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| John Bytheway:        | 00:00:00 | <p>Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of Follow Him. We are continuing with our Voices of the Restoration lessons. We're so excited to have Dr. Gerrit Dirkmaat back to talk more about these voices. And this time we're talking about early converts of the church. We're so excited to have Dr. Dirkmaat. And Hank, I know you wanted to say something about some of the things that Gerrit has been doing when he is not here on followHIM.</p>  |
| Hank Smith:           | 00:00:29 | <p>Yeah, thanks John. Thanks for letting me talk before Gerrit because the thing is, I didn't want Gerrit to start and then I wouldn't be able to fit this in. Now Gerrit did not ask me to do this. This is all me. We've mentioned before that Gerrit has a podcast called the Standard of Truth podcast. It is fantastic. I have recommended over and over and over to Friends and what a lot of people don't know, I have an iPhone and if I go to the Standard of Truth podcast in my podcasting app, there's an option for me to be like a Standard of Truth premium member. And I know Gerrit is probably gonna say cut this out of the podcast, but I'm gonna make an executive decision and say, do not cut this. So, you can go there and what happens is that for a certain fee a month or a year, you can become a premium member and get some extra episodes. Now, before people email me about Priestcraft, this is not that at all. Gerrit is an expert. He has paid a significant price to become an expert in all of these things and Sarah and I, we just adore Gerrit's family, especially his wife Angie, and we want to bless their life. So, I hope all of our listeners, you can do this in two places, only two places on the Apple podcast and on Spotify, if you have an Android, I hope everyone will go try that premium content.</p> |
| Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat: | 00:01:50 | <p>Well thank you. That is very, very, very kind of you.</p>  |
| John Bytheway:        | 00:01:55 | <p>Today in Early Converts. I'm just gonna look at these names and then we're gonna let Gerrit take off the names they listed. And</p>  |

this is the digital online lesson. It's not in the printed manual. Says Early Converts. And then it has a paragraph about Abigail Calkins Leonard, Thomas B. Marsh-that name's more familiar, Parley and Thankful Pratt, and Sidney and Phebe Rigdon. Gerrit, we'll let you just take off with some of these early converts of the restoration.

Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat: 00:02:25

This is a very intriguing Voices of the Restoration. In the sense that, the earliest converts to the church are taking a step into the unknown. You're converting from something, you're leaving what you believed or you're at the very least, you know, embracing something you didn't have before. But I always think back to these earliest converts, about how incredible the decision that they made was. When my son in the Tucson Arizona mission, when he brings someone to church on Sunday, well first of all there's a church there. So there's a building, there's an established organization, there's other people in the pews, hopefully. And so, the person isn't stepping into a complete unknown. There's a building there, there's a structure there. There are classes there. And as President Hinckley wanted us to be as welcoming as we could to people that were coming in from the outside, I feel like today it, now obviously, there are people listening in places where there's like, there's like two members here and I'm one of them that they don't have that same experience where there's not a building.

00:03:31

Really that's more analogous for what these people are doing-- is think of the most rural part of the most far-flung mission in the world today. That's more what it's like for these people that are joining. They aren't joining something that is a long-established church. And frankly, the church is making incredibly radical claims that go against everything that the Protestant and Christian world has taught for years. Just the idea that the Book of Mormon is the word of God alone. Now, I think everyone is a Latter-day Saint listening is well aware that not everyone accepts the Book of Mormon is scripture. So, I mean if you've ever tried to talk to someone about it, you've had at least someone say, yeah, that's not what I believe. But one of the things that I think is lost a little bit in our movement of time away from Joseph Smith's time period is that during the second great awakening, this religious revival that sweeps across especially the northeastern United States, this is the whole reason why Joseph is hearing these different pastors, you know, preach against one another and they're quoting from the same passages of scripture, but understand them so differently as to remove any confidence by going to the Bible.

	00:04:49	It's during this same time period that all of these Protestant religions surrounding Joseph are really digging in to this idea of Protestantism. That all truth about God is only in the Bible, the sola scriptura, it is only in the Bible and the Bible is the only source of scripture. It's during the same time period that Protestants in both England and in America are going to demand that the books of the apocrypha be taken out of the King James Bible. So, when you open up your King James Bible, you don't have Bel and the Dragon in it, which is unfortunate 'cause it's a great story. You don't have first and second Esdras.
Hank Smith:	00:05:36	Maccabees, right?
Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	00:05:37	Yeah. You don't have Maccabees, which you know very important. You don't have those apocryphal books that from the time that the Bible is put together, those books are included in the Catholic Bible, in the Latin Vulgate. And then when Martin Luther makes his German translation and then the subsequent translations that happen in Protestantism, the Apocrypha's kept in there. It's also how some Catholics justified their doctrines. In Joseph Smith's time, there is a desperate desire among many Protestants. They are fighting with each other to prove that they are less Catholic than anyone else. They attack each other in newspapers like: "Brother Johnson claims that he is close to God, but I have it on good authority that last week he preached a sermon that quoted from Maccabees and we all know that's a Catholic invention and not part.." And so, in 1829 and 1830 and 31, those books are actually removed from the King James Bible and that's why it's not in our King James Bible now.
	00:06:43	Just to show you how strongly, culturally the believers in God in Joseph Smith's times surrounding Joseph living in those areas, how the Bible was literally the only scripture. There could be nothing else. We even have to purify the books that are in the Bible and here comes Joseph Smith along saying not only is not all of the truth about God found in the Bible, here is another book of scripture that is on par with the Bible that you need to treat the words of it the same way you treat the Bible. That's already super radical. Just saying that the Book of Mormon's the word of God is enough to have most other Christians say, I'm out. I'm done. I don't need to talk to you anymore because you think that something else is scripture. It goes beyond that though because it's not just challenging the claim of Protestantism that scripture exists outside of the Bible.
	00:07:46	What's inside of the Book of Mormon? What is Joseph Smith teaching? This is something that doesn't seem radical to a Latter-day Saint today. They don't see why anyone could have a

problem with it, but you see exactly just how radical it was based upon Oliver Cowdery's and Joseph Smith's reaction to reading Third Nephi, when they're first translating it. When they translate it and they read the Lord, first of all, they're exhilarated that the Lord says something, that they have more words of Jesus. I mean, how amazing is it that we now have actual words of Jesus beyond the Bible? But the Lord teaches very clearly and very directly: you have to be baptized to be saved. And it's not just you gotta go run to your nearest body of water and throw yourself in it. You have to be baptized by proper authority and in the proper method, and it has to be done by someone who's been given that authority to do it.

- 00:08:50 This is all what the Lord teaches in his appearance to the Nephites. Which is what causes Joseph and Oliver to immediately say, we want to be saved. We've never been baptized like that. That doesn't seem like a radical thing to a Latter-day Saint because they know all their Christian friends, you know, oh, my Christian friend was baptized. But the stark difference is no Protestant religion, whether they were Baptist or Presbyterians, whether they're Congregationalists or Methodists, yes, they practice baptism, but they don't believe that baptism is necessary for salvation. So, if you are an early convert to the church, there are three points of Protestant reformation that come from Martin Luther. The first is that salvation is by grace and faith alone, nothing else, not I have grace and I'm baptized--nothing. In fact, for Martin Luther and for John Calvin, even the grace that you are given is not something that you prayed for and you got, it's a gift that God is giving you that you don't merit and don't deserve.
- 00:09:57 So you're saved only by faith. Of course, you do good works. Because you believe in Jesus, you do good works, but all works are not essential for salvation. So that's the first point. The second is that the only source of divine and revealed knowledge about God is the Bible. Nothing else. You can listen to a sermon, that's wonderful, but if it's not in the Bible, it's not true. And third, that authority to act in God's name doesn't come from a priest placing hands on your head. That authority comes from belief itself. If you believe you have authority, now point 1 and 3 work together in the sense that if no ordinance has saving efficacy, then whether or not someone has the authority to do it becomes far less important anyway. Whether or not someone has the authority to baptize me, that matters a lot to me because I see baptism as essential.
- 00:10:54 But if you don't see baptism as essential and you have faith and your saved. So, these early converts, they are not just saying,

Hey, I kind of like the story of Alma in the Book of Mormon. They are rejecting all of the culture surrounding them, by saying that you have to be baptized to be saved. By saying that the Book of Mormon is scripture in addition to the Bible. There's a reason why the reaction of many other Christians to anyone who believes the Book of Mormon, is that they must be crazy. No one believes that. No one's believed this for 300 years. They must have a frenzied mind if they're going to believe that baptism is essential. So, I think as we study what these early converts have to say, it's important we recognize--talk about counter-cultural. They are legitimately standing on an island in those first two points of doctrine. Of course, the idea that Joseph is a prophet is already, or even legions further away, but just on the idea that there are any ordinances that are essential for salvation and that there is any scripture that is not the Bible on those two points alone, these people are going to be absolutely castigated and denigrated by everyone around them.

John Bytheway: 00:12:23 We've repeated before Hank that it's always 1830 somewhere. Here's somebody who says, well I heard that this uneducated farm boy got this gold bible, so I'm gonna go check into that. That's all they had. They didn't have a church building, they didn't have a big congregation. One of the things that's interesting to me is I've always thought if you had to group these early converts together, were they basically gullible, uneducated people or were there some that were actually quite educated?

Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat: 00:12:54 It's very interesting because that is the initial reaction from people of these early converts. When you read the first public anti-Mormon statements that are being made. That is the assumption that's made. Well, only an idiot could possibly believe this. And as you see antagonistic rhetoric, it changes over time. Part of the reason why it changes is it becomes harder to argue that only idiots believe it. A great example of this is Iber Howe himself. The father, if you might say that you need to call someone a father of modern anti-Mormonism. I mean it's frankly a fatherhood title you don't really want to have. He has a real problem with organized religion generally, and so he mocks revivals of other religions generally, but he initially makes fun of Latter-day Saints the same way. "Yeah, they say an angel appeared to him and they brought him a gold bible and..."

00:13:51 He's mocking and carrying on, but his sister joins the church, and then his wife joins the church. Well now if you're Iber Howe and your wife is a member, it becomes a lot harder to simply just say, only idiots and crazy people join that church. You now

need a better explanation. Sidney Rigdon is another example. "Only idiots who don't know their Bible join that church." What about Sidney Rigdon, this Bible scholar? Except for him and he must have been paid by Joe Smith too. Because, the initial reaction is no one could possibly believe this. When a couple people believe you just make fun of them, you just say they're stupid. You say they're ignorant. The newspaper editor in Palmyra who talks about the Book of Mormon coming forth, Jonathan Hadley, he says that very thing only ignorant and bigoted individuals, meaning people who are not educated, could possibly believe this.

00:14:57      Only superstitious people could possibly believe this. And he's able to say that in August of 1829 because no one believes it. There's a handful of Whitmers that he doesn't know 'cause they're living in Fayette. There's a couple people in in Colesville with the Knights, and there's the Smith family and there's just Martin of the Harris family. There's no danger that there's going to be some kind of massive explosion of membership. So he makes fun of the whole idea of the Book of Mormon. You're trying to tell me that Joseph Smith, the illiterate is producing some book --'cause it hasn't been published yet, is producing some book that's equal to the Bible. Oh, okay. He just makes fun of the very premise. Once the Book of Mormon is published and people start reading it and people start converting. Yeah, the earliest attacks are, well only people who don't know their Bible are believing it.

00:15:54      Well then you start to have preachers who convert and then what do you say? They're all crazy. And that's part of the reason why that antagonism shifts. Like we need an explanation of how otherwise seemingly intelligent and good people like Edward Partridge, why in the world would he believe this? Well then, the Book of Mormon must have been copied from some pastor or from some book. There has to be some reason that this is now deceiving these people. I think the very nature of early antagonism demonstrates what it is that your early believers, like these early converts, had to wade through. People calling them stupid, people telling them that they were crazy. People saying that even after that saying, well this is all just a fraud. This is all made up. They have to wade through a lot. I mean I know modern converts also have to wade through a lot.

John Bytheway:      00:16:51      I love the way you put that. A book on par with the Bible? How audacious is that? 'cause the three of us here love the Bible. I know we do and we teach it, but the audaciousness of saying he could come up with that and then it starts to get out. Boy, then things really get interesting.

Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	00:17:13	I mean when only five people believe it's pretty easy to just say, oh, okay, there must be a bunch of idiots. When thousands of people believe and when people surrounding you start to believe. When dozens of people start to believe, well that they're just all idiots and liars, it becomes a less powerful argument, especially when it's people that you know.
Hank Smith:	00:17:35	Yeah, I know it's about 10 years old. But the review of religious research said in 2015 they had fascinating results talking about Latter-day Saints and education. The study indicated that as members of various faiths receive increasingly higher education, they decrease in their religious activities or their tendencies towards religion. The conclusion was true in all but one case, that of the Latter-day Saints. Church attendance percentage, church affiliation and religious observance increase as Latter-day Saint members gain more education.
Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	00:18:16	Isn't that a fascinating thing that we buck the trend entirely? That if you meet someone who has a PhD, there are all kinds of anecdotal evidences, that people can point out, but statistics exist for a reason. So it doesn't matter that you have an uncle who's got a PhD and is a fervent Presbyterian. That's great. There's a survey that exists that demonstrates that your uncle is not the generality--the typical. So the reality is that for religion generally, that's how people score. Well, when you're uneducated then you believe things like hocus pocus and superstition. But if the more educated you get, the less you're gonna believe and that when you get to the highest level of education, those are the people who believe the least. But for Latter-day Saints, it is a pretty profound point that if you meet a Latter-day Saint who has a master's degree, they're actually more likely to be an Uber faithful member than if you meet one that's a high school dropout.
Hank Smith:	00:19:19	Gerrit, what you're saying here is that it started this way. These educated people, this preacher Sidney Rigdon, who's very successful, Edward Partridge, who's very successful, are actually believing this. Now what do I do?
Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	00:19:35	We have in these Voices of the Restoration here, the story of Parley and Thankful Pratt. I mean, Parley Pratt is already himself preaching to people as an itinerant minister. So he is not just someone who's like "Gosh, if I once even knew what the Bible was, maybe I wouldn't have become a Mormon".
Hank Smith:	00:19:51	Right.

Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	00:19:53	He is a fervent believer in the Bible and that has actually led his entire life and he's going to believe the Book of Mormon. Sidney Rigdon, again, another example. So, two of the examples we have here are men and women that are very well educated in the Bible and yet they embrace the Book of Mormon as the word of God. It puts to lie that argument, oh only stupid people believe.
John Bytheway:	00:20:20	I've heard someone refer to Joseph Smith as the father of adult education. That created this--because of the School of the Prophets--created this culture of we need to keep getting an education and continue learning and that's been the culture of the church ever since the School of the Prophets. Wouldn't you say? What was taught there in the School of the Prophets, how many different languages?
Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	00:20:44	They're trying to learn Hebrew, they're learning German, they're trying to study some Greek. It is true that while Joseph is himself not formally educated, Joseph fervently believes in education. And Latter-day Saints have this long running history of believing that God wants you to be educated. So, I think part of the reason why that survey plays out the way it does, Hank, is that in Latter-day Saint communities, at least in the United States, when a Latter-day Saint finishes high school and they talk to their friends, they don't ever say, Hey, are you going to college? They say, where are you going to college? There's already an implied assumption. Again, I know that not everyone goes and some people serve in the military. I'm well aware of that, but as I listen to my teenage son's friends a whole mess over at my house today, in fact. It's a great thing I'm here recording with you.
	00:21:46	It was our day to host lunch for like 20 teenagers. So, Angie's doing that. And you hear them talk about life after--they're all saying where are you going to go to college? Culturally they are planning on it and they're not even having a conversation of, am I? From the revelations Joseph Smith receives, education is enshrined. You are supposed to seek wisdom and knowledge and seek learning out of the best books. And this is something that's carried on into Nauvoo. It's carried on into Utah. Brigham Young is sending women to colleges and universities in the east long before it is a very culturally acceptable thing for women to attend universities. Because education is so important. In some ways, it's a little bit of a self-fulfilling survey because if you happen to have completed your high school degree and to go to college. In some ways, you might already be someone who's a faithful member because you're trying to follow the prophets that are saying, as President Hinkley said, get all the education



that you can. This world will largely pay you what it thinks you are worth. Obviously, some of the most brilliant people in the world are people that don't have any formal education, but those people are also anomalies that education matters in spiritual items, it matters in secular items and even if you don't go to a four-year university, the idea of bettering yourself by studying and learning new things by reading and studying, it really is a part of what Joseph Smith teaches in the restoration. We should be learning.

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| Hank Smith:           | 00:23:31 | Yeah.   |
| John Bytheway:        | 00:23:34 | It has become the culture. One of my favorite Proverbs, I think it's Proverbs 4:7 is like wisdom is the principle thing. Therefore, get wisdom and with all thy getting, get understanding. You know?   |
| Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat: | 00:23:49 | That was actually on the library at the University of Colorado where I got my PhD. Yeah. With all thy getting get understanding. There weren't that many people there who did that, but...  |
| John Bytheway:        | 00:24:03 | Well I love that. To bring that back around, it wasn't just gullible, uneducated people. There were people getting the Book of Mormon into their hands going, wait a minute, like the Sidney Rigdons and the Parley Pratts.   |
| Hank Smith:           | 00:24:16 | Yeah, I was just gonna say Gerrit quoted President Hinkley. I think that's why I kept going to school. I think I have a PhD because President Hinkley just said, go to school, get all the education you can.   |
| Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat: | 00:24:29 | He said, you've got to get education. And honestly that impacted me as well because when he said that I was like, okay, I mean I'd already, I'd already had inklings that maybe this is what I will do and I felt like, well this is what I'm supposed to do because this is what the prophet taught. I know everybody has different life circumstances, so if you're someone listening, you're like, well I wasn't able to finish college. Yeah, well God loves you just as much, probably much more than me. It's a principle of gaining knowledge, the idea of trying to better yourself educationally. Joseph doesn't graduate from college. Joseph doesn't graduate from high school. Joseph is a completely self-educated person. You read a letter that he writes in 1832 and you are gonna have to buy a vowel to figure out what word he just wrote. |

	00:25:23	Because it's so poorly spelled. He sets his life to becoming more educated. Look, he is never going to be writing Shakespearean sonnets without any error in Nauvoo. But if you read a letter that he writes in Nauvoo in his own hand, it is evidence of this concerted personal effort to better educate himself. It shines through if anyone's thinking like, oh, he just thinks people without a college degree aren't smart. No, Joseph didn't have a college degree and Joseph is the mortal venerate most in the world. But whether he went to a formal education or not, the principle of getting education is something that he believed from God because of the revelations God gave him and he spent time on it. He read a ton of things. His library is vast and you can see him dropping quotes in from things that he's read from poets and from historians. Here's Tacitus here and things like that. He really is a great demonstration of someone who doesn't have a lot of formal education and ends his life with a great deal of knowledge that he's acquired through his own efforts.
John Bytheway:	00:26:45	I love that you mentioned seeking wisdom out of the best books. So that's obviously a section that's coming up. It's a culture and a mindset of keep learning, which I love. Boy, we're living in a day and age today with access to so much knowledge, so many millions of books that we could read and we can seek learning that way and people could even, I don't know, Hank, listen to a podcast and maybe learn something
Hank Smith:	00:27:07	They could. I've heard of those.
John Bytheway:	00:27:10	Yeah, me too. It's a podcast. Is it like broadcast, rhymes with that? Some of these early converts that are listed in the Voices of the Restoration lesson. One of them I wanted to read and you guys, I'm sorry to the Leonard posterity, I had never heard this name before. Abigail Calkins Leonard, I just wanna read this paragraph about this early convert, early voice of the restoration. When Abigail Calkins Leonard was in her mid-thirties, she wanted to be forgiven of her sins. She occasionally read the Bible, and people from Christian churches visited her home, but she was confused about what made one church different from another. "One morning", she said, "I took my Bible and went to the woods, when I fell upon my knees." She prayed fervently to the Lord. "Immediately a vision passed before my eyes", she said, "and the different sects passed one after another by me, and a voice called to me saying; 'These are built up for gain.'
	00:28:12	Then beyond I could see a great light and a voice from above called out: 'I shall raise up a people, whom I shall delight to own

and bless." A short while later, Abigail heard about the Book of Mormon, even though she didn't yet have a copy, she sought to, "know the truth of this book, by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost," and she "immediately felt its presence". When she was finally able to read the Book of Mormon, she was "ready to receive it." She and her husband Lyman were baptized in 1831. So how big is the church in 1831?

Hank Smith: 00:28:50 Right.

Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat: 00:28:51 It's not huge. Depending on when in 1831, it's a thousand to 2000 members probably.

Hank Smith: 00:28:56 Just starting to become a stake, right?

John Bytheway: 00:29:00 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:29:01 John, I would like to read one. This is Parley and Thankful Pratt, who we've mentioned already. Parley and Thankful Pratt responded to spiritual stirrings to leave their prosperous farm in Ohio with the intent to preach the gospel as they understood it from the Bible. As Parley told his brother, "The spirit of these things had wrought so powerfully on my mind of late that I could not rest." When they reached eastern New York, Parley had a prompting to stay awhile in the area. Thankful, they decided, would continue on without him. "I have a work to do in this region of country," Parley told her "and what it is or how long it will take to perform it, I know not; but I will come when it is performed." It was there that Parley first heard of the Book of Mormon. "I felt a strange interest in the book," he said. He requested a copy and read through the night. By morning, he knew the book was true, valuing it "more than all the riches of the world." Within a few days, Parley was baptized. He then returned to Thankful, who was also baptized. I don't know if you guys know this, but Parley P. Pratt has some influence in the church.

Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat: 00:30:10 Yeah. He didn't immediately Apostatize. Yeah, Parley Pratt obviously becomes one of the original members of the Quorum of the 12 apostles when it's organized in 1835. It's a cool thing to think about Parley Pratt in the sense that he's out there trying to preach traditional Protestant Christianity with the Bible but is so open to God. He is so close to God that when he gets the Book of Mormon, instead of having the knee jerk reaction, the cultural reaction that everyone I'm sure around him thought he should have--to reject it as not the Bible--that he reads it and and instantly recognizes the words as being the words of God and converts. To me, when I think about his conversion, I think

about the phrase that there are many kept from the truth because they know not where to find it.

00:31:01 For Parley Pratt, it's not a matter of not wanting to find the truth. It's just a matter of he hadn't got the book yet and the moment he got the book he was in, he had it. He was there. Now not everyone, he the same instantaneous conversion experience. Maybe someone watching or listening is thinking, for me though, I didn't just read one verse from Third Nephi 11 and the next thing I know I was in the water. It took a while. A good example that's not represented here, is Brigham Young. Brigham Young has family members who join the church very early, and friends who join the church very early and Brigham Young doesn't. Brigham Young gets the Book of Mormon. He studies it, he says. He compares it to the Bible. He thinks about it. He reads it for years before he finally makes the decision to convert.

00:31:56 When Brigham Young makes the decision to join, once he puts his hand to any plow, he never looks back. It takes him years to come to terms with the fact that the church is true. But once he makes the decision that it is, he isn't re-asking the question every other week. He is not a casual member. He joins and he is instantly off serving missions and instantly defending the prophet by other people who defame him. I worry sometimes people read about these amazing conversion experiences and they think, I prayed over the Book of Mormon once and I didn't have this rush of wind come into my house. We're all in different places. We all have different upbringings, we all have different experiences and the great part about the Spirit is the Holy Spirit, because it is the Spirit, knows how to speak to our souls in ways that work and penetrate us in order to cause that conversion. And for some people it's almost an immediate and emotional thing that that you feel it and you know, and for other people it's thinking about it over the course of time and it's almost this quiet peace that leads them to conversion rather than this day of Pentecost event with cloven tongues of fire.

John Bytheway: 00:33:14 I'm really glad you said it that way. I'm kind of glad to know it took Brigham Young a while. I'm glad to know that others were right there. There's a beautiful video the church made years ago. This will tell you how old I am, but it was called How Rare A Possession. Do you guys remember that?

Hank Smith: 00:33:28 I do, yes.

John Bytheway: 00:33:29 And the beginning is the Parley Pratt story and I just love how well that's told. I've always thought: his poor wife when he is

like, yeah, I think we need to sell everything. I'm gonna go, I don't know why, I just need to hang out in this region. She's like, well how long? I don't know. But that the spirit manifested that plainly to me, and I think wow, if you can find that, that's a beautiful place to watch the conversion story of Parley Pratt.

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| Hank Smith:           | 00:33:53 | We have to do a quick shout out to our friend Bruce Newbold, who plays Parley P. Pratt.   |
| Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat: | 00:33:59 | Oh!   |
| Hank Smith:           | 00:33:59 | We love you Bruce.  |
| Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat: | 00:34:00 | So he was the one. "Eating was a burden to me, sleep was a burden."   |
| John Bytheway:        | 00:34:04 | Yeah, he did such a great job. He comes across the Baptist deacon and when he brings the book back, he says, do you know what's in this book? The Baptist deacon says, I haven't been able to hold on to it long enough to find out. You know? When Parley goes and he's looking for Joseph Smith, I love the scene. Well Joseph's away, but I'm his brother, Hyrum and they sit up half the night. It's beautiful.   |
| Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat: | 00:34:30 | It's similar to Thomas Marsh's experience. Well he's one of the other people we have, so maybe we could talk about him a little bit. Thomas Marsh's experience of conversion, frankly from his family's perspective is crazy. He lives in Massachusetts, he goes to Western New York on business. He hears about the fact that there's some gold bible that's been found and that it's being published in Palmyra and he goes to Palmyra. "Hey where's this gold bible?" And they haven't printed it yet. This is still 1829. He goes to the print shop and they happen to have the first 16 pages that have been printed and they hand him one of these big unfolded uncut copies and he reads it and is converted. For the people that are always feeling bad about themselves that they start to read the Book of Mormon and they only get through like the first part of First Nephi before they stop and then they have to go back and start over again. You can be converted by First Nephi. Obviously, because Thomas Marsh only had the first 16 pages and imagine what it's like. He goes back to Massachusetts, he left, comes back waving this giant broadside sheet of uncut page. You're like, this is a, this is the word of God. I mean you feel for his family. You feel for Elizabeth because you left on business, you came back claiming there's a gold Bible. |

Hank Smith: 00:35:56 Yeah.

Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat: 00:35:57 And that we're going to have to move to New York. What happened to you out there? We actually have some pretty good insight. I mean they have a nice statement here in the manual that talks about this, but we actually have some really cool insight into their dynamics. We know, and you'll talk about Doctrine and Covenants section 31 later, that a lot of Thomas Marsh's family isn't exactly super on board with the sudden change in both religion and where they're going to live. And even less so when they don't just move to New York, they move to New York and then it's time to move to Ohio and all in the space of less than a year that all of this is going on. What radical changes? Some of the earliest letters that we have that written by Latter-day Saints talking about their testimonies, are some letters that Thomas Marsh and his wife Elizabeth wrote to their extended family members talking about what they believe and why they believe.

00:36:55 So I thought maybe I'd share some of those letters to give you a little bit of insight into that. It's seen the war, it's pretty beat up. So, there's lots of places where there's parts that are torn up, but they're writing to Lewis and Ann Abbott. Ann Abbott is Ann Marsh Abbott. She is Thomas's sister. He's writing to his sister trying to convince her. So this is in New York and this is just after the revelation has come commanding them to go to Ohio. Thomas Marsh and Elizabeth, they write to his sister and her husband trying to convince them, essentially, sight unseen that this is true. And by the way, not only is it true you need to move to Ohio, but don't worry after you move to Ohio, that's not really where Zion is. It's gonna be somewhere else. And the faith that they have, is he gives directions on how to get there.

00:37:52 Thomas is like, okay, you're gonna take Erie Canal to Buffalo, when you get there--without even knowing that they're gonna believe. But, so, I wanna share just part of it, where he is sharing this and then her experience too I think is also really special. He is talking about this idea of Zion. Now in the future here, we talked about it a little bit, but we're gonna start really heavily receiving revelations from the Lord, talking about the establishment of Zion. That they're gonna create the city of the New Jerusalem. That will be a place where there's no rich and no poor, a place where everyone loves one another. It sounds like the greatest paradise ever. And this is a real draw to some of these early converts. You mean there's a place where just everyone loves each other? He writes to his sister talking about Zion, saying there are gonna be great promises there it'll be a land flowing with milk and honey.

00:38:47      There will be no curse on it as it's given a land for our inheritance and for the inheritance of our children while the earth shall stand. And now my beloved brother and sister, the Lord calleth for all to repent and to take upon them the name of Christ and assemble at Ohio speedily. And there our Heavenly Father will tell us what we shall next do. Perhaps it will be to take our march to the Grand Prairies in the Missouri territory or to the shining mountains, which is 1500 or 2000 miles west from us. That's what they called the Rocky Mountains back then by the way. This is the earliest recorded Latter-day Saint reference to a possible move to the Rocky Mountains actually, which suggests, by the way, they must be talking about it. He's not just casually throwing out geographical locations. He's saying Missouri, where there's already missionaries and he's saying that the Rocky Mountains. He goes on to say how soon this will be, we do not know.

00:39:46      In fact, we know nothing of what we are to do, save it, be revealed to us. But this we know, that a city will be built in the Promised Land. You can see him saying to his sister, I need you to leave Massachusetts and all of your family and everything, to come join this religion and then I need you to come here. But don't worry, once you get here, we'll be gone already to Ohio because we're gonna eventually go to a place that's a land of Zion. We don't know where it is, but come anyway. That's essentially the sales pitch he's making. He goes on in a later part of the letter. One stark aspect of Latter-day Saint theology in 19th century Christian terms, is this idea that the Second Coming of Jesus is soon and that Jesus is going to come to the earth and he's going to destroy wickedness.

00:40:41      And that's how you're going to get the millennium. The earth is gonna be cleansed. There will be peace and happiness for a thousand years because the wicked are no longer there. Now that's a fairly common evangelical Christian belief today. So a lot of Latter-day Saints just assume, well, sure that's what all Christians believe, that Jesus was gonna come and the wicked would be destroyed. Actually, in the 19th century, it's an incredibly rare belief. Nearly all Protestant Christians at the time are either a Millennialist, believing that the Second Coming is more figurative than literal or they are Post Millennialist believing that actually Jesus is going to come to an already perfected earth. The world's gonna become more and more and more Christian until eventually everyone's a Christian. And once everyone's a Christian, the world's gonna become a paradise. After a thousand years of that paradise, Jesus is going to come to an already perfected world.

00:41:37 So one of the stark aspects of Joseph Smith's revelations from the time that he is speaking with the Lord in the First Vision or with the angel Moroni, is that the Second Coming is coming soon. We're not 2000 years away from it. We're not a perfected all Christian world away from it. It's coming soon. One of the things that Thomas Marsh knows as he is writing is a big part of what his sister's gonna struggle with is that we need to gather because Jesus is coming soon because no one around her would've said, Jesus is coming soon. So now you're claiming that there's some prophet, there's some kind of city of Zion. You're claiming Jesus is coming soon and you're claiming that there's a book that's scripture, that's not the Bible. So, he kind of preempts her a little bit, to say that he knows not everybody will believe.

00:42:30 He says, now we know that many do not believe that he will come and reign on earth a thousand years with the meek, although he has said that the meek shall inherit the earth, but this we know will be so, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. Therefore, we desire to use all our diligence to make ourselves ready. Then he gives them the directions on how they'll get there. The really cool part is how he describes what he expects they will find when they get to Kirtland, when they get there to these people that are believers. He said, and there you will find a blessed people who are all one, not rich and poo, bond and free, but all are one in Christ, partakers of the heavenly gift. All is to be ordered of the Lord. Every man is to be the head of his own family.

00:43:19 And every man shall esteem his brother as himself, and practice virtue and holiness before the Lord. We shall have no king or ruler in time, but the Lord will be our law giver and our judge, and the Lord will be our king and He will save us. You can feel Thomas Marsh's testimony seeping through the pages. The last part of this letter that I want to share, as it relates to his family. Elizabeth, I can only assume, believes her husband is crazy because of this rapid conversion. And not only are we moving the family, now we're moving again. It's clear that she does not believe right away. And in the post script there's a small postscript to this letter. She writes about what she is thinking and she's writing it to Ann. So, she calls her dear sister, you know, 'cause it's her sister-in-law. Dear sister, I have much to write but I cannot write it now for the want of room.

00:44:22 But this much I can tell you, there is a great change that has taken place with me both in body and in mind since I last wrote to you. So apparently in the last letter she was like, Thomas is crazy. We already lost everything in Massachusetts. We're



about to lose everything in New York and we're going somewhere we don't know, to Ohio. I don't know what exactly she wrote, but clearly whatever she wrote was the exact opposite of what she's about to say. She said four weeks ago yesterday, which was the 12th of March, the Lord was pleased to bestow on us a son. And then she writes, we have called him Nephi. That gives you a little bit of an indication. Here in March of 1831, and it's actually, as far as I know, this is the earliest recorded child with a Book of Mormon name in the church.

00:45:20      Maybe there's more, but it kind of gives you an indication that they called him Nephi. Where are they at with their belief in the Book of Mormon? And she's gonna explain how she gets her conversion. I asked a sign of the Lord, at the time the child was born, that would convince me of the truth of this work. Apparently, Elizabeth Marsh had incredibly difficult deliveries and she talks about that in some of her other letters. And so maybe that's a, I don't know what the sign was. Okay, I asked a sign of the Lord at the time that the child was born that would convince me of the truth of this work that Thomas has engaged in. Okay, so, she still is not convinced, she's not on board. And I promised that I should believe if he would grant it. He granted me the sign I asked, and I have not dared to disbelieve since, but rather to lay to a helping hand.

00:46:11      I feel a desire to be thankful for what I have received and I still look for more. This is, outside of Lucy Mack Smith's letter to her brother, this, I believe, is the earliest written female Latter-day Saint testimony that exists. We certainly have people looking back on their conversion and talking about it, but this is the original letter, in her original hand saying, I had a miracle. And that's why I believe. I thought I'd share that as far as you know, these early converts, the Lord is really working miracles with them to bring the gospel into their lives and they in turn are making all kinds of sacrifices. Giving up jobs and lands and homes to social situations. Yet they're going from being a respected well thought of well off person to having nothing. I mean, think of the Knights in Colesville. Here's Joseph Knight and Newell Knight who are respected land owning--well, I mean they're not rich, but they're well off members of society.

00:47:21      They're well-respected members of society and overnight a revelation from God commands them to leave. To give everything up and to leave. And them that have farms that cannot be sold, let them be left or rented as seemeth them good. They're gonna show up in Ohio with nothing and they're not showing up in Ohio with nothing because they just haven't worked a day in their life. They literally gave up all of their

society, all of their status, all of their wealth to do what a prophet told them to do. And once they got there, almost immediately, a prophet told them another revelation told them to walk another thousand miles to Missouri and they did it. They didn't say, now wait a minute, why'd you even have me walk here in the first place if you weren't gonna have me stay here?

00:48:14 You know, actually I've already done a lot of service. I already gave up everything. I'm gonna stay here for a while. Instead, it is the exact opposite reaction. It is: if God commands me to do it, I'm going to do it. I hope what some of your listeners get out of this conversion stories of these early converts is we need to have their mentality. In order to survive in the world, we have today with the sinfulness and being bombarded by people attacking the church and attacking us for our faith and the sinfulness that surrounds us. We need to have a mentality that once we are converted, we follow the prophet and his church. However long it took us to get there, we are gonna Brigham Young this, we are going to be faithful. And what if things are really terrible? We're still gonna be faithful.

00:49:10 Well what if things don't make sense? Well, what if horrible things happen to me in my life or in my family? We're still going to be faithful. Frankly, I feel like we owe it to some of these early members, to not casually throw away our faith because they suffered so that you could have this. So don't let some anonymous person on X derail your testimony when you have spiritual and possibly even literal forebearers who've given up everything because they knew this was true. And they knew Joseph Smith, they knew him, they met him, they talked to him, and they knew he was a prophet. Much more so than whoever is spouting off on the latest subreddit is telling you.

Hank Smith: 00:50:03 Now, we are gonna talk about the move to Ohio later, but one thing I'd love for you to do is talk about this mission of these four: Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer Jr., Parley P. Pratt, and Ziba Peterson. It seems to me from my study of church history that this is huge.

Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat: 00:50:27 Yeah, the calling that you'll get to with Doctrine and Covenants section 28, which will first command Oliver Cowdery to go on a mission to preach to the Lamanites, but then there will be subsequent revelations that will add other people to that group. Parley Pratt among them. In the list that you have here of these early converts that they gave you. Between Sidney Rigdon who is going to bring his entire congregation in-but we're gonna talk about that--it's Parley Pratt along with Peter Whitmer Jr. and

Ziba Peterson and Oliver Cowdery, they're on their way to what is today, Kansas, to go preach to the Native Americans.

- Hank Smith: 00:51:09 How far away is Kansas to Parley P. Pratt? This isn't a place they visit often, is it?
- Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat: 00:51:17 No, Parley doesn't hang out in Kansas. I mean, it's not even called Kansas really at that point. It's, Indian territory, west of Missouri. It's about 1400 miles away from where they're at and easily traveled by car or bus. They don't even have really good travel by river yet. So, most of this is going to be walking. Again, part of the problem when you're heading west in the United States is that you're going against the currents of the rivers. Coming back from Kansas City, you could theoretically, if you don't get dumped over in the canoe, follow the river down in a canoe down and use that to help. So, you don't have to walk the whole way. But on the way there, good luck with that. I don't know how much many of you wanna row up either the Mississippi or the Missouri.
- 00:52:07 So it's a huge call and of course he's going to be gone for months. Thankful Pratt is just like, okay, this is what God wants you to do. This is not a minor calling. This is huge, but it's very key because in this missionary call, Parley Pratt, as they're going through Ohio, he decides, you know, the person who I know loves the Bible, the person who needs to know this is this preacher that I used to know that I used to speak to. And that's Sidney Rigdon. And he goes to Sidney Rigdon, they share the Book of Mormon with him. And Sidney Rigdon, he doesn't, "Thomas Marsh" it and immediately overnight run home to his family. But he doesn't "Brigham Young" it either. He doesn't take two years, he takes a week and he reads the Book of Mormon over the course of a week and then he comes back believing that it's true.
- 00:53:00 Now, Sidney Rigdon is in a very difficult position because his profession is that he is a pastor. In fact, the home that he and Phebe live in is a home that was built by the congregation that he's preaching to, for him. And so Sidney Rigdon is placed in one of those positions that rarely do we find ourselves actually in, where we have to decide between our livelihood and our beliefs. And Sidney Rigdon starts preaching the Book of Mormon to his congregation. And in fact, many of the early converts in Ohio, dozens and dozens and dozens of them, are people from his congregation. Now, the other half of his congregation wasn't terribly happy with the quick turn that their Pastor Rigdon had made. And so they actually throw him out of the house that they had built for him. Sidney and Phebe

become homeless because they embrace the gospel and they have to go live with other saints and he loses his job and he's gonna have to take other work for the rest of his life.

00:54:17

But both of them made this decision. The Book of Mormon is true. And so if it costs us everything-- and you know, perhaps looking back to what the Savior had promised his disciples--that you shall receive a hundred fold in the kingdom of my father. That blessing is not in this life. We often confuse that. We often think, well if I'm righteous then that means God's gonna bless me with houses and cars and everything's gonna work out right. Jesus always says that those blessings are in the next life. In the kingdom of my Father is where you'll receive those mansions. That in this world you will have tribulation. But fear or not, I've overcome the world. And sometimes I think we are led to believe that when bad things are happening to us, that it must be because we're not righteous enough. If only I was more righteous than it wouldn't happen. What you learn from these early saints is that they are persecuted and they suffer because they are righteous. Sidney Rigdon is now homeless, not because he just keeps sinning, but because he had a very stark choice between God and the world. And some people like James Covill that you'll learn about, he chooses the world and other people like Sidney Rigdon, placed in the exact same position, chooses God and gives up everything.

Hank Smith:

00:55:47

Wow, Gerrit. Not as much as Sidney, but you have Isaac Morley, you have Newel K. Whitney, his wife Elizabeth. These are names we know and love.

Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:

00:56:02

Levi Hancock. You have all of these people that are these early converts in Ohio who are forced to, again, give up their place in society, but then also they give up much of their substance in order to facilitate the movement of the church. Frederick G. Williams is a great example of this. Frederick G. Williams has a farm that is worth over \$2,000. Now that may not sound like a whole lot to everybody today, but the average American makes \$250 a year and Fred G. Williams is going to sign the entire thing over to the church for the settlement of all of these New Yorkers that are moving in by commandment. It is something that's honestly breathtaking, over and over and over again. To see these people who don't just say they believe, they put their money where their mouth is. They put their faith in their footsteps. They don't just say it, they actually do it. And of course all the people around them think they're crazy. All the people around them can't possibly understand how could you do this? But they have had the Holy Spirit speak to them and they know this is God's kingdom on earth and they act like it.

John Bytheway:	00:57:19	I've heard people talk about, you know, wherever you are, just put down roots as if you're gonna stay there. And I just feel so sorry for these early saints that they kept having to mov. And the Colesville Saints come and don't they take up residence at that farm? And then who is it that says, nope, now you gotta leave?
Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	00:57:35	They go to Leman Copley's farm and Leman Copley has said that he was gonna consecrate his farm to the church and then he apostatizes. And so, you have all of these members living on his property, then they are ordered off, because he apostatizes from the church. And as Joseph Knight later, like pretty bitterly remembers this, Joseph Knight Junior, he says that he actually fined them, made them pay a fine for what they did to his property while they were on it. And he is like, yeah, I suppose the fine was for planting all of his crops and for fixing up all of his fences. It was very sarcastic, very bitter that they had to pay for having improved his property while they were there. They are ordered to leave and they go to Joseph looking for help. Joseph receives a revelation from God telling him to go to Missouri.
	00:58:25	I wish I could tell you that everything was all fine and great after they moved to Missouri, but I said the words Missouri. And so, you know, already in Latter-day Saint history that things aren't going to be fine and great. Two years later they're gonna be driven outta their homes in Jackson County. They're gonna live as refugees in the surrounding counties until eventually they move to Far West, until they're driven out of Far West by the extermination order. And then they're gonna live in Quincy as refugees again. And then they're gonna come to Nauvoo where they'll, you know, try to put down roots again, try to build a house. And then you've got the expulsion from Nauvoo and then to Winter Quarters and then from Winter Quarters to Salt Lake. I mean, if you're a member of the Knight family or a member of the Colesville branch, you will have moved, been driven, in most cases out of your home, either by revelation commanding you to move or mobs threatening to kill you, forcing you to move more than half a dozen times in 15 years.
	00:59:24	The amazing part about the Knight family and many of those Colesville members is, they are the main body of people who were converted in the New York period of the church that make it to Salt Lake. You lose people all along the way. You lose people in the move from New York to Ohio. You have people apostatized, not the Colesville Saints. In the move from Ohio to Missouri, you have people apostatized. When the Kirtland Safety Society collapses, you have people apostatize. When

there's the great Missouri Apostacy before the Mormon war. People apostatize. When the Mormon war happens and the extermination happens in Missouri, more and more people apostatize. And then after Joseph is murdered in Nauvoo--in Carthage, the succession crisis in Nauvoo, you have another group of people that apostatize. You have people that apostatize 'cause they don't want to go out west.

01:00:20 Then you have people go to Winter Quarters and apostatize from there. Not the Colesville Saints. Almost every one of them that's still alive, because some have died in all of this, they go to Salt Lake and they stay faithful. It is a great testimony to me that these early converts, once they came to know, and once they came to sacrifice, because they knew, everything else that happened after that, they were able to handle. Because after your third burned down home, it's already happened twice before. This isn't the only time I've walked with my kids across the plains because a mob's chasing me. There's something about being willing to sacrifice for what you believe, that roots that testimony deep down in your soul. And it makes the next trial not easy because it's still a trial. It's still gonna be horrible, but it makes you better able to endure it with faith.

Hank Smith: 01:01:29 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 01:01:30 Gerrit, I loved what you've talked about earlier. Because, Hank, you pointed out to me in another recording, that sometimes we hear the phrase, the cause of Zion before we hear, hear the city of Zion or the place of Zion, and that they're trying so hard to build Zion. Thomas Marsh's letter that you read, Gerrit, about this is the way it's gonna be. This is going to be so great. And what they encounter to get to that place, which I think we're still yearning for.

Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat: 01:02:01 I certainly am. My kingdom for a city where everyone loves one another. Where everyone is just filled with a desperate desire to serve God. I mean, just the idea of it alone is so beautiful that, you know it's a belief that comes from Christ. You know that that's what Jesus wants is this community where it doesn't matter where your background is, your education is, it doesn't matter your race or gender. Everyone just loves everyone because they see each other as brothers and sisters of God. There was one more story I thought I might share, which is one of my favorite ones, and that's the story of Mary Elizabeth Lightner-Rollins Lightner. She talks about her conversion in an autobiography that she gives. So, I thought maybe I'd share a little bit of that because I feel like some of the things that she says are kind of relatable, at least I relate them to me.

01:02:58 She talks about her conversion this way. When I was 10 years old, we moved to Kirtland, Ohio and lived in a house belonging to Algernon Sidney Gilbert, my mother's sister's husband. Do your family history on that and you figure out. We remained two years there when we heard of the plates of the Book of Mormon being found by Joseph Smith. Soon the news was confirmed by the appearance of Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, and Ziba Peterson with the glorious news of the restoration of the gospel through the prophet Joseph Smith. They bore a powerful testimony by the Holy Spirit of the truth of the great work that they were engaged in, and which they were commissioned by the Father to present to all the world. Quite a number of the residents of Kirtland accepted baptism. Mother and myself also, in the month of October, 1830. A branch of the church was organized and Father Morley was ordained as an elder to preside over it.

01:04:00 She goes on to say, A good spirit of one union prevailed among the brethren for some time. Oliver Cowdery and his brethren left, there for Missouri on a mission to the Lamanites. She's gonna talk about that after he leaves there starts to be some doctrines that creep in and some false spirits, which you'll cover with all these great revelations surrounding it. About this time, John Whitmer came and brought a book of Mormon. There was a meeting that evening and we learned that Brother Morley had the book in his possession, the only one in that part of the country. So one of the craziest aspects, the Lamanite missionaries, they come through, they baptize or convert at least dozens and dozens. It seems to be well over a hundred. It's very hard to get an actual number on. The people converted while they're there. They ordained some people as elders and then they're gone. And so, I always think about people who serve missions. Think about the most rural place in the mission you served in. Imagine that you went there and that you baptized 50 people and then you left. And there was no means of communication.

01:05:11 They had no church of Jesus Christ.org. They had no scriptures. They had no manuals. They had no conference talks. You just left and never talked to them again for another six months. What do you think you'd find when you get back? I mean there's...

John Bytheway: 01:05:26 What could go wrong?

Hank Smith: 01:05:27 Yeah.

Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	01:05:29	Well, clearly there are very few copies of the Book of Mormon because these missionaries, they weren't supposed to be giving out copies of the Book of Mormon there. They were supposed to go preach to the Native Americans. And so, they, there are obviously some, but you can tell here, like we learned in this meeting, Father Morley has a copy of that Book of Mormon. So, they've converted, they've already been baptized. They haven't read it. They've heard parts of it read to them. They've heard the testimonies given, but they haven't read it. So, I love her story. I'll continue. She says, that was the only Book of Mormon in possession--the only part in that part of the country. I went to his house just before the meeting was to commence, and I asked to see the book and Brother Morley put it in my hand.
	01:06:17	As I looked at it, I felt such a desire to read it that I could not refrain from asking him to let me take it home and read it while he attended the meeting. He said it would be too late for me to take it back after the meeting. And another thing, he had hardly had time to read a chapter in it himself. And but few of the brethren had even seen it. But I pled so earnestly for it. Finally, he said, child, if you will bring this book home before breakfast tomorrow morning, you may take it. He admonished me to be very careful with it and see that no harm came to it. If any person in this world was ever perfectly happy in the possession of any coveted treasure, I was, when I had permission to read that wonderful book. She talks about taking it home that she says, we all took turns reading until very late in the night.
	01:07:20	And as soon as it was light enough to see, I was up and learned the first verse in the book. When I reached Brother Morley's, they had been up for only a little while. When I handed him the book, he remarked, I guess you didn't read much in it. And I showed him how far we had read, and he was surprised. I don't believe you can tell me one word of it he said. Then I repeated the first verse, also the outlines of the history of Nephi. And he gazed at me in surprise and said, child, take this book and finish it. I can wait. The way she described having it as no one has ever been more happy with any treasure that they've ever had in their possession than I was to have the book. I mean, all it really does is make me feel bad that I don't treat the scriptures. I love the scriptures, but do I treat them with the same level of reverence? That there is no treasure on this earth greater than the word of God. And that's how Mary sees it. She sees this as more valuable than if this was a stack of gold.
John Bytheway:	01:08:36	Gerrit, I have seen that little episode. I think it's on the movie called Kirtland America's Sacred Ground. That's on BYUtv. She's 12. How old is she when that incident happened? Do we know?



Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	01:08:50	She's very young. Yeah. I don't know exactly, but yeah, she's young.
John Bytheway:	01:08:54	In the movie. She's young and yeah, she comes back. "I Nephi having been born" because she knows that first part. And Isaac Morley is surprised that she read it. I think the power of the subtitle we've given the book Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ, how exciting that must have been to have another testament of Christ and to be able to say he came to the Americas. Talk about firing up the imagination. Right?
Hank Smith:	01:09:25	Gerrit, I have a 12-year-old son named Rockwell. If you wouldn't mind, can you tell us about one of the earliest converts? I know there's not a lot known about him, but I'm pretty sure one of the earliest converts is Orin Porter Rockwell. Am I right?
Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	01:09:42	Yes. Porter Rockwell is legendary in Latter-day Saint history in the sense that he's got long hair and a beard and may or may not take the license at times when it comes to profanity. You know, he is just this kind of rough and tumble person. But I think the reason why people love him, he was so completely and totally devoted to Joseph Smith and to the gospel. Was he a perfect person? Clearly, he was not. Let's just say his rough stone had all rough edges. It didn't ever really get smooth. He was rough edges all the way down. As many books have been written about him, and as many lies as have been told about him by enemies of the church, that, you know, Joseph Smith secretly had Porter Rockwell go murder people. I mean, there's just all kinds of a historical garbage.
	01:10:39	Unlike Brigham Young who's gonna study the Book of Mormon for two years. Unlike Sidney Rigdon, who's gonna get the book of Mormon and read it in a week. Or unlike Parley Pratt, who's gonna read it all night because sleep is a burden to him. Porter Rockwell doesn't ever read the Book of Mormon. He doesn't ever read the Book of Mormon. He doesn't ever read a single sermon that Joseph ever writes and publishes. He doesn't read a revelation because Porter Rockwell is so uneducated that he can't read at all. And he's illiterate. And when people will call Joseph illiterate, what they mean is he can't read and write very well. When they say that Porter Rockwell's illiterate, they mean Porter Rockwell's illiterate. And if you see a document in the Church History Library where Porter Rockwell signs his name, it's like a cartoon.
	01:11:30	It is legitimately an X that he signs. And someone underneath will say this, X in behalf of Porter Rockwell. The Book of Mormon's a powerful converter. But for Porter Rockwell, he's

converted by the story. He's converted by the testimony that Joseph Smith has plates that Joseph Smith translated plates. And even though he can't read the book himself, he can hear other people read it. He's converted by it and he is going to become a totally devoted follower and a Latter-day Saint. And yeah, he's super rough around the edges. I mean, one of the great stories of Porter Rockwell is that he gets arrested on trumped up false charges in Missouri of attempting to murder Lilburn Boggs, which couldn't have happened to a nicer murderer. Sorry, I'm not a huge Lilburn Boggs fan. There's something, something about exterminating women and children that will make you on my bad side. I have a negative part of my personality and that is I'm not a huge fan of people like that.

01:12:39      Someone tries to kill the Governor of Missouri and Porter Rockwell is--without any evidence whatsoever, Lilburn Boggs says, oh, must've been Porter Rockwell. And he must've done it on Joseph's orders because that's what they do, those Mormons. And so, Porter Rockwell gets arrested and he's held without trial for months and months and months. He eventually is able to get away. And he actually shows up in Nauvoo in the middle of the Christmas party that Joseph--Joseph always loved to have Christmas parties. And he is in the middle of the Christmas party and there's like some ruckus at the door, there's some gibberish talking, they think is a drunk Missourian with a scraggly beard coming in there in the middle of winter. And they find out that it's actually Porter Rockwell.

01:13:23      We're about to kick him out. Get that Missourian outta...oh, oh it's Porter Rockwell. He's someone who's so devoted to Joseph. And while we don't have anything written by him, I hate to burst everyone's bubble. Every biography of Porter Rockwell that you've ever read is entirely taken from other people saying what they think about him and what their interactions with him were. And you know, that's valuable. It's not because they're reading Porter Rockwell's letters because Porter Rockwell's letters don't exist. Or they're just an X if you find a letter. But in the Council of Fifty Minutes, which is one of these more recent documents that were published by the church through the Joseph Smith papers, you get this insight into Porter Rockwell's personality. In the Council of Fifty, this is after Joseph has been murdered and they're talking about what they can do. Now we've gotta leave.

01:14:21      The mobs are getting worse. People are saying they want to exterminate us. What are we going to do? And Porter Rockwell doesn't talk a whole lot in those meetings, but in one of the

meetings, what he says is recorded. And William Clayton's writing it down at the time as he says it. So it's not Porter Rockwell saying it, but it's about as close as you're gonna get to a verbatim thing from Porter Rockwell. And he kind of says about what you think he might say. In the aftermath of Joseph being murdered. Let me make sure I quote him directly-- he has so few words.

Hank Smith:	01:14:55	Let's get him. I'm glad we did this.
Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	01:14:57	Just so we could talk about Porter Rockwell?
Hank Smith:	01:14:59	Yeah.
John Bytheway:	01:14:59	If you're naming and your kids Rockwell we better do it.
Hank Smith:	01:15:03	Yeah.
Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	01:15:04	Yeah, then we have to. He kills one of the people who participates in the martyrdom. Because he's attempting to kill Sheriff Backenstos at the time. And so Sheriff Backenstos actually calls out to him and says...
Hank Smith:	01:15:17	He's after me. Yeah.
Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	01:15:18	Help, help, help. And Rockwell takes a beat on him and takes him out. Takes him out in one shot.
Hank Smith:	01:15:23	Yeah, I remember Alex told me, yeah, shot him right above his belt buckle.
Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	01:15:28	So they're all talking about, here in this meeting, again, they are grieving that Joseph has been murdered and also that things are so bad and that they're going to have to leave the country. They're gonna have to go find somewhere else where they can practice their religion. As Porter Rockwell says, I was a friend to Joseph Smith while he lived and I'm still his friend. He can't avenge his wrongs himself, but I mean to avenge them for him. And if I get into trouble, I want you to help me out, if you can, without incriminating yourselves. If not, let me go. So at least at that point, Porter Rockwell's like, they're not gonna do anything to the people who murdered Joseph.
	01:16:13	And Port Rockwell's right. There are dozens and dozens and dozens--hundreds of witnesses of a multiple murder, multiple attempted murder. And not one person serves one moment of a conviction. Yeah. Oh, there's a couple people charged. And

then they prevent Mormons from being on the jury. So surprisingly no convictions come down. It's crazy how that happens. But no one's convicted of those murders. You just think about that. There are hundreds of witnesses and no one's convicted. Porter Rockwell says he's gonna have some vengeance. I don't think that he does actually take any a vengeance in that regard. So, rest easy. But then he goes on to say, I love my friends and I hate my enemies. I can't love them if I would. If I would's a 19th century way of saying even if I wanted to. And so, you kind of get this insight into this person where he loves Joseph so much that his death has rocked him to the center. And he loves his friends and he hates his enemies. He's a rough stone and he's gonna continue to be rough. I think some of us find comfort in knowing that even people who are sinners in other ways can still be devoted to the gospel and look forward to that time that you change.

Hank Smith:	01:17:36	I love that. For anyone out there who thinks their young men's program is a little right, a little rowdy. I think he's baptized, John. Isn't he baptized, Gerrit at like 16? He was the entire young men's program in the church.
Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	01:17:50	He was, yeah.
Hank Smith:	01:17:50	For a while.
John Bytheway:	01:17:53	First to get the Marksmanship Merit badge too. I think he was the first.
Dr. Gerritt Dirkmaat:	01:17:57	Yeah. Yeah. He led in marksmanship and the Camping Merit Badge.
Hank Smith:	01:18:04	So yeah. Thanks for talking to us about Porter. My wife is gonna love this part. So Sarah, that was for you.
John Bytheway:	01:18:11	I was watching a documentary on Orrin Porter Rockwell once, and I liked what, I think it was an ancestor of his says. He said that we tend to like to think that somebody's all this way or all that way, all good or all bad. And most of us are a lot more complex than that, including Porter Rockwell. And I thought, thank you just for saying that. But wow, what a wonderful day to talk about these and be inspired by them. Oh, and by the way, we're all moving. So get up and uproot everything and no moving vans, no help from the Elders Quorum. Just grab all your stuff and you're gonna need to walk to your new house. Amazing.

Hank Smith: 01:18:50 And build it.

John Bytheway: 01:18:52 And build it yourself. And leave the stuff you've already built behind. So, we're so inspired by these Voices of the Restoration. Next time we'll be talking about the move to Ohio because those missionaries passed through and did a little work. Now we're all gonna move to Ohio. We hope you'll join us there with Dr. Dirkmaat again on Voices of the Restoration, on followHIM.