I think that was his way of Alma 37:33 to teach them to withstand every temptation of the devil.
John Bytheway:	00:22:39	It reminds me of the last verse of the Korihor story, right? The devil will not support his children at the last day, but will kick them off the motorcycle.

Hank Smith:	00:22:50	He'll kick them off the motorcycle and leave them on the side of the road.
John Bytheway:	00:22:55	I'm fascinated by how often the Exodus is so much in their minds and in their culture that it is still being brought up in verse one of Alma 36, that Moses remembering the captivity of our fathers for they were in bondage, and then of course, at the very end as well. Thank you for that reminder of how much Moses, and you're saying the Passover may be even part of this arrangement of these chapters.
Hank Smith:	00:23:25	And then we talked about Passover and how Alma goes away and they never hear from him again. That's the same with Moses.
Prof. Jack Welch:	00:23:33	Oh, that's right. Something they would've recognized from their tradition.
Hank Smith:	00:23:38	What do we want to do next, Jack. Should we jump into this portion to Helaman?
Prof. Jack Welch:	00:23:43	Let's dive right into what Alma has to say to Helaman. This chapter 36 is the greatest chiastic passage in the Book of Mormon . When you look at density and a lot of other factors, precision, balance, quotation, a lot of the elements that make for a real strong, meaningful chiasm, the turning point has to be impressive and something that you would put on a pedestal at the top of a pyramid or something and then come back down. Chiasmus can be used in explaining a journey in a way where you go from point A to point X and come back all the way to point A, or you climb up a mountain and come back down. All of these elements are brought together in a truly masterful way, and as we said before, I think that Alma knows his scriptures well enough to know that there are chiasms like this.
	00:24:44	At the end of the book of Leviticus, for example, in Leviticus 24, one of the great chiasms there, he would've been trained by his father. His father Alma, had been one of the priests in the court of Noah, and they knew the language of the scriptures. They studied the scriptures, they used the scriptures. Abinadi could quote the scriptures. I think this kind of verbal technical expertise, I'm not saying that Alma's showing it off because he's not. He doesn't draw any attention to it, and it wasn't until 1969 that this was actually even found. It's that kind of thing that people wouldn't have thought of. It makes so much sense that Alma would've used a very formal dignified style that would help actually with the memorization of this text. Once you know

the pattern and the orders, it's a lot easier to memorize. When we talk about a gem, they're cut.

00:25:53 They have facets, they reflect the light in various ways. They're clear, they're beautiful. All of those attributes describe Alma 36. All of these facets, they're cut in place, they're put together and they reflect the light of Jesus Christ. They reflect the light of truth. But Alma 36, it's not like we've been handed one little gem or a beautiful big one. The Book of Mormon itself is like a crown and you have all these different parts of the crown that give it structure, that make it fit, that give it authority. I mean, what's a crown for? It's to recognize that the person wearing that crown is worthy. And the Book of Mormon, when you look at it with all of these kind of metaphors in mind, you can begin to say, "Well, the Book of Mormon does that too and does other things that communicate to us the deep message that Alma here is focusing on."

John Bytheway: 00:26:58 There is on BookofMormonCentral.org, a video called [The Discovery of Chiasmus](#), which is so beautiful. I hope people will watch that and see how this pattern that you just described was discovered, and I'd marvel that the Lord found a young missionary, put you in the right place, and it makes me think, what else are we going to discover in here? Are we at the end of Book of Mormon scholarship or are we still at the beginning, and what else are we going to discover? It's so exciting to think of that.

Prof. Jack Welch: 00:27:32 We have not exhausted this book. There are so many wonderful things in it. Yes, it's true that as I was a missionary, I was in the middle of my mission. In fact, the day I discovered chiasmus in the Book of Mormon was the dead center middle day of my mission.

John Bytheway: 00:27:49 Oh, really? I never knew that. Imagine that. It was the gem in the crown of your mission.

Prof. Jack Welch: 00:27:57 Yeah, the top of the mountain. Now you come back down.

John Bytheway: 00:28:01 Wow.

Prof. Jack Welch: 00:28:02 We used to mark that on our calendar, our hump day, when you're absolutely halfway through. I look back on that and say, "Well, the Lord has a sense of humor too." I mean, he could have done that on any other day, but he did call it to my attention at a very early point in the morning and I got up, and I did not find Alma 36 at first. I began by happening to read in

Mosiah 4 and 5, King Benjamin's speech. That's where I went because that was what we were faithfully doing as missionaries the night before. We read every night in our Book of Mormon together in German. That's where we'd left off, and I said, "All right," there's a long story on why I was aware of Chiasmus and why I would've responded to a spiritual prompting to actually look for it.

John Bytheway: 00:28:54

Oh, watch the video, yes.

Prof. Jack Welch: 00:28:57

But to turn exactly to Mosiah 4, turn one page, and there was Mosiah 5:10-12, which is a beautiful chiasmic structure. At the end of King Benjamin's speech, there's a similar one of exactly the same length at the very center of King Benjamin's speech. Now, I mentioned this in the context of Alma because we come back to the point about who is Alma the Younger, he is becoming the new ruler of the city of Zarahemla. He has taken over from Mosiah the king, the son of King Benjamin, and Mosiah had been crowned king when King Benjamin gave that coronation speech and covenant speech years before at the temple of Zarahemla. This would've been like reading the Gettysburg Address for Alma. This is the essence of the politics. It gives the rules that King Benjamin wanted to bestow upon his people so that his son would be a successful king, and some of the rules are very secular and popular, and ordinary, and others are very spiritual, bringing all those together.

00:30:16

So I'm convinced that Alma would have, for many reasons, been consulting King Benjamin's speech for religious and political reasons. He knows he has to know and recognize these crowning literary formations that King Benjamin has given him. When he now turns to giving his speech to his son, it's natural that he would use that. But I didn't find Alma 36, and I'll tell you this little story, it hasn't been told very often. I was home for my mission. I was called to be, guess what? The Gospel Doctrine teacher in my student ward. That year we were doing the Book of Mormon, and you may remember that we used to go from September to the end of August on the curriculum. The middle of that year would've come in March, and March the 9th was the Saturday before we were going to read some material about Alma in the Gospel Doctrine class.

00:31:24

I had assigned the students to go back and read all of Alma's speeches, Alma 5, Alma 7, Alma 12 and 13, read all of these speeches and see what you can ascertain, what you can learn about who Alma was and what he was concerned about, and so I had to do that. I didn't want to stand up in front of my class if I hadn't actually done the exercise. I pulled out my replica copy of

the first edition of the Book of Mormon because I like to read that because it didn't have chapters and verses and two columns, and I could see the text better. It was faster to read it that way, not just faster to read, but I could absorb more. As I was turning through all of these, I opened up and started reading Alma, it's not 36, it wasn't chapter 36 in the 1830 Edition.

00:32:19 But as I read those pages right at the top of one of the middle columns was the turning point of Alma 36, and I had been working on chiasmus for a couple of years or a year and a half. Immediately I noticed the middle and then I started looking out to the wings, the beginning and the end of that section. The Lord does this to you. You do what you're supposed to do and he'll tell you things that you're needing to know when you need to know them. That's how Alma 36 was found. And let me say also, it's not a gee whiz kind of thing. John, you were saying how the discovery of Chiasmus really changed a lot of things, and Hank how we do Book of Mormon studies.

00:33:06 Do you remember how Book of Mormon studies, what it was like back in the 1960s and '50s? Who read the Book of Mormon in those days? Not very many people really. Once chiasmus was found, instead of reading the Book of Mormon as we used to, which was to select out certain verses that were proof texts, maybe about one thing or another, or maybe to get the storyline and pick up a few details about the big picture. Now, we all became aware of the need to focus on the word level, the details, look at every little word all of a sudden might have some significance. That was a game changer, and think how many ways that has then benefited John, as you say, our study of the Book of Mormon.

Hank Smith: 00:34:03 It did. It really changed the field. Now you have [Book of Mormon Academy at BYU](#). The many books that really have changed how we look at the book itself, the structure of the book itself. I like what you said there, John, earlier. I go back and forth from the structure-

John Bytheway: 00:34:20 Being dazzled by the structure or the content.

Hank Smith: 00:34:23 Yeah, you go back and forth. I like how you said that.

John Bytheway: 00:34:26 I will show my class the chiastic structure of Alma 36 and then I'll say, "Now let's not get so excited about that structure that we don't read it. We've got to read and see what Alma's going to teach his son, Helaman." I go back and forth because both of them are amazing.

Hank Smith:	00:34:45	John, since you mentioned that, will you do something for me? There might be someone out there who is gardening or on their commute and they've heard us say this term, chiasm, chiastic structure, and they might be thinking, "I wish I knew what that was." What do you tell your classes, John, when you introduce it to them?
John Bytheway:	00:35:01	Let me do this and then let me have Jack fix it if I don't do it well, okay?
Hank Smith:	00:35:06	Yeah. Have you ever done it with Jack in the room? This'll be-
John Bytheway:	00:35:09	No, I've never done it. I'm nervous right now.
Prof. Jack Welch:	00:35:12	Jack will stay in the box.
Hank Smith:	00:35:14	Yeah.
John Bytheway:	00:35:17	Yeah. Okay. I'll tell my class that there was a structure of writing things to say a word or a phrase in a specific order like ABCDE, and then repeat it and reverse order EDCBA, or something like that and that to visualize it, it kind of goes like this and then goes like this and I'll make an X with my hands and say, "The Greek letter chi was like that, so I think that's why they called it a chiasmus." Some mini chiasmus might be, "It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice," and then they kind of get that idea or some of them that Jesus used. "The first will be last and the last will be first," and so forth. It's really fun. After explaining that, then I'll show them Mosiah five that you found, 10 through 12.
	00:36:11	I'll show them in King Benjamin's speech in Mosiah three, but then when I get to show them Alma 36, that's when, if they've never seen it before, their jaws drop and I say, "Look at that. That is a masterpiece. Look how intricate... That cannot be an accident. Think of a certain order of things and then a center which is super important where it shifts and then repeats in reverse order." How did I do?
Prof. Jack Welch:	00:36:40	Very well. That's good. Nicely explained, John. I would just add that the Greek word chiazerein, which is where the word chiasmus comes from, means crossing. The optic nerve actually has... The left optic nerve goes to the right side of the brain, and you know how there's a crossing in the optic nerve pattern in the brain? Well, that's called a chiasm. That's the chiasm in the optic nerve. It's this idea of crisscrossing. Why do we call it crisscrossing? That actually is related to the word Christ. I don't

think there's any reason to believe that the pattern of chiasmus is related except... The idea of the cross is not directly related, of course, to a literary chiasm, but it is interesting that in most cases, in the Book of Mormon, what you'll find at the center of the chiasm is Jesus Christ. He's often there at the middle. That's certainly the case with Alma 36, isn't it?

John Bytheway: 00:37:41 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:37:41 Oh, it's wonderful. That Apex!

John Bytheway: 00:37:45 And Jack, I don't know the answer to this. How many of these structures have been discovered within the Book of Mormon? Is it 10? Is it 20? Is it hundreds?

Prof. Jack Welch: 00:37:55 It's hundreds. [Don Parry](#) has put together a little book of some of the newest ones that have been found and there are 200 and some in that book. You gather them all together... I haven't added them up, but I'm guessing we have really good substantial uses. Some small, some medium, some long, I'd say four, maybe 500 of them.

Hank Smith: 00:38:18 This point is crucial, this center point that you've shown us in this chiasmic structure, that it's like climbing a mountain and getting to that top point and then coming back down and the center point is what's impressive, not only about the structure, but about what it teaches. The manual brings up a great talk from [Elder Matthew Holland](#). This is back in 2020. I remember this talk specifically because I deal with the same problem that Elder Holland here starts his talk with. He says in Alma's report to Helaman of what happened to him, he says, "I was struck by the phrase 'nothing so exquisite and bitter as this pain,'" and then he says, "I confess talk of exquisite pain caught my attention partly due to my battle with a seven millimeter kidney stone." He says, "Never has one man experienced such great things when such a small and simple thing was brought to pass."

00:39:22 I have had my fair share of kidney stones. I thank my father for that. There were some nights where I would be, "oh, please, please. I don't want kidneys anymore," but he says right at the end of the talk... This whole talk is fantastic. I hope everyone will go read this, the Exquisite Gift of the Son by Elder Matthew Holland. He says, "I witness to you that through the staggering goodness of Jesus Christ in his infinite atonement, we can escape the agonies of our moral failings and overcome the undeserved agonies of our mortal misfortune. Under his direction, your divine destiny will be one of unparalleled magnificence and indescribable joy."

	00:40:09	He's using the language here of the center point of Alma 36. "A joy so intense," he says, "and so unique to you, your particular ashes will become beauty beyond anything earthly. That you might taste this happiness now and be filled with it forever, I invite you to do what Alma did. Let your mind catch hold on the exquisite gift of the Son of God as revealed through his gospel in this, his true and living church." Isn't that so wonderful that that is the center point of this chiasmus?
John Bytheway:	00:40:50	It's so good, and I think that a lot of parents, I hope it will give them hope because this is Alma, the vilest of sinners who... "Wait. Somewhere back there, my father told the people about Jesus Christ, a Son of God, who would atone for the sins of the world." And then that phrase that Elder Matt Holland repeated in my mind, "caught hold upon this thought." I mean, it was grasping like the last rope to save my life. "My mind caught hold upon this and I cried..." This is why you don't want to be dazzled by the structure because look at the content. "I cried within my heart, 'Oh, Jesus, thou Son of God have mercy on me.'"
	00:41:32	And Hank and Jack, I have a memory of sitting in a jeepney in the Philippines next to a pastor who I had reason to believe didn't believe we were Christians. I told him this story. I told him about in my Book of Mormon, there's this story about Alma who remembers his father to have taught about Jesus Christ, the Son of God who could forgive sin. No idea what happened, but really fun to tell this beautiful story about someone who cried out in his heart to Jesus, "Thou Son of God, have mercy on me." What an essential message of the whole gospel right there, faith in Christ and repentance.
Hank Smith:	00:42:26	Yeah. More from Elder Holland's talk, he said, "Alma said everything started to change the moment his mind caught hold upon the coming of one Jesus Christ." Everything changing at that singular moment.
John Bytheway:	00:42:43	Jack, I hope you wouldn't mind this, but you told me... When we were on a trip together I asked you, "Did you go home? Did you show Hugh Nibley?" Could you tell us briefly how that meeting was to have one of his former students come home? And Hank, can you imagine showing Hugh Nibley something he had never seen before? Is there any other human who has ever done that before? So it's just kind of a fun thing to imagine.
Prof. Jack Welch:	00:43:08	Well, thanks for asking about that. I was returning from my mission. It was September, the beginning of fall semester, 1968. Hugh Nibley had been my Book of Mormon teacher when I was a freshman, so I knew him. I had written to Robert K. Thomas,

who was the academic vice president and told him about my discovery of chiasmus because he taught a class at BYU on the Bible as literature. He had written back kindly and said, "No, I don't think anybody's ever found this. I've never heard anyone talk about it," so I made a little note of that and said, "Well, if Brother Thomas doesn't know about it," and knowing that Brother Nibley probably didn't know about it and knowing how excited he would be, it gave me courage to get to BYU, we drove up, my brother and I, and checked into our dorm.

00:44:04 It was about 9:30 or so, and I thought, "I'm going to take my briefcase and go over and knock on Hugh's door." I knew where he lived. School was beginning. I was worried that, "Well, if I don't catch him, when am I going to have a time free to come and do that?" So I did. It was probably close to 10 o'clock when I knocked on the door. It didn't bother me because I knew he was a night owl. He always said, "There was no virtue in getting up early in the morning to write a bad book."

John Bytheway: 00:44:34 That's right.

Hank Smith: 00:44:36 I think I've heard that. "I'd rather get up at nine and write a good book than get up at five and write a bad book."

Prof. Jack Welch: 00:44:45 You're right. Was I out of my mind? Yes. But I knocked on the door... Well, first of all, the lights were all on. I felt confident. One of his daughters opened the door and recognized me and said, "Hey, dad, it's one of your students here," and he let me in. He had served a mission in Germany. He welcomed me and I explained where I'd been, what cities I'd been in, and we chatted for a while and I said, "Well, if you've got a few minutes, I've got something I'd like to show you." Well, I started taking out my handwritten notes and some of the work I'd done. I had with me copies of some of the books that I had acquired in German and in other places. Started talking to him about this and he immediately caught on and saw what was going on. He knew about chiasmus in ancient literature, but had never thought of finding it in the Book of Mormon.

00:45:41 It wasn't like it was just coming out of nowhere at him. As we started going through them, I pulled out one after another. I said, "Here's another sheet. Here's another one." They were all just handwritten, some of them just scribbled, but he immediately... He knew the text. He could sense, of course, the place in the scripture where it came, its meaning, and he was like a kid in a candy shop. He insisted on my telling him every person I had talked to about it, he wanted to know where I had learned about it, and what was the name of that German

professor that gave that lecture and the book that I went and bought and read about it. He was really impressed with and immediately saw, I think, a lot of the value in, "Let's do this right." It was probably a little after midnight when we finally said, "Okay, we've covered it tonight."

- 00:46:33 As he did, put both of his hands on his legs and said, "You need to write a master's thesis on this subject," and I said, "Well, Hugh, I'm an undergraduate. I'm not Brother Nibley. I'm not even admitted to a graduate program yet." He said, "Don't worry. We'll take care of that." I started working on my master's thesis at that point, which I would then complete and graduate with a master's degree the same day I got my bachelor's degree in the spring of 1970. True to his promise, he said, "I will be on your thesis committee," and he was. I'm so grateful that he would take the time, that he would take the interest. What a great mentor! And I've tried to repay that debt partly by being the general editor of the collected works of Hugh Nibley, 19 volumes, and like King Benjamin says, "It doesn't matter how much you try to repay, he immediately pays you back and you're still in his debt." I'm still very grateful.
- John Bytheway: 00:47:41 Didn't he say to you something like, "This could be the most important thing to come out of the BY," or something like that?
- Prof. Jack Welch: 00:47:48 Well, he did as we walked out on the porch of his house and we were looking out in the dark and wondering, "So what's next?" And I said, "Thank you, thank you," and he said, "Thank you for coming. I think you've made the first significant discovery to come out of the BYU." Now, to me, that of course was enabling, empowering, stimulating. I mean, I thought, "Okay, I certainly have now the support of my mentor," but more than that, I recognized... I knew Brother Nibley well enough that he loved to speak in hyperbole. I took it with a grain of salt or maybe a whole lump of salt.
- Hank Smith: 00:48:47 Well, John, this would be a perfect moment to include this. We need to do a shout-out to Rebecca Nibley who left us the kindest review on Apple Podcast. I don't know if she's the one who opened the door Jack, but here's what she said. "I love, love, love this show. It's my very favorite podcast," and then she says, "It gives me a little personal thrill when they quote my father, Hugh Nibley, because he is my hero and the smartest man I ever knew."
- Prof. Jack Welch: 00:49:18 Thank you for bringing that up. Way to go, Rebecca. Thank you.
- Hank Smith: 00:49:22 What a great story.

John Bytheway:	00:49:24	Let me throw in one more plug to watch that, the Discovery of Chiasmus video on BookOfMormonCentral.org , because correct me if I'm wrong, Jack, it looks like some of your handwritten notes are included in that video. You see a lot of those handwritten notes of chiasmus examples, is that right?
Prof. Jack Welch:	00:49:42	That's correct. This is the issue of <i>BYU Studies</i> that was published in the autumn of 1969, so that's only six months after Alma 36 was found. In this issue of BYU Studies, Alma 36 ... And also Alma chapter 41 has a wonderful, very creative chiasm in it, and that was published as an undergraduate in <i>BYU Studies</i> and it's still one of the landmark publications of this great journal.
John Bytheway:	00:50:15	My memory too is that you published an article in the <i>New Era</i> , '71 or something, about chiasmus.
Prof. Jack Welch:	00:50:21	It was actually February of '72 , and you can still look that up on the church's website. You have to go back into the old issues of the magazines, but there's a real fun story about that too. I was studying at Oxford University at that time, and while we were there, the church held for the first time an area conference outside of the United States. Manchester, England was the place where that was held. There were just a handful of us who were college students then. This is 1970. How many members of the church in England were there?
Prof. Jack Welch:	00:51:00	Not many. And then there were a few of us from the United States, but again, only a handful of us. As a part of that Area Conference, Jay Todd, who was the new editor of the <i>New Era</i> , came wanting to do an article about that Area Conference, do some interviewing, talk about the youth in England and what they were doing.
	00:51:26	He came to a little session that we had where all of the college students in all of England, we fit into one very small chapel and didn't even begin to fill it. But he and Marion D. Hanks and other people were there, and that's when I met Jay Todd.
	00:51:45	He had heard a little bit about chiasmus. He was current with his reading and had seen the article and he said, "Will you do an article for the <i>New Era</i> and aim it at the youth? We don't want all these footnotes or we just want something that's really nice and fun." So I put on the title of that article, Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon, or the Book of Mormon Does It Again. Took a minute to get a smile, but you read that and it's a clever enough title.

- 00:52:16 And in those days we didn't have social media, we didn't have YouTube, we couldn't go online to get things. Where did people get, especially the youth, their articles and interests? There were good things they were putting out in that little magazine. It was circulated fairly widely and more than that, the New Era sent copies of this to all the missions of the church as far as I know. And missionaries then would leave these magazines in their apartments.
- 00:52:49 And I can't tell you the number of people who tell me, "I read that article in Italy" or "I read that article in Japan" or wherever it was, and it left an indelible memory where they saw for the first time like I had. It was so exciting and so new. It's still maturing. We're still learning more about it.
- John Bytheway: 00:53:13 That's wonderful. I have loved talking about the structural elements of this end of the whole Book of Mormon briefly, but let's jump in and start looking at the content. You want to begin to take us through Alma 36 here?
- Prof. Jack Welch: 00:53:28 I think the best way to do it would be to go line by line, but looking at them by their pairs. Get the logic of how Alma is putting this together. In Verse 1, Alma begins by saying to Helaman, "My son, give ear to my words." And of course, when you talk about hearing, when we hear the word of the Lord, it doesn't just mean listen, but you really internalize it. You hear it and you obey it. If you hear the word of the Lord, there's more to it than just listening.
- 00:54:02 Then at the end in Verse 30, the last thing he says here is that the promise of the Lord that has just been mentioned, this is according to his word. What Alma is saying, you begin by listening to my words, but that will bring you to the words of God. And chiasmus often will do this, that the first mention will be at kind of an ordinary or worldly level, but then there will be an intensification in the second half. It's clearly related. And in many of these cases, these words are only mentioned in their sequential spot in the big structure.
- 00:54:50 So what does he want him to hear? He says, "Keep the commandments." Like we've said, hearing means obey. "Keep the commandments and you shall prosper in the land. God has promised you that." And if you look at Verse 30, you have exactly these same words where he says, "I want you to know as I do know, that if you will keep the commandments, you shall prosper in the land." So at the beginning, he's giving a command, an imperative, "Keep the commandments," but then at the end he's kind of bearing his testimony, "I know this." If

you do this, God will be true to his words. Next in Verse 2, he says to his son, "I wish you should do as I have done," and particularly going on remembering the captivity of our fathers for they were in bondage. Now, if you go to the end, starting in Verse 28 and 29, "God brought our fathers out of bondage and captivity and you should retain a remembrance of their captivity. And now you will know as I do know." You can see the reversal of the order and there's a little subtle difference in each of those. But at the beginning he says, "I want you to do as I have done." And then he says, "And if you do so, you will know as I do know." Can you see how it's being elevated but clearly connected?

00:56:28 Going back up, he says they were in bondage, yes, and he surely did deliver them. Then in Verse 27, working up from the bottom, "He will deliver me." We have in Verse 27 also, trust in him. And up at the top, Verse 3, Alma is saying, "Trust in God." You see how that's also a pattern.

00:56:56 Now, in Verse 3, we have him saying that you will be supported in your trials, troubles and afflictions. So that's an interesting little triplet. And in Verse 26, he says, "My knowledge is of God and I have been supported in my trials, troubles and afflictions." He'll only use that triplet twice. I don't know how many other times it even appears in Alma's writings, but very clearly they're positioned exactly in this order.

00:57:26 Now, in Verse 4, Alma says, "I know this not of myself, but of God." And if you look in Verse 26, after he tells the story of his conversion, he says, "I have been born of God, therefore my knowledge is of God." And if you look at Verse 5, back up at the top, the way he had said it there, "I know this not of myself, but of God, for I have been born of God." And in the second half he says, "I have been born of God and therefore my knowledge is of God." Once again, you see the switching of the order.

00:58:04 And at that point he begins to tell this story that I'm sure Alma has told many, many times. You go back to Alma chapter five, there are some allusions to his conversion. In Mosiah chapter 27, we have the words that he spoke as he came up out of the three days where he thought he was going to be destroyed and he immediately says, "I was in the darkest abyss, but now I behold the marvelous light of the..." I was this, but now I'm that. I was this, but now I'm... In Mosiah 27, he gives us a whole bunch of what you call antithetical parallelisms. Here he will split those antithetical parallelisms and put one part in the first half and the other part in the second half.

	00:58:49	Now, it's much more natural and spontaneous to have done it the way he did in Mosiah 27 when he hasn't thought about it very much. But here you can see him orchestrating, telling this story like Joseph Smith tells the story of the first vision on many occasions. He changes it in structure, not in content. It's the same message, but it's delivered in a way that's appropriate for each of the contexts that Joseph is speaking in. And so it is here.
	00:59:20	So in Verses 6 through 9, Alma goes at some length to talk about how he sought to destroy the church. And if you go down to Verse 24, it's interesting that the contrast there is that "I now have labored to bring souls to repentance." He clearly sees his missionary labors as doing penance for, or compensating for, trying to correct problems that he had created by seeking to destroy the church.
John Bytheway:	00:59:55	I look at Verse 24 there where he's now building up the church and one of the things that I thought was really, really interesting there where he says that "I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste." And a lot of times when we're talking about sharing the gospel, we say we want people to feel what we have felt. But it's interesting that he has just finished writing about the Zoramites and asking them to plant the word in their hearts and to partake of the tree of life. And he's still using the word taste there instead of feel.
	01:00:34	I probably had a pie chart of reasons that I went on a mission. My dad went, my brothers went, I should go. I want to go. I think it's the right thing to do. Do you know what I mean? But when I look at Verse 24, I feel like this sounds like such a wonderful motive, maybe the best motive. "From that time even until now, I've labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls onto repentance, that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste, that they might also be born of God and be filled with the Holy Ghost."
Hank Smith:	01:01:09	If you had to think of all the reasons to go on a mission, that might be high on your list.
John Bytheway:	01:01:13	Yeah. And if you're like me, my reasons got better after I was out. I met people and saw what the gospel had done for them, and it got more exciting to share it rather than just, oh, my brothers went, my dad went. Then in Verse 26, he says, "Yeah, and because of that, behold many have been born of God and have tasted as I have tasted and have seen eye to eye as I have seen."

Hank Smith:	01:01:37	He talks about Lehi in Verse 22, and then it's tasting and it's fruit in Verse 25, almost as if he's channeling Lehi's dream there, reminding us of how Lehi had tasted of the fruit and wanted other people to taste that same thing.
John Bytheway:	01:01:59	Yeah, I love that he's still using taste, that metaphor.
Hank Smith:	01:02:04	All right, Jack, where do you want to go next with this?
Prof. Jack Welch:	01:02:07	Verse 10, he says, Whoa, this angel appeared and my limbs were paralyzed. You don't see that word limbs very often in the scriptures, but you'll find it again in Verse 23, down in the second half "when my limbs received strength again." Why did they receive strength? Well, we can just zero in now on the middle, starting in Verse 14, he says, "I feared being in the presence of God and I suffered the pains of a damned soul. I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins. And then I remembered my father speaking of one Jesus Christ, a son of God who would come to atone for the sins of the world." And he then says, "And I did cry out within my soul, 'Oh Jesus, thou son of God, have mercy on me.' And when I did that," he said, "and I was harrowed up no more by the memory of my sins." Indeed, my joy was as exceeding as had been my pain. And where he had feared being in the presence of God, now he says, " And I did long to be in the presence of God."
	01:03:35	The words are exactly the same but now being put into first the problem side and then the solution side. Of course, the most important thing is always the turning point. Sometimes we think that, well, Alma was converted because the angel came. No. Angels come to people. Didn't help Laman and Lemuel. It's more than that. The conversion doesn't happen until he cries out within his soul, "Oh, Jesus have mercy on me."
	01:04:11	And he's doing it because he remembers his father speaking about the coming of Jesus Christ. He exercises faith and says, "I now call upon the name, your name, Jesus. Help me." And when he did, that's the turning point of not only this chapter, but obviously the turning point of his whole life.



- John Bytheway: 00:00 Welcome to Part Two with Professor Jack Welch. [Alma 36-38](#). Speaking of looking at both sides here, I'm using paper scriptures. I'm looking at verses 12 and verses 19, and they're straight across from each other. [President Boyd K. Packer](#) in April 2001 talked about verse 12. He mentioned the words racked and harrowed. He described in painful detail what a rack was, like an instrument of torture.
- 00:31 And then he described what a harrow was with spikes on it that is dragged over hardened ground. And how this was happening to his hardened heart so that God could plant a new seed. But one of the things that on the other side in verse 19, he says, "I could remember my pains no more." And I'll bet that all of us have heard this and maybe asked the question ourselves. How do I know if I've been forgiven? I like the clue it gives us here. I love this phrase, I could remember my pains no more.
- 01:12 Yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more. It doesn't say you don't remember your sins anymore. Alma is telling us about his sins, but the memory of them didn't harrow him up. It didn't hurt anymore. And that seems to be a result of this repentance is that, oh, I remembered my sins but it didn't harrow me up anymore. It didn't cause pain anymore. And then verse 20, what joy and marvelous light I did behold, and my soul was filled with joy as exquisite as was my pain. Do you see the same thing there?
- Hank Smith: 01:49 Oh, absolutely. How do I know, I like that you brought that up. How do I know if I've been forgiven of my sins? As we work towards the center of the chiasm here, it's that your thoughts are centered on Christ. As soon as your thoughts are centered on Christ and you're starting to feel that strength, you're feeling the Holy Ghost, you know it's working. It's difficult to say at a certain point, oh, I'm forgiven, I'm done, right? But you're trending in the right direction, but you're keeping centered there on Christ.

John Bytheway:	02:23	And I remember one of our guests earlier quoting President Eyring , that if you are feeling the spirit that is evidenced that the atonement is working in you, but a caution then, who would really want to keep reminding you of your sins?
Hank Smith:	02:39	Yeah.
John Bytheway:	02:39	I love that little clue right there. Here's how you know it's not going to harrow you up anymore, but don't let Satan try to do that because he will.
Hank Smith:	02:52	John, I'm reminded of our discussion with Dr. Spencer who said, "The evidence can convince you, but this, this converts you." Verses 17 and 18, that's center point. That is life changing from darkness to light.
Prof. Jack Welch:	03:09	I agree entirely with that. We need a little help in knowing, so what is it that we really should focus on? It's perfectly obvious to us. It's taken a while for us to really focus on that as the main important part of what the gospel of Jesus Christ really amounts to. Now to us we say, well, of course it's that way, but it wasn't always understood of course that way. Alma has left us with a wonderful personal record and let's turn for a moment then to chapter 37. It's rather straightforward. It's mostly personal instruction to Helaman about his responsibilities as the guardian of the sacred treasures where he's given the brass plates, the liahona, the other sacred relics and artifacts that were brought from the old world. These were in the custody of the high priest. And I imagine they were kept in what they would've called their holy of holies. Alma had used these, they were part of his life. He's entrusting those to his oldest son. I imagine that he's already trained Helaman. He doesn't say, just well put them in a box somewhere. I think Helaman knows what to do with them. He also interestingly gives Helaman the 24 gold plates, which are not to be made public, but were very important treasures and they knew and understood that it contained the story of the Jaredites and we will get that in the book of Ether much later.
John Bytheway:	04:43	One of the things I love about Alma 37 is this phrase, it's in verse eight, "And now it has hitherto been wisdom in God that these things should be preserved; for behold they have enlarged the memory of this people." I've enlarged the memory of my laptops back in the day, but to enlarge the memory, I think my mission president used to say the weakest ink is better than the strongest memory. And the scriptures enlarged the memory of the Nephites by preserving their history and their testimony and keeping it alive, just the way our personal

journals can enlarge the memory of our children and give them a sense of our family history. There's another thing my mission president used to say, that wise people learn from experience, but super wise people learn from others' experience. I think, what are the scriptures? They're the experiences of others. They can enlarge our memories. I remember reading about this in sixth grade and I didn't understand it at all, but people that thought that language and books are miraculous and now I get that. This is miraculous that we can preserve memories with little marks on paper called words, that we can enlarge our memories, our experiences, we can benefit from the experiences of others.

Hank Smith:

06:05

Absolutely. John, since you talked about your favorite part of Alma 37, if you don't mind, I'm going to jump in. I've always loved these opening verses six and seven where it seems Alma is thinking Helaman might not take these things as seriously as he hopes him to because this sounds like a dad saying, now look, I know what you're going to think. And he says, you may suppose that this is foolishness in me, but behold I say unto you that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass. It's a common phrase I think in the church, right? Is this by small and simple things are great things brought to pass. I think I could start it with almost any church member and they would be able to finish it, but I've always loved it because if you look at a painting, for example, if you take Starry Night, I think it's the most valuable piece of art in the United States.

06:57

I'm not sure, but I think it's up there in the \$180 million range. Let's say you were to cut it up, I would cut up a replica. I wouldn't cut up the original, but let's say you take a replica and you cut it up into little pieces, you would find that Starry Night, this masterpiece, is created of just individual brushstrokes. They're not all impressive. Each individual brushstroke isn't super impressive, but man, when you back up and look at all those little tiny brushstrokes one after another after another, they become a great thing. Their very small and simple brush strokes are great paintings brought to pass. Can I read a little bit from, I wish I could say I got this idea myself, but it comes from [Elder Bednar](#), this talk from 2009 more diligent and concerned at home. He says in my office is a beautiful painting of a wheat field.

07:52

The painting is a vast collection of individual brushstrokes, none of which in isolation is very impressive or interesting. In fact, if you stand close enough to the canvas, all you can see is a massive seemingly unrelated and unattractive streaks of yellow, gold and brown paint. However, as you gradually move away

from the canvas, all of the individual brushstrokes combine together and produce a magnificent landscape of a wheat field. Many ordinary individual brushstrokes work together to create a captivating and beautiful painting. Well, then he relates that to our homes. He says each family prayer, each episode of family scripture study and each family home evening is a brushstroke on the canvas of our soul. No one event may appear to be very impressive or memorable, but just as the yellow and gold and brown strokes of paint compliment each other and produce an impressive masterpiece, so are consistency in doing seemingly small things can lead to significant spiritual results.

09:04 John, Jack, he adds this little discussion he and his wife had, he said, sometimes Sister Bednar and I wondered if our efforts to do these spiritually essential things were worthwhile. Now and then verses of scripture were read amid outbursts, such as he's touching me, make him stop looking at me, mom, he's breathing my air. Sincere prayers occasionally were interrupted with giggling and poking, and with active rambunctious boys, family home evening lessons did not always produce high levels of edification. At times, Sister Bednar and I were exasperated because the righteous habits we worked so hard to foster did not seem to yield immediately the spiritual results we wanted and expected. Today, if you ask our adult sons what they remember about family prayer, scripture study and family home evening, I believe I know how they would answer. They likely would not identify a particular prayer or a specific instance of scripture study or an especially meaningful family home evening lesson as the defining moment in their spiritual development. What they would say they remember is that as a family we were consistent. By small and simple things are great things brought to pass.

John Bytheway: 10:26 Ah, I really like that

Hank Smith: 10:29 Jack, what are we going to look at next?

Prof. Jack Welch: 10:32 [Alma 38](#) is interesting because it's a short chapter but it divides exactly in half, but in a different way. Alma begins by telling the story of his conversion to his son, Shiblon. And he starts where he starts in Alma 36 and you can read through and in about four or five verses he goes through exactly those same steps, not in quite as much detail, until he comes to that point where he cries out, oh Jesus thou son of God, have mercy upon me. And Shiblon knows that that's a turning point. You read through that, he finally ends there in verse eight. It came to pass that I was three days and three nights in the most bitter pain and

anguish and so on, and never until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy did I receive remission of my sins. And then I did find peace.

11:30 Now what he's done here is he has given Shiblon half of Alma 36. Under Jewish law, and this comes out of the book of Deuteronomy chapter 21, the oldest son in the family was entitled to what was called the double portion of inheritance. If you have three sons, you divide your estate into four portions. The oldest son gets a half, two fourths, and the others each get their fourth. Now, why would the older son get double? He's got more responsibilities. He's got to take care of his mother. He might have to take care of other relatives or other people, but he's the older son who's taking the place of the father and will need more resources. Now, Alma doesn't have a lot of money. He's not leaving his sons with an estate. He was out in the missionary field. We don't know where he lived or what kind of home he had, but he seems to have been more out on the road than he was at home.

12:37 But what he gives to Helaman is a double portion. And what he gives to Shiblon is one portion. And then like he gave to Helaman, personal instructions about what Helaman was supposed to do in his calling as record keeper and guardian of the treasury. Now what will he do for Shiblon? With the second half of this, he now gives him personal advice on how he should live in his personal life. This is your responsibility, your stewardship to be a good man and you go through what you're supposed to do. Be diligent and temperate in all things. See that you're not lifted up in pride. Use boldness but not too overbearing. Bridle all your passions that you may be filled with love. Don't pray the way the Zoramites did. Can you see this as personal advice that Alma is now giving, its advice, but it's not the official advice like he would give to his first son. That explains why Alma's giving a shorter blessing to Shiblon.

John Bytheway: 13:42 Jack, I'm glad you read that verse. I was one time in the JSB and [Elder Neal Maxwell](#) was there. This is probably before you were born, Hank. It was a conference on King Benjamin's speech, but I don't know how Alma 38:12 came up. He said, if you were to compress the missionary handbook into one verse, it could be Alma 38:12. And I had never thought of it that way, but think of this as the missionary handbook. This is prior to Preach My Gospel, we had this little white handbook we carried in our pocket. Think of this as a missionary, use boldness but not overbearing and also see that ye bridle all your passions that ye may be filled with love. See that ye refrain from idleness. Isn't that interesting? Great advice for a missionary. I've heard lots of

people talk about this idea of bridling your passions. That is a sermon in a sentence. He doesn't say kill your passions or destroy your passions, but what's a bridle? What do we use that for?

- Prof. Jack Welch: 14:48 I'm not a horse person, but I'm pretty sure it's a horse.
- John Bytheway: 14:51 Right. Let me quote [Elder Bruce C. Hafen](#), he said, is self-denial wise because there's something wrong with our passions or because there is something right with our passions? Alma taught his son, see that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love. He did not say we should suppress or eliminate our passions, but rather bridle them. Harness, channel and focus them. Why? Because disciplining our passions makes possible a richer, deeper love. And I love what comes after, bridle all your passions, not because that's bad, bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love. How positive is that?
- Hank Smith: 15:34 Sounds a lot like our appetites and passions are better used when they're within the bounds the Lord has set.
- John Bytheway: 15:44 We bridle a horse, not because horses are bad, but because they are so powerful and useful if we bridle them.
- Hank Smith: 15:53 I love that.
- Prof. Jack Welch: 15:55 That brings us to the end of today's lesson. We might want to end with Alma's blessing there, which I think is a beautiful farewell. May the Lord bless your soul and receive you at the last day into his kingdom to sit down in peace. Now go my son, and teach the word unto this people. Be sober, which is a way of saying be wise. My son, farewell. That is Alma, oh, he's leaving. Well he says farewell. Well, he's not through. Next week we'll go through Alma 39 to 42 where he now will speak to Corianton. The topics he will cover there of course are the things that a wayward son needs to know about the plan of redemption, the plan of restoration, the plan of mercy, the plan of salvation. Alma will mention the word plan 10 times in those four chapters.
- 16:57 I think it's his way of saying, well, we know that there are 10 commandments, but the reason behind those 10 commandments are these 10 expressions and explanations of the plan of salvation, of mercy, of redemption, of restoration, and of happiness. And I'd like to conclude with the comment by Elder Maxwell. Sometimes we just talk about the plan of salvation. We've gotten better now and we sometimes talk

about the plan of mercy. All of these different attributes of God's plan are a part of Alma's explanation of what is the plan really all about and how will it work in your life? And the point that [Elder Maxwell](#) made at the end of one of his books was that the principles of the gospel need each other as much as we people need each other in the church and in the kingdom of God. That the principles of the gospel are all together dependent upon each other. They are an organ with all the pipes and you have to have all the pipes playing.

18:13 I think all of these ways in which Alma explains what the plan of happiness, salvation, mercy, redemption, restoration, and atonement are all about is a really unusually profound insight in a way. You read through those chapters and you can see a great mind and a great spirit and a fantastic testimony at work on his son Corianton. And it works. He converts, he repents, and wouldn't that be a blessing to all of us as parents?

Hank Smith: 18:53 Everyone knows, all that we've been talking about today, our wonderful Team member Lisa Spice will make sure it's in our show notes. Go to followhim.co. We'll link it all over to Book of Mormon Central and all the other articles we've mentioned.

Prof. Jack Welch: 19:06 Well that's great. Thank you for doing that. And again, you can go on the Book of Mormon Central Archive and you can look up another book that I've written. It's called [The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple](#), and it was published by an academic press in London called Ash Gate Publishers. What I wanted to do was show that each of the words, the elements in the Sermon on the Mount have temple significance. For example, when it says put your light on a candle, your lamp it says really, don't put it under a bushel. Well, the word there for candlestick is luchnia, which is the word for the menorah. Put your light on the menorah. You're adding your light to the light of the temple. There's a temple connection, and you go through the beatitudes. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

20:06 That's coming right out of Psalm 24 where it says the pure in heart shall see God. And that's a psalm the pilgrims sang when they were coming to the temple. You can go down through all of the elements in The Sermon on the Mount, and almost every one of them has important temple connections. And I'll mention one last one. You remember when it says if you come to the altar and you realize that your brother has ought against you. The altar, how many altars were there in Jesus's day? There's only one altar. Here you come unto the altar of the temple and you're told if you have ought against your brother, stop what

you're doing, leave your sacrifice and get out there and get reconciled. If there are any hard feelings, we can't do at the altar what we need to do. Does that sound temple-ish to you?

- John Bytheway: 21:06 It sure does. Yeah. The last time I was at the Mount of Beatitudes, I was drawing on my iPad and I thought, oh, this is cool if this is the Moses thing to go up into the mount. And I thought it was interesting that it was the Premortal Christ at Sinai. It was the mortal Christ at the Mount of Beatitudes and it was the resurrected Christ at the temple at Bountiful. I thought how interesting he was at all those places, but it was a different time. And in the Sermon on the Mount, they're astonished because of his taught them as one authority and not as the scribes. And I love what the JST does with that, with authority from God and not with authority from the scribes. But then in the Book of Mormon, it sounds like they're astonished because the law of Moses was coming to an end. We were talking our last episode about how often people get astonished in the Book of Mormon. You've heard me talk about this before.
- Prof. Jack Welch: 22:05 Yeah. That's great. Well, one other thing, what you've noticed there is you have Jesus in the preexistence, in the mortal, and then in the resurrection. You have the three stages of the plan of salvation.
- John Bytheway: 22:20 Oh, that's a good way to look at, yeah. When the Zoramites say in their prayer that you are the same yesterday, today and forever, I always ask my class, well, at one time he was a spirit. Another time he was immortal. And another time, well another time he was resurrected. What must that mean then about being the same? It's a different, his reliability maybe instead of his form. The Zoramites, they had a truth in there, but they weren't looking at it right. I always thought that's interesting.
- Prof. Jack Welch: 22:54 Yeah, yeah, that's good. That's good.
- Hank Smith: 22:56 Jack, before we let you go, I was wondering if you could answer a question for us. And John, I'd like you actually to answer this question as well. I often ask this of our guests. John, why don't I ask it of you and then Jack? We have people who listen all over the world. It's one of the fun parts of our job is hearing from people in Germany and in Japan and in Madagascar and in Farmington saying, I'm listening to the show. John and Jack, let's say I've listened to these stories of Alma talking to his sons, Helaman and Shiblon. What do you hope I walk away with? Maybe I haven't told you this before, but we even have prisoners in jails and prison facilities who are allowed to listen

to our podcast. What would you say to them? What's your hope?

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| John Bytheway: | 23:50 | I love that Alma is not saying Helaman, I've done everything in my life perfectly and here's how you should do it too. This is more like Helaman, Shiblon, I was a mess. I was in a bad place doing bad stuff. Here's how I got through that. It was through Christ. He is our hope and our anchor and the way it's presented is dazzling in chiasmus. But please don't miss that this isn't a perfect father talking to perfect sons. This is a father saying, I had really messed up and let me tell you how I got out of that. And it was all because I was delivered by Christ. The same way he delivered the Egyptians, he can deliver me and he can deliver you. That's, I think, central to the whole thing. |
| Hank Smith: | 24:48 | I think of anyone who's in Alma 37:45, anyone who's in a veil of sorrow that you can listen to Alma as he says, the words of Christ, if you follow their course, can carry you beyond that veil of sorrow. Anyone who's listening can know that it will come to pass. The Book of Mormon says frequently, and it came to pass. This veil of sorrow will come to pass. Jack, how about you? How would you answer that question? |
| Prof. Jack Welch: | 25:19 | Oh, that's a great question and I hope first of all that anyone in that position will see Alma as a friend. See Alma as someone who has been in prison, he was imprisoned for several months, tortured, almost put to death. They hoped that he would die. He was delivered from that. I don't think he ever forgot that. He knows your condition and what he's telling everyone is the way in which no matter where you are or what your condition might be, this is the gospel of Jesus Christ that is eternal and is true. He talked about remembering the captivity and bondage of his own people and how he himself was suffering and under a type of captivity before he was liberated. Now that liberation can occur no matter where you are, even if you're in prison. And then he talks to his son, Corianton, and he wants Corianton to realize that when you die, when it's over, it's not over. |
| | 26:29 | There is more to come. Alma makes a big point about how some people that he had had to work with there in his own society denied that there would be a judgment and an afterlife. And what Alma promises them in chapter 42 is that God will provide a way and a time, a length of time that judgment will not be entered until everyone has had time to repent. And Alma says that he will even give you a space of time. I think that's very interesting that the word space is used there because that's an opening. You're not being confined. The time will be open and whether it's in this life or before the resurrection in the next life, |

Alma says, the law of mercy is not that he will somehow just forget what you've done, but that you will be given time to repent. And that's mercy, because God will not execute judgment.

27:44 He will give you a stay of judgment and he will not execute that judgment until you have had all the time you are asking for and in his righteousness know that would be good for you and will leave you to have. This is something that you won't find taught anywhere outside the Book of Mormon. I know that this is true. And I know that the Lord loves his children and everyone, no matter their condition, no matter their place in the world, no matter their problems, no matter their successes, he loves all of us and wants us to come back to him voluntarily that we choose him. And if we do, he will magnify us. I promise.

Hank Smith: 28:43 Jack, thank you for spending time with us and telling us about chiasmus and walking through these chapters with us.

Prof. Jack Welch: 28:49 You're sure welcome. Thank you.

Hank Smith: 28:51 And with that, we want to thank Dr. Jack Welch for being with us today. It has been an absolute treat to walk through these chapters. We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen, and every episode we remember our founder, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We're looking at Alma speaking to his son, Corianton, 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 Testament. 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. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra and Annabelle Sorensen.

President Russell M. Nelson: 30:11 Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Turn to Him. Follow Him.

ONCE THERE WAS A SNOWMAN



- Hank Smith: 00:03 Hello everyone. Welcome to another followHIM Favorites. John and I are sharing a single story to go with each week's lesson. John, we are in Alma 36, 37 and 38 today. In chapter 36, Alma tells the story of his conversion, and I have a story for you. I heard this story the very first time, and I looked into it and found a lot more details from Joseph Wirthlin from way back in 2006. He tells the story of Harry de Leyer. Harry de Leyer was late to a horse auction one day, way back in 1956. All the good horses had been sold, and the few that were still there were old, and the company was going to probably salvage them. I don't know if you know what salvaging a horse looks like, John.
- John Bytheway: 00:49 Might not be what we think it is.
- Hank Smith: 00:51 Yeah. But it sounds pretty bad.
- John Bytheway: 00:54 Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 00:55 Harry was a horse master at a local girls school. He saw this horse. It's described as an uncared for gray gelding with ugly looking wounds on its legs. The animal still bore the marks of a heavy work harness. Had a hard life. All these scars, had a hard life, but Harry figured he's a pretty cheap horse, so I'll buy him. He bought him for 80 bucks. By the time he gets the horse home, he's covered in snow. Harry's children named him Snowman. John, listen to this. Snowman ends up being a pretty good horse. The girls like to ride him. He was steady and he didn't startle. He made rapid improvement as a workhorse. In fact, a neighbor said, I'll pay \$160 for it. Harry's excited, right? He turned around an \$80 horse into \$160 horse. But the problem is, John, that Snowman goes to the neighbor's house but ends up every day back at Harry's property.
- 01:54 Harry brings him back to the neighbor and says, you ought to close your gates and get your fences fixed because this horse ended up back at my house. Well, they do this time and again, and the neighbor is swearing, look, I've fixed all the fences and

I've closed the gates, and this horse is still coming back to your property. And it happens so many times that the neighbor says, give me my money back, right? This horse obviously wants to live at your house. Well, Harry is like, how does he keep coming back? Harry said, well, maybe he's jumping the fence. Maybe he wanted to jump. Harry decided, let's see if he's actually jumping. Harry starts jumping this horse just a little bit at a time, and he thought maybe he could compete. John, this will blow you away. In 1958, Harry entered Snowman in his first jumping competition.

02:48 Everybody looked like, are you kidding me? These beautiful, well-bred horses against this flea-bitten gray. And Elder Wirthlin says, a wonderful unbelievable thing happened that day. Snowman won. Harry continued to enter Snowman into other competitions, and Snowman continued to win. Audiences began to cheer every time Snowman won an event. He became a symbol of how extraordinary an ordinary horse could be. He had started to appear on television, stories and books were written about him. As Snowman continued to win, listen to this, John. One person offered \$100,000 to Harry for his \$80 horse.

John Bytheway: 03:33 Man.

Hank Smith: 03:35 But Harry would not sell. And then in 1958 and 1959, Snowman was named Horse of the Year. This old horse who had once been marked for sale to the lowest bidder was then inducted into the jumping hall of Fame. Isn't that crazy, John, that this \$80 horse becomes Horse of the Year?

John Bytheway: 04:00 He was always the same horse. What was missing? Somebody did not know what was in there, I guess.

Hank Smith: 04:07 Yeah. The untapped potential that once, think of Alma the Younger that way.

John Bytheway: 04:13 Mm-hmm.

Hank Smith: 04:13 He bore the marks of a hard, heavy life, poor choices, his own poor choices, but the Lord took him out of the salvage yard, right? Alma the Younger becomes what? One of two translated prophets. He goes from vilest of all sinners according to Mormon, to a translated prophet in the Book of Mormon.

John Bytheway: 04:35 Walks away and is never heard of more like Moses.

Hank Smith:	04:39	Yeah. He becomes Prophet of the Year, right? I bet someone offered \$100,000.
John Bytheway:	04:45	Senines, 100,000 Senines for him.
Hank Smith:	04:47	Yeah. But the Lord would not sell.
John Bytheway:	04:50	That's right.
Hank Smith:	04:51	John Elder Wirthlin finishes this story with this as illustrated in the story of an old discarded horse that had within him the soul of a champion, there is within each of us a divine spark of greatness. Who knows of what we're capable of if we only try. The abundant life, the horse of the year life is within our reach if we will drink deeply from living waters, fill our hearts with love and create of our lives a masterpiece. The Lord can take Alma the Younger and turn him into what he turned him into, he can do the same thing with us, right?
John Bytheway:	05:27	Absolutely. Take ordinary and make it extraordinary.
Hank Smith:	05:31	Yeah. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcasts. Come back next week. We'll have another story for followHIM Favorites.