



“He Shall Come into the World to Redeem His People”

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:

Merry Christmas! Brother and Sister Meredith share their testimonies of Jesus Christ and their experiences sharing the gospel at Brigham Young University-Idaho as they serve as President and First Lady of the university. They explore how the Book of Mormon testifies of Jesus Christ and the gift of His life and Atonement.

Part 2:

The Merediths continue to share how the birth of Jesus Christ has blessed their lives and continues to be a gift to their family and the BYU-Idaho community.

Timecodes:

Part 1:

- 00:00 Part I - The Merediths
- 01:24 The Merediths share family Christmas traditions
- 05:02 Bios
- 06:33 The call to serve at BYU-Idaho
- 13:32 BYU-Idaho is set apart and sacred
- 18:25 The *Come, Follow Me Manual*
- 20:16 Christmas in the Book of Mormon
- 26:20 *Come, Follow Me* journal prompts
- 27:32 Something I learned or felt about the Savior
- 32:02 President Meredith shares a story about a church visitor
- 37:04 Learning about grace
- 40:55 The natural man and Miracle Gro
- 45:40 A prisoner in Vietnam bears testimony of Jesus
- 46:31 The Holy Ghost's role
- 48:31 Jesus Christ's role in joy
- 54:48 End of Part 1 - The Merediths

Part 2

- 00:00 Part II - The Merediths
- 00:07 Three impressions to share with the rising generation
- 05:07 A talk a day
- 11:19 His yoke is weightless
- 14:38 Criticism
- 16:07 A seminary teacher's loss
- 18:24 The Merediths testify of Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon
- 22:56 Four more years
- 27:19 End of Part 2 - The Merediths

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Biographical Information:



Alvin F. Meredith III is currently serving as a General Authority Seventy and in 2023 was assigned as the president of Brigham Young University-Idaho.

President Meredith previously served as president of the Utah Salt Lake City South Mission, an Area Seventy, stake president, bishop, and as a young missionary in the Utah Salt Lake City Mission.

In his professional career, President Meredith worked in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Nashville as a senior executive of Asurion, a global technology firm. He has also worked for GE Capital and the Boston Consulting Group.

President Meredith earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Brigham Young University and a Master of Business Administration in finance from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

Sister Jennifer Edgin Meredith received a bachelor of arts degree in communications from Brigham Young University. She worked in human resources for Franklin Covey.

Sister Meredith served as a mission leader with her husband in the Utah Salt Lake City South Mission. She has served in ward Primary, Young Women, Relief Society, and Sunday School organizations and as a young missionary in the Argentina Salta Mission.

The Merediths are the parents of six children and love any time they get to gather with them.

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Hank Smith:	00:04	Hello everyone, and Merry Christmas from FollowHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I am your host and I'm here with my Santa-like co-host, John Bytheway. John, I was looking at your picture and it's almost uncanny.
John Bytheway:	00:18	The resemblance?
Hank Smith:	00:19	Yeah. The beard, the build.
John Bytheway:	00:22	I saw him at the mall and I thought, I'm looking into a mirror. It's true.
Hank Smith:	00:26	Fantastic. John, it is Christmas here at FollowHIM and we are privileged to have our guests with us. This is President & Sister Meredith from BYU-Idaho. They have come down from Rexburg to see us for Christmas. Welcome.
Sister Meredith:	00:42	Thank you.
President Meredith:	00:43	Merry Christmas. It's wonderful to be with you.
Hank Smith:	00:46	This is fantastic. I've been so excited for this. John, tell me about Christmas in the Bytheway home.
John Bytheway:	00:54	We try to make it so anywhere you look you're going to see this is different, this is different, this is Christmas. It all comes down to that word joy.
Hank Smith:	01:04	John, you've heard me say this before, that when the Savior's around, miracles just happen. They're the natural results of his presence. That happens at Christmastime. We start putting his name up, we bring out the Nativity scenes and miracles start to happen. People get more polite, people get more generous.
John Bytheway:	01:23	I love that.

Hank Smith:	01:24	President & Sister Meredith, tell us about Christmas in the Meredith home. We'd love to know.
President Meredith:	01:29	It's a magical time of the year for all of us. We've got a few Christmas traditions. The one that I think we probably share with many others is we gather on Christmas Eve and read Luke chapter two. Do you remember the old Luke two video back in the 1980s? We used to show that as missionaries, reflect on the birth of the Savior and we do try to make it a time of joy. We need more joy.
Sister Meredith:	01:55	One of my favorite traditions is that our children all pull names for who they're going to give a gift to for that Christmas. It's really fun to see them talk amongst each other. They'll try to find out what that person might want and really be intentional about finding gifts for their sibling that that sibling would enjoy, and I think just that being outward focused and being more focused on giving than receiving.
Hank Smith:	02:19	John taught me a couple of years ago to do a text thread with everyone except that child.
Sister Meredith:	02:26	I love that. Oh, I'm going to write that down.
John Bytheway:	02:30	When you find a perfect gift for someone and when our kids have done that and you could say, "See, it is more blessed to give, isn't it? Isn't it exciting when you are watching someone open something you found this is the perfect thing for them. I'm so excited for them to open this."
Sister Meredith:	02:45	Years ago we asked our children to tell us about their favorite Christmas. It was so interesting because not a single one of them mentioned a Christmas gift they received. It was about an experience. Being excited for finding something for someone, I just think that there's something insightful in that.
President Meredith:	03:04	My memories of Christmas as a young boy were not about receiving the gifts but giving the gifts. I remember I spent a lot of time making my sister a paddle for her Cabbage Patch doll, who apparently was a very naughty doll. That's one of my memories of Christmas is making that for her.
Hank Smith:	03:23	That's actually pretty funny. Then I heard her use it just that day, right?
Sister Meredith:	03:29	I was in a Relief Society lesson. I had been in college and was home for Christmas and I was sitting in a Relief Society lesson

and the teacher invited us to share our favorite Christmas. The only Christmas I remember was the Christmas that my parents were going through financial struggles. They went outside, cut down a tree in our yard, used that for the Christmas tree. Most of the gifts were homemade. And this is the only Christmas I remember what gifts I received, which was my parents had taken boards and painted them with chalkboard paint, put our names at the top, and then they gave us each a little tackle box that had crayons and chalk and some scissors and things. My mom, for weeks, I had been watching her working on a sewing project and I kept asking her what it was and she says, "Oh, I'm just sewing a coat." And I thought, "Okay. That's an interesting color."

04:20 Well, it turns out it was a teepee that she had made for us with some PVC pipes. I used that for years after that. It was so interesting. I was sitting next to my mother and I was sharing this Christmas and my mom got really emotional and she said, "We didn't have anything to give you kids that year." But it was so sweet because she shared with all of us. She said, "When I went to bed that night, I prayed so earnestly that my children would be happy for what we could offer." And it's the only one I remember. It was a special experience with my mother and knowing that mothers' prayers are answered when we give things in love. That is what really matters.

Hank Smith: 05:02 Wow. And now I'm getting all teary-eyed and we've just started. John, there may be some listeners out there who don't know President and Sister Meredith and they need to. Do you have some information? Did you do a background check?

John Bytheway: 05:16 We did our extensive checks like we always do here at FollowHIM, except I skipped mine. But yes, President and Sister Meredith, as we talked about, currently president and should we call her first lady of BYU-Idaho. They were mission leaders in the Utah Salt Lake City South Mission. Still with young adults now, but they're up there at BYU-Idaho. They model the joy of living the gospel as you have already seen and are powerful witnesses of the Savior. That mission services Salt Lake City South and then now with all those young adults up at BYU-Idaho, what's the number of return missionaries, pre-missionaries? Do you have any data on that?

President Meredith: 06:00 About 55% of our students are return missionaries. The rest of them are likely on their way.

Sister Meredith: 06:06 We feel like it's Mission 2.0. Just continuing to build their discipleship in Jesus Christ.

Hank Smith:	06:14	You went from probably 250 missionaries to, what do you have up there?
President Meredith:	06:20	34,000. A lot of people don't realize that about BYU-Idaho. 34,000 students. Yeah.
Hank Smith:	06:26	I want to hear about Rexburg. How long have you been the king and queen, the couple to look to there in Rexburg?
John Bytheway:	06:33	The first couple.
President Meredith:	06:35	Well, we're sophomores. We've been there a year and a half. And I have to tell you, the assignment to go to BYU-Idaho came out of the blue. I had been serving as a general authority for two years. I'm not sure if you're aware, but every April, the Tuesday after general conference, there's an assignment meeting for all the general authorities and their spouses. This is kind of like the transfer meeting when you find out where you're going to serve for the next 12 months of your life. Jennifer and I went to this assignment meeting expecting that there would be no change for us because I had been serving in the Middle East Africa North area presidency for just a year, and typically you're in an area presidency for several years. One thing to note about the Middle East Africa North area presidency is the only international area presidency that's based out of Salt Lake, so we lived in Salt Lake.
	07:28	Well, we went to that meeting and it's in the big auditorium in the church office building. There's 300 movie theater style seats and then 15 big red chairs up front and we sit in that meeting and a member of the First Presidency of the 12 tabs through a PowerPoint to let you know where your assignment is going to be. Well, when my picture popped up, it indicated that there was going to be no change, which is what we expected. I went back to my office. Jen went home. Well, that afternoon I got a phone call from Brook Hales who's the secretary to the First Presidency. He said, "Elder Meredith, the First Presidency would like to meet with you and Sister Meredith in three weeks."
Hank Smith:	08:16	Oh.
President Meredith:	08:17	That is a long time to wait for a meeting with the First Presidency.
Sister Meredith:	08:22	We had a lot of sleepless nights.
Hank Smith:	08:23	I was hoping you were going to say three hours.

President Meredith:	08:26	We could not for the life of us think of why the First Presidency would want to meet with both of us. When we were called as mission leaders, we met with one member of the First Presidency and when I was called as a general authority, we met with one member of the First Presidency, but this was the entire First Presidency three weeks from that time. You can imagine the conversations we had leading up to that. Well, as we got a little bit closer, it dawned on me that maybe it was time to move the area office for the Middle East from Salt Lake over to Dubai. We went in to meet with the First Presidency thinking that we were moving to Dubai and walked out with an assignment to go to Rexburg, Idaho. I have to tell you, we had such a sweet experience with the First Presidency. We walked in President Nelson's office. There was a little couch over against the wall. He said, "You two sit on that couch and sit real close and act like you love each other."
Sister Meredith:	09:23	And we held hands tight.
President Meredith:	09:24	We held hands tight, and their three chairs were right in front of us.
Sister Meredith:	09:30	All three of them were so joyful. Speaking of joy in Christmas, they immediately put us at ease and I was really grateful for that because we were nervous.
President Meredith:	09:41	Well, President Nelson was as warm, as inviting as one could ever hope for. He said, "Three weeks ago, there was an assignment meeting. We've invited you here to change your assignment. You're going to be the new president of BYU-Idaho." Before we left, by the way, he said ... You can imagine President Nelson doing this. He said, "Elder Meredith, over on my desk is a vase of flowers." He said, "You go pick the prettiest one and give it to Jennifer." We had different expectations, but we walked out of that office with a ticket to Rexburg and a pretty red rose. We have loved our experience there. It is a place that is rooted on its mission to develop disciples of Christ. It offers a great education at a very affordable price and it's a place that bounds with joy. Great privilege to be there.
Sister Meredith:	10:38	I feel like Rexburg is a great place for BYU-Idaho because the entire community is that way. We left President Nelson's office. One of the last things he said to us was, "You are not to share this with anyone, not even your children." And then he said, "Say as little as possible for as long as possible." Well, we were going to bring them with us to Rexburg, so at some point we needed to tell them.

President Meredith:	11:00	They knew that we had this meeting and they were on pins and needles.
Sister Meredith:	11:05	So they come home from school and they say, "So what did President Nelson say?" And dad got to tell them that, "He told us that we can't tell you for three more weeks." Fast-forward three weeks. It had just been Mother's Day. Our son had just returned home from Chile from his mission, so he gave his homecoming talk. Our daughter was leaving for her mission to Sweden. She was giving her farewell talk. And we said, "Tomorrow, we need you to be at the house when the little boys get out of school at 3:30. We need you to be at home. Bring an overnight bag with church clothes. As soon as the cars are packed, we will tell you where we're going." They did dutifully. We took our youngest son into the laundry room and told him, so he got to tell everyone. Their reaction was a little tempered.
	11:53	They were going through all the scenarios of what it could be and they thought, "Maybe we get to go live abroad again." We loaded everyone into two cars and we had the three youngest in our car with us. One of my personal sweetest experiences, I was riding shotgun. As we crossed the Idaho border, our three children in the back erupted in cheers. I was crying. I was so grateful for their willingness to embrace wherever it was that the Lord wanted us to go, not knowing beforehand, what is this going to be like. They had already been through a lot of change. The Rexburg community has been amazing. In fact, we had been there about two days, I get a knock on the door at 10:30 at night, I'm already in my pajamas and I have eight 17-year-olds on our front doorstep saying, "Can Ellie come out and roast marshmallows with us?" She was a senior in high school, so nervous about coming in for her senior year and not knowing anyone. That epitomizes what Rexburg is all about and the people there. It has been amazing.
President Meredith:	12:54	And we've been cheering ever since.
John Bytheway:	12:56	Hank, you have a personal connection to Rexburg, don't you?
Hank Smith:	13:00	I have the sweetest, most wonderful daughter. She came to Provo, where I am. We are excited to have these years together. She came home one day and she said, "Dad, I think I need to go to Rexburg." And I, "Well, why? You don't want to go there. It's cold." She said, "I just feel strongly about it," and went up to Rexburg. She's thriving in Rexburg. Friends, fun.
John Bytheway:	13:31	So good.

Hank Smith:	13:32	Perhaps there's a myth we need to dispel, President and Sister Meredith, that somehow it's a step down from BYU. It is not.
President Meredith:	13:40	Well, I was talking to a parent just a couple of weeks ago and this parent, she said, "BYU-Idaho really is a hidden gem." And it's great that she recognized that it was a gem, but it's not so great that it's hidden. We've been really intentional about telling the BYU-Idaho story and if you know the history a little bit, it's not a surprise that it's a gem. It became BYU-Idaho when Elder Bednar was president. He left to go to the 12, was replaced by Kim Clark, who was the dean of the Harvard Business School, left Boston to come to Rexburg and then he only left Rexburg because he was called to be a general authority and then replaced by Clark Gilbert with a master's from Stanford, a doctorate from Harvard, on the faculty at the Harvard Business School. And then Elder Gilbert was replaced by Henry J. Eyring, who literally wrote the book on the innovative university.
	14:35	And there's no institution, whether it be in higher education or anywhere else, that can go through that type of inspired and innovative leadership and not become exceptional, and that's what BYU-Idaho is today. We met with all of our predecessors before we went up there and their message was really clear. One, BYU-Idaho is a special place. Elder Bednar says it's a special and set apart and sacred place. The second message was from everyone. They used different words, but it was all just as clear, so don't mess it up.
Sister Meredith:	15:08	No pressure.
President Meredith:	15:09	That's our intent. One of the sweetest parts of this assignment for me is Jen is an equal companion in every sense of the word. When we were mission leaders, we had great hopes that that service was going to be just like that, but COVID hit and we only served for two years because of my call to be a general authority. Most of our time was during COVID and we had kids at home doing Zoom school and we weren't together as much on the mission as we had hoped. But Jennifer is such a vital part of campus. The students love her, the faculty love her, and she is very, very much engaged and we're all blessed because of it.
Sister Meredith:	15:51	One of my favorite things on campus is we host regular focus groups. We'll bring 10 to 12 students in, we'll feed them lunch and ask them about their experience. How are things going? We ask them what they love, why they came, and that has been a really insightful experience for us. When we ask them what they

love about it now that they're here, without exception, they will all tell you it's the teachers.

16:17 At BYU-Idaho, we have very small class sizes. The average class size is 27. The one question we always ask is, "Just raise your hand if you have at least one teacher who knows you by name." Every session, every hand goes up without exception. They go on and it almost becomes a testimony meeting. They are so emotional. We had one student that talked about how ... She said, "It was finals week and I received a call from my professor. He calls me on my cell phone and the first question he said was, 'Are you okay? You haven't turned in your final and this is not like you.' The next thing he asked was, 'Is there anything I can do to help?'" And she said, "That meant so much to me." That I feel blesses the entire campus. Being known and being seen, that is the way the Savior ministers to us one by one and I think those students feel that in the classroom. They'll walk across campus and their teachers will call them by name, passing them. It's been a really sweet thing. I wish we could memorize all 34,000 names. They're just amazing.

President Meredith: 17:30 There's divine precedence for that. The very first word spoken by the father in this dispensation was a name.

Hank Smith: 17:40 He called me by name.

John Bytheway: 17:42 I love what you're saying. I heard President Steve Lund, the Young Men's General President say once, "Programs don't change people, relationships change people." That's what you're talking about up there if your teacher knows your name. I was also going to just add you gave a wonderful list of previous leaders and presidents up there and I was thinking of Elder Bruce C. Hafen. He gave a talk, I have my students read it, called The Gospel and Romantic Love. So good. Helped me. Because it was given in what, Hank? '82? And also President Eyring. So then his son again. Some amazing leaders have been up there. I'm glad you mentioned that legacy of leadership up there.

Hank Smith: 18:25 And the Merediths are not a wit behind. President and Sister Meredith, I want to read from the [Come, Follow Me](#) manual. One thing I really appreciate in the Come, Follow Me manual is we don't skip these two important holidays, Easter and Christmas. There's lessons every year on these weeks. It says, "From Nephi to Moroni, every Book of Mormon prophet was committed to the sacred purpose summarized on the book's title page, the convincing of all people that Jesus is the Christ. One prophet saw him as a pre-mortal spirit. Another saw his mortal ministry in a vision. One stood on a wall to proclaim the

signs of his birth and his death and another knelt before his resurrected body, touching the wounds in his hands, feet and side. All of them knew this essential truth. There is no other way, nor means whereby man can be saved. Only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ who cometh to redeem the world. During this Christmas season, as believers around the world celebrate the goodness and love of God in sending his Son, ponder how the Book of Mormon has strengthened your faith in Christ. As you think about his birth, ponder why he came and how his coming has changed your life. Then you can experience the true joy of Christmas, the gift that Jesus Christ gives to you."

	19:45	Beautiful. Whoever it is, the team that puts together the Come, Follow Me manual, wow, we need to tell them thank you.
John Bytheway:	19:54	What an amazing task that must have been for them to distill something down to ... And every time, Hank, you have read an opening paragraph it's like, wow, that's beautiful. Succinct and powerful.
Hank Smith:	20:07	I love it. President and Sister Meredith, as you've looked at this Come, Follow Me lesson, what stood out to you? What do you want to talk about today?
President Meredith:	20:16	The very next sentence in the Come, Follow Me manual says, "It's traditional to read the story of the Savior's birth in the New Testament and the events surrounding the birth of the Savior found in the Book of Mormon at Christmastime." And I thought that'd be a great place for us to start. President Nelson said, "The reason we celebrate Christmas is because of Easter or the reason we celebrate the birth of Christ is because of the Atonement of Christ," and as we wrap up this Book of Mormon study this year, I think it's a wonderful thing for all of us to reflect on what have we learned about our Savior and our study of the Book of Mormon this year. What have we learned about the Atonement of Christ and of his power to redeem all of us?
Sister Meredith:	21:06	As we read the introduction to this Christmas Come, Follow Me lesson, my mind was drawn to President Nelson's talk from October 2017, The Book of Mormon: What would your life be like without it? If you go to the end of his talk, he lists a framework of what the Book of Mormon is, what the Book of Mormon affirms, what it refutes, what it fulfills, what it clarifies and reveals information previously unknown. For part of my personal study I went through and I spent some time going through the Book of Mormon because within each of those categories he has several statements. For example, the one that my mind was drawn to is at the very beginning here, the Book

of Mormon is, this is the first category, another testament of Jesus Christ. It's major writers, Nephi, Jacob, Mormon, Moroni, and its translator, Joseph Smith, were all eyewitnesses of the Lord.

22:11 As we read the introduction, that's where my mind went and it was a really amazing revelatory experience to go through with this lens looking for which of the prophets had these experiences and where do I find those references? It's Nephi, it's Jacob, the brother of Jared, Moroni, Lehi. The Nephites at Bountiful. Mormon. As I went through and studied each of these categories and found those references, it really deepened my appreciation for the Book of Mormon. I'm very grateful that we have the Bible and we have additional information that helps us learn and come closer to the Savior. The Book of Mormon is truly another witness of Jesus Christ and the framework President Nelson gave us was so helpful.

President Meredith: 23:01 John and Hank, you can't see this, but I'm looking at Jennifer's iPad right now. What she has done with each one of these points, she's made links to the verses in the scriptures throughout the Book of Mormon. I just have to tell you how much I admire what a scriptorian she is. Every morning I come upstairs from my workout on my elliptical machine, Jen is at the kitchen table with her Book of Mormon out and her iPad up and she is studying diligently. There are a lot of things that make her amazing, but towards the top of that list is she is an avid reader of the Book of Mormon.

Sister Meredith: 23:42 That is so kind of you. I try my best. I'm not at the kitchen table every morning. There are a lot of years that we had a lot of babies and a lot of young children, so that was not possible, but I do try to get a little something every day. Spiritual sustenance. It is my oxygen, it's my lifeblood, it's what feeds my spirit, and I've missed days and those days are not as good as the days that I do it, so I do try to prioritize it preferably in the morning. That's not always possible. We do our best, right?

President Meredith: 24:14 Yeah, we do our best and I appreciate you saying that. I'll also note that the Savior is the great compensator. There's lots of titles for Jesus in scriptures. That's not one of them, but it's one that I firmly believe in. When we strive to be diligent and if we have those days where life just gets in the way and we're not able to do what we want to do, I think the Lord compensates. He's anxious to bless us.

Hank Smith: 24:37 John, I don't know about you, but when we finished our New Testament year, I thought, I know the Book of Mormon. This is

going to be such a fun year. I'm going to get to share all of my knowledge about the Book of Mormon. Episode after episode after episode I'm seeing things I've never seen before. This is what [Elder Maxwell](#) said. I've seen it more this year than ever before. I actually had read this quote before and thought, yeah, you're right, and now I'm almost yelling, yes, you're right. He said, "The Book of Mormon is a vast mansion with gardens and wings. My tour of it has never been completed." We all remember Elder Maxwell. "My tour of it has never been completed. Some rooms I have yet to enter." And then this one. "And there are more felicitous fireplaces waiting to warm me."

Sister Meredith:	25:33	I love that.
Hank Smith:	25:36	How many fireplaces have warmed us this year? The book is unending. You will never get to the bottom of it.
John Bytheway:	25:46	It's been humbling because I thought, okay, I know this book, been teaching it for all these years and people came in and showed us stuff and I became ... Let's use a Book of Mormon phrase, Hank. I became exceedingly astonished more than once and kind of embarrassed. How have I never seen that before? It was a mixture of humility and pure excitement. Oh my goodness, I never saw that. That was a fireplace to warm my hands by to use Elder Maxwell's phrase, so I'm right with you there.
Hank Smith:	26:14	I've learned for myself that this book really does what it says it does.
President Meredith:	26:20	The Come, Follow Me manual I think gives us a wonderful prompt. It says, "Consider recording in a journal how studying the Book of Mormon this year has brought you closer to Christ." And then it gives us three things to prompt our thoughts. Something I learned or felt about the Savior this year was... learning about the Savior in the Book of Mormon changed the way that I... and thirdly, my favorite person or story in the Book of Mormon taught me that the Savior, fill in the blank. Hank, I'm with you. I think this year of study in the Book of Mormon has been a journey of discovery of things and places that I felt like I had been before. That's one of the wonders of scripture that if we continue to peel things back, we'll continue to learn. Could we reflect just a little bit on those prompts and things that we learned, things that we felt in our study this year and how those things either deepened our understanding of the Savior and of his Atonement?

Hank Smith:	27:27	Absolutely. Who wants to start? Something I learned or felt about the Savior this year was....?
Sister Meredith:	27:32	I have one in just Third Nephi chapter one. Nephi going to pray and he's very distraught because all of the believers are about to be put to death and I don't know why this didn't occur to me before, but we have I think the last pre-mortal words of Christ before he's born. There are a few things that I learned about the character of Christ in greater depth. In Third Nephi chapter one verse 13, Nephi hears the voice of the Savior saying, "Lift up your head and be of good cheer." That alone I'm sure was very reassuring for him. "For behold, the time is at hand and on this night shall the sign be given and on the morrow come I into the world to show unto the world that I will fulfill all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets. Behold, I come unto my own to fulfill all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world and to do the will both of the Father and of the Son. Of the Father because of me and of the Son because of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand and this night shall the sign be given.
	28:46	And it came to pass that the words which came unto Nephi were fulfilled according as they had been spoken." The thing that occurred to me as I was reading this is that this is just before the Savior's to be born, yet again, here he is focusing on other people. It reminds me of when he was on the cross and he was worried about his mother. He was focusing on others. I really appreciate that. It really truly is his work and glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man and he came in the 11th hour before these sweet Christians were about to be put to death. He is focused on them and reassuring them that he will fulfill all that he said he will, which he did in his mortal ministry and he did as I mentioned with his mother and I just really appreciated seeing that outward focus and I want to be more that way. I want to be more focused on others, especially as he's preparing to fulfill this amazing mission that we all needed so desperately.
John Bytheway:	29:48	Wow. Sister Meredith, I just wrote in my margin, "Last pre-mortal words of Christ." What a great insight. Like you said, I don't know what was going on with religious liberty. I think we're still under the reign of the judges, but they're going to put you to death if the sign of Samuel the Lamanite doesn't come? Wow. Sometimes we think traditionally since the wise men in Matthew brought gifts that we think that's the tradition of gift-giving, but I always like to think Jesus gave a gift right here. "I will come tonight and you can all live." I appreciate you pointing

that out. What a gift that was. And it says that the going down of the sun, S-U-N, it's like there was a coming down of the son, S-O-N, was like that idea that he came right then.

Sister Meredith: 30:36

Yes.

Hank Smith: 30:38

John, you'll remember our episode with [Dr. Melissa Inouye](#). She ended up passing away just a couple of weeks after we recorded. John, it's never left me. Something I learned or felt about the Savior this year was from the prompt here in the Come, Follow Me manual, was how he uses us as witnesses. John, do you remember what she said? She said, "We mourn with those who mourn, we comfort those who stand in need of comfort and we bear one another's burdens." And then she said, "And we stand as witnesses of God," but she tied it back to those other three. She said, "Because someone who is mourning, who has a heavy burden or is in need of comfort probably can't see God, so when you go to them, you are standing as a witness of God that God has not left you in this dark place. Perhaps you can't see him, but you can see us and we're here with you as a testimony." That changed me. When someone is in a very difficult dark place, I don't go to them and try to teach them. Just the fact that I'm there says God is mindful of you.

President Meredith: 32:02

Hank, I would add to that, and it's not just for when people are in a dark place, but it's for when people are in a place, absence of the fullness of truth. Years ago when I was serving as an Area Seventy in Tennessee, I had multiple weekends in a row where I had church assignments that kept me away from my home ward and finally I had an assigned home weekend. I was at church with my family. We showed up at 8:45 for a 9:00 sacrament meeting because that's what time Jennifer thinks is on time for 9:00 church.

John Bytheway: 32:36

That's wonderful.

President Meredith: 32:38

As we got the kids settled, I noticed that there was a lady seated in the first row of the overflow, those hard chairs back behind the chapel, that I had never seen before. And I asked Jen if she knew who that was and she didn't know either, and so I went back and I introduced myself. The lady told me her name was Jackie. I said, "Hey, I've been away for a few weeks." I said, "Are you new here?" And she said, "Well, this is my first time visiting your church." When she used the phrase your church, it caught my attention and I said, "That's wonderful." I said, "We love to have visitors. We're so grateful that you're here. What brought you here?"

- 33:18 And she said, "Well, there's a little bit of a story." And I said, "Well, there's 15 minutes. Please tell me a story." She proceeds to tell me that 20 years ago she was working for a small newspaper right outside of Nashville. One of her responsibilities was to edit the religion section of the paper. A group of men had written an article about the church. They brought it to her and asked her to publish it. She, like a good editor, asked what their sources were and they admitted that they had not talked to anyone from the church and she said, "Well, don't you think we should talk to someone from the church before we publish an article about the church?"
- 33:55 She took it upon herself to reach out to the church, so she went to the phone book, looked up the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She dialed the number. A man who she described as having a nice voice answered. She described her plight to him. He said, "I'm really busy right now, but I'll be at the church on Wednesday and if you come back, then I'll be happy to help in any way I can." She begins to tell me about this meeting that she has on this Wednesday night at what was ... She didn't realize it but it was the stake center. She said, "This man was so kind and so gracious." And then she used this phrase, "He must have been the most Christlike person I have ever met." Well, she left that interview. You know how sometimes life gets in the way? Not the bad things of life but the busyness of life.
- 34:43 She didn't do anything about those feelings that she had until the week before we had met in our church building. She was walking through a business park in Brentwood, Tennessee, walked by a door that had a nameplate that said The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Tennessee Nashville Mission. She said that same feeling that she had had two decades ago came back and she felt compelled to walk into what was the mission office. She tells the sweet senior sister missionary seated at the receptionist desk this story. And this senior missionary, I don't know exactly what words she used, but I imagine in my mind she said, "Jackie, surely you know the Lord has brought you here. You've got to come and see why you felt that way then and why you felt that way today." She gave Jackie the address for our church building and the time that Sacrament meeting started. There she was in our overflow. I've grown up in Tennessee and those are my people and I was curious about the story and I said, "Do you by chance remember the name of the man that you talked to 20 years ago on that Wednesday night?" And she said, "I'll never forget him. His name was Todd Christofferson." Six weeks after that-

John Bytheway:	35:58	Wow.
President Meredith:	36:00	Jackie was dressed in white. I was privileged to be dressed in white with her. After her baptism, with her hair still dripping, the bishop asked her to speak at her own baptism. He asked her to share her testimony, but if you're a new convert, you don't know any different. She stood up in front of what she referred to as her new church family. She thanked everyone for being there and then she said, "Brothers and sisters, I hope that you know that your lives may be the only Book of Mormon that anyone will ever read." As we think about what this means to stand as a witness, to be as Paul would say, an example of the believers and do so in such a way that people feel like they are no more strangers or foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints, we can help them come out of, but we can also help them come to the fullness of the light.
John Bytheway:	37:02	That's amazing.
President Meredith:	37:04	In my study this year, I've become really enthralled with the concept of grace, which is not something that we talk a lot about in the church. I was actually thrilled that in April general conference of this year, the choir sang Amazing Grace. I'm from Tennessee and I love just that Christian hymn. A couple years ago I was with Elder Renlund when he had responsibility for overseeing the revisions of the new hymn book and I said, "Elder Renlund, please tell me Amazing Grace is going to be in the new hymn book." And he said, "I think it is." And he said, "I'll tell you something else. It's not going to surprise me if when we get to the other side, we find out that the whole war in heaven started over revisions of the hymn book." He said, "You'd be shocked at how much passion there is." But I love it that we're bringing that term into the lexicon of the church.
	37:57	Elder Bednar , he's taught some wonderful things about grace and he makes the connection to what we refer to as the enabling power of the Atonement of Christ. And he takes us to King Benjamin's teachings to Mosiah chapter three, verse 19. I had read this for years, but had never quite dissected it like Elder Bednar does. The verse reads, "For the natural man is an enemy to God and has been from the fall of Adam and will be forever and ever unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit." And then this is the key phrase. "And puts off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ, the Lord." Elder Bednar, he takes us back to what President David O. McKay used to teach, that the purpose of the gospel is to make bad men good and good men better, and then he takes us to this phrase in Mosiah chapter three and he says these

phrases are certainly related, but he wants to separate them as we think about the blessings of the atonement of Christ, particularly about enabling power.

39:07 He said, "First I draw your attention to the phrase putteth off the natural man." That's the process of bad men becoming good. When we think about the blessings of the atonement of Christ, that's often what we think about is that redemptive power, that ability that we have through the atonement of Christ to make scarlet sins white and to have the Lord remember our sins no more. But then he goes on to the second phrase, which is becometh a saint. He says something interesting. He says, "I suspect that many church members are more familiar with the nature of the redeeming and cleansing power of the atonement than they are with the strengthening and enabling power of the Atonement." He said, "Most of us clearly understand that the Atonement is for sinners. I am not so sure however that we know and understand that the Atonement is also for saints."

40:06 He teaches us that this enabling power, this grace of Christ helps us to receive strength and assistance to do good. To be a little bit better today than we were yesterday, to be a little bit better tomorrow than we were today. To be able to endure the tough things that come with the journey of mortality. That's been a particular blessing to me as we've taken this new assignment at BYU-Idaho. I don't have a background in higher education. We've had to draw upon the enabling power to do something for us that's been hard and I think about my call as a general authority. Boy, never have I wrestled with feelings of inadequacy like I did when that call came. I'm just grateful for that enabling power of Christ, that grace of Christ.

Sister Meredith: 40:55 I've actually heard you teach this scripture and you talk about that first part, putting off the natural man. When we moved into our first home in Tennessee, he was very particular about our grass and taking care of the yard. He'd go up to our bedroom on the second floor and look down at the lines, how beautifully he had mowed the lawn.

President Meredith: 41:13 They were straight.

Sister Meredith: 41:14 They were straight. Sometimes it would be diagonal, sometimes it would be horizontal, vertical. He just took great pride in our yard. And when he talks about this, I heard him teach this to some missionaries and he talked about putting off the natural man is like the weed killer and becoming a saint through the atonement of Christ is like Miracle Gro. Both of those elements

are necessary to have that healthy grass grow. I just wanted to insert that because I thought that was a really fun way of visualizing that and remembering that we really need both parts of that.

- President Meredith: 41:46 We took weed killer and Miracle Gro to one of our zone conferences to teach that. The Atonement, it's more than just for becoming clean. It's also for becoming stronger and again, doing things that we've been called to do that perhaps might feel overwhelming. A read of the scriptures looking at how prophets felt about their call reminds us that it's not just us that feels overwhelmed at times. And I say we because Jennifer's ... She's a part of every calling that I've ever had and I feel like I've been a part of her calls as well. We were serving as mission leaders when we received a call from President Eyring's secretary who said, "President Eyring would like for you and Sister Meredith to come to church headquarters and to meet with him." My response was, "We would love to meet with President Eyring, but I just tested positive for COVID." So she said, "Well, we'll call you back," and she hung up really quick before we could ask what the meeting was going to be about.
- Hank Smith: 42:49 Oh goodness.
- President Meredith: 42:51 When that call was extended, every inadequacy, every transgression, offense that I've ever committed just ran through my mind and if I fast-forward a little bit to the Wednesday before that April general conference ... By the way, we received that call at the beginning of February, so we had several months-
- Sister Meredith: 43:11 Two months.
- President Meredith: 43:11 Two months before we could tell anyone. The Wednesday before that general conference, they have a meeting for newly called general authorities and their spouses and everyone who's in Salt Lake meets in the church administration building in the boardroom that's right in between President Nelson and President Oaks' office. We arrived early, we were ushered into that conference room and they had little nameplates in front of the chairs for everyone that was going to be there. There were four or five of my fellow brethren that were called at the same time that zoomed in, but we were there in person and I walked in already feeling inadequate and I see the names of Clark Gilbert, who I've known for years and have the utmost respect, who is brilliant. [Michael Dunn](#), who is a master teacher. Do you remember his general conference talk about just the 1%?

Hank Smith:	44:07	Yep.
President Meredith:	44:08	<p>And I had served with him a little bit. He was an Area Seventy and some of the coordinating councils that I was a mission president in. And then the other name was Vai Sikahema. I mean we're all Vai Sikahema fans. I mean I almost bought a Sikahema Eagles jersey back in the day. I looked at those three names and the feelings of inadequacy got worse and not better. And I was really wrestling with this. Elder Kearon was the senior president of the seven presidents of the Seventy at the time. This was his meeting. He came in and he said to both the newly called general authorities and their wives, "We need leaders in the church who will love the people, lift the people and witness of the name of the Savior." And I thought to myself, if that's the charge, if the charge is to love and to lift and to be a witness of the Savior, then I can do that, but I can do that only because of the enabling power, that grace of Christ. This year as I've read the scriptures, I've been touched and reminded of the power of that enabling power, the power of that grace and how it's helped me personally to do things that I've felt have been hard. I'm grateful for the redemptive power but also for the enabling power.</p>
John Bytheway:	45:35	My grandma used to read a magazine called Guideposts.
Sister Meredith:	45:39	I remember that.
John Bytheway:	45:40	<p>There's a story, Chieko Okazaki referred to it the first time, but I just thought it was so fascinating about a Vietnam prisoner of war named James Ray. People start tapping out in Morse code and he doesn't know what it is. The prisoners are not allowed to communicate with each other, and if they start tapping out and he is in a tiny concrete cell and he starts scratching on the floor what they're tapping out. I will lift up my eyes unto the hills from whence come my help. And these guys are encouraging each other with Psalms and scriptures. It's the most incredible story how they did not have scriptures but they each helped each other remember them and the strength it gave them.</p>
Sister Meredith:	46:27	Wow.
President Meredith:	46:27	That's great. Thank you.
John Bytheway:	46:28	It's incredible.
Sister Meredith:	46:29	I would love to read that.

Hank Smith:	46:31	<p>I'm very happy that you brought up that verse. Mosiah 3:19. One thing we've studied this year is the role of the Holy Ghost in bringing the Atonement into us. Internalizing it. How the Holy Ghost isn't just for sinners like we talked about. President Eyring has taught over and over when the Holy Ghost is your companion, you can have confidence that the Atonement is working in your life. That's a lifelong process. I'm hoping to always have His Spirit to be with me every day, so that means the atonement of Jesus Christ is working on me every day. I really love the connection you made there that it's not just for sinners, it's for saints. It really is for what you want to become. He's going to do that. I will make weak things become strong unto them. It's I will make your mortal experience ... I'll turn it into something glorious.</p>
John Bytheway:	47:37	<p>And what you were saying, President and Sister Meredith, about what Elder Bednar said. I'm reminded of something Elder Oaks said. He used a tree as an example. I've always loved that Elder Oaks would use a tree. I thought that was clever. But he said, "A tree that bends deeply in a storm and it soils its leaves with mud." And he said, "If we only focus on cleaning the leaves, the weakness in the tree that allowed it to bend and soil its leaves may remain. What the atonement of Jesus Christ does is not only cleanse the leaves, but it changes the tree and strengthens the tree for future storms that we know are coming." And Elder Bednar talked about that, that dual thing, it cleanses us, changes us, clean hands, pure heart, cleansed from sin, strengthened against future sin. That's all there too in Mosiah 3:19, as you pointed out.</p>
Sister Meredith:	48:31	<p>Another characteristic of Christ that I've noticed in the Book of Mormon is, as he mentioned earlier, we served our mission during COVID. There were a lot of things we learned during that period of time. It was very challenging. At one point, we went from ... We had about 160, 170 missionaries when we started our mission. We dropped down to 110 when COVID began. We had to send about 50 missionaries home that were either international or had health issues. We skyrocketed up to 270 within about four months. It was a challenging time. In the middle of all of that, the thing that stood out to me ... In fact, I went back, from the time he was called as a prophet, President Nelson mentioned the word joy in all his conference talks. And I thought, "He keeps talking about joy and I'm going to be honest, this is not feeling very joyful right now. This is feeling very overwhelming, as a mother, as a mission leader."</p>
	49:30	<p>We had just started as a mission that March. We thought, okay, everyone's in basements, they're in their apartments, they can't</p>

go out. We're still trying to figure out how to share the gospel. We started reading the Book of Mormon together as a mission. We were probably at the end of First Nephi or beginning of Second Nephi, and I started noticing the word joy, so I went back and I highlighted the ones that I had already seen and as we continued to read that for the next few months, I highlighted every reference to joy. And when I was finished, I went back and I made a document with each of those references and trying to take into context what was happening. I think there are 130 or so. So many things I learned from the study of joy.

50:10 One of them was that 96 of the 98 that I found were coupled with challenges and trials and struggles. And then it occurred to me, this is why President Nelson is talking about joy. That's what Christ focused on. One of the sweetest things I have found in my study of joy is in Third Nephi chapter 17, which might be one of my very favorite chapters in the Book of Mormon. So many good things happening here and there's so many ways you could study this chapter. The one that was so amazing to me is that these individuals have had the opportunity to listen to him teach. They've been able to touch him. He tells them that, "I'm going to leave you, but I'll come back." If you go to verse eight, he says, "I perceive that you desire that I show unto you what I have done unto your brethren at Jerusalem."

51:08 He changes his plans and when [Elder Holland](#) came to speak in Hong Kong when we were living there, he said, "The Savior did three things that he might not have done had they not desired it, one of which is where he heals the people, he blesses the children and then he introduces the sacrament." The thing that stood out to me was if you go to verse 17, "No tongue can speak. Neither can there be written by any man. Neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things. We both saw and heard Jesus speak and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father." I can't even imagine what that must have felt like to hear the Savior praying for you to the Father. It goes on to say, "And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying unto the Father, he rose, but so great was the joy, the multitude, they were overcome. And it came to pass that Jesus spake unto them and bade them arise and they arose from the earth and he said unto them, 'Blessed are ye because of your faith and now behold my joy is full.'"

52:18 This is what I discovered. Usually when the phrase my joy is full or I had fullness of joy, it is associated with people coming unto Christ, but what really moved me was that we get to witness ...

We have this record of how Christ's joy is full because people are accepting, they're receiving his Atonement. They're receiving the gift that he's given them. It goes on to say, "And when he said these words, he wept." As I think about the Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ, I ask myself the question, how can I be a living witness? How can my life be a testament of Jesus Christ? How can I bring the Savior's fullness of joy? Because I'm choosing to follow him. I'm choosing to be a lifelong disciple of Christ. I'm choosing to receive the atonement, to repent daily like our prophets invited us to do repeatedly, to think celestial, to let God prevail. How do we align our will, our purpose, our intent with that of the Father and of the Savior? I love the imagery of wanting to bring the Savior joy, bring him fullness of joy, and I think that's how we do it.

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| President Meredith: | 53:35 | By the way, isn't that the message of the season? Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy. |
| Hank Smith: | 53:44 | Coming up in part two of this episode. |
| President Meredith: | 53:47 | When I was serving as a young bishop in Tennessee, our bishopric meeting was right before our 9:00 sacrament meeting, and I think I took some of the heavy things that we had been discussing in our bishopric meeting into the sacrament meeting, and when the sacrament meeting concluded, I went to walk off of the stand and Jennifer met me at the bottom of the stairs with a kind of stern look and a question. She said, "Are you happy?" |



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| John Bytheway: | 00:00 | Welcome to part two with President and Sister Meredith. The episode is Christmas. |
| President Meredith: | 00:07 | Well, you've had some impressions about things that we need, three things in particular, to emphasize with the rising generation that we interact with at BYU-Idaho. Could you share those with John and Hank? |
| Sister Meredith: | 00:19 | Sure. Shortly after he received his assignment to be president of BYU-Idaho, he received a job description with that. It was just so overwhelming at first that we went back about a week later and read through, okay, what is it we're supposed to be doing? In that time period, I had three very distinct impressions that we need to point our rising generation to the Savior in all things. Second, we need to point them to living prophets and apostles. And third, we need to model that living the gospel of Jesus Christ is joyful. It does not mean that we're going to be spared from challenges in trials, but it is through those challenges and trials that we find that joy with the Savior when we yoke ourselves to him. It's going to be hard regardless, but it's so much easier when we yoke ourselves with the Savior. |
| President Meredith: | 01:07 | Welcome to the Church of Joy. |
| Sister Meredith: | 01:08 | Yes. |
| President Meredith: | 01:08 | Wasn't that just an amazing message? Elder Kearon said this. He said, "Because of the redeeming life and mission of our Savior Jesus Christ, we can and should be the most joyful people on earth." Doesn't mean that we're spared trials and adversity. Think of how often the Savior said to his disciples "Be of good cheer." It was often in the midst of really terrifying things for them when they were on the ship that was tossed by the contrary winds, he goes walking to them on the water and they're fearful and he says, "Fear not. It is I. Be of good cheer." Hours before his crucifixion, as he concluded introducing the 12 to the ordinance of the sacrament and then was about to give |

that great intercessory prayer, he said to the 12, "These things I have spoken unto you that in me, you might have peace. In the world, you shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world."

02:08 That's one of the great messages of this holiday season is to fear not, to have joy, to be of good cheer. Those of us that are called upon to lead, I think it's imperative that we lead with that in mind. Paul and Corinthians said that "God loveth a cheerful giver." It could also be said that God loveth a cheerful leader. Elder Holland to a group of leaders said, "Brothers and sisters, we have a duty to be strong and optimistic and filled with hope as we meet our people, especially in troubled times." And then Elder Holland went on to say, "In all times and in all things and in all places, the saints have a right to look to us for reassurance and confidence. We smile and lift and are strong in order to help our members smile and lift and be strong."

03:03 When I was serving as a young bishop in Tennessee, our bishopric meeting was right before our nine o'clock sacrament meeting, and I think I took some of the heavy things that we had been discussing in our bishopric meeting into the sacrament meeting, and when the sacrament meeting concluded, I went to walk off of the stand and Jennifer met me at the bottom of the stairs with kind of a stern look and a question. She said, "Are you happy?" And I said, "Well, yes, I'm happy," and she said, "Well, when you're in front of the saints, remind your face." Which I think is great counsel and I love this impression that Jennifer's had about our responsibility at BYU-Idaho, but I think all of our responsibility, particularly in working with the rising generation, point them to the Savior, encourage them to follow living prophets and apostles and exhibit joy. By the way, sometimes that's with word. More often it's with our countenance. You can imagine, she's just a perfect example of all three of those things, which is why she's so beloved on campus.

Hank Smith: 04:12 [Elder Maxwell](#) said part of what may be lacking at times, and he's talking about teaching here, but I think we could add it to leadership. Part of what may be lacking at times in the gospel leader, the church leader, is a freshening personal excitement over the gospel, which could prove highly contagious. I think you're right. This enthusiasm, this church of joy, it's contagious.

President Meredith: 04:36 Hold on, we've got a phone.

John Bytheway: 04:39 It's Elder Eyring. Can you meet in three weeks?

Sister Meredith:	04:44	This rising generation going back to BYU-Idaho, they're amazing. Our missionaries, they're amazing. As we were going through COVID, I remember telling them, "I don't know what is ahead. These are the last days." And if you listen to President Nelson's most recent conference talk, he is very direct with us in preparing us.
John Bytheway:	05:04	Elder Bednar too.
Sister Meredith:	05:07	Yes. Going back to joy, we just had Sister Camille Johnson come up with Elder and Sister Bennett. For the North America Central Area, we had a devotional for all of the young single adults and we hosted it at BYU-Idaho. One of the invitations that Sister Johnson extended to all of the young single adults, it was to listen to a talk per day. She says, "I do this every morning when I get ready, but listen to President Nelson every morning, just one conference talk." She said, "It has made all the difference. It lifts my spirits, and how can you not be cheerful and optimistic when we're listening to who the Savior has appointed to be leading us?"
President Meredith:	05:53	We should acknowledge that life can be tough sometimes. It's just part of the test of mortality, but that eternal perspective, there's multiple times in the Book of Mormon, Mormon and the early chapters as well as Alma in chapter five where we're invited to, I'll use President Nelson's phrase, "To begin with the end in mind, to look forward to the end." We have that promise that in the end all will be well because of the Atonement of Christ. A couple years ago, I had an assignment to preside at a stake conference in Draper, Utah and Jennifer was able to go with me, which was a treat. We were getting acquainted with the stake presidency before the meeting started and each of them introduced themselves and I asked them just to tell us a little bit about themselves. And one of the counselors said, "You need to know I'm a rabid baseball fan and I'm really passionate about the LA Dodgers," and then he said, "I record every LA Dodgers baseball game."
	06:54	He said, "I don't watch it live, but once the game's over, I check the score and if the Dodgers win, I watch the game and if they lose, I delete it." Okay. Then he said something that I thought there was just a brilliant spiritual parallel to, he said, "If I'm watching a Dodgers game and in the fourth inning they give up a three run home run or commit a couple errors, I don't fret because I know the Dodgers win every game that I watch." Because of the Atonement of Christ, we know how it ends. We know what's in store for all who simply strive to be disciples of Christ, not who've achieved perfection, but for those who strive

to stay on the covenant path and repent daily and think celestial on all those things. That eternal perspective that President Nelson continues to invite us to have and that we read throughout the Book of Mormon can help us find joy and at least peace in those troubled times.

- Hank Smith: 07:59 President Meredith, as you taught us there, automatically came to my mind a story where [Mike Wallace](#), 60 Minutes, journalist interviewing President Hinckley. Afterwards, Mike was talking with President Faust. As he spoke with him, he said, "With all that President Hinckley has to deal with, how is he so cheerful and optimistic?" And President Faust, if you remember him, you know that smile. He said, "Well, he knows how it all works out."
- President Meredith: 08:27 On a side note, you'll remember in that segment on 60 Minutes that Mike Wallace interviewed with a little bit of an awe, a handful of students, young people at BYU and that Jennifer was one of those.
- Hank Smith: 08:41 What?
- President Meredith: 08:42 Yeah, and that's where the awe came from.
- Sister Meredith: 08:46 It was actually a really sweet experience. They spent about two hours with us and I think they might've used a 20 second clip. In between takes of changing the tapes, he kept looking at us and saying, "You're amazing to see light, and..." I'm not saying this about me. That sounds really awkward, but it was a really sweet experience. We were a little bit nervous going into that interview.
- President Meredith: 09:10 Whoever the casting director was to pick Jen was brilliant.
- John Bytheway: 09:15 One of my favorite statements of [Elder Holland](#), he said, "The future of this world has long been declared. The final outcome between good and evil was already known." There's absolutely no question as to who wins because the victory has already been posted on the scoreboard. The only really strange thing in all of this is that we are still down here on the field trying to decide which team's jersey we want to wear. The idea of watching a game that you know your team's going to win, but they're behind, there's no anxiety. In fact, you laugh because you're saying the Dodgers are going to come back.
- 09:50 What Elder Holland's saying is, "We know what's going to happen." Faith in Christ gives us, I think the best word I can think of is we're just settled. Things happen, hard things,

unexpected things, but underneath it all, there is this. We know the outcome. We know what the atonement of Christ does. We have hope smiling brightly before us. To be settled in that testimony is such a gift. It makes joy possible in the midst of the hard times. Hank, you and I have met so many early morning seminary teachers out there who get up so early and have kids that come in that are tired.

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| Hank Smith: | 10:32 | They got their blankets around them. |
| John Bytheway: | 10:34 | They bring their pillows with them, and these early morning teachers that get out there and model joy like that, I want to end up where they're going to end up because I honor those teachers out there. |
| President Meredith: | 10:47 | This is not doctrine, but I think the first row in the celestial kingdom is reserved for early morning seminary teachers and scout masters. I think we're going to be looking at the back of their heads. |
| Hank Smith: | 11:00 | And Sister Meredith, I think that counsel you gave is really fantastic. Be aware when you're sitting on the stand of what message you're sending with your face. You might be thinking and pondering, but you can get a scowl on your face when you're thinking. I love that counsel. Be aware. Be mindful of the message. |
| Sister Meredith: | 11:19 | I like, John, what you were saying about feeling settled. We can feel settled when we're yoked with Christ. It reminds me of a scripture in the New Testament in Matthew Chapter 11 verses 28 to 30, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." As I was reading this not too long ago, the thought that occurred to me is that the reason that his yoke is easy and that his burden is light is because I've always thought of that as light versus heavy, but his burden is light. He is the light. His yoke is easy. It's weightless. He's already done for us what we need, so when we yoke ourselves with him, he shares that power with us. |
| | 12:22 | As we think about how President Nelson has repeatedly invited us to make covenants and to receive power through those covenants, that is how Christ shares his power with us to enable us to face those things. If you go all through the Book of Mormon, you think about Ammon for example. He finds himself in a really precarious situation with the servants of King Lamoni. They're all worried for their lives and he finds joy in that |

situation because he recognizes this as an awesome opportunity to share the truth with him. Right? As we face things and when we know who we are, when we know what our mission is. We are disciples of Christ and we have a daughter serving a mission right now. She comes home tomorrow. I am not going to go there because I'm going to get really emotional. We're so excited. Her testimony, the Book of Mormon and the power that we can gain from these amazing experiences that have been shared with us, that we can face challenging situations and even find joy.

13:27 That's what President Nelson tells us. We can find joy in these challenging situations when we are yoked with Christ. He'll help us see that and see them as opportunities and not to be fearful. Her testimony of the Book of Mormon is just amazing. Monday, her last email was to start reading the Book of Mormon. For all those who haven't with a link, start with 1 Nephi 1 Chapter 1, "Preach my Gospel" talks about how the Book of Mormon combined with the Spirit is the most powerful resource we have in conversion. It's so true. It's so fun to see your child realize that and see how it changes people's lives literally. She said, "We had this young man just got baptized and she said to see the difference and even in his countenance as he's committed every day to read the Book of Mormon." It's incredible.

John Bytheway: 14:18 It was strange as a bishop to come to realize that no matter what the nature of somebody's problem was, if it was employment, if it was family, if it was health even, the answer always seemed to be, "Hey, read the Book of Mormon every day."

Sister Meredith: 14:35 Right. Right. It's the same prescription.

John Bytheway: 14:38 Yeah. I love what [John Lund](#) said. He wrote this book on criticism and he just says, "Criticism doesn't change people. The agent of change is the Holy Ghost," and that helped me to know if people are reading the Book of Mormon, they get a dose of the Holy Ghost, then their own discernment of their own issues and problems, it increases. The Holy Ghost has the solutions. People would look at me like, "What an odd thing you're asking me to do. My problem is this," and I'm like, "I know. Read the Book of Mormon every day."

Sister Meredith: 15:10 I promise.

Hank Smith: 15:12 And how often is that in the scriptures? "Do this." "Wait, that has nothing to do with it."

John Bytheway:	15:16	"That has nothing to do with my problem." Well, actually it has to do with getting the Holy Ghost in your life.
Hank Smith:	15:22	Yeah.
Sister Meredith:	15:23	Right.
Hank Smith:	15:23	That's awesome, John. Sister Meredith, that is a beautiful way to look at that verse. It brought to mind, "My burden is light." Now you can see. Now you can see your burdens in a different way. Now you can see the end from the beginning. "My burden is light." I really like that.
John Bytheway:	15:45	You can be settled in everything that's going on because you know the outcome. I think that's why we say things like President Nelson, that Jesus Christ is the source of all joy and hope too, because without that, what is there life after death? Do we see our loved ones again? No, but because of Christ, all of those things happen. We can be settled.
Hank Smith:	16:07	John, you've heard me tell this story before, but it's Rexburg, so I have to tell it again. This is a touching, difficult story. The seminary teacher at Madison High School for years and years and years was Bruce Parker. Bruce and his wife lost an 18-year-old daughter in a car accident. Everybody in Rexburg came to the funeral. This is then their seminary teacher, my mom's seminary teacher, my seminary teacher, with this stake center full of his former students. Bruce Parker goes up to the stand, doesn't speak for more than 30 seconds, and quotes Job, which says "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." A profound sense of yes, I'm suffering, but I know in whom I have trusted.
President Meredith:	17:08	The title of the Come, Follow Me lesson "He shall come into the world to redeem his people." This is the testimony that Amulek leaves with Zeezrom and we don't quite know what exactly it was that turned Zeezrom's heart, but I have to believe that it was this witness, this testimony. In Alma Chapter 11, verse 40, he says, "And he shall come into the world to redeem his people and he shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name." That's one of the blessings of the atonement of Christ.
	17:48	And then down to verse 42, and he says, "Now there is a death which is called a temporal death, and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death." That is another blessing of the atonement of Christ, and Hank, that really sweet story that you just shared is a good reminder to all of us that the

reason we celebrate Christmas is because of Easter, because the tomb was empty, we can celebrate what happened in the manger. It's just a wonderful blessing to all of us to know that we will all live again because of what he did for us.

Hank Smith: 18:24 Sister Meredith, President Meredith, this has been a joy. We've talked about joy. This has been a joy. I know when I'm full of the Holy Ghost because I don't want it to end. I want to keep going. Before we let you go, this Book of Mormon, this spectacular, miraculous book, I think our listeners would love to hear. Tell me how you feel about the Book of Mormon.

President Meredith: 18:48 I would say that the Book of Mormon fills me with love, joy, and peace, and if that phrase sounds familiar, it's because that's what Paul refers to as the fruits of the spirit. There's other things that he mentions, but love, joy, and peace are the first. Those feelings are engendered in me because of a deeper understanding of the atonement and of the grace of Christ. When we go to the end of the Book of Mormon, we go to some of the great blessings and promises from Moroni Chapter 10. Moroni Chapter 9 is Mormon speaking to his son Moroni, and I'd like to think of him speaking to me.

19:26 He ends that chapter by saying, "Be faithful in Christ. May Christ lift thee up and the hope of his glory and of eternal life rest in your mind forever and may the grace of God, the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, be and abide with you forever." That is what I take away from the Book of Mormon, that the hope of his glory and of eternal life and the rest and the grace of God, the Father, and the Son abide with me when I am in the Book of Mormon. I know that it is the word of God. I know that it's another testament of Christ, and I know that Jesus is the Christ and largely because of my reading in the Book of Mormon.

Sister Meredith: 20:13 I think the Book of Mormon is the best instruction manual we have for parents, for leaders. You name any quality you want to develop, whether it's patience or obedience, anything, and you go through study the Book of Mormon with that lens on, you're going to learn so much and beyond that. The thing that I love most about the Book of Mormon is that it draws me closer to the Savior I love, and 2 Nephi Chapter 25:26, "And we talk of Christ. We rejoice in Christ. We preach of Christ. We prophesy of Christ. And we write according to our prophecies that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins."

21:08 My hope for all of our listeners and for our children, for our missionaries, for our students is that they will have a desire to

come to Christ, to stay with him, to stay on that covenant path, to return to our Father in heaven. That's what the Savior wants for us. This book, unlike any other book, helps me come closer to the Savior and I'm so grateful for all those who have sacrificed that we can have this holy book of Scripture in our lives that can bless us in that endeavor.

Hank Smith:	21:42	Beautiful. President and Sister Meredith, I know John agrees with this, what we have done today and the way you've pointed us to Christ, the thought runs through my head, so this is Christmas. This is Christmas.
Sister Meredith:	21:56	We have loved being with you today. Thank you for the invitation.
President Meredith:	22:02	Well, and thank you for allowing us to talk about our two of our favorite subjects, the Savior and the Book of Mormon.
Hank Smith:	22:07	And your third favorite subject, BYU-Idaho.
President Meredith:	22:10	There you go.
Hank Smith:	22:11	I want to bring up, those of you who are listening, come on to YouTube. We might break YouTube here, John, but come on to YouTube. Come tell us about BYU-Idaho. We will make sure the Merediths get all of those comments, those of you who love it, and it's almost a waters of Mormon to you. Please come and tell us, and John, YouTube might be saying, "Why are our servers on fire? Right? What's happening? What's happening over there?"
John Bytheway:	22:37	Is that Hank again?
Hank Smith:	22:38	Yeah. Yeah. Something is going on. President and Sister Meredith, if you don't mind, John and I just have a couple of announcements for our listeners. John, you and I, four years ago thought, all right, four years and here we are.
John Bytheway:	22:54	Incredible.
Hank Smith:	22:56	And the thought was, well, maybe we're done. Right? Maybe we wrap this up over four years. As we got talking, I think it was about two years ago, we started thinking, "Well, do we want to wrap this up?" And we talked about this a little bit last week with Dr. Sweat, but we are happy to let everybody know if you didn't know already that followHIM will continue. We have plans to go through those four wonderful books again. John, I

thought we had covered every single aspect of these four books that there is to see.

- John Bytheway: 23:29 What more could there be to say?
- Hank Smith: 23:31 Yeah, and then all of a sudden you realize, "Wow, I don't think we've even scratched the surface." Right? I think we just touched it. We're excited for that. Also, John, I don't know if you know this, but you and I are going to speak Spanish, French and Portuguese next year. Do you want to tell us about that?
- John Bytheway: 23:49 Yeah. Through the miracle of something called AI, it will look like my face and my mouth and it will sound like me speaking Spanish.
- Hank Smith: 23:59 And we are nervous that people are going to come up to us in public and start speaking Spanish. That's going to be a serious letdown.
- John Bytheway: 24:08 As Sister Meredith talked about the people that brought us this book and that ushers us into our church history, Doctrine and Covenants year, and we get to go right into that again, which is so exciting to see how this book got to us and the sacrifices that were made to get it to us.
- Hank Smith: 24:25 Absolutely, and next week, the wonderful Dr. Tyler Griffin is going to kick us off with a lesson called The Restoration of the Fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Well, President and Sister Meredith, we want to thank you for spending your time with us today. We want to thank our executive producer Shannon Sorensen. We love you, Shannon. Merry Christmas. We want to thank our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen, and for the end of our four years, we want to remember, I'm tearing up here, John, our founder, Steve, Shannon. I still remember that initial phone call just over four years ago. We want to remember our founder, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us for the next four years on followHIM. Before you skip to the next episode, I have some important information. This episode's transcript and show notes are available on our website followhim.co. That's followhim.co. On our website, you'll also find our two free books, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament and Finding Jesus Christ in the New Testament.
- 25:42 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. 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: 26:18

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 HEARD THE COW ON CHRISTMAS DAY



Hank Smith:	00:02	Hello, everyone. Welcome to followHIM Favorites. This is where John and I share a single story to go with each week's lesson. John, we have Christmas this week, and I know you have one of the best Christmas stories ever.
John Bytheway:	00:17	Well, it's probably one that a lot of people have heard. I even think the Tabernacle Choir did a re-telling of it. And I love this story. And actually, Hank, I first saw it on a movie that BYU Productions made, called The Gift, years ago before BYUtv. So, here's the gist.
	00:34	There's this young man, he's going through the catalog, "What can I get Dad for Christmas?" Every morning, Dad wakes him up at 5:00 AM to go milk the cow, shovel the hay for the other animals, do all that stuff. It's hard. He's just a kid. One day he's about to wake up and he hears his dad talking to his mom. His dad says, "I hate to wake him up so early. He's a young man, he needs his sleep. He's just growing." And his mom's like, "I know, but he needs to learn to work." And he has this feeling, "Oh, my dad loves me." He goes and takes care of the cows and everything, and then he has this idea, "I know what I can give my dad for Christmas. I can do the work on Christmas Day in the morning. I can do all of the work and I can surprise my father." And it's really a fun movie.
	01:27	Hank, have you ever set the alarm and you just keep checking to see if it's really going to go off this time?
Hank Smith:	01:32	Yeah. Did I miss it? Did I miss it? Yeah.
John Bytheway:	01:35	Did I miss it? He keeps waking up, "Oh, it's 1:00 AM." I think it is 2:00 AM when he crawls out of bed, quietly puts on his galoshes. He walks across the crunchy snow, trying not to wake anybody up. Opens up the door. He says the cow looked surprised. I don't know. The only expression I've seen on a cow is exactly the same look every time, no matter what. But he sees the cow. He says the cow looked surprised. He milks the cow, he

covers up the milk can with some canvas, shovels some hay; does everything he's supposed to do. And he's looking at the clock, but he's, "Oh, no. It's about the time where Dad comes to get me."

	02:15	He runs back. He runs up to his room as quietly as he can, dives in his bed. He pulls the covers over himself, hiding that he's still in his work clothes. And suddenly he hears that knock at the door, and he's kind of acting, "Oh, Dad." "Come on, son. I know it's Christmas Day, but we still have to feed the animals. That's the nature of farm work." He says, "I'll be out in a minute." And then he hears his dad go down the stairs. He hears his dad walking across the snow, and he hears his dad open the barn door. And that moment right there, Hank, that's the Spirit of Christmas, because he knows what his dad's doing.
	02:56	His dad looks at the cow, who's like, "Again? Hello, I already gave this morning."
Hank Smith:	03:04	I just did this.
John Bytheway:	03:06	His dad looks at the cow. He lifts up the canvas, sees the milk is full, the hay is shoveled. And the little boy, he's just giddy. There's something about giving a gift that is so fun. The little boy is just giddy back there. And his dad walks across the snow, comes up the stairs, opens the door and says, "Son, no one ever did a nicer thing." And then the part that always gets me, the dad says, "This is the first time I'll be able to see the girls come down the stairs on Christmas morning. Let's go out together."
	03:40	He says, "Every Christmas Eve now, I remember that Christmas of the perfect gift I got for Dad." And it was a gift of service, a gift of saving Dad some time. And a gift of surprising a cow, which is always an effort.
Hank Smith:	03:57	Right. Even the cow got a Christmas surprise.
John Bytheway:	04:01	So that is a story by Pearl S. Buck. The Tabernacle Choir did a version. You can buy a little book of it. I love the story because I saw that movie and it affected me as a kid; to find a way to serve. And it also affected me because, you've heard it all your life, it's better to give than to receive. And every once in a while when you find a really good gift, it is really fun to give and to feel that.
Hank Smith:	04:25	That's beautiful, and that really is the spirit of Christmas. What can I do that will really bless someone's life? Because the Savior

comes to Earth, he gives us this gift of blessing us in a way that we can't comprehend. How can we do that in some small way for somebody else? How can we bless their life?

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| John Bytheway: | 04:47 | And the feel of a little of that. You feel that way once, you'll want to feel that way again. |
| Hank Smith: | 04:51 | Yeah, it really is. 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 President and Sister Meredith of BYU-Idaho this week. And John, they are a riot. |
| John Bytheway: | 05:06 | It's great. And it's always Christmas being so cold up there. |
| Hank Smith: | 05:09 | Yeah, yeah. It's Christmas every day in Rexburg. |
| John Bytheway: | 05:13 | Yeah, they were great. |
| Hank Smith: | 05:14 | They are so much fun. And then come back next week. We are going to start a new year of followHIM Favorites. |