



"Preserved by His Marvelous Power"

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 the War Chapters help us in our personal struggles? Dr. Justin Top uses his personal military experience and spiritual education to explore the War Chapters and how to apply the teachings of Jesus Christ in our spiritual, emotional, and physical battles.

Part 2:

Dr. Justin Top continues applying the insights and strategies to help with personal battles through the War Chapters in Alma 53-63.

Timecodes:

Part 1

- 00:00 Part I - Dr. Justin Top
- 01:51 Dr. Justin Top's bio
- 04:32 *Come, Follow Me* Manual
- 07:45 First type of personal weakness
- 11:59 Fortify where you can
- 14:54 How grace works on our behalf
- 18:49 Alma 53:1-9 - Enemies within
- 21:14 Alma 53:11-16 - Oath keeping and choosing leaders
- 28:08 Alma 53:17-20 - Who is Helaman?
- 30:59 Alma 54:1-17 - Conflict and taking a stance
- 36:49 Alma 55:1-22 - A plan to rescue prisoners of war
- 39:12 Alma 55:28-35 - Temptation sometimes follows success
- 43:08 Alma 56:1-30 - Sin and creating spiritual strongholds
- 48:03 Alma 56:39-46 - No plans survive first contact with the enemy
- 53:39 Alma 56:47-57 - Faith of mothers, none were slain
- 1:01:34 "Miracle at Gapyeong"
- 1:05:57 Alma 57:1-26 - Obedience and a relationship with Jesus
- 01:14:53 - End of Part 1 - Dr. Justin Top

Part 2

- 00:00 Part II– Dr. Justin Top
- 01:13 Alma 57:20 - The power of the youth
- 02:27 Alma 58:1-11 - A fixed determination of faith to deliverance
- 05:46 Alma 58:32 - Confidence vs. being overwhelmed
- 06:15 Alma 58:38-41 - All stripling warriors wounded, none have perished
- 09:14 The Sons of Mosiah end up saving their people in current wars
- 13:11 Alma 59:8-13 - Better to prepare than repair
- 16:33 Alma 60:1-14 - Angry letters from Moroni and Pahoran's love
- 22:32 Alma 60:28-33 - Righteous indignation and personal narratives
- 26:38 Alma 61:1-9 - Pahoran's generous response
- 29:44 Alma 61:10 - Pahoran's lessons for today
- 33:46 Elder Bednar's "And Nothing Shall Offend Them"
- 37:01 Alma 60:14-15 - Struggle vs outcome
- 42:52 Alma 62 Moroni's response to Pahoran is about action
- 45:15 Alma 60: 30-41 - Setbacks lead to comebacks
- 49:54 Alma 62:48 - Post-traumatic growth
- 51:26 Alma 63:10 - Shiblon dies and Corianton leaves on a ship
- 52:04 Dr. Top's major takeaways and testimony of Jesus
- 56:16 End of Part II– Dr. Justin Top

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Biographical Information:



Dr. Justin Top is an Assistant Professor in Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University. He is also an associate graduate coordinator for the BYU Master of Arts in Chaplaincy program, which prepares

students to become chaplains in military, healthcare and other settings. Dr. Top has a PhD in Counseling Psychology, a Master's degree in Religious education and a Bachelors degree in Near Eastern Studies, all from BYU. His research interests include pastoral counseling and in the relationship between spirituality and mental health, and he has a particular passion for studying the role that grace can play in spiritual, emotional and mental well-being. Prior to joining the faculty at BYU, he worked as a Psychologist in various mental health settings. Justin has also worked as a hospice chaplain and a full-time seminary teacher. Justin Top joined the US Navy in 2008 as a chaplain and served for six year on active duty, including two deployments aboard Navy ships in support of the Global War on Terror, before leaving active duty behind and joining the Navy reserves in 2014. He was activated to work at the Pentagon for a year in 2017 to develop an initiative to promote "Spiritual Fitness" in the Marine Corps. He is currently a Commander in the Navy reserves and the Deputy Chaplain for Marine Corps Installations Command, Washington DC. Justin and his wife Shauna have a family of eleven children, including two sets of twins. He and his family love all kinds of outdoor adventures, especially skiing, climbing, canyoneering, hiking, biking and scuba diving.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:03	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 was taught by his mother. John, we're in the second half of the War Chapters today. What you brought out with Dr. Boren last week was fantastic. What are you looking forward to in the second half of the War Chapters?
John Bytheway:	00:00:24	There's so much in all of these. We're going to see the influence of family, the influence of watching others sacrifice for you and how that helps you want to get involved and always the why are we fighting? This is a hard thing. Why are we doing this? And Mormon, as the abridger, is very careful to remind us over and over again of why these conflicts are continuing.
Hank Smith:	00:00:47	I'm looking forward to what you have to offer this week. Also, looking forward to what our guest has to offer, John. We're with Dr. Justin Top today. Justin, when you think of these chapters at the end of the Book of Alma, what do you think of? What are we going to do today?
Dr. Justin Top:	00:01:03	I'm so excited. I love these chapters. This is the continuation of the War Chapters that we talked about last time, but I want you to look for three themes. The first word to think of is struggle. This is all about struggle, something that all of us know a little bit about in our lives. The second word is courage. We're going to learn about courage, how to access that courage to motivate us in life. And then the last word is lenses, and that may not make sense right now. It's all about understanding lenses and perspective and how they affect us.
Hank Smith:	00:01:36	I love coming into it with a plan. John, some of our listeners might be thinking, "Wait, we already heard from Dr. Top back in Alma 30." This is a different Dr. Top. Can you introduce him?
John Bytheway:	00:01:51	Yes, that we had Dr. Brent Top. This is his son, Dr. Justin Top and Dr. Justin Top is an assistant professor in ancient scripture at BYU. Dr. Top has a PhD in counseling psychology, a master's

degree in religious education and a bachelor's degree in Near Eastern Studies, all from BYU. His research interests include pastoral counseling and the relationship between spirituality and mental health. Justin Top joined the United States Navy in 2008 as a chaplain and served for six years on active duty, including two deployments aboard Navy ships in support of the global war on terror. He's currently a commander in the Navy Reserves and a deputy chaplain for Marine Corps Installations Command in Washington, DC. Justin and his wife Shauna have a family of 11 children. I think that's considered a platoon, including two sets of twins. He and his family love all kinds of outdoor adventures, especially skiing, climbing, canyoneering, hiking, biking, and scuba diving. Justin, before we formally welcome you, can you tell us more about the Master of Arts in Chaplaincy program?

Dr. Justin Top:	00:03:06	Of course. Yeah. Military chaplains, in general, we're out there to support the troops, the sailors in whatever environment, whatever their faith is, and provide support, and every chaplain is endorsed by a religious organization. Of course, mine is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. BYU has this flagship program for training our chaplains for military, and now it's open for healthcare and prison and education and other chaplains as well. We train these students to go out in the world and be ready to provide spiritual and emotional support to whatever community they're supporting.
John Bytheway:	00:03:41	Wow.
Hank Smith:	00:03:42	That's fantastic.
John Bytheway:	00:03:44	That's wonderful work. I can't even imagine all the stories you could share with us about doing that for six years in the Navy.
Dr. Justin Top:	00:03:52	That's a lot of adventure, a lot of wow miracles, and you just see the hand of God working in everyone's lives. It's pretty amazing.
John Bytheway:	00:04:02	Thank you for joining us, Dr. Top. I'd rather call you Commander. That just sounds really cool to me.
Dr. Justin Top:	00:04:10	Oh, please not. I have to admit, hearing that Dr. Top, I'm... Dr. Top's my dad, that's not me. I'm used to being Chaplain Top or Brother Top.
Hank Smith:	00:04:18	Yeah. Well, John, I think this is a first for followHIM, isn't it? To have a father-son, a parent-child?

John Bytheway:	00:04:25	Yeah, which is so appropriate for the Book of Mormon. How many father-son chats have we had already in Alma?
Hank Smith:	00:04:32	Dr. Top Senior. If you're out there listening, know that we love you and we're excited for your son to show you up here today. Justin, like I said, we're taking on Alma 53 through 63. A lot of chapters, a lot to look at, a lot to discover here. I'm going to read from the Come, Follow Me manual then let's see where you want to go here. The name of the lesson is Preserved by His Marvelous Power. "When compared with the Lamanite armies, Helaman's little army of young men shouldn't have stood a chance. Besides being few in number, Helaman's soldiers were all very young and they never had fought. In some ways their situation might seem familiar to those of us who sometimes feel outnumbered and overwhelmed in our latter-day battle against Satan and the evil forces of the world. But the army of Helaman had some advantages over the Lamanites that had nothing to do with numbers or military skill.
	00:05:25	They chose Helaman, a prophet to lead them. They had been taught by their mothers, like John, that if they did not doubt God would deliver them. And they had exceeding faith in that which they had been taught. As a result, they were protected by the miraculous power of God. So when facing life's battles, we can take courage. Helaman's army teaches us that there is a just God and whosoever does not doubt will be preserved by his marvelous power." What a great opener. Justin, with that, how do you want to go about looking into these chapters?
Dr. Justin Top:	00:05:59	I think as we start off here, it's important to step back and take a look at the big picture. The war is dragging on. I mean, it's getting old. We're going on a decade of war with the Lamanites and it just keeps going and going and going. The Nephites are outnumbered, and they're surrounded and it's a dark time. It's kind of interesting if you think about how Mormon pauses in his style. Normally he's talking about the preaching and the word of God, but he takes a big section here, an unusually large section to pause and talk about battles. I remember when I was younger being excited about this because it's kind of interesting, but finding spiritual nuggets in it seemed harder. But Mormon knows what he's doing. He intentionally puts this section in here. What we want to do is step back and look at the whole War Chapters as something that applies to us.
	00:06:50	That's where the real power is in finding application as we go along. What I like to do when I read the War Chapters is put this title over the top of it. It's insights and strategies to help with our personal battles or our personal struggles. There's that

word I told you was coming--struggles. All throughout and last week you heard about, for example, Captain Moroni and the Title of Liberty. It teaches us in overcoming our struggles, how important it is to be able to remind ourselves of meaning and our why in life. The story of Lehi and how dangerous it is to come down, come down from high places or like [Elder Uchtdorf](#) said with the I'm doing a good work and can't come down. Those ideas, all these stories have incredible application to us in our personal struggles. I want you to be thinking of what your struggle is, and I'll throw a couple of examples.

00:07:45 I'll throw three examples out of the types of struggles that people might have in mind and be able to apply these stories. First is a struggle with some sort of personal weakness, and maybe it's pornography or sort of negativity or poor self-worth, something like that, but an internal battle or struggle. Relationships bring a lot of struggles. If you have difficulties in your relationships, man, there's some great, great nuggets of truth that you can pull out of these chapters. Another common one is struggle with doubt. There is some sort of message for you in these stories that will help you with your personal struggles.

Hank Smith: 00:08:26 John, we talked about your book last week. As Justin is introducing us to this, what is coming to your mind?

John Bytheway: 00:08:32 He used a word that I loved. We can apply these to our lives. I was intrigued and we talked about it last week, that Mormon himself was a General and probably saw so much of light and how to overcome struggles in life, and that will be one of the fun things to do is to say, "Okay, interesting story, interesting battle, great strategem, but what do I do with that?"

Hank Smith: 00:08:58 Justin, I can think of parents who are listening who are saying, "My teenager is struggling here, here and here." And you're saying, "Oh, you can find answers in these chapters to those struggles."

Dr. Justin Top: 00:09:15 Absolutely.

Hank Smith: 00:09:16 What do you want to do next, Justin?

Dr. Justin Top: 00:09:18 Why don't we dive into the text. Start with [Alma Chapter 53](#).

Hank Smith: 00:09:22 Okay.

Dr. Justin Top:	00:09:22	You kind of got the ongoing battle. First you had Amalickiah raging war and all his deception and intrigue to take over. Then Teancum sneaks in and kills him, and now Ammoron, his brother, takes over. And it's the same story, different family member, which is probably what everybody's feeling like with me and Dr. Top and Dr. Top--same story, different family member.
Hank Smith:	00:09:47	Yeah.
Dr. Justin Top:	00:09:47	But right before this chapter, a battle has taken place and the Nephites have won and they've taken captive a bunch of Lamanite prisoners. As soon as the battle is over, they're going back to work preparing for the next battle. And he goes into detail in verse four, and he caused that they should build a breastwork of timbers on the inner bank of the ditch. And this isn't the first time we read all about this strategy in last week's reading in chapter 50.
	00:10:16	The best time to fortify ourselves against struggle is when things are good. Sometimes we wait and ignore it and think everything's okay, but you know the next struggle is going to come. The best time to fix a leaky roof is before it rains. I remember I was at the beach one time and made a sandcastle with my kids, and then I sat back to relax and watch the sunset, and I fell asleep. The waves started coming over my feet and it woke me up because the castle had been between me and the waves, but the tide had come in and now this castle that I put so much time into is getting washed away. And so I jumped down and I start digging, trying to build this thing up. But now for every two scoops that I put on there of sand, one gets washed away because the waves are hitting. It reminds me of a quote by President Kimball about us having reservoirs of righteousness. Think of this as in the same thing as fortifying ourselves.
	00:11:14	By President Kimball , there should also be reservoirs of knowledge to meet the future needs, reservoirs of courage to overcome the floods of fear that put uncertainty in our lives, reservoirs of physical strength to help us meet the frequent burdens of work and illness, reservoirs of goodness, reservoirs of stamina, reservoirs of faith. Yes, especially reservoirs of faith so that when the world presses in upon us, we stand firm and strong. When the temptations of a decaying world about us draw on our energies, sap our spiritual vitality and seek to pull us down, we need a storage of faith that can carry youth and later adults over the dull, the difficult, the terrifying moments,

disappointments, disillusionments and the years of adversity want confusion and frustration.

- 00:11:59 This idea of fortifying whenever you can, build those fortifications, I think that's one of the important things that really is brought out by Mormon here. And in fact later on in [Alma 59:9](#), it builds on this same idea. He says, "Knowing that it was easier to keep the city from falling into the hands of the Lamanites than to retake it from them", [President Ezra Taft Benson](#) said that "it's better to prepare and prevent than to repair and repent."
- John Bytheway: 00:12:31 Exactly right. I like the word reservoir because it has that idea of a reserve. And nowhere in the scriptures are we told actually the world's going to get better and better and more righteous and life's going to get easier and easier. We're told the opposite. What do we do? We prepare. We get that reserve. Great application of that.
- Hank Smith: 00:12:52 My wife and I have a little exercise that we try to practice, and this only came because of hard experience and that is we ask a question of ourselves, what are we not doing right now that in a few years we would look back and say, "Why didn't we do that?" What are we doing right now that as we're 10 years down the line, looking back at this moment going, "Oh, if only we would have." It's obviously impossible to tell the future, but that has helped us a couple of times saying, "Well, we'd probably regret this." All right, let's do something now to see if we can prepare against a future that is uncertain.
- Dr. Justin Top: 00:13:33 When we read these War Chapters, it sometimes feels like the Nephites are always winning these amazing victories, but in reality we're only getting the highlights of what's going on and it becomes clear as we read on that Nephites are actually losing ground as much as they're gaining it. So look at verse eight and nine, "And now it came to pass that the armies of the Lamanites on the West Sea South, while in the absence of Moroni on account of some intrigue among the Nephites which caused dissensions among them, had gained some ground over the Nephites. Yea insomuch that they had obtained possession of a number of the cities in that part of the land. And thus because of iniquity amongst themselves, yea because of dissensions and intrigue among themselves, they were placed in the most dangerous circumstances." In these War Chapters, what we see happening is it's like a big chess match.
- 00:14:21 The Nephites are taking some cities, but then the Lamanites take some. This is so how life is. I don't know if you've noticed

this, but we all are always playing this game of natural man whack-a-mole. You focus on this part of your life and I'm going to overcome, I got to have victory in this struggle, and something else pops up over here. As life goes on, we get new challenges that create new problems and it's almost like the dam that's about to break and the old cartoons where it cracks a leak and you stick your finger in that one and then another one comes over here.

00:14:54 Sometimes we think that the goal is if we can just be righteous enough and be good enough that all of that will go away and we'll be victorious. But the story of the Nephites doesn't end that way. In fact, the only one that can put an end to this natural man whack-a-mole is when Jesus Christ comes. It's the grace of Christ, the presence of Christ that makes the difference there. It becomes easy to believe that if we're just good enough then we won't have to struggle anymore. Struggle is a big part of why we are here, but grace is the answer to all that, not just grace that helps us heal and overcome and win battles, but grace that makes up the difference when we don't.

Hank Smith: 00:15:35 If I'm a listener and I'm struggling with all that I need to do and I'm failing in many different areas, how does grace play in?

Dr. Justin Top: 00:15:44 Grace is anything that is a gift from God. So, remember, anything that God gives us on our behalf that works to our good, that's grace. And the kind of grace we want is like that we've talked about, the enabling grace that empowers us to overcome whether it's disease or weakness or whatever, and that is an important kind of grace. But what if the struggle itself is grace? What if one of our whole purposes of being here is to be part of this struggle that stretches us and gives us experience and teaches us to love like God does? So then you start to view the struggle as grace and find God in the struggle. We're going to talk about this with the stripling warriors and our brains think, "Oh, these guys were perfect. They did everything right." This is the story that we tell ourselves. But really I think the key to their success is grace.

00:16:38 They keep the commandments because they love them, not because they're terrified that if they don't keep them that they're going to suffer or something like that. Commandments, the commandments themselves are grace. When you view the commandments as grace, rather than this thing I have to do so that I can get grace, then that changes your approach to keeping the commandments because now this is a blessing. God is giving this to us as a way to lift us up towards him rather than somehow condemn us if we don't do well enough.

Hank Smith:	00:17:12	I find that so liberating. You've shown us in these chapters already, this is going to be a constant struggle. There's nothing wrong with you. Life is a constant struggle. You're never going to get to struggle nirvana where I'm good enough, I have no more struggle. It's going to be a constant struggle and you're saying that's okay.
Dr. Justin Top:	00:17:33	It's not just that it's okay. That is grace. That's what I'm saying. The deck is stacked against us on purpose. Like the Nephites, we're overwhelmed. We're outnumbered, we're surrounded. We cannot do this ourselves, but finding grace in the struggle is so important. You think about little babies who they have to learn how to control their emotions. They cry over everything and then they get to that golden stage right between like five and 10 where everything, they start to get it and they're great and they think their parents are great, and then they become teenagers and their hormones go puff and then the alien inhabits their body.
	00:18:12	They get that figured out and now they've got to get married and that's a whole new one. Then they start to get that figured out and then they have kids. God is not as concerned with our immediate happiness and prosperity as he is with our ability to receive grace and learn to love like him.
John Bytheway:	00:18:49	Yeah, I like that we're all struggling. Verse one of chapter 53 says that the Lamanites, they were compelled to bury their dead yea and also the dead of the Nephites. The Nephites were dying too. You brought up verses eight and nine and say, oh yeah, in the war chapters, it's the Nephites fighting the Lamanites. Well, the Nephites had an enemy within and it was their own issues. In verse eight, there was an intrigue among the Nephites and Moroni had to leave the front and come back and solve this problem, and so verse nine, Mormon tells us because of iniquity amongst themselves. To make an application of that, I don't know if there's a whole lot I can do about critics of our church, but I can go to my ward and I can extend grace to everybody I see and try and build and lift people, because I think if Satan is going to try and get us, it won't just be from the outside, it'll be from the inside. When we look at the Prophet Joseph Smith, some of his worst problems were not caused by outsiders, but by people inside that had become disaffected. The Nephites not only had the Lamanites without, but they had their own problems within and the struggle continued.
Hank Smith:	00:20:00	The struggle continues. I sometimes suffer from what I call future me syndrome. The future me is going to have more time.

Future me is going to be healthier. Future me is going to read more. Future me is going to have a lot more freedom than current me has, and the problem with that is future me is always future me, right? Future me should be here by now. I've been talking about it for quite a while. I like what you said there, Justin. This is going to be a constant thing and that is part of the gift God has given us of mortality.

Dr. Justin Top:

00:20:34

Absolutely. Let's jump into the stripling warriors. I mean this is the crown jewel of this section, probably one of the most well-known stories in the Book of Mormon for kids especially. These are the ones who were converted by Ammon and followed King Lamoni and Ammon and came and joined the Nephites. As part of that process, they made an oath to never take up their weapons again. In fact, it says they buried them deep in the earth. A lot of powerful symbolism there. This is something, these weapons represented a whole way of life that they were done with, and they don't want to have anything to do with, so they make this oath that they would rather die than take up their weapons again.

00:21:14

Let's pick it up in [Alma 53](#) verse 11, "And because of their oath, they had been kept from taking up arms against their brethren, for they had taken an oath that they never would shed blood more. And according to their oath, they would have perished. Yea, they would have suffered themselves to have fallen into the hands of their brethren." They're so concerned about this that they would rather die. Down in verse 13, "But it came to pass that when they saw the danger and the many afflictions and tribulations which the Nephites bore for them, they were moved with compassion and were desirous to take up arms in the defense of their country."

00:21:50

They see what's going on. They see this struggle. They see people dying to protect them. You can imagine this worry and the way they're working through this in their mind that's saying, "Maybe in this case, it's okay for us to go against our oath," and verse 14, "But behold, as they were about to take their weapons of war, they were overpowered by the persuasions of Helaman and his brethren," or they were about to break the oath which they had made. So Helaman comes in. Now, let's pause for a second and remind ourselves who Helaman is. Helaman is the oldest child of Alma, Alma the Younger right. And so Alma 36, when Alma's talking to his kids, he's given these personalized lessons to his kids and blessings to his kids. Alma 36 is to Helaman, and we know that Helaman then becomes a high priest and he goes out and preaches.

	00:22:41	For example, Alma 49 verse 30 talks about Helaman declaring the word. His job is that he's a high priest, he's a religious guy. That's where we see him pop up before now and somehow, it looks like as part of this, he's dealing with the people of Ammon. He's the one as they're going through this struggle, "What do we do? How do we help?" He's the one that says, no, that's not worth it, because whatever physical strength that you could bring to the table, we don't want to risk taking away from the spiritual strength by having you break your oath. Helaman's a remarkable guy.
Hank Smith:	00:23:23	He seems like a chaplain almost, doesn't he?
Dr. Justin Top:	00:23:26	I like that. Absolutely. We'll call him Chaplain Helaman.
Hank Smith:	00:23:31	He's out in the battle with them and he's seeing to, what did you say, their emotional and spiritual welfare.
Dr. Justin Top:	00:23:38	That's a fantastic analogy. There's a really important message here for our struggles. In dealing with the struggles of life, the big question is who are we choosing as our leaders? Who are we choosing to follow? Because that's going to have all the impact in the world, because they inspire us. Inspire means breathe into and implies breathe spirit into us, and this is Helaman.
Hank Smith:	00:24:04	I really like that verse. It's not one I focused on before, the Alma 53:14. I thought of two ways I might apply. At one, the prophet, the leaders of the church can overpower me by their persuasion to not break my covenant. I listen to my leaders. And also I like to point out when someone is a good friend, I frequently tell my own children, especially my teenage children, you've got to be the type of friend who stands in the way between someone making a terrible decision and say, "I wouldn't do this," like Naaman's friend who says, "Maybe you ought to do what the prophet says. What do you think? Maybe you ought to give it a try."
John Bytheway:	00:24:45	You can sense and you feel that dilemma. This was something they voluntarily did to bury their weapons of war, and in verse 15, because of this covenant, they are compelled to behold their brethren, wade through their afflictions. I think of how I watched my parents work for us. My dad had three jobs at one point. We knew why he was doing it and it was to bless us, but it didn't make it easy. Here they are watching them fight and die to bless them and thankfully, he would get some relief in verse 16.

Dr. Justin Top:	00:25:19	<p>This is where the psychologist part of me comes out because this story is so full of emotion. The backstory behind this, I'm telling you this would make a fantastic Hollywood movie. The dynamics of, like you said, being pulled in different directions, wanting to help but feeling stuck in this dilemma. Like you said, in verse 16, so they come up with this solution, which one is more heart-wrenching, breaking your oath or having your children go and fight for you. "But behold, it came to pass that they had many sons who had not entered into the covenant that they would not take their weapons of war to defend themselves against their enemies. Therefore, they did assemble themselves together at this time as many as were able to take up arms and they called themselves Nephites, and they entered into a covenant to fight for the liberty of the Nephites, yea to protect the land unto the laying down of their lives. Yea, even they covenanted that they would never give up their liberty, but they would fight in all cases to protect the Nephites and themselves from bondage."</p>
	00:26:23	<p>Wow, there's some really amazing comparisons here because you remember their parents' oaths that they would lay down their weapons and die so that they never have to take it up again. Now, here are their sons who are now making a different oath, very different oath. We are willing to lay down our lives so that they don't have to pick up their weapons again. What a crazy experience this must be for the people of Ammon to watch these young men say, "We will take up arms, but for a completely different reason than our parents used to take up arms for." Now, let's talk about these sons first. To really bring out this emotion behind this, let's talk about the stripling warriors, these 2,000 stripling warriors. What do we know about them?</p>
	00:27:15	<p>We know they're stripling. That's a middle English word for youths, so what does that mean? I would say they're not old enough to be normally expected to fight at this point. Remember, they grew up in a pacifist culture. They probably didn't even play sword fight or whatever with sticks like most kids do because that was so shunned in this culture. Now we know that they're strong and hard workers, but they know nothing about fighting, so to ask them now to say, "Okay, will you take up these weapons, start this lifestyle that you know nothing about in order to defend us?" That's a big ask, not just for these youth but for their families as well.</p>
Hank Smith:	00:28:00	<p>What an interesting point. They're growing up with parents who no longer take up the sword. Maybe they haven't been trained in fighting in battle.</p>

Dr. Justin Top:	00:28:08	<p>Like I said, I'm sure they're fit, says they're exceedingly strong for activity. I don't know if you have been to high school or a junior high, what do the youth look like there? If you were to take a sampling of high school students, you would have some that maybe look like football players and warriors or whatever, but you'd also have some that look like they're still 12, and that's got to be a scary thing when you're the little guy. Remember the second word that I talked about at the beginning was courage. This is where we're going to learn all about courage, no combat experience, and now they go out, but they have so much faith and love for their family and their situation that they're willing to do it. Verse 19, "And now behold, as they never had hitherto been a disadvantage to the Nephites, they became now, at this period of time, also a great support for they took their weapons of war and they would that Helaman should be their leader."</p>
	00:29:05	<p>Now, let's really quickly remember who Helaman is. He's not a trained fighter either. He's a high priest. This is amazing. You have a group of untrained kids who chooses their leader, an untrained religious leader or chaplain, like you said, who has also probably been mostly a pacifist as well to some degree, just has avoided this type of thing because that wasn't where his expertise lied. Now, verse 20, it tells us a little more about these young men, "And they were all young men and they were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity. But behold, this was not all. They were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted." In verse 21, "Yea, they were men of truth and soberness for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him." Now, maybe they're not perfect like most teenagers aren't. Where it matters is they have courage and a desire, a willingness to do the right thing. I see this section as basically, these young men are saying, "Here am I, send me."</p>
John Bytheway:	00:30:15	<p>This verse 20 reminds me of something that I learned from Robert L. Millet. You guys know him and he's been on our podcast. He mentioned one time that to the Greeks, truth, it was all about learning the truth and knowing truth. To the Hebrews, truth wasn't something that you know, it's something that you do. The wording here is inspiring. They were men who were true. It's not they were men who knew the truth, but they were truth.</p>
Hank Smith:	00:30:42	<p>I think of a bicycle wheel. When I was first getting into road biking, someone said, "Is your tire true?" I was like, "What do you mean is it true?" And the idea was is it working correctly? Is it balanced and centered?</p>

Dr. Justin Top:	00:30:59	<p>The stripling warriors, we'll come back to them in a minute, but we learn about this letter exchange between Moroni and Ammoron. Ammoron sends and says, "Hey, we want to exchange prisoners." Moroni's had it with Ammoron and his war, what he feels is really unethical warfare because they don't just capture combatants. They're also capturing women and children and taking them, and in Moroni's response to Ammoron who wants to exchange prisoners, you can feel that he's upset and he doesn't just say, "No, I don't want to exchange with you," or, "Here's my terms." First, he's got to tell Ammoron how he feels about him. Moroni has certain narratives in his mind and so does Ammoron. They have these lenses, remember that was the third word that I was going to talk about. He sees Ammoron through these lenses, and Ammoron has got his own lenses, and they've changed by the way since he now is a Lamanite rather than Nephite, so you're going to see that anger and that frustration.</p>
	00:31:59	<p>Moroni's frustrated with this war that's been going on for so long. We see in verse seven for example, and this is in Moroni's response, "Yea, I would tell you these things if you were capable of hearkening to them. Yea, I would tell you concerning that awful hell that awaits to receive such murderers as thou and thy brother have been, except you repent and withdraw your murderous purposes and return with your armies to your own lands." Verse 11, in the middle there it says, "It supposeth me that thou art a child of hell," and in verse 13, "Behold, I am in my anger, and also my people. You have sought to murder us and we have only sought to defend ourselves." And from where Moroni is coming from, this is all true and probably from God's perspective as well, but what's interesting is how Ammoron receives this.</p>
	00:32:45	<p>This is a great example of contention, like a conflict between two people and how this tends to escalate because of these different lenses on different sides, and his perspective is this. We see it in verse 15. It talks about how he's so angry with Moroni's letter. Then we get into verse 17, "For behold, your fathers did wrong their brethren," meaning Laman and Lemuel, "Insomuch that they robbed them of their right to the government when it rightly belonged to them." Ammoron, who's a former Nephite is now taking on this perspective of the Nephites are bad and they're the ones that need to be put in their place. There's this back and forth, and you notice that Ammoron, his own lenses get in the way of him achieving his goals. He wants to exchange prisoners. He needs to exchange prisoners, but because he gets so angry and worked up over it,</p>

he responds in a way that causes Captain Moroni to say, "Yeah, forget it. Never mind. We can get them back ourselves."

- John Bytheway: 00:33:46 Justin, you mentioned, "It supposeth me that thou art a child of hell." My students might say, "Brother Bytheway, would Jesus talk that way?" And I say, "A footnote 11A takes you to John 8:44," where Jesus is up at the feast of Tabernacles and he says to those who are plotting to kill him, "You are of your father, the devil," which is like saying you're a child of hell, you don't have to be a doormat and let evil run all over you. Going back to verse 13 here, it's a little more subtle this time, why are these two sides fighting? "Okay, you have sought to murder us. We have sought to defend ourselves." Well, Ammoron says, "Well, actually it's because your fathers did wrong their brethren," this 450, 540 years ago, they have been speaking of lenses brought up, "We've been wronged in this. We've been wronged in this. We've been wronged in this."
- Dr. Justin Top: 00:34:43 It brings up this interesting question, does Ammoron believe this stuff or is he just using it? Because Amalickiah, it's pretty clear there was some deception involved. Very good liar. The human mind is fascinating and it has this endless ability to deceive us, the natural man in us. We create these narratives that fit what we need, and we start to believe them, what's called confirmation bias, you start to only pay attention to evidence that supports what you already believe. I think that's partly what's going on here, but of course, this is why Moroni is so upset with Ammoron because he knows he's a fraud.
- John Bytheway: 00:35:20 Here's Moroni, "I will arm my women, my children. I will come against you. I will follow you to your own land. It'll be blood for blood, life for life. I'll give you battle until you're destroyed from off the face of the earth," and how do you close a letter like that? "Love Moroni." Verse 14, this is how he closes, "I close my epistle. I'm Moroni. I'm a leader of the people, the Nephites."
- Hank Smith: 00:35:44 I like that he takes a stance. I won't negotiate with evil. From what you and Justin said, I thought of a story that I don't think I've ever shared with you. I was a young seminary teacher. A dad came in and his son was headed in the wrong direction. He obviously was really concerned with what was happening and I was young and I said, "Hey, I'm going to do my best to help him along the way. If he'll come to seminary, I'm going to try to do whatever I can to help him get off this trajectory." I still remember he was weeping. He looked at me and he said, "Well, we'll do whatever we have to do. I will not lose my son." It was like this Moroni moment of, "I will go toe to toe with evil and I will not lose my child." I mean, it's been 20 years since, but I still

remember that moment of he's willing to go to war with evil and call it what it is, like what Mormon's doing here.

- Dr. Justin Top: 00:36:49 In [chapter 55](#), we get Moroni's response to this back and forth letter. He says, "I'm not going to negotiate," and he decides to come up with a plan to get the prisoners back without an exchange. We get this in chapter 55, "To summarize the plan, he searches among his men and he finds one who's of Lamanite descent." His name is even Laman, surprisingly. Laman pretends to be a Lamanite soldier and he acts like, "Oh, I've captured this fresh batch of wine from the Nephites," and he takes it and he uses some reverse psychology on him. "No, you can't drink this. You don't want to drink this now, wouldn't you rather have this later?" And of course, that just makes them want it more.
- 00:37:31 They begin to drink to the point where they were all drunken. In verse 15, we see now when Laman and his men saw that they were all drunken and were in a deep sleep, they returned to Moroni and told him all the things that had happened, and now this was according to the design of Moroni, and Moroni had prepared his men with weapons of war and they went to the city, Gid, while the Lamanites were in a deep sleep and drunken, and cast in weapons of war unto the prisoners in so much that they were all armed.
- John Bytheway: 00:38:01 I've often wondered how they did that because I guess, on the other side of a wall, "Okay, everybody back up. We're going to start chucking some javelins in there. You might want to move to the side. Catch!" They started throwing weapons of war in there. They kept throwing the boomerangs, but they kept coming back. But anyway, they throw the other weapons in. I've always imagined that as kind of a funny thing, "Wait, left side? Right? Your left? My left? Where do we go?"
- Hank Smith: 00:38:27 Good thing the Lamanites are all asleep.
- Dr. Justin Top: 00:38:30 I had a teacher once tell me in verse 22 that the prisoners are armed on the inside and then the Nephites are armed on the outside. And he said, "When it comes to fighting evil..." I still remember this. He said, "You need to be a skunk and a porcupine, armed from within and armed from without."
- Hank Smith: 00:38:46 Oh, wow.
- Dr. Justin Top: 00:38:47 You need to be on both sides. Okay.

John Bytheway:	00:38:51	I'm going to try harder to be a skunk. I'm going to tell my wife that. She'll probably-
Dr. Justin Top:	00:38:54	Skunk and a porcupine.
Hank Smith:	00:38:57	I love the understatement of Mormon, too. The prisoners are armed on the inside. They're armed on the outside. And then it's, "We find that it is not expedient that we should fight at this time." Really calm reaction there.
Dr. Justin Top:	00:39:12	Obviously the Nephites take the city. They free the prisoners, take the Lamanites captive. And this marks this change for a little while, where shifts in the favor of the Nephites. We look at verse 28, "And it came to pass that the Nephites began again to be victorious and reclaim their rights and their privileges." So remember, it's this back-and-forth thing, but now the momentum is in their favor. The danger when you start having success again, like we talked about before, is that you become complacent. That sets up for problems in the future, especially because of what Moroni did. You can imagine Ammoron's pretty upset about this after their letter exchange. He did not like to be on the losing end of this one.
	00:39:53	The Lamanites are going to try and trick the Nephites in the same way, but verse 31 says the Nephites are ready for this. "But behold, the Nephites were not slow to remember the Lord their God in this, their time of affliction." So many times that's happened in the past, where they forget, but not this time. They're paying attention. They could not be taken in their snares, yea they would not partake of their wine, save they had first given to some of the Lamanite prisoners." So in other words, they're on their guard.
	00:40:23	Spiritual application for that is so important. Just because you have a little success, sometimes success is followed by greater temptation.
John Bytheway:	00:40:30	It sounds like Mormon draws out, "Don't be slow to remember God in the time of your affliction." We're supposed to remember God all the time, but in the time of your affliction, don't interpret that, oh, God's not caring about me or not loving me. Oh no. He's still aware. Verse 32. Think of all the ways you can apply this: "They were cautious that no poison should be administered among them." Of all the poisons that are out there. I remember a story that Elder Spencer J. Condie told. He was in Europe with his wife, and they found these different mushrooms that they could buy.

	00:41:08	I'm quoting from, this is in the last century, the New Era, February of 1990. Elder Condie said, "Among the poisonous mushrooms is one called the jack-O-lantern mushroom. The body reacts to its poison very quickly with violent nausea and vomiting. Because of this immediate reaction, the jack-o-lantern is not fatal. A much more dangerous mushroom is called the destroying angel." Would you eat anything called the destroying angel?
	00:41:35	"Just one or two in a batch of two dozen can poison an entire family. Because it tastes like an edible mushroom and has no immediate effect, the victim keeps on eating. Then six to 15 hours later, when it's digested and its poisons have entered the bloodstream, the victim experiences severe nausea and cramps and unquenchable thirst. It eventually destroys the liver. There is no known antidote and the fatality rate is about 90%. Just as there are different kinds of poisonous mushrooms, there are different kinds of music, movies, magazines, poisons that poison the spirits of men and women. Some are like the jack-o-lantern mushrooms. Their impact is so repulsive and objectionable that we immediately reject them, but there are other kinds of music, movies, magazines that work like the destroying angel. At first we have no idea what we are listening to or watching or reading is slowly and surely poisoning our very souls."
Hank Smith:	00:42:35	I like what you pointed out there. Verse 28, "They began again to be victorious and to reclaim their rights and privileges," and then verse 31, "But they were not slow to remember the Lord their God." So it seems that they are mindful of their own tendencies. Maybe they've been through this so many times they're going, "Okay, we're starting to have some wins here. Normally we would forget God. Let's not do that this time."
John Bytheway:	00:43:02	Let's not do a victory lap. Let's keep preparing.
Hank Smith:	00:43:05	Learn from our mistakes. Yeah. What happens next?
Dr. Justin Top:	00:43:08	Chapter 56 . This is a letter. So now we're going to have Helaman is sending this letter to Captain Moroni. The first part of this, he summarizes the stuff we've already talked about where we introduce the 2,000 stripling warriors. He talks about them making a covenant to protect their people and marching forth at the head. Now, Helaman is telling everything to Captain Moroni. Basically for these next few chapters, this is all this letter. Here's what he tells us, basically. Helaman marches at the head of his 2,000 stripling warriors and they go and join a portion of the Nephites. One of the problems that they have in these cities is that now, when the Lamanites take a city, it's

fortified. It's going to take quite a bit more, a much larger force, to be able to push out the Lamanites out of the city. And this is what we talked about before.

00:44:01 It's harder to push them out. As we talk about this, I want you to be thinking about that battle that we have with ourselves when we're trying to push out some bad aspect of our life, and how difficult that can be. Because of the way the brain works and how our brains build neural pathways to make it more automatic to do certain behaviors and so on, it takes a lot of work and effort to make important changes. One of the challenges that they run into, and we see this in verse 21 of chapter 56, is that they want the Lamanites to come out to them. "Now, we were desirous that the Lamanites should come upon us, for we were not desirous to make an attack upon them in their strongholds."

00:44:42 Think about that with your own weakness. It is so much harder to make changes and have spiritual victories in your life when you keep it inside, when you hold that stuff inside of you and try and do it yourself, like we talked about earlier. Sin, sinfulness, natural man, those kind of things, as we keep it inside, it stays fortified in there and it festers. It's almost like athlete's foot or something. It gets worse in the dark, and the key is to air it out.

00:45:10 Whatever your struggle is, whether it's some sort of personal weakness or relationship struggles or struggle with doubt, testimony, those types of things. In order to be able to overcome it, you got to draw it out. You got to get it out in the open so it can be exposed to the light. But as we keep it inside, it just churns and spins there.

Hank Smith: 00:45:32 I like that. I've learned through the years of working with so many students that secrecy seems to be the lifeblood of addiction. Keep it secret and it keeps going, keeps going. A confession can be such an airing out, like you said. Having close friends, parents that you talk to about your problems. Even, like you said, doubts. Not just sins, but doubts and questions. Let's get that out of its stronghold.

Dr. Justin Top: 00:46:01 The story continues. They come up with this plan. We pick this up in verse 30. "Now, when we saw the Lamanites began to grow uneasy on this wise, we were desirous to bring a stratagem into effect upon them. Therefore, Antipas ordered that I should march forth with my little sons to a neighboring city as if we were carrying provisions to a neighboring city." They are the bait. The stripling warriors become the bait. Now,

let's talk about why they're such good bait. There's a couple things here.

00:46:30 Now, clearly in the story the goal is to not have them fight, if possible. We're going to use them to draw out the Lamanites. But I don't know. I would imagine they're still not ready to take on a fight. They're still just learning how to fight. They're not very big. I've often wondered, why don't they integrate these young men with more experienced troops? But instead they stay as their own unit with Helaman, inexperienced Helaman, as the leader. I don't know that anybody's expecting them to actually have to fight. But the main reason why they're such a good target, they're young and inexperienced, but Lamanites. Can you imagine how the Lamanites react to seeing this army of young Lamanites fighting for the Nephites? They probably know what this group of individuals represents for morale for the Nephites as well. So this is a really tempting target.

00:47:29 They walk past the fortifications of the Lamanites and the Lamanites decide to take the bait, and they jump on it. This is the ultimate story of, wow, miraculous victory in battle against all odds. And actually there's several of these. We're going to see these kind of stories in chapter 56, in chapter 57, chapter 58, all of which involve these young men. The incredible courage that it takes. The Lamanite army comes out after them, the stripling warriors take off running to avoid the battle, and then the Nephite army, then they follow.

00:48:03 You've got one chasing the other, and the chase goes on and on and on until they get to the point where all of a sudden the stripling warriors wake up and the Lamanites are no longer chasing them. It creates this really interesting situation. Verse 39: "It came to pass that before the dawn of the morning, behold the Lamanites were pursuing us. Now, we were not sufficiently strong to contend with them." Okay, so again, this is not the army of football players. "Yea, I would not suffer that my little sons..." he calls them little sons. That gives you an idea. "Should fall into their hands. Therefore, we did continue our march and we took our march into the wilderness." So they're running.

00:48:47 But then when they turn around and find that the Lamanites are no longer following, it becomes this big dilemma. Do we go back and fight? It appears that was never really the plan, but no plan survives first contact of the enemy. Things go differently than they expected and now they worry. We need to go back and help the other army. Imagine the emotion behind this. These young men who've never fought, they don't know. This is a

warrior culture. The Lamanites are a warrior culture. They grow up training to be warriors from a young age. They have to make a decision without knowing how it's going to turn out. Man, have you ever been there before?

Hank Smith: 00:49:30 What are we going to find when we go back there? Yeah.

Dr. Justin Top: 00:49:33 And there's so much danger either way you choose. Verse 44 we pick up the story. "Therefore, what say ye, my sons? Will ye go against them to battle." Do you want to go? We have to make this decision together. I want to bring something out here because I think this is so important. We sometimes look at these young men as though these were spiritual giants and they did everything right and had perfect faith but, like I said before, these are teenagers. And though they had a lot of faith, it was the faith of a child.

00:50:13 I'm sure they were terrified. The important thing to remember here is that courage is born in defining moments. This is one of those moments. That it builds on all of the things that have happened in the past. And so he asks, what should we do? Do we take the easy road or do we follow our covenants? There's not even a hesitation. Look at this. "And now I say unto you, my beloved brother Moroni, that never had I seen so great courage, nay not amongst all the Nephites. For as I have ever called them my sons, for they were all of them very young, even so they said unto me, "Father, behold, our God is with us, and he will not suffer us that we should fall. Then let us go forth. We would not slay our brethren if they would let us alone, therefore let us go, lest they overpower the army of Antipas."

00:51:08 This is the magic that every commander and army in battle wants to find among their troops. This willingness, motivation, zeal for the battle. Not for fighting but for the cause. As we mentioned before, I worked at the Pentagon for a while doing Marine Corps spiritual fitness. Spiritual fitness is a real push in the Marine Corps. The way they teach it is, to win a battle, you have to have the skill and the will. You got to have the skill. That's why we do training and different things like that, but you got to have the will to follow through when it's hard. When the battle turns against you, that will to keep you going.

00:51:48 They call that spiritual fitness. Your staying power. Your why in life. Why are we doing this? Why are we going through it? In Marine Corps spiritual fitness, they'll say this, that regardless of what your religion background is, or lack of religious background, there are five elements for your spiritual fitness, spiritual well-being that every person should have: having a

connection to the divine, membership in a transformative community, pursuit of meaning and significance, join in shared sacrifice for a greater good, and commit to character and a life of honor. That's how the Marine Corps defines spiritual fitness. And I think every single one of these fits perfectly with these young men.

00:52:37 Now, they may not be perfect in all ways, but they choose to have a relationship with God. They're completely involved in their religious community. Meaning and significance, that's where this oath is going to come in. We'll talk about sacrifice for a greater good and commitment to character and a life of honor. That's spiritual fitness. That's the stripling warriors, and that's what we want all our young men and women to be like. To have that in their life, because of the benefits. And the reason the Marine Corps jumps on, and all the Military, jumps on this is because research shows that when you have those things in your life, greater levels of happiness, success, wellbeing in general.

John Bytheway: 00:53:18 That's wonderful. The skill and the will. And it sounds like we're looking at these young men. They might not have the skill, because they were pretty new at this. They had the will. They knew why they were there. And a connection to the divine. Like you said, "Behold, our God is with us."

Dr. Justin Top: 00:53:39 Now, there's more to this story, too. Wow. I wish we had the backstory on this. It's not really in there. But verse 47, they share with us their why, a little more about their why: "Now, they had never fought, yet they did not fear death, and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers than they did upon their lives. Yea, they had been taught by their mothers that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them. And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying, "We do not doubt our mothers knew it." The first thing we need to talk about here is the influence of mothers.

00:54:13 I sit in awe of my wife when I watch how the kids, their whole world sort of revolves around her. Even the teenagers and the young adults, they don't even realize, but they have to constantly touch base with mom. And so much of who they are is shaped by their mom.

00:54:33 That's really important to acknowledge here. Here are these young men. And by the way, you'll see this in combat, that when people are on the battlefield, when they get injured, when they're dying, who do they think of most? Mom. That's who they call for. That's who they want assurance from, is their

mother. But when I read this, there's something else going on to this story, something with their mothers. They did not doubt that their mothers knew it. I wish we had this story, but it hints to me that there was some kind of spiritual manifestation to the mothers of these young men back when they were making the decision to go out there. Back when these young men are making their oath to go and be willing to lay down their lives, it seems that somehow the mothers felt inspired to make a promise on behalf of God.

00:55:23 If you will do these things, if you will be obedient, follow every command from your leaders, show courage, then not one of you will fall. I think there's plenty of mothers out there who feel like they're not a very good mother. This doesn't describe them, because their kids are not this good or something like that. You don't know the influence that you've had.

Hank Smith: 00:55:49 I've always loved the story that [Elder Maxwell](#) told. There's a lot of our listeners who are too young to remember Neal A. Maxwell, but the story goes like this: "My only surviving aunt said that sometime in May of 1945, she doesn't remember the day, mother had told her the next day that she and dad had prayed their usual vocal prayer and included me, of course, and my sisters. Then they got into bed and began to sleep. And mother said, "Clarence, we've got to get out of bed and pray again. Neil is in grave danger." So they got out of bed and prayed again for me. I don't know which day that was, but I rather imagine, given time zones and all that, it would have probably been when Japanese artillery shelling occurred at its worst stage. The phrase that comes to mind from the Book of Mormon is about some other young men who went off to war, and what they said was, "We do not doubt our mothers knew it." I don't have any doubt that my mother knew intuitively that she needed to pray. Such parenting is what I hope our young men and young women will experience, because they will at times be in great danger too." I think of these stripling warriors' mothers at home. Maybe in this exact moment of Alma 56, my son is in grave danger.

Hank Smith: 00:57:00 I've also loved this story from [Elder Holland](#), though it's a little bit chilling. Elder Holland says he was having a conversation with a beloved friend of more than 50 years who was dying and he had been away from the church. Even though he knew in his heart the church was true. No matter how much I tried to comfort him, I could not seem to bring him peace. Finally, he leveled with me, "Jeff, however painful it is going to be for me to stand before God. I cannot bear the thought of standing before my mother. The gospel and her children meant

everything to her. I know I have broken her heart and that is breaking mine."

00:57:48 Elder Holland goes on and says, "Now, I'm absolutely certain that upon his passing, his mother received my friend with open loving arms. That is what parents do. But the cautionary portion of this story is that children can break their mother's heart. Here too, we see another comparison with the divine." He compares mothers to Christ. "I need not remind us that Jesus died of a broken heart, one weary and worn out from bearing the sins of the world. So in any moment of our temptation, may we behold our mother as well as our Savior and spare them both the sorrow." Elder Holland, in this talk, it's called Behold Thy Mother. He says think of the words that describe Jesus's ministry. Bear, born, carry, deliver. He says, "Can you hear in this language another arena of human endeavor in which we talk about bear and born, carry, labor, and deliver as Jesus said to John, while in the very act of the atonement, "behold thy mother". These are great moments to ponder and think on of your mom.

Dr. Justin Top: 00:58:52 Armed with this protection from their mothers, they decide to turn around and they come back just in time to find the Lamanites falling on the army of Antipas. And Antipas was about to be overpowered, but Helaman and his amazing stripling warriors don't hesitate, they attack with such strength. Well, let's read it, verse 52. "And it came to pass that the Lamanites took courage and began to pursue them," Antipas's army. "And thus were the Lamanites pursuing them with great vigor. When Helaman came upon their rear with his 2,000 and began to slay them exceedingly in so much that the whole army of the Lamanites halted and turned upon Helaman." And because of the timely arrival of the 2,000 stripling warriors, the battle is won by the Nephites. The Lamanites are taken prisoner.

00:59:43 Let's pick it up in verse 55 now. "And now it came to pass that when they had surrendered themselves up unto us, behold, I numbered those young men who had fought with me, fearing lest there were many of them slain. But behold to my great joy, there had not one soul of them fallen to the earth. Yea, and they had fought as if with the strength of God. Yea, never were men known to have fought with such miraculous strength. And with such mighty power did they fall upon the Lamanites that they did frighten them. And for this cause, did the Lamanites deliver themselves up as prisoners of war."

01:00:20 And this is an amazing story. How do these young men who have very little skill overpower such a greater, more skilled force? And it's because of the strength of God. There's a great quote by [Major General John Lejeune](#) was the Commandant of the Marine Corps way back when. I love it, because I think it applies really well here. He says, "There's no substitute for the spiritual in war. Miracles must be wrought if victories are to be won. And to work miracles, men's heart must be afire with self-sacrificing love for each other, for their units, for their division, and for their country. If each man knows that all the officers and men in his division are animated with that same fiery zeal as he himself feels, unquenchable courage, and unconquerable determination crush out fear, and death becomes preferable to defeat or dishonor." This is these young men. That will, that faith and meaning and covenant that drives them, that's what keeps them going. Now they all get wounded, and yet the covenant promised by their mothers holds true.

Hank Smith: 01:01:34 John, Justin, I have had a story that I've been hanging onto for this lesson. It was just published in the Deseret News by our friend, [Tad Walch](#). The title of the article is Miracle at Gapyeong. I think that's how you say it. It talks about Elder Holland helped create this [video](#), and we can link it in our show notes. It says "73 years ago this month, a US infantry offensive designed to trap Chinese and North Korean soldiers worked well, but it left its supporting Utah National Guard artillery unit unprotected. When 4,000 enemy soldiers tried to escape the trap, they stumbled upon the 240 Utah artillerymen and launched a middle-of-the-night surprise attack. Outnumbered 16 to 1, the Americans fought for their lives. One soldier manned a 50-caliber machine gun that he fired until the barrel melted. Others were thrust into hand-to-hand combat." Elder Holland actually talks about these soldiers because they were from Southern Utah, St. George, Cedar City, Richfield, Beaver, and Fillmore. Elder Holland says, "These young men were from my home area in Southern Utah, just a bit older than me. When I was 10 years old they were shipping off to Korea, and I couldn't have imagined what they were about to face in that war-torn country. None of us could." And it talked about that, they don't know what is around that corner. Are we going to go to battle? Because what are they going to find as they go back in?

01:03:05 It says, "The 213th was comprised of young men generally between the ages of 18 and 22, who were chiefly Latter-day Saints. Before they left for Korea, they were invited to a meeting in the St. George Utah Temple, where temple president, Harold Snow, promised them that if they were

faithful to God and kept the commandments, God would watch over them and preserve them. And then on May 26th, 1951, they were providing this artillery support. During the middle of the night, they found themselves under attack by 4,000 enemy soldiers. When dawn broke, the Chinese and North Korean attacked east. Captain Ray Cox organized a combat patrol of 18 men to watch a counterattack around a self-propelled 155 Howitzer that the patrol used like a tank. For hours, Captain Cox's small band," so there's 18 of them, "outnumbered now 220 to one, rolled through the valley, taking out enemy machine gun emplacements.

01:04:06 Some of the members of the 213th were wounded, but none were killed. The presidential citation issued seven months later praised the unit for its unshakable determination and gallantry." This video is made this year. We'll link it in our show notes. It's about 11 minutes long, all about this Southern Utah artillery unit in Korea.

Dr. Justin Top: 01:04:30 Amazing story. This story of the stripling warriors, as well as that story, highlights that there are some times when God, that's his promise. If you are faithful, you'll be protected. Unfortunately, it doesn't always happen that way. Sometimes these kind of miracles that we're hoping for don't happen. People die, people get sick, and diseases, and different things like that. And so it's hard to understand. We're going to see an example of that. That really comes out in chapter 57, because the stripling warriors are compared to the other Nephite army where lots die. I would imagine that for the families of those who died this is, while it's an inspiring story, it chafes a little bit, right?

01:05:13 Let's dive into 57. The Nephites are getting reinforcements the way that they should, to have a big group of 6,000 that join them along with another 60 stripling warriors to join Helaman. The result is that they are able to win some victories, they have some good success, but along with that comes a huge load of prisoners. They've got these Lamanite prisoners and they have to send them with a portion of their army to send them back to Zarahemla. Well, shortly after that they have this surprise attack where they're attacked by the Lamanites. And again, they really have to fight to protect themselves. We pick up the story, especially with the stripling warriors, in verse 19.

01:05:54 "But behold, my little band of 2,060 fought most desperately. Yea, they were firm before the Lamanites and did administer death unto all those who opposed them. And as a remainder of our army were about to give way before the Lamanites, behold, those 2,060 were firm and undaunted. Yea, And they did obey

and observe to perform every word of command with exactness. Yea, even according to their faith it was done unto them. And I did remember the words which they said unto me, that their mothers had taught them."

01:06:32 If we're going back to finding the active ingredients in victory over struggle, just like the Marine Corps is trying to do, I would say that some of them come out here. Complete obedience. They followed Helaman's commands with exactness, regardless of if it meant they were going to lose their life in the process. They were willing to lay down their life in order to obey. Number two, they have this incredible faith that keeps coming out. And we constantly get reminded of this covenant, this covenant that keeps us going. Again, remember, it doesn't mean that they were all perfectly obedient in all aspects of their life, but they're willing. They're willing to do the best they can to obey. Well, this reminds me of the pioneers.

01:07:19 There's a story when saints were being driven out of Nauvoo. The last group, they had been given time, supposedly you have time to get out, but then the mobs drive them out early. So they're on the banks of the river and needing help getting across. Brigham Young finds out about this, and he sends a group of rescuers back to help them out. And these are really poor people that didn't have the money yet, that they're not ready. Driven out of their homes, not really ready to take all the things that they have. But [Brigham Young](#) calls up rescuers and says, "Now is the time for labor." Listen to this part. "Let the fire of the covenant, which you made in the house of the Lord, burn in your hearts like flame unquenchable."

01:08:02 [Elder Merrill J. Bateman](#), when he's talking about this story and the fire of the covenant, he said, "The fire of the covenant spoken of by President Young is not an imaginary, but a real force in the lives of all faithful saints. The rescuers as well as the last remnants on the bank of the Mississippi were strengthened by it. Most, if not all of us, have felt the burning as well. A personal witness received at baptism lights the fire. The intensity of the flame increases as we face adversity, and the furnace of affliction tempers our soul. The flame bursts into a full-fledged fire as we enter into and live special covenants with the Lord Jesus Christ." So that fire of the covenant is such a key to keep us going through hard times. Remembering our promises, not just what we promise, but the blessings that are promised us as a result of the covenant.

Hank Smith: 01:08:55 As I read this chapter, and I hear about exact obedience, two things come to mind that I think you could comment on. One,

how crucial is obedience in the military? Because we often hear stories of, "Oh, he disobeyed that order. Oh, wasn't he courageous? He disobeyed that order." But I'm sure for every one of those there's, "Oh, he's so courageous, he obeyed that order." And then the other side of it is, as Latter-day Saints, some have a tendency to really get down on themselves if they're not exactly obedient. Do you see both sides of that question? Just in your experience in the military, let's take on the first question. How crucial is obedience?

- Dr. Justin Top: 01:09:36 I want to start by saying this. I don't believe that righteousness and obedience are automatically the same thing. I think righteousness is something that comes from our relationship with Jesus Christ. Like I said earlier, I believe commandments is a manifestation of grace, and our obedience leads us to that relationship with Jesus Christ. But it is also possible to get really down on yourself, because I don't know that it is possible to be exactly obedient in all things in this life. The game is fixed against us. It makes it become really hard just because of the way that our brains work. And if you focus too much on that obedience, then it can become like the Pharisees, where you miss out on the relationship aspect. Viewing obedience as a part of our discipleship is important, because it leads us to have a relationship with Christ.
- 01:10:27 In this situation, talking about the military, there are times when obedience is so crucial because you cannot always see the big picture. You are commanded to do something, your unit, or you need to do this, you need to move to this place or take this hill, or whatever it is. But in your limited perspective that may not make sense. If you rely on your perspective and base it off what you think is right, then it could cause problems for the whole. If I had to guess, one of the reasons why the stripling warriors were so effective strategically and tactically is because they work together as a unit so well. That's how you make up for lack of skill, is through obedience. The fact that they follow through with everything, even if they can't figure out how, if he says, "You need to protect this hill at all costs," then that's what they do.
- Hank Smith: 01:11:21 I like both answers there, because it's important to have both. Obedience is absolutely crucial. I like how you addressed that question, Justin. Because on one end of the spectrum, obedience is critical to success. And on the other end, repentance is the second principle of the gospel on purpose. When you make repentance the second principle of the gospel, I think it's built in that you're going to not be exactly obedient.

The fact that we have the sacrament every week tells you the Lord is like, "Yeah, you're going to need to do this a lot."

Dr. Justin Top:

01:11:51

Yeah, the gospel's all about obedience and discipleship. And I think it's important that when we read this story, we don't make the assumption that obedience and faith are always 100% linked to being delivered from whatever the struggle is. And our brains can easily say, "Oh, it's because they were obedient enough that they didn't die." Well, that's going to create a lot of problems for you. And we read in verse 26, there's this comparison. "And now their preservation was astonishing to our whole army. Yea, that they should be spared while there were a thousand of our brethren who were slain." While that's amazing that the 2,060 survived, it's pretty painful for those who didn't. We ask ourselves, well, why? The automatic answer is, the 2,000 stripling warriors were more faithful. That's going to cause problems for your faith later on. Because, though God is able to deliver us from whatever it is, death or challenges, he doesn't sometimes.

01:12:52

I see this story. This is a really good example of how God's grace is so all-encompassing. His grace can be there to protect us. And does he send miracles like this, times when people who have cancer are healed miraculously? Sure. But are there just as many or if not more times when people who have just as much faith are not healed? Yeah. But don't forget that there is also grace in the alternative. There's grace in the struggle, grace in the loss, especially for those who have fought valiantly, even though their end was different than the stripling warriors.



John Bytheway:	00:00	Part two with Dr. Justin Top: Alma 53 through 63.
	00:06	Over Memorial Day weekend, I saw a bunch of wonderful stories. One of them, Hank, was about Elder Maxwell that you read. One of them showed President Nelson as an officer in Korea supervising MASH hospitals. A long time ago, there was a TV show called MASH, and I remember one time hearing something I never forgot, and it was the colonel, and he said something like this: "All I remember is what they taught me in command school. Number one, in a war, young men die. And number two, doctors can't do anything about number one."
	00:46	And I don't know why I remember that, but this is an astonishing event and that's how they describe it, that none of the Stripling Warriors were perished, while a thousand others were slain. But the point for all of us, I guess, ends up in verse 27: Put your trust in God continually. The Abinadis and the Jobs and the others suffered in life, but that doesn't mean God isn't there.
Hank Smith:	01:13	Another principle I get from this whole story, chapter 57 specifically, is the way we view our youth and the energy they can give. Verse 20: the Army was about to give way. Sounds like the adults were pretty tired. And then here comes this group of youth who gives so much energy to the adults. That's one thing we could draw out of this is, in our own wards and stakes, not to look at the youth as problems or as, "Man, if they would just not be youth anymore, that would be great," but see them as this great energy for the church, that they have a lot to give.
John Bytheway:	01:51	It's interesting that President Nelson used these very stories to say, in 2018, "I am inviting every young woman and every young man between the ages of 12 and 18 in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to enlist in the youth battalion of the Lord to help gather Israel, which is the greatest challenge, the greatest cause, the greatest work on earth today. I'm glad you brought that up.

	02:19	Here's President Nelson saying the youth are going to help us do this and inviting them to be a modern group of Stripling Warriors.
Dr. Justin Top:	02:27	Chapter 58 , we get another one of these similar types of stories. This is a little different than last time, because the last story, the Nephites started out in this place of advantage and then were taken by surprise. In this one, it's different. They're really getting neglected. They're not getting the supplies they need, they're not getting support from the government, and they're just hanging on by their fingernails, basically.
	02:51	In verse six: "And the Lamanites were sallying forth against us from time to times, resolving by stratagem to destroy us. Nevertheless, we could not come to battle with them because their retreats and their strongholds, and it came to pass that we did wait in these difficult circumstances for the space of many months, even until we were about to perish for the want of food." They're in a bad situation: losing ground, they're trying the best they can to hold on. Now again, think about being like this in your life, being at these times in your life where you're just barely surviving.
	03:24	In verse nine: "And now the cause of these, our embarrassments, or the cause of why they did not send more strength unto us, we knew not. Therefore, we were grieved and also filled with fear, lest by any means, the judgments of God should come upon our land to our overthrow and utter destruction. A lot of discouragement here, but their way of dealing with it is really important.
	03:45	"Therefore, we did pour out our souls in prayer to God that He would strengthen us and deliver us out of the hands of our enemies, yea, and also give us strength that we might retain our cities and our lands and our possessions for the support of our people."
	04:02	So they're begging, "God, we don't know how this is going to go. We can't see how it's going to get solved, but we're trusting you." And in the process of that, they get a spiritual confirmation. "Yea, it came to pass that the Lord our God, did visit us with assurances that He would deliver us, yea, insomuch that He did speak peace to our souls and did grant unto us great faith and did cause us that we should hope for our deliverance in Him. And we did take courage with our small force which we had received and were fixed with the determination to conquer our enemies and to maintain our lands and our possessions and our wives and our children, the cause of our liberty."

	04:43	Even though the external circumstances aren't good, they choose to make the best of it and focus on controlling the things that they can, which is their faith.
Hank Smith:	04:54	That spiritual witness turns into a fixed determination. I really love that little connection. I'm barely holding on here, pour out my soul to God. He speaks assurance, peace, faith, and hope, and I turn that into a fixed determination to keep going. It's a great model on how to take on big time struggle.
John Bytheway:	05:17	I think, too, Hank and Justin, there's a lot of times in life when all of us feel like we're running out, we haven't got strength, we haven't got energy, we haven't got what it takes. And I think verse 11, I underlined, it could be one of the most beautiful verses in the war chapters: "Assurance, deliverance, peace, faith, hope, deliverance." That's a lot of really wonderful words in just a short verse. That causes them to hang on.
Dr. Justin Top:	05:46	Now, we get more of that in verse 32. Our armies are small, we can't maintain. There's too many cities, we're spread too thin, but we trust in our God, who has given us victory over those lands. So we've had these victories in the past. This chapter has another story of a great strategy where they lure the Lamanites out and sneak back and take the city and so on. This is the constant story, battle after battle, and sometimes they feel confident and other times they're overwhelmed.
	06:15	The last real portion that we get about the Stripling Warriors in verse 39: "And those sons of the people of Ammon of whom I have so highly spoken are with me in the city of Manti, and the Lord has supported them, yea, and kept them from falling by the sword, insomuch that even one soul has not been slain." After all these battles, still not a one of them. "But behold, they have received many wounds."
	06:42	"Nevertheless, they stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has made them free, and they're strict to remember the Lord, their God, from day to day. Yea, they do observe to keep His statutes and His judgments and His commandments continually, and their faith is strong in the prophecies concerning that which is to come." This is the story of the Stripling Warriors: again and again and again, they win when they shouldn't. They're outnumbered. They're not experienced. They have no business doing so well.
	07:17	I was in Washington D.C recently and I went to the World War II Memorial there on the Mall and it's divided into two parts: there's the European Theater and the Pacific Theater. And on

the side of the Pacific Theater there's a quote that I think really applies well to the Stripling Warriors.

07:33 It's actually a quote about the battle of Midway. Now if you know the Battle of Midway, this is one of those similar types of stories where the United States had no right winning that battle. Way outnumbered, better technology, better forces, but a series of miracles come into play. The Allied forces are able to defeat the Japanese there and it really, really changes the course of the war.

07:58 And there's a quote in that memorial, and this is by an author named [Walter Lord](#): it said, "They had no right to win, yet they did; and in doing so, they changed the course of a war. Even against the greatest of odds, there is something in the human spirit, a magic blend of skill, faith, and valor that can lift men from certain defeat to incredible victory."

08:25 And I would suggest to add to that that it's not just the human spirit: it's when that human spirit comes in contact with divine spirit, and the soul is able to communicate with the divine and to be nourished by God's love and grace and find that courage that helps them push through when it's hard. And that applies not just to physical battle, but to all of these struggles that we go through in our lives. Accessing the grace of God: that's the answer.

John Bytheway: 08:58 Wow, Justin. Thanks for bringing up Midway. There were some real miracles: the scout plane whose radio was broken that found the American fleet but couldn't tell anybody about it, so it was delayed till he flew back. The code that the American sent out, the AF is having trouble with their water condensers, even though they weren't, but they thought that AF was what the enemy was using to describe Midway. It was such a stratagem and it worked. It's hard to look at that and not think they had some divine help with what happened at Midway. So I like that quotation.

Hank Smith: 09:30 Justin, John, before we move on from the Stripling Warriors, I wanted to talk about one thing and see what you both think about it. It's something I've been thinking about over the years of reading the Book of Mormon.

09:41 It seems to me, Justin, you can correct me here, that these Stripling Warriors changed the trajectory of the war that Mormon, at least, is highlighting. Things were heading in the wrong direction, and then this group came in and really turned it around. Even Captain Moroni getting this letter gives him a

boost of energy. And I go back to Ammon, Aaron, Omner and Himni saying, "We want to go on a mission to the Lamanites." And everyone's saying, "You don't want to go on a mission to the Lamanites. It'd be better to kill them than to go preach to them."

10:14 And yet because those sons of Mosiah went on that mission, if you think about it this way, they were really saving themselves. They were saving their own children by going on that mission, because the way it unfolds is that the children of those they converted or taught end up saving the Nephites. Be thinking about that, and I'll tell a quick story that I think both of you already know.

10:40 And that is that when [Parley P. Pratt](#) went on a mission to Toronto, Canada, his wife was sick, he didn't really want to go, I don't think, but he went anyway, and he baptized [John Taylor](#) and a group of saints up there. Well, when John Taylor moves to Kirtland, Parley P. Pratt has lost some confidence or some faith in Joseph Smith, and it's John Taylor who kind of grabs Parley P. Pratt and says, "Get back on board here." So when Parley P. Pratt goes on his mission, he's actually saving himself, because he converts John Taylor, who then turns his life around.

11:19 Maybe there's a principle in all of this, and either of you can comment on it, that what at first looks like a sacrifice to go on a mission becomes an investment in saving yourself or saving your children or your grandchildren. Any thoughts on that?

Dr. Justin Top: 11:36 Yeah, actually, God is the master story writer. He creates these incredible journeys for each of us, and you can't ever tell how it's going to end. What happens at one point may show up again later on. And one of the things that I've loved about being a chaplain is being able to walk with people in their journeys and see this type of thing: seeds that were planted way back when that seemed like nothing then come to fruition later on and have incredible impact.

12:06 This is what it means to have faith in the Lord, is that every little thing can matter. Things that we don't even expect can bless our lives in ways we can't anticipate. This is God's grace. The scriptures say that all things work together for our good, and I don't think we fully grasp or appreciate what that "all things" part means; but God is heavily invested in bringing about our story of grace.

Hank Smith:	12:38	I love the little... The great chess game, John and I have called it, this 5D chess where all the pieces have their own agency and he's somehow playing this game.
John Bytheway:	12:50	I hope that people listening, don't skip over, don't skim over these chapters, look for these kind of messages because we are all in a spiritual warfare, if nothing else. Look at how in verse 40, they're strict to remember the Lord their God from day to day. It's what we've been asked to do, is to remember.
Hank Smith:	13:11	Justin, with that, walk us through the rest of the war chapters, here. There's an interesting back and forth. Moroni's frustrated.
Dr. Justin Top:	13:19	Yeah. I want to bring out, in verse one of chapter 59, this is after Moroni finishes reading the letter, and it says his reaction is mixed, but he's really inspired by the story of the 2000 Stripling Warriors, and he tells the armies and the people, and it rejuvenates. And we know that these kind of stories have the power to do that. You remember from World War II, just the picture of the flag being planted on Iwo Jima, the country was getting tired out from the war and I can only imagine how bad it was for the Nephites in this situation. They use that picture to really regenerate the spiritual energy of the country as a whole, and certainly the story of the stripling warriors has that effect on Nephi and his people.
	14:04	What I wish I could be a fly on a wall for was the people of Ammon when they got those letters. Can you imagine the gratitude to God on hearing that none of their sons had been killed? It's mind-blowing. People who already had incredible faith, having that confirmed. Really powerful.
	14:29	The rest of chapter 59 sets up what you said about Captain Moroni getting frustrated. It's worse. They start losing more ground again and they're not getting provisions and you can only hang on by your fingernails so long. Moroni finally gets to the point where he's had it. He's done.
	14:52	In verse eight, he talks about this, that they're losing ground and their armies were so numerous that the remainder of the people of Nephihah were obliged to flee before them. They're fleeing before the army of the Lamanites. And they came even and joined the army of Moroni. So they're fleeing.
	15:09	And here's this verse we talked about before: "And now as Moroni had supposed that there should be men sent to the city of Nephihah, to the assistance of the people to maintain that

city, and knowing that it was easier to keep the city from falling into the hands of the Lamanites than to retake it from them, he supposed that they would easily maintain that city."

- 15:29 Moroni, he was under the assumption that Nephihah was in good shape, that they had been reinforced and they should have enough to maintain their city, but no reinforcements had ever come, and so they lost the city, and that causes problems, because now it's harder to get it back.
- John Bytheway: 15:45 Such a great principle in that verse there, and you mentioned the [President Benson](#) quote: "When it comes to the law of chastity, it's better to prepare and prevent than it is to repair and repent." I think it's the same principle as "An ounce of preparation is better than a pound of cure." This would be a lot easier if we could keep the city from falling and think of the timing, the resources, the blood, the treasure, however we put it, to try to retake a city, than to just prevent it from being taken in the first place. And think of that. Spiritually, there's some great applications in there,
- Dr. Justin Top: 16:21 Spiritually and mentally, emotionally, relationships: all of those things, being proactive is much better than being reactive.
- Hank Smith: 16:30 I like that.
- Dr. Justin Top: 16:31 We ready for [60](#)?
- Hank Smith: 16:32 Yep.
- Dr. Justin Top: 16:33 Now, Moroni's frustrated, he's had it, and he's going to let Pahoran, who's the chief judge, he's going to let him know his frustration. Now, I love this little back and forth between Moroni and Pahoran, because the psychologist in me just loves to dissect this and see what's going on inside their heads.
- 16:51 Now, this goes back, we sort of introduced the idea of lenses with Moroni and Ammoron; but now we're going to see how Captain Moroni, his own frustration, how it's going to really distort his lenses. And we talk about Captain Moroni. He's an amazing guy, but he's also still human, and that frustration, he's really going to take it out on Pahoran. As we look at this, we're going to see in his letter some of the common mental distortions that we make that cause problems for us.
- 17:20 In this letter, he talks to Pahoran about his frustration. Let's pick it up in verse three: "And now behold, I say unto you that

myself and also my men and also Helaman and his men have suffered exceedingly great sufferings, yea, even hunger, thirst and fatigue and all manner of afflictions. But behold, were this all we had suffered, we would not murmur or complain: but behold, great has been the slaughter among our people. Yea, thousands have fallen by the sword, while it might have otherwise been, if ye had rendered unto our armies sufficient strength and succor for them. Yea, great has been your neglect towards us."

- 17:58 Two things happening. Number one, we're suffering, so the focus becomes on your own suffering. That's a really common, natural thing for us to do. When things get hard, that's all we can see. We can't see past our own frustration. But what starts to happen is we start to change this narrative and say, "And it's your fault. We got to have somebody to blame for it, so it's your fault that we're suffering." That's frustration and it's focus on your frustration and it's blaming it on others. That's one of the common things that we do.
- 18:31 In verse seven: "Can you think to sit upon your thrones in a state of thoughtless stupor while your enemies are spreading the work of death around you?" You don't care. He's making an assumption here. "You're sitting back there relaxing while we're suffering. You have it easy." Have you ever done this in your brain with somebody? Like, "Oh, you just don't even care about me."
- 18:53 Verse nine: "But behold, this is not all. Ye have withheld your provisions from them, insomuch that they have fought and bled out their lives because of their great desires which they had for the welfare of this people. Yea, and this they have done when they were about to perish with hunger because of your exceedingly great neglect towards them." In other words, "You did that on purpose." Ever used that in a relationship argument? "You did that on purpose."
- 19:21 This is what our brains do when we get all worked up. You tell yourself a story and you're convinced it's the truth. That emotional narrative becomes our absolute truth and it goes on and you can see at the end of verse 10 and in verse 11, the narrative is: "Because you've done all these things, you're bad." That's the next step. Our brains tend to oversimplify and make things: people are either all bad or all good. So, "Because you did this thing, behold, could ye suppose that you could sit on your throne, and because of the exceeding goodness of God, you could do nothing and He would deliver you?" You have all

these ideas that you're so high and mighty and you're going to be okay?

- 20:04 And then in verse 12, we get this mind reading. I know what you're thinking. I know what you're thinking. "Do you suppose that because so many of our brethren have been killed, it is because of their wickedness?" Oh, you're thinking they deserve this, now. This is kind of ridiculous stuff, but Moroni is just worked up. And he is an amazing person, but he still has to deal with this.
- 20:24 And that's going to all lead, this is step-by-step, that leads to eventually in verse 13 and 14 and more towards the end, "And because of this, you deserve punishment. And if you don't change, I'm going to be the one that gives it to you." From a psychologist's point of view, just look at how... This happens to us all the time. Our brains work against us and cause problems.
- Hank Smith: 20:47 It's fascinating that the facts that he has, that they have not received provisions, turns into a full out story. It's hard. I can sense you're hesitating to make judgments on Captain Moroni. So am I. But at the same time, all he knows is the provisions haven't come and it's turned into a full out narrative, like you said, that he wholeheartedly believes. You can almost see him escalating as he's writing. It starts out with, "I'm wondering why you're being neglectful to us," and then at the end, "I will come and slay you. I will come kill you." Going, "Whoa, that escalated."
- Dr. Justin Top: 21:29 I love this about Captain Moroni. I love that he struggles with this as well, because if you were to put yourself just in his perspective, then he is coming from this place of righteousness and being neglected and he's justified in his anger; but the truth is, he just doesn't have the big picture. And all of us get like that sometimes, too. And I love reading this story because somebody as amazing as Captain Moroni can struggle with this. And I'll have times where I'll get in an argument with my wife or one of the kids and then later on I'll be like, "Where did that come from? I don't even really think that way."
- John Bytheway: 22:04 I love that Moroni goes right to thrones. We all know how they feel about the king men, but, "You guys are sitting back there on your thrones," or you could say "recliners," "while we are out here doing this." I see thrones in verse seven, verse 11, verse 21. Accuses them of just sitting back there on their thrones.
- Dr. Justin Top: 22:25 What an amazing insight. It's like a subtle jab. You're becoming like the king men. Yeah, I like that.

John Bytheway:	22:30	That we just got away from.
Dr. Justin Top:	22:32	One of the other things that happens is when you get so frustrated and the other person is wrong and they're doing bad and you start to elevate yourself a little bit, right? In verse 28, it's very much, "And God is on my side in this. Yea, behold, I do not fear your power nor your authority, but it is my God whom I fear, and it is according to His commandments that I do take my sword to defend the cause of my country." We often find ourselves in this state of what we consider righteous indignation that can sometimes blind us in some ways to the interaction and the relationship and other perspectives.
Hank Smith:	23:10	Justin, I think you're right. This happens in relationships all the time. I remember being newly married and thinking, my wife should be able to read my mind. You should be able to know why I'm so angry and frustrated. And why are you not responding to this? And all of a sudden I come up with this narrative: "You don't love me, you don't care about me." And then I find out, "Oh, no, she just had her phone off."
Dr. Justin Top:	23:38	Your brain brings in all these examples. "You always this, and you never this," and none of that's true, but in that moment it really feels true.
Hank Smith:	23:47	What do you do with that, Justin, when your emotions are taking you? I mean, first you have to notice it's even happening.
Dr. Justin Top:	23:53	Yeah, the answer to this is grace, and that takes training: to train yourself to have grace for others, have grace for yourself, and receive grace from others and from God. In this situation, we talk about this with relationships with others, but this story plays out the same with our relationship with God, and sometimes we're frustrated with God, and we do all these things in our narrative with him. This is what leads us to greater doubts and feeling distance from the church and from our relationship with God.
	24:23	This all sets up so nicely, because Pahoran in chapter 61 is the ideal response. To answer your question, "How do we deal with this?" Well, we learn to think like Pahoran does, because if Pahoran really was the kind of guy that Moroni paints him out to be, he could very easily be really upset about this. Like, "How dare you? I'm your boss." I picture something like this happening in the military. Whew, that would not go over well if you spoke to your superior officer like this.

Hank Smith:	24:58	It would not go over well.
Dr. Justin Top:	25:01	No, no.
Hank Smith:	25:03	If you go to Alma 60:33, he, even in his emotion, says he's getting revelation. "The Lord says to me, 'If those whom you have appointed your governors do not repent of their sins and iniquities, you will go up to battle against them.'"
Dr. Justin Top:	25:18	Yeah. I wonder how often that happens. Revelation is more than just a feeling. My testimony of the church, though, it comes from feeling the Spirit, it's really balanced by a lot of other things besides how does it make me feel? It makes sense. And there's a certain degree of light and grace that comes with it, and that's something we have to always be careful for, because our brains, our natural man minds do trick us sometimes.
Hank Smith:	25:46	Yeah, sometimes your anger can feel like...
John Bytheway:	25:50	Righteous indignation or something.
Hank Smith:	25:52	Yeah. "The Lord is telling me I'm right." Is He?
John Bytheway:	25:56	And the Lord's like, "Moroni, let off your steam. I'm going to let you know what's really going on back there. Pahoran's been kicked out. He's not even there." The Lord lets him know in time that the situation is not what you thought it was.
Dr. Justin Top:	26:08	I would say, too, that it kind of is: it's just not who he thought it was. There are plenty of people who deserve this and what Pahoran's going to do is redirect this zeal to where it needs to be rather than get all offended and it reminds me of Paul who's fighting against the Christians and then God says, "Let's redirect you a little bit [inaudible 00:26:30] zeal."
John Bytheway:	26:30	Redirect some of that energy.
Dr. Justin Top:	26:32	Same principle here with Captain Moroni.
Hank Smith:	26:34	Justin, how do we deal with this? Is that what comes next?
Dr. Justin Top:	26:38	Pahoran shows us a great example. His response is full of grace. We can really learn how to respond when somebody comes at us like this, how to respond in a way that's really helpful, because we saw with Ammoron and Captain Moroni what doesn't work. Let's take a look here at what he says: "I, Pahoran,

who am the chief governor of this land, do send these words unto Moroni, the chief captain over the army. Behold, I say unto you, Moroni, that I do not joy in your great affliction. Yea, it grieves my soul." In other words, empathy.

27:16 First thing is: I acknowledge your experience and I'm really sad about it and he's not diving right into, "How dare you? What about my perspective? What about me? What about me?" It's like really feeling this sorrow for what they're going through.

Hank Smith: 27:34 There's some validation there, too, right, Justin?

Dr. Justin Top: 27:37 Absolutely. Instead of pushing back on that emotion, he's pulling it a little bit and saying, "Okay, I see that, and that's okay." Verse three: "But behold, there are those who do joy in your afflictions. Yea, insomuch that they have risen up in rebellion against me. And also those of my people who are freemen, yea, and those who have risen up are exceedingly numerous."

28:02 The next thing he does is he acknowledges this is a problem. There is a problem going on right now. Doesn't minimize, doesn't diminish. This is a problem that needs to be addressed. Then he goes on to explain, this is my perspective of the problem, and he talks about how they've been driven out, they've taken over Zarahemla and Pahoran's been hiding at this point and he's trying to gather forces together to support him, but he still doesn't have enough to retake the judgment seat. Explaining his own perspective.

28:36 Verse nine: I like this. He says, "And now in your epistle, you have censured me." You've been pretty harsh, "but it mattereth not. I am not angry, but do rejoice in the greatness of your heart." So in other words, he acknowledges, "Okay, you came at me kind of hard," but he says, "but I know you," and expresses confidence. "Because I know you. I'm not offended."

29:02 How many times do we need to do that? Need to remind ourselves, "Oh wait, this person I'm talking to is a good person who cares about me," whether it's a spouse or a family member. Our narrative gets all worked up, but we need to be reminded, "Hey, they actually are on my side here."

29:18 He states his commitment, and this is his response to exactly the way Moroni said it in his: "I, Pahoran, do not seek for power, save only to retain my judgment seat that I may preserve the rights and liberties of my people. My soul standeth

fast in that liberty, in the which God hath made us free." He says, hey, this is what I stand for, here. I'm committed to this.

- 29:44 And then from this point on, every verse in the rest of this chapter, this is where it gets amazing. I went through and I circled all the times I saw the word "we" or "us." Moroni went into it like it's going to be me against you, but now Pahoran invites Moroni to join with him: "And now, behold, we will resist wickedness even unto bloodshed." Verse 11: "We would not shed the blood of our brethren if they would not rise up in rebellion against us." Verse 12: "We would subject ourselves..." So all of a sudden, it's not who's right; it's, "Let's figure this out together." Verse 14: "Let us resist them with our swords."
- 30:30 And then this is also symbolic of how Christ comes in and how His grace comes in and wraps us in His loving arms. Go back to the example of Paul who's resisting God and fighting and he finds out that he's wrong, and you could picture God who comes into his life and says, "Hey, let's do this together now. Let's go together and solve this problem." And what happens to Paul? He becomes this amazing advocate for Christianity and does amazing things.
- 30:59 This chapter from Pahoran teaches us so much about the grace of God, and if we can copy this, use these principles in our lives, think of all the conflict, internal and external, we could avoid by following his example.
- Hank Smith: 31:14 I think about a parent with an angry teenager. Chapter 60 comes at you in your face, and to respond with empathy and then, "Look, we're on the same team." I think Pahoran is a great example of a very calm response to a very angry accusation. I have a tendency, I don't know about either of you, but if someone comes at me with an angry accusation, I usually escalate the anger. But this calm response defuses the situation. He says, "Look, we are on the same team. I promise."
- John Bytheway: 31:48 "I'm not on a throne. I'm on a desk with a squeaky chair." I love that, "I rejoice in the greatness of your heart," that he's able to read that and go, "Moroni, what a great heart. He doesn't understand what's going on here, but I love this man's heart." And then thank you for pointing that out, how it becomes we. This is us. We'd say to my kids sometimes, my wife and I, "This isn't us against you: this is all of us against Satan. We are on the same team."
- Dr. Justin Top: 32:20 It reminds me of a story that my wife has told in a talk for church before, but she tells this story of being at the mall with

one of the kids. We call her Jack. She wanted to go into one of the stores. Of course, no, it's time to go home. She goes into this having a tantrum there on the floor because she wanted to go into that store. And it was not a little tantrum, it was a full-on tantrum.

32:44 I don't know how you would respond in that situation. For me, I'd try and reason with her. In that situation, it's not going to work for her. She's worked up. I'd try and reason with her and then I'd try and be firm. "Well, you come right now," or this or that, and then maybe get Child Protective Services called on me. Maybe I would be more likely to give in. "Okay, whatever. Just stop complaining. Stop your tantrum."

33:05 But my wife, she pulled up a chair and sat down next to her, so she's sitting there screaming on the floor and my wife sat there, and every once in a while would stroke her back a little bit, and there, waiting until she's ready. And finally, she calms down. The whimpers die down, and my wife whispers something in her ear and she hops right up, takes my wife by the hand, and they go. And I wonder how many times we're like that with God: we're in our anger and our frustration and we have our ways of seeing things, but God's always there waiting, waiting until we can get in this place where we can hear Him and take Him by the hand. That's His grace.

Hank Smith: 33:46 I'm sure both of you remember way back in October of 2006, almost, what, 18 years ago, [Elder Bednar](#) gave a talk called "And Nothing Shall Offend Them." This is a great talk to go read, if you want to, this week. He mentions this exchange between Moroni and Pahoran, and then he says this: "One of the greatest indicators of our own spiritual maturity is revealed in how we respond to the weaknesses, the inexperience, and the potentially offensive actions of others. A thing, an event or an expression may be offensive, but you and I can choose not to be offended and to say with Pahoran, 'It mattereth not.'" So hard. John, this is so easy for you, to be just so calm in the face of anger.

John Bytheway: 34:38 No, I just turn my mic off.

Hank Smith: 34:41 It does not come naturally to me. It's something I've been... I am hoping a weakness that can become a strength, one day. He mentions [Elder Maxwell](#) called us, as members of the church, we are the "clinical material" for each other's growth and development. We bump into each other and people in the ward might say something offensive. I say something offensive. The bishop says something offensive. And what are we going to do

at those moments? Such an inspired part of the Book of Mormon. John, do you want to comment on how natural it is for you?

- John Bytheway: 35:13 You know more about this than I do, Justin, but sometimes people have to let off steam, and sometimes you'll find that they come up with their own solution once they get all the steam out and they feel like they've been heard and then they... "Maybe I should... Yeah, that's a good idea." But first they had to let off all that steam. I love this story for so many reasons, and I love that Mormon would put it in there, because he gives this tribute to Moroni, names his own son Moroni, and he wants us to see Captain Moroni, as well. Here's the authentic Moroni, unedited. Here he comes.
- Hank Smith: 35:54 Justin, how do we do this better in our family relationships? You must be the pro at it. You've got your wife and you have 11 children. You're a trained psychologist. You're a chaplain.
- Dr. Justin Top: 36:09 When you practice enough, it's just a piece of cake.
- Hank Smith: 36:12 Yeah?
- Dr. Justin Top: 36:13 There's a phrase that we find all through the Book of Mormon, and that is this idea of being stirred up to remembrance. This applies to our battles with ourself, as well: that internal part of ourself, and that's maybe not helpful. The best we can do is keep trying, stirring ourselves up, and understand that God's grace is there to help us be better, to help us be more graceful and loving to other people.
- 36:39 But it's also there to help us when we're not. We don't have to be perfect, and there are times that God doesn't take away our challenges and he just lets us struggle. We quote [Ether's](#) version, where, "I give unto men weakness that they may be humble. If men come unto me, I will show them their weakness and weak things become strong unto them."
- 37:01 But Paul has a version of this, it's a little bit different, and that is in [2 Corinthians 13](#). Paul says, "I went before the Lord and asked him to take away my weakness," and God's like, "Nope. Yeah, I'm not going to." And He says, "I'm going to let you struggle with this, because my strength is made perfect in weakness." What an interesting thing to say. Sometimes it's more about the struggle than it is about the outcome for us.

	37:30	What can we do? We continue to work. We acknowledge our weakness. We seek the grace of God, seek to have grace for others and for ourselves, and know that when we don't, the grace still applies for us and is still helping us push us towards a better relationship with Him.
Hank Smith:	37:51	I've heard it said before that a successful marriage has two very good forgivers. You get practice at forgiving, a lot of practice at forgiving each other. John, do you think Captain Moroni went to Mormon after this is published and says, "Really? Of all the letters you put in that book?"
John Bytheway:	38:08	I know, I think it's a federal offense to read other people's mail, but here we are. We've got these letters, we've got Ammoron and Moroni and they're letting each other have it, and you're a child of hell, and see you on the battlefield and wow, what a fun book.
Hank Smith:	38:22	Captain Moroni is sure passionate.
John Bytheway:	38:25	Justin, I love what you showed me, here. I'm doing that. I'm going through all the "us" and "we" and "our," and what a great insight. "Moroni, I am with you in this," Pahoran is saying to Moroni. Thanks for sharing that. That's really good.
Hank Smith:	38:41	Same team.
John Bytheway:	38:43	Look at 14 and 15. "Let us resist evil. Whatsoever evil we cannot resist with our words," okay, diplomacy first, "such as rebellions and dissensions, let us resist them with our swords.: If that's what it comes to. "Why are we fighting? That we may retain our freedom, that we may rejoice in," I love this phrase, "the great privilege of our church, and in the cause of our Redeemer and our God."
	39:10	And then there's a phrase in 15, one of those things that's put on a wood plaque on the wall or something, "The spirit of God, which is also the spirit of freedom." Whoa, what a phrase. The spirit of God is the spirit of freedom, and that's what they're fighting for: not to force everybody to worship God the way they want, but for the liberty that they can have the privilege of their church and they can worship God.
Hank Smith:	39:36	I love that. Amazing insight. Did you guys know that Abraham Lincoln used to write angry letters and then he would put them in his desk drawer? He would never send them, so when he's really upset, he would write what he called a "hot letter" and

then they found these in his drawer after. He never sent them. He needed to get it out there, say what needs to be said, and then, "Yeah, I probably shouldn't send that."

- Dr. Justin Top: 40:03 That'd make a great app. Nowadays with email and texts, sometimes you send them too quick, so you should have like an app that says, "Okay, you can't send this for five days," or whatever, to make sure you don't regret what you wrote.
- Hank Smith: 40:16 That's a great app idea.
- John Bytheway: 40:18 Hank, can I read an [Abraham Lincoln](#) quotation?
- Hank Smith: 40:21 Yes,
- John Bytheway: 40:21 "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, but we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace: too proud to pray to the God that made us." There's one of the letters that I'm glad he sent.
- Hank Smith: 41:02 John, from that quote, I thought of the fourth verse of the Star-Spangled Banner. It's sad we only sing the first verse, because there's this line in the fourth verse: "Oh, thus be it ever when free men shall stand between their loved homes and the war's desolation, blessed with victory and peace, may the heaven-rescued land raise the power that hath made and preserved us a nation." Don't forget God.
- John Bytheway: 41:31 Yeah, and conquer we must when our cause it is just, and this be our motto, in God is our trust. This is what's always bugged me about sporting events. The Star-Spangled Banner is a Q&A. We sing the Q and then we never do the A. The people in the war are asking us the question: "Does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave? Play ball." It should end: "Here's the answer: and this be our motto: in God is our trust; and the Star-Spangled, Banner in triumph shall wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!" We rarely answer the question, except on

followHIM, where today, we answer the question posed by verse one.

	42:18	When we buried my dad, the flag draped over his casket there, and the veterans came and played Taps, oh man, did a salute with the rifles. I looked over on Honeycutt Road and there was this electrical crew there with a little basket, the crow's nest thing, and they were all standing, kind of reverently watching this happen. They didn't know who it was from a distance, but I thought, "We're giving dad a send-off here," that salute, it was touching.
Hank Smith:	42:50	It's beautiful.
Dr. Justin Top:	42:51	Absolutely.
Hank Smith:	42:52	All right, Justin, walk us through the rest of this.
Dr. Justin Top:	42:55	Chapter 62 is Moroni's response to Pahoran's letter, and his response is all about action. Now, at first you can imagine how relieved he is, and think about how healing this has got to be for him who's lost faith in his government to see that he's still being led by a man of faith.
John Bytheway:	43:15	I wonder if there's another letter after this where he said, "Hey, sorry about that. I was in a mood."
Dr. Justin Top:	43:23	Yeah, we'll throw Moroni a bone here and not put that one in. This is the happy ending to this story. Captain Moroni, he's encouraged, the whole momentum changes, and now Moroni is motivated, and we get the Title of Liberty, the sequel. This is the sequel version of the same story that happened where Captain Moroni says, "Well, I can't pull any forces away from the war to help him out," so he goes and he raises the Standard of Liberty around.
	43:53	He's holding this standard up and reminding the people of why they fight, but I would imagine that he's also spreading the news about the Stripling Warriors and he's changing the attitude toward the war, insomuch that people are willing to enlist. They're like, "Okay, we've got to do this," and they remember again how important what they're doing is. He's able to gather an army, go kick the king men out of Zarahemla, reinstate Pahoran, and momentum keeps going beyond that in that now they're able to take these people who've joined in the cause and reinforce the war effort in other places.

	44:33	This is where we see a fizzled end to the major war section. Not that there's not battles or anything, but now Mormon's focus is going to shift away from these battles significantly, really is because all these bad things happened, these failures, this frustration, but it becomes a catalyst for change and growth, which then leads to this period of general peace and prosperity and where the people remember what's important. That's chapter 62 for him.
Hank Smith:	45:06	I don't know if he listens to the show, but my friend Justin Sewell says, "Setbacks lead to comebacks," and that's what's happened here.
Dr. Justin Top:	45:15	Absolutely. The prosperity that comes not only culminates in Pahoran getting put back in power and the armies being strengthened, but we also find in this chapter that Teancum sneaks in and he executes basically Ammoron, the king of the Lamanites, who's really the driving force behind this big, large-scale war. That's going to really put an end to this level of aggression from the Lamanites.
	45:44	But think about how long this has gone on. If you look at your footnotes from start to end, this is a decade plus long war. And you remember maybe from Vietnam or from the Gulf War, which wasn't even at our doorstep, necessarily, but how tired the country gets of war and how it affects things. But imagine having that threat around you all the time. It's got to have an impact.
	46:13	So not only do you have economic impact of the war, but you've got these soldiers who are coming back impacted by what they've seen and that's going to affect their family life and so on, and so there's this really fascinating verse in verse 41 that talks about how this long conflict has really affected people: "But behold, because of the exceedingly great length of the war between the Nephites and the Lamanites, many had become hardened because of the exceedingly great length of the war, and many were softened because of their afflictions insomuch that they did humble themselves before God, even in the depths of humility."
	46:52	What a fascinating scripture. The same experience can have different effects on different people at different times and it can really disrupt the soul, either in a good way or a bad
Hank Smith:	47:05	The Come Follow Me manual says, "Put a raw egg and a potato in boiling water to help you think about how you can choose to either be softened or hardened by your trials." Justin, I love that

verse. Seems that Mormon might be saying, "You have a choice. You have a choice to make when you're going through terribly long, difficult trials: are you going to be hardened?" And it seems like hardened is the default. If you don't do anything, you'll probably get hardened. You'll probably get angry. But you can choose to be softened. You can choose to humble yourself. That's hard to do

John Bytheway:	47:42	What Justin said, too, about these guys going home, now: I love the veterans who have served and I think they all handle it in different ways, and some of them have seen such horrific things and they compartmentalize it and put it away. Some are able to talk about it. My dad would tell you everything. But use that grace that's so available to help you process that and move forward.
Dr. Justin Top:	48:09	I would add here: we look at this verse, and it's easy just to make it this dichotomy like, "Oh, you can either be hardened or you can be softened," but that's not the end of the journey. The story is bigger than just, "Oh, the war hardened me," and we see this with veterans all the time who come back and they carry incredible burdens that they never expected.
	48:30	It would be amazing if signing up and protecting your country was good enough to make you a hero, but man, it can change you. And that's not just true with veterans. There are people who have been abused and have different challenges in their life and does it harden them? Well, yeah. And I don't want this verse to seem like, "Oh, you're bad if you let things harden you," because that's not the end of the story.
	48:54	We read this all through the Book of Mormon, of people whose hearts are hardened, can become softened through the preaching of the word and through some of the things we've talked about, like getting it out in the open, seeking healing from it, finding good leadership. All these things that we've talked about in these chapters about the struggles that we deal with. They apply.
	49:13	It's okay if you're hardened because of something, but don't stay there. Seek the incredible healing, softening grace of Jesus Christ to overcome that.
Hank Smith:	49:27	The conjunction that Mormon uses is: "Many were hardened because of the exceedingly great length of the war." He doesn't say "but many were softened," he says, "and many were softened." That could be someone who was hardened and then softened.

Dr. Justin Top:	49:41	Or in different aspects of our life. You can be hardened in some areas and softened... I mean, this is the journey of life and why it's so amazing. There's all the complicated factors that we rub up against.
Hank Smith:	49:54	Doesn't it seem, Justin, that Mormon gives a hopeful thought at the end of 62, that they have learned profound lessons through this. They are getting more rich, stronger, more prosperity, but they're not prideful. They're not slow to remember God. They remember the great things the Lord has done. I'm trying to get into Mormon's head here, but he seems to be finishing with, "Phew, that was a long time, but there was some good here at the end."
Dr. Justin Top:	50:23	Absolutely. Optimism about, "Hey, this is hard for us, but there's hope and a good future going forward." 63 makes me nervous. We talk about how because of their faith and their courage that helped them through the struggles, now we have this sort of happy ending. And it's, of course, not the ending, but it's a happy ending, a period of prosperity. Helaman goes back to his job preaching the gospel. He then passes the records along to his son, and we hear about this expansion, migration of the Nephites and settling new areas. We read about Hagoth and the ships and settling in other places.
	51:02	We may consider this as a form of post-traumatic growth: because of the struggle that's been going on and they came out on the other side, now we see this growth that comes and the prosperity that comes because they had to step up and trust in the grace of God, and now they're reaping the benefits of that.
Hank Smith:	51:21	What a great phrase: post-traumatic growth.
John Bytheway:	51:26	It's fun that we spent some time with Alma talking to his sons, Helaman, Shiblon and Corianton, and they're all mentioned here, that Shiblon died in verse 10. Corianton went off on a ship. We hope he lived happily ever after. We don't hear from him again, and then the things were passed on to Helaman, son of Helaman.
Hank Smith:	51:47	It's interesting that Shiblon, who is the brother of Helaman, is the one who passes the records on, almost like Helaman's, maybe too tired, right? Shiblon's like, "Let me take care of this for you."
John Bytheway:	52:00	Records division. You're records division. I'm high priest division right now.

Hank Smith:	52:04	Justin, we have covered a lot of time and material and stories. If I'm at home and I'm listening to the podcast, I've got my scriptures open, or maybe I'm on my commute or maybe I'm walking across campus, what are my major takeaways? What are you hoping I do differently?
Dr. Justin Top:	52:23	Struggle, conflict, internal or external is a normal, natural part of life, and though we try and avoid it as much as possible, it's going to happen. How we embrace that, how we receive that and deal with it from a place of moral courage, that's what really matters, and the most important source for us to seek that moral courage is through our Savior, Jesus Christ, the grace of God in our lives, and we access that through obedience, through faith, and through humbling ourselves and asking for it.
	52:57	We hear these stories of victory over insurmountable odds, and the same principles apply to us in our life, in our struggle. In whatever struggle it is, if we will reach out for the grace of God and be willing to receive what he has for us, we'll find greater courage to face those struggles and greater insight and endurance, strength to get through, even if we can't get around, the challenges come in our life.
Hank Smith:	53:26	Not only survive but thrive. I think you've taught us a lot about that today. John, I know these are your favorite chapters. You've written the book on it, you and Mormon, both. What a great day.
John Bytheway:	53:39	To have a Navy chaplain here that served for that many years and talked to people. I'm so thrilled, Justin, that you would come. What a resource. Thank you for showing us stuff here, today.
Dr. Justin Top:	53:50	Thank you so much for having me. I've really enjoyed the conversation, and especially the chapters that we've read. I get pretty passionate about it.
Hank Smith:	53:57	Yeah, it was wonderful. With that, we want to thank Dr. Justin Top for being with us today. We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen; our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen; and we always remember our founder Steve Sorensen. Join us next week. We have a new book, the Book of Helaman, coming up on followHIM.
	54:20	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. 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.

54:54

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: 55:15

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

I FIGHT SO YOU CAN DANCE



- Hank Smith: 00:02 Welcome to followHIM Favorites. This is where John and I are sharing a single story to go with each week's lesson. John, we're in the second half of the war chapters, the last 10 chapters of Alma, and I know you have a great story, because I've heard you tell it before. This is where Captain Moroni has written a not-so-kind letter, we'll call it that, a not-so-kind letter to Pahoran accusing him of sitting on his throne, while all these men are out there fighting and dying. Captain Moroni ends up being a little bit off in his assumptions, but you have a perfect story for this situation.
- John Bytheway: 00:39 I have four words in my margin right next to Alma 60, verse 22. You're right. Moroni is saying, "Have you forgotten the commandments of the Lord? Have you forgotten the captivity of our fathers? Have you forgotten how many times we've been delivered?" In verse 20. Verse 21, "Do you think the Lord will still deliver us while we sit upon our thrones?" And then in verse 22, "Will you sit in idleness while ye are surrounded with thousands of those, tens of thousands who do also sit in idleness, while there are thousands round about in the borders of the land, who are falling by the sword, yea wounded and bleeding?" And Hank, I have four words in my margin, "Dad in the Pacific," and it's quite a story, so I'll try to tell it. Hank, you have seen, and people are familiar probably with the statue of the Marines pushing up the flag at Iwo Jima during World War II.
- Hank Smith: 01:29 Beautiful picture.
- John Bytheway: 01:30 And the statue, if you've ever seen it at Arlington National Cemetery is moving. It's huge. That was taken February 23rd, 1945, and on February 21st, 1945, my dad just turned 19 years old, was a lookout and a gunner's mate on the USS Saratoga, which is an aircraft carrier. They were northwest of Iwo Jima. He wrote an autobiography. First paragraph: "I had taken my place on lookout watch at 1600 hours. The day was Wednesday, February 21st, 1945. I'd been on lookout watch for about an hour when our leader advised me to proceed to my battle

station as bogeys were shown up on our radar screen at 80 miles. I immediately left my lookout station to send it through the superstructure and was crossing under the flight deck on the port side when I heard..." And my dad described this, "Bwong bwong bwong," that was the general quarters alarm.

02:27 I'll just tell the rest. He was underneath the top is called the flight deck. Below is the hangar deck running across the hangar deck. He said, "I felt the ship jolt. Something hit us. I got up. I ran out to my gun. I looked out there and I saw this airplane coming at us and I thought, what is that guy doing? He thought it was an F-six Hellcat, one of our fighter planes." And he said it wasn't. As his eyes focused, he said, "That's a zero. That's a Zeke." They had two names for it, "Coming right at us."

Hank Smith: 02:58 Which is an enemy plane, right?

John Bytheway: 03:00 An enemy plane. He said, "We're breaking open ammunition as fast as we could. Our gunner jumped up there and swung around." He was on what they call a quad-forty, four barrels, 40 millimeter anti-aircraft. "Our gunner swung around and started to boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, fire at this plane." Dad was called a second loader. He handed the ammunition to the first loader who held it just right and dropped it in the breach of the gun. One of these kamikazes came and hit all the Marines on a quad-forty in front of them. And my dad said, "I just thought my folks are going to get the telegram. We regret to inform you type of a thing." And he said, "All we could do was focus on our job." He stayed at his post, and he fought for his life and the life of his comrades, and the ship took about seven kamikazes.

03:50 The ship was stopped. It was dead in the water. He thought, "We are a prize for a submarine". One of the things he said that I just thought was so cool, Hank, he said, "A destroyer came up at flank speed firing every gun it had, and then stopped and pulled in front of the bow." That is where the enemy was coming to try to hit the bow. Here's the skipper of this destroyer saying to the enemy, "If you're going to hit the carrier, you're going to have to go through us." Isn't that amazing? The gallantry of these guys? Long story short, that battle went on for hours. Dad wasn't a member of the church at the time, but a couple of these guys were, and he was so worried about them. Well, finally, they got the fires out. They cleared from general quarters. The ship was pretty beat up, and my dad said, "I got to go down to the fire rooms and see if my buddies are okay."

- 04:40 He got there and he said they were all okay, but they said, "Help us clean up." This is part he did not write. This is part that he told me in person. He said that, "Some of the bodies down there were so badly burnt that we couldn't pick them up. They would disintegrate in our hands," and he said, "We finally had to use our shovels." They ran out of body bags and started to have to use mattress bags. He said, "Somebody had an AM radio." An AM radio travels really far at night, but somebody picked up Eddy Duchin and his orchestra at the Sir Walter Raleigh Hotel in San Francisco, California. And my dad said, "We heard laughing and dancing and clinking champagne glasses while I was cleaning up the bodies of my comrades." He got emotional all over again when I interviewed him, and he said, "Did they know what we were going through out here?"
- 05:38 When I read Moroni writing this to Pahoran, I know that Moroni got some of the facts wrong, and where Pahoran was in his heart. Maybe a little bit, I can start to understand how he was feeling. Did they know what we're going through out here? My dad, he said that, "I thought, well, maybe I'm doing this so that they can be back there dancing." And he said, "I thought that was a pretty mature thought for a nineteen-year-old." I think so too. 123 killed, 196 wounded, and he talked about the memorial service. The chaplains would say a prayer over these bodies in a body bag or a mattress bag. They put a spent five-inch shell in there. I have pictures of this, and they would say a prayer over them, the chaplains, and then bury them at sea. And he said, "I thought about all those letters going home to those moms and dads."
- 06:34 But he said one of them was a tall redheaded LDS boy from Provo. Here's why I think he knew that. At one o'clock on Sundays, there would be an announcement, our LDS church service is in the library, and these buddies of my dad, Keith Crawford, Cal Miller, grabbed my dad and said, "You're coming with us." And he said, "I didn't want to go. Sometimes they pulled me off my bunk, often cruelly." I think of the story in Luke 5, men brought in a bed, a man who was taken with the palsy. "You're coming with us. We're taking you to Christ." And that is exactly what these teenage boys did for my dad. He got home from the war, thought, "You know, I should date some LDS girls." One of those was a girl named Diane. One day he asked her, "Hey, could you ask your dad to baptize me?"
- 07:28 And she said, "Okay." Vernon Jarman baptized my dad, and then later, "Hey, Diane, would you marry me?" She said, "Okay." And then he got called on a mission to New England after they were married. Korean War, a shortage of elders.

Hank Smith:	07:45	Wow.
John Bytheway:	07:45	I know. Cool story, huh? Went on a mission, hung out in the mission home with Truman Madsen, who had been on a mission there and used to come back and hang out at the mission home. So when I saw him at BYU, he would always say, "Hello Jack, hello Jack." Got home from his mission, they had six children. I'm number five. That's what I think of when I see Alma 60:22, was dad in the Pacific. And I have to add, my brother Kendrick opened his mission call to Sapporo, Japan, and nobody could have been happier than my Dad.
Hank Smith:	08:20	Wow.
John Bytheway:	08:22	To say, Kendrick, you're going back there for a completely different reason than I did. Because human nature divides us, divine nature unites us. These war chapters can teach us some lessons about applying the gospel in the toughest times, but ultimately, the Savior comes, the Prince of Peace comes. Pretty cool that Kendrick could go to Japan, and my dad could be so thrilled about that. So when I had a hard day on my mission, Hank, all I had to remember was, yeah, dad had a hard time too, but he stayed at his post and he fought for his life, helped me try to do the same thing.
Hank Smith:	08:58	And I think of all the ways I could apply that story, do they know what we're going through? That could be almost anything. What about the apostles and prophets? Do we try to remember all that the work they're doing on our behalf? Or our parents? If I'm away at college, do you remember all that your parents are doing for you while you are enjoying yourself? It's just a wonderful principle to remember those who could be suffering in anywhere in the world while you are sitting upon your throne.
John Bytheway:	09:28	Hank, thanks for saying that because Dad didn't say, "I shouldn't be here. I shouldn't be doing this." He knew he was where he was supposed to be. It was just, "Do you know? Do you have empathy for what we're doing, and do you appreciate it?" Whenever I'm in an audience and I see veterans or I see a guy in the airport that says, "Veteran," I like to say, "Hey, thank you for your service."
Hank Smith:	09:47	I see it. I see it.
John Bytheway:	09:48	Yeah.

Hank Smith:

09:50

Well, thank you for letting us into the world of John Glenn Bytheway, that was really fun. 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. Justin Top this week. He's been in war himself. It's interesting how he walks us through these chapters, and then come back here next week, we'll do another followHIM Favorites.