



*“What Wilt Thou Have Me to Do?”*

## **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:**

Why was Saul so unlikely to convert to Christianity? Dr. Casey Griffiths examines the conversion of Saul, the power of the Holy Ghost, and the martyrdom of Stephen.

#### **Part 2:**

Dr. Casey Griffiths continues to explore the Book of Acts and the power of the Holy Ghost in the lives of the disciples of Jesus Christ.

## Timecodes:

### Part 1

- 00:00 Part 1–Dr. Casey Griffiths
- 01:37 Introduction of Dr. Casey Griffiths
- 03:09 Calling of the seven men
- 05:33 Stephen and Philip influence Paul’s conversion
- 07:08 Stephen’s recap of the Hebrew Bible
- 10:55 Stephen is charged with blasphemy
- 13:21 Uncircumcised of heart
- 17:54 They rejected Jesus and resist the Holy Ghost
- 19:49 Stephen full of the Holy Ghost and a scribe
- 21:05 Stephen uses inflammatory language
- 23:05 Saul is holding coats at the martyrdom of Stephen
- 24:21 Right hand of God, figurative or literal?
- 25:38 Was Stephen a successful missionary?
- 31:02 Parallel to Alma in Ammonihah
- 32:51 Philip is introduced and Saul needs a call
- 35:31 Jews are spread out over the Mediterranean
- 36:54 Philip is performing miracles
- 38:31 Simon is converted by the Holy Ghost
- 40:26 Bad acts driven by good motives
- 44:08 The eunuch from Ethiopia
- 49:09 Story of Godelia and Guillermo
- 55:17 The gospel going beyond Judea and Samaria
- 59:56 End of Part 1–Dr. Casey Griffiths

### Part 2

- 00:00 Part II–Dr. Casey Griffiths
- 00:07 Paul arrives in Acts 9
- 01:10 Paul gives his backstory through Luke
- 04:53 Paul always lived his religion
- 07:29 Acts chapter 9 Saul has revelatory experience
- 09:50 “Saul, why persecutest thou me?”
- 12:25 Christianity isn’t easy but easier than life without it
- 14:15 Saul and Ananias meet
- 16:02 Ananias wonders if it has to be Saul
- 18:52 Matthews says Ananias was probably presiding officer in Damascus
- 20:20 We can never discount anyone as a covert
- 22:10 Michael Ballam story
- 23:31 Dr. Griffiths shares a story about his uncle Kevin
- 25:32 Elder Uchtdorf’s “Waiting on the Road to Damascus”

- 28:44 Saul's name
- 30:47 Paul gives biography in Galatians 1
- 32:27 Dr. Griffiths shares a personal story about a fellow student
- 34:11 Paul becomes an enemy of some Jews in Jerusalem
- 35:38 We meet Barnabas
- 37:11 Elder Holland: "Let people grow"
- 39:09 Paul is totally converted
- 41:35 Peter raises Tabitha from the dead
- 43:46 Acts now tells Peter's story again
- 45:20 People change through Christ
- 48:22 Disciples of Christ act in faith
- 49:33 Leaders see individual's potential
- 52:59 End of Part II—Dr. Casey Griffiths

## References:

Ball, Terry B. "Whom Say Ye That I Am?": Peter's Witness of Christ." "Whom Say Ye That I Am?": Peter's Witness of Christ . Accessed June 29, 2023. <https://rsc.byu.edu/ministry-peter-chief-apostle/whom-say-ye-i-am-peters-witness-christ>.

Elder Ulisses Soares of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "How Can I Understand?" The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 1, 2019. <https://site.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2019/04/11soares.6?lang=eng#6>.

Frederick, Nicholas J. "The Life of the Apostle Paul." The Life of the Apostle Paul . Accessed June 29, 2023. <https://rsc.byu.edu/new-testament-history-culture-society/life-apostle-paul>.

Griffiths, Casey Paul, and Scott Woodward. "Church Matters Podcast." Doctrine and Covenants Central, June 14, 2023. <https://doctrineandcovenantscentral.org/church-history-matters-podcast/>.

Griffiths, Casey Paul. "The Church of the Lamb of God." The Church of the Lamb of God . Accessed June 29, 2023. <https://rsc.byu.edu/things-which-my-father-saw/church-lamb-god>.

Griffiths, Casey Paul. "Truth Seeker: The Life of Joseph F. Merrill, Scientist, Educator, and Apostle." Truth Seeker | . Accessed June 29, 2023. <https://rsc.byu.edu/book/truth-seeker>.

Hansen, J. Peter. "Paul the Apostle: Champion of the Doctrine of the Resurrection." Paul the Apostle: Champion of the Doctrine of the Resurrection | Religious Studies Center. Accessed June 29, 2023. <https://rsc.byu.edu/go-ye-all-world/paul-apostle-champion-doctrine-resurrection>.

Hilton, John. "Peter as a Learner and Teacher." Peter as a Learner and Teacher . Accessed June 29, 2023. <https://rsc.byu.edu/vol-20-no-2-2019/peter-learner-teacher>.

Judd, Frank F. “The Jerusalem Conference: The First Council of the Christian Church.” The Jerusalem Conference: The First Council of the Christian Church . Accessed June 29, 2023. <https://rsc.byu.edu/vol-12-no-1-2011/jerusalem-conference-first-council-christian-church>.

“July 10–16. Acts 6–9: ‘What Wilt Thou Have Me to Do?’” July 10–16. Acts 6–9: “What Wilt Thou Have Me to Do?,” January 1, 2022. <https://site.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/come-follow-me-for-individuals-and-families-new-testament-2023/29?lang=eng>.

Kimball, Spencer W. “Peter, My Brother.” BYU Speeches, March 15, 2021. <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/spencer-w-kimball/peter-brother/>.

Ludlow, Jared W. The Book of Acts: A Pattern for Modern Church Growth. Accessed June 29, 2023. <https://rsc.byu.edu/shedding-light-new-testament/book-acts-pattern-modern-church-growth>.

Matson, Joshua M. “Between The Testaments: .” Between the Testaments . Accessed June 29, 2023. <https://rsc.byu.edu/new-testament-history-culture-society/between-testaments>.

Matthews, Robert J. “Unto All Nations: A Guide to the Book of Acts and the Writings of Paul.” Amazon: Unto All Nations, 1975. <https://www.amazon.com/Unto-all-nations-guide-writings/dp/0877476012>.

Matthews, Robert J. “The Jerusalem Council.” The Jerusalem Council . Accessed June 29, 2023. <https://rsc.byu.edu/sperry-symposium-classics-new-testament/jerusalem-council>.

McKay, David O. “A Personal Interview with the Savior.” A personal interview with the savior - president David O. McKay. Accessed June 29, 2023. [https://emp.byui.edu/ANDERSONR/itc/Book%20of\\_Mormon/04\\_jacob/jacob01/jacob01\\_02pinterviewsavior\\_dom.htm](https://emp.byui.edu/ANDERSONR/itc/Book%20of_Mormon/04_jacob/jacob01/jacob01_02pinterviewsavior_dom.htm).

“Peter Brings Tabitha Back to Life.” Chapter 60, January 1, 2005. <https://site.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/new-testament-stories/chapter-60-peter-brings-tabitha-back-to-life?lang=eng>.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf Second Counselor in the First Presidency . “Waiting on the Road to Damascus.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 2, 2011. <https://site.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2011/04/waiting-on-the-road-to-damascus?lang=eng>.

Taylor, Catherine C. “Peter in the House of Tabitha: Late Antique Sarcophagi and Christian Philanthropy.” Peter in the House of Tabitha: Late Antique Sarcophagi and Christian Philanthropy . Accessed June 29, 2023. <https://rsc.byu.edu/ministry-peter-chief-apostle/peter-house-tabitha-late-antique-sarcophagi-christian-philanthropy>.

Toone, Trent. “Reflections of a Sister Missionary.” Deseret News, November 3, 2011. <https://www.deseret.com/2011/11/3/20227959/reflections-of-a-sister-missionary>.

Wayment, Thomas A. “Peter, Cornelius, and Cultural Boundaries.” Peter, Cornelius, and Cultural Boundaries . Accessed June 29, 2023. <https://rsc.byu.edu/ministry-peter-chief-apostle/peter-cornelius-cultural-boundaries>.

Whitney, Elizabeth Ann. "Elizabeth Ann Whitney." AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ELIZABETH ANN WHITNEY Cited in Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* New York, 1877 pp. 32-35, 41-42, September 23, 2021. <https://doctrineandcovenantscentral.org/history/elizabeth-ann-whitney/>.

## Biographical Information:



Casey Paul Griffiths was born and raised in Delta, Utah. He served a mission in Fort Lauderdale, Florida before returning home to complete a B.A. degree in History at Brigham Young University (2002). He later earned a M.A. in Religious Education and a PhD in Educational Leadership and Foundations at BYU (2007, 2012). His studies focused on the development of religious education programs among the Latter-day Saints. Prior to joining the faculty in Religious Education at BYU, Brother Griffiths served in Seminaries and Institutes for eleven years as a teacher and a curriculum writer. His research focuses on the history of religious education among Latter-day Saints, the history of the Church in the Pacific, and diverse movements associated with the Restoration. He is married to Elizabeth Ottley Griffiths and they live in Saratoga Springs with their three adorable children.

Courses Taught: Doctrine and Covenants (REL C 324, 325), Foundations of the Restoration (REL C 225), The Eternal Family (Rel 200), The Living Prophets (Rel 333)

Areas of Expertise: Doctrine and Covenants, LDS educational history, 20th century LDS Church history, Global LDS Church History with emphasis on the Pacific

Areas of Research: History of Seminaries and Institutes, Global LDS Education, Restoration Movements, Consecration practices

## Fair Use Notice:

The *Follow Him Podcast with Hank Smith and John Bytheway* may make use of copyrighted material, the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright holder. This constitutes a “fair use” and any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material on this podcast is offered publicly and without profit, to the public uses or the internet for comment and nonprofit educational and informational purposes. Copyright Disclaimer under Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976, allowance is made for “fair use” for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research. In such cases, fair use is permitted.

No copyright(s) is/are claimed.

The content is broadcasted for study, research, and educational purposes.

The broadcaster gains no profit from broadcasted content. This falls under “Fair Use” guidelines:

[www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html](http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html).

### Note:

The *Follow Him Podcast with Hank Smith and John Bytheway* is not affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints nor Brigham Young University. The opinions expressed on episodes represent the views of the guest and podcasters alone. While the ideas presented may vary from traditional understandings or teachings, they in no way reflect criticism of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day leaders, policies, or practices.



Hank Smith:	00:00	Hello, my friends. Welcome to FollowHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I'm here with the incredible John Bytheway. Hello, John.
John Bytheway:	00:09	Hi Hank. Good to be here again.
Hank Smith:	00:10	John, we just reviewed Acts one through five. Our little church is now being directed by the Savior, although he is in a different location. The apostles have gained power and strength. Peter is performing miracles. He's giving these fantastic speeches. He is bold. What do you think this little church is going to do now?
John Bytheway:	00:30	Yeah, this has been really fun because we got done with the gospels, which felt like the get ready, get set, and now the Book of Acts is go. And at first Peter just went fishing and then Jesus came and said, "What are we doing here?" We're reading this going, "Wow, what happened? These guys are on fire. They're going out, they're doing things, and they're gaining converts by the thousands. So how do we manage all of this?" They're doing that great commission, going into all the world, they're doing that. There's got to be challenges that go along with that, right?
Hank Smith:	01:00	Yeah, absolutely. I think the Lord, and I've read ahead a little bit, but I think the Lord is preparing a new generation of converts to really fuel this fire. John, in order to help us understand this next section of Acts, Acts 6, 7, 8, and 9, we have an incredible scholar and friend joining us, Casey Griffiths. Casey, what do you think is going to happen in this next section?
Dr. Casey Griffiths:	01:24	This little section tells us how that little church of Jerusalem expanded through the whole world with some help from some very unexpected people. In fact, maybe the last person you would think that would help them.
Hank Smith:	01:37	Awesome. John, why don't you introduce Casey to our audience?
John Bytheway:	01:41	Yeah. We're so delighted to have Casey back again. We've seen his happy countenance on here before. We've had Casey before. He was born and raised in Delta, Utah. Everyone there

has a happy countenance. Served his mission in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, came back to BYU, got a degree in history, later, a master's in religious education and a PhD in educational leadership and foundations at BYU. And his studies have focused on the development of religious education programs among Latter-day Saints. His research focuses on the history of religious education among Latter-day Saints, history of the church in the Pacific, and diverse movements associated with the restoration. He is married to Elizabeth Ottley Griffiths. They live in Saratoga Springs with their four adorable children, and I like to watch Casey on Scripture Central videos and they're awesome. So we're really glad to have him here. Thanks for joining us, Casey.

- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 02:35 Thank you very much for having me. It's always a joy to be with you two brethren.
- Hank Smith: 02:41 We love Casey on followHIM. I'd encourage anybody to go back to those Doctrine & Covenants lessons we did with Casey. They are fantastic. They were really life changing to me and just being around Casey, you get full of light when Casey's around. Casey, Acts 6, 7, 8, and 9. Title of the lesson is "What Will Thou Have Me Do?" So I guess I'm going to ask that of you. What will you have us do in moving forward in this lesson?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 03:09 Well, the main story here is we're introducing a huge character in the New Testament. The guy who takes over is the main character of the Book of Acts and then writes a significant portion. That's Paul. But Paul, who here is known as Saul, isn't something we want to rush into because there's a lot of really interesting figures leading up to Saul who later becomes Paul's conversion that we want to take time to talk about too. So there's Stephen, there's Philip, James, and Peter and John are still in the mix here. And the story of Saul's conversion really has to start all the way back here with these helpers that come into the church named Stephen and Philip who we find a little bit about in these early chapters.
- Hank Smith: 03:55 Should we go right into chapter six? Do you want to give us some background? We're happy to do whatever you want to do.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 04:01 I'd be more than happy to give you some background. So just like you mentioned, the church is expanding and it's getting bigger and they run into the basic problem, all expanding movements have, we need more help. So the apostles meet together and in Acts chapter six, starting verse three, they decide to choose seven men of honest report, full of the Holy

Ghost and wisdom who may be appointed over this business. They need seven people specifically to look after the poor, and they name each of these seven people, but we really only get stories about two of them. That's first Stephen, who's discussed in Acts six and seven, and then Philip who's going to come in Acts chapter eight and get a little bit about him too. They described them here as, Stephen, a man full of faith in the Holy Ghost. He is appointed to look after the poor, but it's really his missionary work that takes center stage and his goodness, his example that starts us down the road to where Saul becomes a convert to the church.

Hank Smith: 05:01 Okay. I don't want to get away from the Bible here, but as you were describing the situation, I couldn't help but think of the early church, the restored church. They're growing at a huge rate. They need some help to take care of the poor. Doesn't that feel like the Doctrine & Covenants?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 05:16 You're speaking my language now because I'm normally a church historian, but yes, the parallels here are very, very strong between the early church where they're growing, they're growing fast, they need help. They have all these unlikely people come into the scene that can help them do what they need to do.

Hank Smith: 05:33 Yeah, that's beautiful. So let's jump into chapter six. Walk us through Stephen and Philip and how they influence Paul's conversion.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 05:40 Okay, well, Stephen gets right in there, and Stephen appears to be kind of a firebrand. He starts talking to people and speaking out and gets accused of blasphemy, down in verse 11. Stephen just kind of out of the gate is immediately set up as a dangerous person in verses 14 and 15. These are the same people that targeted Jesus just a year or two earlier said, "We've heard this man say," this is verse 14, "Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and change the customs that Moses delivered to us and all of a sudden the counsel looked steadfastly on him and saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."

06:17 So Stephen, straight out of the gate gets into trouble, but the accusation is he's going to wreck the system of worship we have. He's an acolyte of this Jesus of Nazareth who wants to change the law of Moses and the traditional way we worship. And so Stephen kind of turns that accusation against them and gives a lengthy discourse to point the entire Old Testament towards Jesus Christ and basically try to convince them that the whole point of everything they're doing is to adhere to the

teachings of the coming Messiah, who's the person who gave them the teachings of Moses in the first place.

- Hank Smith: 06:57 Oh, so chapter seven is going to be his response to them saying, "You're a follower of Jesus of Nazareth and you want to get rid of the law of Moses." And he's saying, "Let me show you what the law of Moses really was doing."
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 07:08 Stephen's a good scriptural scholar, and chapter seven is actually a great recap of the Old Testament. It's kind of the Old Testament in five minutes basically where he walks through everything going back to all the way to Abraham, is where he starts the story and hits the main major points of why they're here, why they worship and where everything came from. He walks through Abraham, Isaac. In verse eight, he mentions Jacob and the 12 patriarchs. Talks about Joseph, talks about the Egyptians, and now he gets to where Moses is. But all of this is leading to the main point that Stephen's trying to make, which is basically, "I'm not trying to change your system of worship, I'm trying to show you what the point of your system of worship really is to begin with." So you continue to walk through the verses and he talks about Moses, he even gives us some interesting biographical information about Moses and how Moses got in trouble with the Egyptians and some of the things that happened there after Moses killed the Egyptian. This is a good commentary on the Old Testament.
- Hank Smith: 08:12 Yeah, this isn't in the Old Testament, some of this stuff. He must have had other sources.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 08:16 Yeah, I'm assuming Stephen is drawing from a more pure source than we have today, or he's giving inspired commentary by the Holy Ghost. Either way, this is good stuff where Moses kind of is cast out as well and then meets God. Verse 32, "The voice of the Lord speaking on him saying, "I am the God of my fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." And Moses, tremble and durst not behold." And he just keeps going through explaining, "Hey, this is your heritage. Let me explain to you what your background is." Then he starts talking about David and Solomon. David and Solomon build the temple, but people misuse the temple. People use the temple to worship these false gods. And David and Solomon are complicit in this in some sense because of their own personal wickedness, but kind of his whole discourse leads to verses 48 and 49 in chapter seven.
- Hank Smith: 09:13 I noticed that he quotes Moses verse 37, this is what Moses said, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of

your brethren." This is Stephen pointing to Christ right there. He is saying, "Moses knew about Christ and told them he was coming."

- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 09:28 Yeah. He's taking their scriptures and doing the same thing the Savior did to say, "Hey, all of this history was leading to something," Moses said there would be a prophet that would come. David and Solomon were commanded to build a house unto God. That house in one form or another is near the place where Stephen is prophesying, but then he tries to take this house that they built all their faith around and cause it to transcend what they're using it for. That's in verses 48 and 49, "The most high dwelleth not in temples made with hands, saith the prophet. Heaven is my throne, earth is my footstool. What house will you build me saith the Lord or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things."
- 10:12 So he's trying to say to them, yeah, the temple's important, but the temple's not the point. The point of all this is to understand and know God. If the temple is helping you get closer to God, then that's good. But you guys are so concerned with the tickety tackety of the law that you've sort of looked past the whole reason of the law, which was to bring you to Jesus Christ. And in your obsession with the law, you've started to see the law and the temple to a lesser extent as the point of your religion when it never really was to begin with. Yeah, it's not the end.
- Hank Smith: 10:50 Yeah. We don't worship the temple.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 10:52 That's right.
- Hank Smith: 10:53 We worship the Lord.
- John Bytheway: 10:55 The very thing that they said at the end of Acts six is he's speaking blasphemy against Moses and here's Stephen, "Let me tell you about Moses," and gives this great detail and by what he's telling us, honors Moses. Right. And of course Moses is a type of Christ and then leads up to what you were just saying about, "I'm not destroying Moses. I honor Moses," and he gets all the way up to the temple. How could he be speaking against Moses? I guess it's the law of Moses, is that what they're saying he's speaking against?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 11:28 Yeah. Their charge against Stephen is he wants to change the customs, which Moses delivered against this. That's what they say in Acts chapter six. They're accusing Stephen of sort of trying to subvert Moses and Stephen's turning it back on them

and saying, "What do you think Moses was going for in the first place? Why do you think Moses told you there was going to be another prophet that would come along if what Moses gave to you was the end of everything that you're supposed to get to?" And Stephen's trying to say, "Hey man, it's not Moses that you're supposed to be worshipping. It's supposed to be God. And Moses, the temple, and the entire system that Moses gave you are only useful in the sense that they get you to God." And you can understand verse 51 in chapter seven, "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears. You do always resist the Holy Ghost as your fathers did. So do ye."

12:22

Now this isn't exactly how to win friends and influence people kind of thing. Right? Stephen is a little too blunt. In fact, as I was reading through this, the parallel that I kept going back to is Stephen is like Abinadi in the Book of Mormon where he just doesn't seem to be afraid of what the consequences are going to be. He's more interested in making sure that they know they're on the wrong track and they're misleading people. So at risk of his life, which he very much is doing here, he tells him how it is verse 52, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they've slain them, which showed before the coming of the just one of whom you have now been betrayers and murderers." So this is some strong, strong language. You guys have betrayed Moses by killing the people who were sent to do the same thing that Moses did up to and including the very best of the best, the just one, Jesus Christ himself.

John Bytheway:

13:21

I would love to offer our listeners a way to explain to their children what uncircumcised in heart and ears means. And I've always just figured that talking as much as the book of Acts does and starts referring to those of the circumcision kind of refers to the Jews, but maybe to all of the law of Moses, those that are following that. What would you say, you haven't made covenants in your heart and ears? How would you explain verse 51, if you're a mom or a dad? What does that mean?

Dr. Casey Griffiths:

13:53

That's a great question. I mean, as a mom or a dad, you don't have to explain circumcision in great detail, I would say. But circumcision is very much an outward thing, that's literally done to the outside of your body to show a covenant. When he says you're uncircumcised of heart, I think what he's saying is you're going through the motions and you're acting like a righteous person, but inwardly, you're really not a righteous person. The Savior and Paul, are later on going to use this title called the Whited Wall, when they talk to people or empty sepulchers. Basically the idea was there's a tomb and it's full of dead bodies and it's got decay and death on the inside, but they painted on

the outside so it looks all good. And he's basically saying, "Yeah, to a person observing you on the outside, you seem like a really righteous person, but on the inside you're uncircumcised of heart. You've made those covenants and you walk in an outward way. But inwardly, you don't really believe this, do you? At least you're not practicing fundamentally the way a person should if they really believe this."

14:58 And this is Stephen, I mean, I'm guessing because he was called to assist the poor, that part of his accusation could be linked to the fact that these guys aren't doing anything to help the poor. They're spending all their time trying to tamp down Christianity when the Christians are doing everything that they can to try and bring everybody together, make sure everybody's fat, everybody has a roof over their head, everybody's taken care of. Well, it seems like these rulers are more interested in the appearance of good and the accumulation of power and wealth. Luke is a cinematic writer. He's really good at what he does, and he has Stephen have this dramatic confrontation with the scribes and Pharisees.

15:39 And then it's kind of like the camera pulls back and there's this guy standing over to the side kind of listening to what Stephen says. I guess if we're comparing Stephen to Abinadi, this is Alma the Elder, except Alma the Elder, if he didn't feel bad about anything that happened to Abinadi and actually sort of participated in it as well. So it's possible, yeah, that what Stephen says really does come down into Paul's heart because I never realized that Paul quotes Stephen and takes this idea of temples built without hands and it's diffused through all of his writings. You know, "You are the temple of God," he's going to say in first Corinthians. So that's an interesting connection, Hank, thanks for pointing that out to me.

Hank Smith: 16:19 Yeah. I'm just wondering if he's like, "Hmm, that's a great point."

John Bytheway: 16:23 I think that that's another thing, we call the temple the house of the Lord, but he's not limited to that place. Is that the way we would say it?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 16:31 I would say that definitely, that holy places can exist everywhere. And the other thing is there's a real tendency sometimes in religion to become obsessed with ritual and place and missed principle. This would be like a person that goes to the temple once a week and participates in ordinances, but then is mean to his kids or talks bad about his neighbor or is dishonest in his business dealings or anything like that. That

honestly temples are there to point us towards the principles that make us better people and that lead us to God but the temple isn't the point.

17:11 Where there was no temple, and in our faith there was a long period of time where there was no temple, people could still make covenants with God in the hopes that those covenants would lead into their everyday life. And Stephen saying, "Yeah, you guys have the temple, but what good is it doing to you? Look at how you treat everybody around you and how you respond when a genuine prophet comes into your midst. You can't see past the temple to the person who's inspired the temple and everything that you've been doing."

John Bytheway: 17:38 I remember somebody speaking about the temple, and the more we go to the temple, the more the temple is in us. It's that sort of an idea. Not just the going to it and showing up at the geography, but having it become a part of us. So thank you. I appreciate that.

Hank Smith: 17:54 The manual brings up a great point here from Stephen's speech. It says, "The Jewish leaders were responsible for preparing the people for the coming of the Messiah, yet they had failed to recognize the Messiah and rejected him. How did this happen? Part of the answer may be found in Stephen's words, Acts 7, 51, 'You do always resist the Holy Ghost.' " And then it goes on to ask some great questions. What do you think it means to resist the Holy Ghost? Why does resisting the Holy Ghost lead to rejecting the Savior and his servants? As you read Acts six and seven, look for other messages that Stephen taught the Jews. What attitudes was he warning against? Do you detect any similar attitudes in yourself? What do Stephen's words teach you about the consequences of resisting the Holy Ghost? How can you be more sensitive and responsive to the promptings of the Holy Ghost in your life? Great little section from the manual where you can take this verse. You do always resist the Holy Ghost and say, "Okay, this is happening to them. How might this also be happening to me?"

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 18:50 And it's interesting that they use a phrase in verse 55 to describe Stephen. They say, "He being full of the Holy Ghost." So they're comparing and contrasting Stephen saying to these guys, "You guys know the law, but you don't live the law or have the life of God within you." To Stephen who's saying, "I know the law and I'm trying to have the Holy Ghost with me to direct me from time to time," because the scriptures are great, the temple is great, but all of these things can become idols in a sense that we worship. I mean, even a temple or the scriptures

can become idols if we see them as the end of the law. The end of the law is to connect with God, to always have the spirit to be with us and to receive direction and counsel and guidance that helps us when we're not in the temple or when we don't have the scriptures present or when we have to make decisions based on how the Spirit directs us to do certain things.

- John Bytheway: 19:49 I like what you're saying. I like how when it starts out in Acts seven, it says that Stephen, verse three, "Pick men, pick seven men who are full of the Holy Ghost," right? Verse five. So they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost and all the way to the end, he's full of the Holy Ghost. Back to the Christmas story, Herod had scribes on his staff. When the wise men came, he was like, "Hey, tell me where would this Messiah be born?" They knew the answer. Maybe they weren't full of the Holy Ghost though. So nice to be a scribe, even better to have the Holy Ghost like Stephen did.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 20:25 And Stephen's discourse here proves he's quite the scribe. Seems like he really knows his stuff.
- John Bytheway: 20:30 It sounds like off the top of his head. Yeah.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 20:32 Deliver a resounding discourse on the law where it came from. He knows his stuff. He's just trying to get them to connect the law and their history to the fulfillment of that law, which understandably, they were expecting something different than a suffering savior. But at the same time too, they should have known that the point of the law wasn't to destroy their enemies. It was to free people from sin.
- Hank Smith: 20:57 That's awesome. I like what you said that he doesn't seem to be so fearful of the consequences and they're coming.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 21:04 They're coming.
- Hank Smith: 21:05 Yeah.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 21:05 Stephen uses pretty inflammatory language. The interesting thing here is this isn't a set execution. This isn't a, "Let's take him to the Romans and let's find out if we can get this guy executed." This is a spontaneous crowd reaction. Verse 54, "They were cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth." I mean, that is visceral language, basically saying that instead of even submitting Stephen to the law, they're so angry and filled with contention and hatred, they have to kill him themselves and kill him in a violent, visceral way. This is one of

the real painful deaths of the New Testament because Stephen is almost torn to pieces by these people. He's stoned to death. But contrasting that, Stephen says, "Hey, the temple isn't the temple. It's being filled with the Holy Ghost. It's knowing God." And in these dying moments, Stephen has his own vision.

- 22:02 This was scripture mastery when I was a kid, so I have it memorized. I remember quoting it multiple times as a missionary. I still refer to it in my class. Verse 55 and 56, "He being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God and said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."" Stephen is going to be okay, I think Luke inserts this so that we know. And for his courage, he's rewarded with a vision of the true temple, the presence of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost inside of him.
- Hank Smith: 22:44 And he's so like the Savior as he dies, right? Verse 60, "Lord-
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 22:49 Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 22:49 "... Lay not this sin to their charge."
- John Bytheway: 22:53 Which is amazing. I mean, I am a natural man. I would've been going, "You guys are in so much trouble." Right? That's what I would've been thinking. And he's forgiving. That's amazing.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 23:05 Luke gives us this little tease here that Stephen's being stoned to death, he's being executed. But pull the camera back. Verse 58, "They cast him out of the city. They stoned him. The witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul." So Luke is setting up the next chapter of the story by showing this person who doesn't participate in the stoning, he's careful to say, but is okay with the stoning and actually assists the people that are stoning Stephen, who's going to become a huge figure in the story as it goes forward.
- John Bytheway: 23:41 I think that could answer Hank's question. He was obviously in the vicinity when Stephen said that God dwells not in temples made with hands. He was obviously close by. Can I add something else? My students sometimes when we say, why did they have to take Jesus to the Romans? "Oh, because they were the only ones who could do capital punishment."
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 24:00 Execution.

John Bytheway: 24:01 Right. And yet they stoned Stephen. You kind of alluded to this, Casey, this is more like mob behavior. I mean, the idea of stoning is everybody throws it and you don't know who really killed him. Isn't that part of it?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 24:13 That's part of it. Yeah.

John Bytheway: 24:14 That's more of a mob. Ah, that's more of a riot happening. That horrifying way they stone Stephen.

Hank Smith: 24:21 And I think we probably need to at least mention that when we were younger and we use this as a scripture mastery, it was meant to point out that look, they're two separate beings, that Jesus is on the right hand of God. So how do you be on the right side of something that doesn't have a body?

John Bytheway: 24:41 Or doesn't have a hand? Yeah. Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 24:46 I did an exercise in my class when we were going through scripture mastery and said, draw a picture of what this would've looked like. And this kid ran up to the front and literally stood on his own right hand. And we all sat there confused for a minute and said, "What are you doing?" And he goes, "Well, if God and Jesus are the same person, then this is Jesus standing on the right hand of God."

Hank Smith: 25:07 Standing on his own right hand.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 25:08 Yeah, that was a nice little pithy image. I mean, I don't want to get into any tangles with Trinitarian theologians, but it is tough to square what you see here with the idea that God and Jesus are the same person. So it's a useful text for Latter-day Saints and Joseph Smith borrows a lot of the language in these passages, especially when we get to Saul's conversion a little bit later on to try and describe what happened to him and what his experience is.

Hank Smith: 25:35 Oh, okay. So we have that to look forward to.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 25:38 Let me maybe add one thing here too. Is Stephen a successful missionary? We'd have to say, I mean, no. Yeah, he kind of is a bright star, he's a shooting star that flames out immediately. Pretty much shortly after his calling is given he has this confrontation, he's killed, and it doesn't seem like he converts anybody. But Saul is there and you note that Saul paraphrases him later on. And even though it's difficult to sort of discern this

from the limited text we have, you have to imagine that seeing someone stand up with the kind of conviction that Stephen does, and then also I hope he heard Stephen say, "Lay not this sin to their charge," starts to affect and work on it.

- 26:24                      And one of the things to keep in mind is what makes a successful teacher of the gospel? What makes a successful missionary? It's not always those outward numbers. When I was a missionary, some missionaries were obsessed with the number of baptisms and confirmations and discussions and all those things. By those metrics, Stephen's very unsuccessful. But by other metrics, he's real successful. He converts or starts the process of conversion for the most successful missionary probably of all time.
- Hank Smith:              26:56                      Yeah, that's a great statement. And Luke seems to be weaving this together. This led to this and I can now introduce this young man named Saul. He's going to have some impact later on.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths:      27:09                      Luke's doing a good job here too, kind of showing us who the real main character of the story is. There's a lot of scholars that believe that Luke and Acts, the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, should be read together, that they're really one work with two parts. The Acts or the Acts of the Apostles could be renamed the Acts of Jesus Christ through the Apostles because you see the Savior popping in, especially in these chapters, to assure Stephen that he's going to be okay, to visit Saul later on and perform his conversion. The Savior is still helping all these people down the path, even if he's resurrected and moving on to other things at this point too.
- Hank Smith:                27:51                      Wonderful.
- John Bytheway:            27:52                      What we had said last time too is that it's kind of the Acts of Jesus through the Apostles, which I really like. Stephen is like Abinadi, and Saul is like Alma the Elder.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths:      28:03                      This idea of success in ministry or missionary work. Stephen put me in mind of when I was reading through this, a guy on my mission who was serving as a bishop. He was a wonderful guy, happy guy, blessed the lives of hundreds and hundreds of people. But one night I'm eating dinner at his house and he was talking to me about earlier in his life, he grew up in the church, but he left the faith. He sort of became a prodigal son and went off the path and drank and smoked and did all kinds of things that he wasn't supposed to do. And he said one day he was after an all night bender laying on his couch and he looked out the window of his house and he saw two guys in suits coming

up the sidewalk. His home teachers, and home teachers walked up, knocked on the door, he didn't answer the door, he saw them knock again, he didn't answer the door. And then he saw them turn around and walk down his path and leave.

29:03 And those home teachers, I would guess, would've said, "We're a failure. We tried. We didn't do anything." He said he saw them walking away and he thought to himself, I want what they have. And a couple days later he came back to church. He cleaned up his life. And when I knew him 10 or 12 years later, he was serving as a bishop blessing and helping the lives of hundreds. Now again, it's one of those things where you think, "Am I a failure? Am I successful?" Especially in missionary work where sometimes there's so much pressure to be an amazing baptizer. There's all kinds of success that happens. And sometimes even something that seems unsuccessful, a Stephen or a Zion's camp or two home teachers walking up to a door can have profound long-lasting effects on a person and their lives. So you never know exactly how your actions are going to affect others. You do what you think is right and sometimes those blessings are multiplied in the lives of the people around you.

Hank Smith: 30:05 Yeah. David Larson from Scripture Central writes, "Stephen was an example of the believers and one who was a witness of Jesus's exaltation to the right hand of God. The Greek word *marturos* means witness. This is the origin of the word martyr, which in English contains the additional concept of one dying for his or her testimony. As one who died for testifying things he had both heard and, heard and seen, Stephen became the first Christian martyr. Appropriately, the name Stephen, *Stefanos*, means crown in Greek. Although he was convicted of blasphemy and stoned to death by those who would not believe his testimony, Stephen most certainly earned the crown of life promised to those who are all faithful unto death." So Stephen can be someone we think about and talk about maybe more in the church.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 30:56 Wonderful insights.

John Bytheway: 30:58 Yeah, that's really cool.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 30:59 And he's a great figure, a Christ-like figure.

John Bytheway: 31:02 Especially that forgiveness and being full of the Holy Ghost. You guys remember how Alma stepped down from being Chief Judge went to Zarahemla, then went to Gideon, and then he went to Ammonihah and in Ammonihah, they spit on him. It was horrible. And as he was leaving, this is in Alma 8:14, "Came

to pass while he was journeying thither being weighed down with sorrow, waiting through much tribulation and anguish his soul because of the wickedness of the people who were in the city of Ammonihah. It came to pass while Alma was thus weighed down with sorrow, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him saying, "Blessed art thou Alma, therefore lift up thy head and rejoice." And I can imagine Alma going, "Why? They hated me."

- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 31:46 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 31:47 "I had no success in Ammonihah. What do I possibly have to rejoice about?" And I love what the angel says, "For thou has been faithful in keeping the commandments of God from the time which thou received thy first message from him." And then I'm so glad Mormon left this in, "Behold, I am he that delivered it unto you." It's the same angel that stopped him when he was out trying to destroy the church. And now he's like, "Alma, you're doing so great, but notice that you have cause to rejoice. Why? Great cause, because you've kept the commandments since you first heard them." And I love to share that with missionaries. And you both know I have a son on a mission right now that if you are keeping the commandments, if you are trying to keep the mission rules, whatever, you have, not only cause to rejoice, you have great cause to rejoice even if nobody's listening to you. I love that little message from the Book of Mormon about why you can rejoice even when nobody's listening.
- Hank Smith: 32:46 That's beautiful. Thanks John.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 32:48 No, I really like that. Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 32:51 So Casey, seems like we end our story of Stephen and pick up a new story with Saul, but then we get a new character also in Philip.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 32:59 Yeah, there's a little deviation because earlier I think you and I both compared Stephen to Abinadi and said Paul's like Alma the Elder. But one major difference is Alma the Elder repents.
- Hank Smith: 33:12 Yeah.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 33:13 Saul does not. In fact, it picks it up in Acts chapter eight verse one, "Saul was consenting unto his death."
- John Bytheway: 33:21 Yeah. He needs a bigger intervention. Doesn't he?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 33:23 He needs a shock. Yeah. Imagine if Alma the Elder saw Abinadi get burned to death and was like, "Yeah, I'm okay with this." That's Saul basically says at that time there was a great persecution against the church, which was at Jerusalem. They were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles. And jumped down to verse three, "Saul, he made havoc of the church entering into every house and hailing men and women and committed them to prison. Therefore, they were scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching his word." So as he's setting up the story here, you see Alma the Elder repents, he sees Abinadi's example and he changes his life.

34:00 Is Saul like Alma the younger? I don't know if that's a fair comparison either. Partially because you get the feeling that Saul isn't like Alma the younger, where he's wicked and he knows he's wicked. He's the more dangerous type of persecutor of the church. Someone who believes they're right and thinks they're doing God's will. He's a zealous disciple of the law of Moses and thinks, "Hey, these people, they got to be stopped. They're going to wreck everything that God has set up." And that makes him maybe a little scarier because he thinks what he's doing is right until right up to the moment when the Savior changes the course of his life.

John Bytheway: 34:43 And that is scarier. I love the phrase that Jesus uses. It's such a haunting phrase, "People will kill you and think they're doing God a favor." Whoa.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 34:52 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 34:54 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 34:55 And yeah, here's Paul, "These blasphemers have got to be stopped," because he's a Pharisee and he knows all that. He needed a bigger intervention.

Hank Smith: 35:04 And he's got a powerful motivation. When you think you're doing God's work and you're not, you still have quite a motivation.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 35:11 When you watch a TV show or movie, the scariest type of villain is the one who thinks they're the hero of the story. And you get the feeling that until the road to Damascus, Saul sees himself as the hero of the story. The person who's doing what he thinks God wants him to do, doing the right thing, which makes him a little more frightening.

- John Bytheway: 35:31 One of the things I noticed in reading the book of Acts that I kind of hadn't considered before, the Jews were spread out all over the Mediterranean. There were synagogues all over the Mediterranean. I guess I had always kind of imagined everybody was right there in Jerusalem, but it sounds like they're spread out already. I guess there were ships and people could get on ships and move around. I'm jumping the gun a little bit, but here they're going to spread out and they're going to find Jews all over the Mediterranean. Is that a fair statement, guys?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 36:02 It's fair to say the Lord is preparing for this worldwide church to kind of spread out. You've got the Roman Empire creating these good conditions for missionaries to travel and travel safely. And you've also got Jews being spread throughout the Roman Empire and now you've got Christians. So Saul's acts, even though they're not, I guess you would say outwardly helpful to the church, do set the stage for the next part of the story. But the Luke's trying to tell, which is how the church grows and spreads throughout the known world at that time.
- John Bytheway: 36:36 I just think it's interesting. They were all over the place. And that's coming up, but he always goes to the synagogue first and in Corinth and in Athens and Cyprus, and I guess they had some synagogues up there.
- Hank Smith: 36:50 Now Casey, why does Luke take us away from Saul and go to Philip?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 36:54 Well, Philip's the second of the seven. Like I said, only two of the seven get their stories told. Who knows how many interesting stories are left out. But of the seven introduced in Acts chapter six, Philip is one of them as well. And this story also is going to set us up for a couple things that become important down the road. For instance, Philip goes to Samaria, he's preaching Christ. And then a couple interesting things happen. People hear what Philip is doing and the miracles that he's carrying out. And there is a man there named Simon. It mentions, this is verse nine, "In the same city used sorcery and bewitch the people of Samaria giving out that himself was some great one to whom they all gave heed from the least to the greatest saying, "This man is a great power of God.""
- 37:42 So Philip comes along and everybody says, "Oh, have you heard of Simon? He's this guy who can do wondrous things too." And they start to set up a contrast in this chapter between people that exercise the power of God for good reasons, and Simon who exercises some kind of power, probably not of God, but for more nefarious reasons. So they're also contrasting between

genuine disciples of Christ and the miracles they can do and the kind of counterfeit miracles that sometimes are performed by people who pretend to be great, who do them for less than pure motives, I guess you'd say.

- Hank Smith: 38:22 So he looks at this and he's like, "That's quite a trick. I want that."
- John Bytheway: 38:26 Yeah, yeah. "I could add this to my repertoire." Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 38:29 Yeah.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 38:31 Yeah. He hears what Philip is doing. And it actually says, "Simon himself believed also," this is verse 13, "And when he was baptized he continued with Philip and wondered beholding the signs and miracles which he had done." So Philip is kind of a new preacher. He brings in this convert, but then we have the more experienced church leaders come on the scene. Peter and John show up in verse 14. They're invited from Jerusalem to come to Samaria and meet with those who have received the word of God, but who it mentions here have not yet received the Holy Ghost. So they're setting up another contrast here between genuine ministers and people that are false ministers along the way, and it's all going to come to a conflict. So verses 15 and 16 says, "They were come down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost," which implies they've been baptized, but they haven't been confirmed yet. They haven't received the Holy Ghost, which this is a major theme throughout all of Acts, right?
- 39:27 A genuine teacher of Jesus Christ will be filled with the Holy Ghost and have the power and gift of the Holy Ghost with them. As verse 16 says, "It had fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. And then Peter and John authorized ministers laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost." And Simon sees this and says, this is great. He even offers them money. Verse 19, "Give me this power that on whomsoever I lay hands, they may receive the Holy Ghost."
- Hank Smith: 39:56 I'll pay for it.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 39:58 Yeah. "Hey, can I buy into your racket here? Because this is really amazing what you're doing." Peter rebukes him showing a sign of a genuine minister. I'm not doing this for money. And that's not where the power comes from. It's not mine to give away. Verse 20, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou has

thought the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou has neither partner nor law in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God." Good stuff.

- Hank Smith: 40:25 It's pretty brutal of him.
- John Bytheway: 40:26 Yeah. What was the story they used to tell? I can't remember. Someone who was very wealthy died and how much did he leave behind? And the other person at the funeral said all of it. And just the idea, your money's all going to go too. But also, it reminds me of Peter saying, I just love that in the last episode, "Silver and gold have I none but such as I have," and such as he had was so much better than silver and gold, "Such as I have give I to thee." When at first it sounds like, "Well, I don't have any of that, but I'll give you... But it turns out what I have is so much better." And what he's offering here is so much better, giving the Holy Ghost than anything that can be bought with money.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 41:12 I wonder if the contrast here is between Paul or Saul who's doing bad things, but with his sincere motive, and Simon who's doing good things but with an insincere motive. The worry here is priestcraft, that the person like Simon is in this sort of for the power, the fame and the money and thinks because of that, he can manipulate people with money too. When the apostles are trying to say, "Hey buddy, this isn't a business. This is a way of life. This is a gospel that we entered into to genuinely help people, not become rich and famous."
- Hank Smith: 41:47 Peter does soften on him here towards the end, right? "Your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness and pray, God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Simon's an interesting character, isn't he? That he does want this gift. He wants to pay for it. He's kind of a very confused new convert. Probably still wants to go out and be a sorcerer and make money off of this. And yet Casey, you called it from Peter. This is good administering, is that what you call it? This is...
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 42:19 I can't remember what I said, but I think the contrast here is between bad acts driven by sincere motives, that's Saul, and good acts driven by insincere motives, that's Simon. So I don't know what's better in the sight of God. At least Peter recognizes unless he repents and gets his heart in the right place, he's not going to be able to help very many people.
- Hank Smith: 42:43 I wonder why Luke put this story in here because he started with Saul, then he has Philip. Is it just to tell us more about

Philip's ministry or is Luke trying to tell the reader, "You can't be this way, you can't be like Simon. You have to be sincere"?

- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 42:57 I wonder if he's doing this to try and soften Paul a little bit later on where when Paul comes into the story, the major thing we have to remember is he thinks he's the good guy until the Savior intervenes. And so I think that Luke might be wanting us to not judge Saul so harshly just because he causes havoc in the church. I mean, he's doing what he thinks is right. Where with Simon, there's this kind of deep cynicism of he's doing what's good on the surface, but he's doing it for the wrong reasons. In Luke's estimation, Simon is lesser than Paul, even though Simon, at least outwardly appears to be doing really good things. He's helping people, but for the wrong reasons.
- Hank Smith: 43:43 So far, Luke has introduced us to these seven men that you told us about. He's told us about Stephen and his martyrdom. He's introduced Saul, who is going to be a major player later on. He's walked us through a little bit of another one of the seven, Philip and his interactions with this sorcerer as Simon. What's going to happen next? I think it's Philip. Do we keep following Philip?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 44:08 Yeah. Philip goes on another adventure that seems designed to highlight how the church is spreading and expanding beyond Judea. It's going to be more than just a Jewish offshoot. It's going to be its own thing that goes out into all the world. And so they mention the conversion of this eunuch from Ethiopia, actually, verse 27 is the biography of the guy, "A man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure and who'd come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning sitting in his chair reading Isaiah the prophet." Now, if he's reading Isaiah for fun...
- John Bytheway: 44:49 That's impressive.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 44:49 This is a golden investigator. This is a guy we can work with. He's got the kind of hobbies that seem to give him a proclivity towards the gospel and everything like that. But again, he may be run into the same thing we have with Isaiah verse 30, "Philip sees him and says, "Understand what thou readest?" The eunuch says, "How can I except some man should guide me?" And he desired Philip that he would come and sit with him." So I guess he's reading Isaiah, but he's like the rest of us. He doesn't understand what the heck he's reading
- Hank Smith: 45:22 Even way back then. Yeah.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 45:24 Yeah. Let me explain it to you. And Philip does what Stephen does here. He takes an Old Testament passage or the story from the Old Testament or an Old Testament teaching and says, "Let me explain to you what exactly this means." He goes to verse 32, and he's going to be quoting here an Isaiah passage that talks about Jesus Christ, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation, his judgment was taken away. And who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth." And the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I pray thee, of whom speak of the prophet this, of himself or some other man?" Interpret this for me. In other words, this is a contrast again between Simon an insincere, outwardly, good person. Here is a sincere seeker of truth that just doesn't really know what these passages mean, and needs somebody to come along and put it all together for him, which Philip gladly does.

Hank Smith: 46:25 He has some great questions. Who's he talking about? Where is that in Isaiah? Is this Isaiah 53?

John Bytheway: 46:31 Absolutely. Well, 33 is, "Who shall declare his generation?" It was taken from judgment. And in Isaiah, when you see judgment, if you change it to justice, it makes it a little clearer. In verse 33, "In his humiliation, his justice was taken away. What happened to him wasn't just. Who shall declare his generation?" And then Abinadi says, "He will see his seed. When his soul is made an offering for sin, he will see his seed because here he has no generation." I mean, I just wrote that in my margin, Philip uses Isaiah 53 to teach Christ.

Hank Smith: 47:04 This is a golden investigator, right? Someone who's like, "Who is he talking about here?" "Well, let me tell you."

John Bytheway: 47:10 "Who is this person?" Yeah, "Who's this suffering servant," as the Isaiah scholars call it.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 47:17 And boy, does he tee Philip up for the right thing. Philip verse 35, "Opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus." So he's ready to go. He's without much guidance, but very sincere, very clear on what his desires are, and Phillip sees him ready to go. There was a guy in my mission, I didn't teach this guy, one of my companions did. They gave him a copy of the Book of Mormon. They said, "Read it and we'll come back." They came back, asked him if he read. He said, "Yes," which when you're a missionary, you're over the moon, right? If they said they've read. They said, "Did you pray?" He goes, "Yes." They said, "Did you get an answer?" He said, "I'm not sure." They go, "What do you mean?" He said, "I

did have a dream that was kind of funny last night." And the guy literally said, "In the dream, a guy named Moroni came and told me the book is true. Do you think that's my answer?" And my companion was like, "Yeah, we're pretty sure that's your answer."

48:15 I mean, the eunuch has been completely prepared before Philip comes onto the scene. He just needs an authoritative teacher. So this might tie into this theme of authority too, because Peter and John have authority that they're able to give people the Holy Ghost. Simon wants to purchase it. Philip has authority, and all the eunuch needs is a person who has authority to come along and say, "Yeah, this is what that means." And then surprisingly, again, showing a golden investigator, "They came to a certain water and the eunuch said, "Here is water. What doth hinder me from being baptized?" Holy cow. How would you like to have somebody just say that to you?

Hank Smith: 48:53 Can we do this right now? Yeah.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 48:54 Yeah. Let's do this right now. Philip said, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest, and he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still. They went down to the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him."

John Bytheway: 49:09 One of the things that you've heard me joke about this, Hank, probably, but it appears in the NIV, that one of the early nicknames for this movement was the Way. But King James puts it this Way, like in Acts nine, two, "That if he found any of this Way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." NIV calls it the Way, which I think is so cool. It's referred to it as the Way until they call it Christianity, and I've always loved that because that is like 66.6% of my last name is "the Way".

Hank Smith: 49:49 Casey, this story with Philip running into this golden convert seems like he's even on the right page of Isaiah at the right moment. This is a story told in the Deseret News by our Friend Trent Toone. He wrote this story, "The Lord's guiding hand is often quiet, subtle, and simple. We can miss or overlook his tender mercies if we are not watchful, we may discount them as just chance happenings if we're not humble or do not truly desire to follow the Lord's individual plan for our lives. In the late 1940s, a young man named Guillermo Gonzalez was visiting his sister, who was a sales clerk at the department store in Monterey, Mexico, when he noticed another clerk whom he found to be very attractive. Her name was Godelia. Guillermo

had recently completed his obligatory military service in the Mexican army and declined a commission. After he noticed Godelia, Guillermo decided to visit his sister more often.

50:42 He wanted to talk to Godelia. He would walk her home and they would talk for hours. After several months of dating, Guillermo suggested that they should get married so that their conversations could continue." That's a good...

John Bytheway: 50:55 That's a good reason.

Hank Smith: 50:56 Yeah. Yeah. "Godelia agreed. They were married a few months later. Guillermo and Godelia continued to have long talks after they were married. Often they would discuss religion. They decided they needed something more than what their current situation was offering. It was time to start looking for a new church. It was during one of these conversations that Guillermo made a rather remarkable prophecy. He said to his wife, Godelia, "One day two young ladies will bring us the true religion." "What?" She asked, "What did I say?" He asked. Guillermo honestly had no idea why he had said what he just said. Four months later, Guillermo was out of town working for the railroad when two sister missionaries knocked on the door of Godelia's parents who lived next door to Godelia and Guillermo. Godelia's mother asked for help to get them to go away.

51:50 Godelia helped by bringing the two missionaries over to her house. Godelia had never heard of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, so she accepted a pamphlet with contact information. After the missionaries left, a neighbor came over and warned Godelia to stay away from those girls and called them emissaries of the devil. When Guillermo returned home, Godelia told him about the two missionaries. He told Godelia that these could be the two young ladies he had spoken of months before. Godelia had the missionaries contact information, so the two walked over to the missionary's apartment. No one was home. They left a note asking the young ladies to come visit them the next day. The missionaries taught the Gonzalez's their first gospel lesson. The next morning, Guillermo was so excited about their message. He asked them to stay and continue teaching. The two missionaries stayed all day. When they felt that they had taught them all they knew, he declared he was ready to be baptized.

52:41 On May 30th, 1953, Guillermo and Godelia Gonzalez were baptized. 10 years later, Guillermo was serving as the district president, and later was called to be the stake president of the

first stake organized in Monterey, Mexico. In 1974, Guillermo and Godelia were called to preside over the Mexican Hermosillo Mission. Under their stewardship, tens of thousands of people have joined the church. How easy it could have been for either Guillermo or Godelia to dismiss what they had talked about that night. They may have dismissed it as odd and simply gone on with their lives. Instead, they acted. By tracking down the missionaries. Because of their faith, thousands of lives were changed forever." Awesome.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 53:21

Golden investigators. Reminds me of Newell and Whitney. Newell K. and Elizabeth Ann Whitney, who goes by Ann Whitney, have this experience. They're a little couple living in Kirtland, Ohio. Newell's a storekeeper. Ann writes this later on, she said, "One night, it was midnight as my husband and I and our house in Kirtland were praying to the Father to be shown the way, the Spirit rested upon us and the cloud overshadowed the house. It was as though we were out of doors. The house passed away from our vision. We were not conscious of anything but the presence of the Spirit and the cloud that was over us. We were wrapped in the cloud. A solemn awe pervaded us. We saw the cloud and felt the spirit of the Lord. Then we heard a voice out of the cloud saying, "Prepare to receive the word of the Lord for it is coming."

54:09

At this, we marveled greatly, but from that moment, we knew the word of the Lord was coming to Kirtland. A few days later, a slave pulls up in front of their store. A man walks in and says, "Newell K. Whitney, thou art the man." Newell K. Whitney pauses and says, "Sir, you have the advantage of me. I could not call you by your name as you have called me by mine." The man says, "My name is Joseph Smith, the prophet. You prayed me here. Now what would you have me do?"

54:36

And the whole story with Philip and the eunuch kind of illustrates the Casey Griffiths form of missionary work, which is I do everything I can and everything I do fails, and then somebody who's just really prepared shows up. That was how almost all the people I helped join the church came into the church. It didn't have a ton to do with me. I think all my efforts were just to demonstrate my sincerity. The Lord was working among all these people from different backgrounds, different areas, and getting them ready to just sort of fall into my lap and be ready to join the church.

John Bytheway: 55:17

Exactly. I had a guy knock on the door as a Bishop once and said, "My wife passed away," and last thing she said was, "Take us to the temple and get us sealed," and I don't even know what that

means. "Will you help me?" So yeah, sometimes they walk up to you. I'm going to start noticing chariots when I'm out and about and if anybody's sitting in their chariot reading, I'm walking over.

- Hank Smith: 55:41 Yeah, what are you reading? I just happened to be reading this perfect thing. Yeah. These are great stories. The work is moving forward despite the opposition coming from Saul, and then he's going to turn around and join the team.
- John Bytheway: 55:54 Kind of shows the gospel going beyond Judea and Samaria too.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 55:58 This is an Ethiopian, which is pretty exotic compared to where they're at, showing that, "Hey, the gospel's going to extend to all things, all people. There's going to be no boundaries." But they're just getting the first hints here. The major stuff is going to come in Acts 10 when Peter gets his revelation.
- Hank Smith: 56:15 This story of Philip and this Ethiopian man. The question that the man asks Philip, "How can I except some man should guide me?" I really like that because so often we think if I just sit down with me and the scriptures, that's all I need. I don't need anything else, and there is something to be said for that, right, John? To get the, what do you call it? The pure source or get it...
- John Bytheway: 56:36 Yeah. Cling to the rod of iron, but don't drink downstream from the herd. I mean, we've heard that.
- Hank Smith: 56:42 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 56:43 I'm so thankful for good scholars out there and mentors that can help me understand what I'm reading just like the Ethiopian. I think that's where you're going, right?
- Hank Smith: 56:54 Yeah. I'm with you on this, John, that some of the greatest gospel insights I've had have not come from me just reading, but me listening and asking other people that know a little bit more than me, "What do you think?" President Ballard said it's okay, basically, "To consult the works of recognized, thoughtful and faithful LDS scholars." We have one right here, Casey Griffith. He said, "In addition to counseling us to seek words from church leaders," President Ballard said, "We should ask those with appropriate academic training, experience and expertise for help." This is exactly what I do when I need an answer to my own questions that I cannot answer myself. Elder Ballard says, "I seek help from my brethren in the quorum of the 12 and from others with expertise in fields of church history and

doctrine." We're not trying to say we want to replace your scripture study. We want to help you with your scripture study.

- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 57:47 I've learned a lot by listening to both of you as we've discussed this today.
- Hank Smith: 57:51 I like that the story and even the story of Simon the sorcerer, shows us that this missionary work, though they're joining the church by the thousands, is still done just one person at a time.
- John Bytheway: 58:03 I like that point.
- Hank Smith: 58:05 There's probably a thousand different stories of these type of meetings.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 58:10 Individual conversion narratives, people like the eunuch that are primed and ready to go. People like Simon who really want to join, but for the wrong reasons, so they're not right. And then we get to the main event of this passage in scripture, which is someone who almost has to be dragged in kicking and screaming, but turns out to be exactly who we need at the time.
- Hank Smith: 58:34 Yeah. I've heard it said before that Jesus is the message and Paul is the messenger. He becomes the major missionary of Christianity, taking it from its local area, Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and making it go global, at least global in their mind.
- John Bytheway: 58:55 Please join us for part two of this podcast.



- John Bytheway: 00:01 Welcome to part two with Dr. Casey Griffiths. Acts, chapter six through nine.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 00:07 Paul shows up in Acts nine, although there's still important stories told about Peter and the other disciples, he runs away with the story here. A large part of the rest of the gospel of Acts is the story of Paul, his work, and then a lot of the theology of the New Testament comes from Paul's writings as he reaches out to people to explain concepts and teach. He's just maybe not a golden investigator, but man, exactly the sort of person that the Lord had prepared to come into the church to do a mighty, mighty work. And help a lot of people from a lot of different backgrounds identify with and come unto Christ.
- Hank Smith: 00:44 Fascinating that he becomes such a major, major figure. You just never know with a convert. You just never know with someone you're teaching. It's like Samuel Smith giving that copy of the Book of Mormon to Rhoda Green, and that ends up in the hands of Brigham Young and changes the entire church.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 01:02 Yeah, small and simple things. Small and simple things. But before we dive into Saul's story, can I give him a little backstory here?
- Hank Smith: 01:09 Please do.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 01:10 He gives us a few samples of his backstory in different writings of the New Testament. For instance, in Acts 26, because he's going to tell his conversion narrative three times in the Book of Acts. Luke writes it down three times. Acts 26:5. He says, "My manner of life for my youth, which was at the first among my known nation of Jerusalem, know all the Jews which knew me from the beginning if they would testify after the straightest sect of our religion live, die a Pharisee." This guy is a Pharisee. He is one of the people who he's complicit in Stephen's death. He was probably okay with Christ's death, but he's basically saying, hey, you know where I came from?

- 01:51 In another passage he talks about studying with Gamaliel, who's this really famous Jewish rabbi. And it seems like, because Acts 22 calls him a young man, that he's probably some sort of prodigy. He's studying this stuff as a teenager and a young man. In Galatians, chapter one, he says, "You have heard of my conversation in times past in the Jews religion, how beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God. And wasted it and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in my donation being more exceedingly zealous than the traditions of my father's."
- Hank Smith: 02:29 I was good at it.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 02:30 I was really good at this. Actually, we don't know in what sense he means profit, but he's basically like, I was a big success. I was better than anybody else at this. And this is where that word that we've been using a lot for Paul comes up, he's zealous. That's why I would pull back a little bit and say, yeah, Paul's doing bad stuff, but he's doing bad stuff for good motives. He's not like Simon. He's doing what he thinks is right. We would say a zealous missionary is a good thing. Paul would say, I was a Pharisee. Whatever thou art, act well thy part. I was Phariseeing up the place as best I could, and doing what I thought was right when suddenly I got thrown this huge, huge curve ball. And in all these statements there is a tinge of regret.
- 03:20 In fact, one of the most touching things Paul writes is in 1 Corinthians 15, he's talking about witnesses of the resurrection. And he says this, this is verse eight in 1 Corinthians 15. "Last of all he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that I'm not meant to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace was bestowed upon me was not in vain. I've labored more abundantly than they all, by the grace of God, which is with me."
- 03:58 He looks back over the stage in his life with regret, feels like he's the least of the apostles because what he's done. But we have to give Saul, because he's called Saul here, a little credit that he at least was trying to do what he thought was right. He's not an evil person, he just was raised with incorrect principles, and strived as best he could to live the truth as he knew it. That's why I think the Savior is willing to extend mercy to him, and the Savior deals with him more mercifully than maybe some of the other nefarious figures that show up in the Book of Acts.
- John Bytheway: 04:35 Yeah, I think he's trying to prevent blasphemy from what he believes is blasphemy. And I guess that excuse was used to

execute Abinadi as well, he false prophesied or he was blasphemous. But isn't that what he's trying to prevent, his blasphemy?

- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 04:53 Yeah. And in the Book of Hosea, they go out of their way to point out that King Noah is hypocritical and he is wicked, and he's not living the commandments. In the Book of Acts, Luke seems to go out of his way to point out that Saul wasn't being hypocritical, he was doing what he thought was right and striving as best he could to live the commandments. He just didn't know the full story. If anybody accused Paul of converting from Judaism to Christianity, I think Paul would be the first one to say, "I never converted. I consider myself Jewish. I just finally found out what it all really meant. The truth of my religion was fully revealed to me, but I've always tried to live my religion to the best of my ability, even in those days when I persecuted the church."
- John Bytheway: 05:39 I found the Messiah that my religion prophesied about.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 05:42 Yes, Stephen would say he found the real temple, and learned the meaning behind the temple they built with hands. He came to know what the point was of all these prophets, prophecies, and all the things that he had learned from the time he was a little boy.
- Hank Smith: 05:57 This discussion reminds me of, do you remember Javert in Les Misérables?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 06:05 That's a great parallel. Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 06:06 Wholeheartedly believes he is doing the right thing until the very end. He doesn't have the turnaround that Paul has. But I remember growing up and listening to the music and seeing the play, and reading the book and thinking, how fascinating that both men in this story believe they're the good guy. What does Javert say? "I am the law, and the law will not be mocked. I'll do the right thing."
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 06:34 I think that's the kind of thing Paul would say too. What makes Paul maybe a greater figure than Javert, and I know Javert is not a real person. Is that when Javert is confronted with the truth that what he's been doing hasn't been right, that he's persecuting a just person, he can't handle it. He takes his life. Paul does a complete 180. He's willing to fully admit that he's wrong. I'm the least of the apostles. But now that I know what's right, I'm going to do what's right. I'm going to be zealous in the

cause of good because, before I was zealous, I just didn't know it was for the wrong cause. He has enough greatness of soul that he recognizes when he is on the wrong track and that he needs to repent.

- John Bytheway: 07:19 And so quickly. So quickly too. When as we read what happens to him, he doesn't argue with the vision at all.
- Hank Smith: 07:29 I always have thought of Acts chapter nine as Saul waking up one day thinking today's going to be just like every other day, persecuting Christians, going to find them. And man, at the end of that day he's probably thinking, I did not think. I did not see that coming. I guess he literally can't see at the end.
- John Bytheway: 07:50 Yeah, and it's not persecuting Christians, it's defending... Maybe that's how Paul-
- Hank Smith: 07:55 Judaism.
- John Bytheway: 07:56 I'm defending Judaism, that's what I'm doing.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 07:58 Casting down heretics, defending the truth, he's zealous for what's right. It says, "As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly they're shined around him a light from heaven. He fell to earth and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? He said, who art thou Lord? And the Lord said, I'm Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It's hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what will thou have me do? The Lord said unto him, arise, go into the city and it shall be told thee what thou should do. And the men with surety with him stood speechless, hearing no voice and seeing no man."
- 08:35 Now, this story Paul's going to tell two more times in the Book of Acts, Acts 22 and Acts 26. There's slight variations in it, but again, it's one of those things. One day he's the worst enemy of the Christians. The next day because of his greatness of soul, he accepts correction and changes direction and becomes the greatest missionary of all time.
- Hank Smith: 08:59 Just in a few verses, it all turns around. I think that's a great message for anyone who really wants to turn things around, that you can.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 09:06 Just stop going in the wrong direction, and then you change and do things. And the hint here that Stephen may have affected him. And that was happening in the Savior's own words in verse

five, "It's hard for thee. It's hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

- Hank Smith: 09:22 Maybe something's been inside of him stewing.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 09:25 Something's been bugging him, and he's been getting all these indications that maybe he wasn't on the right track, and it was getting hard for him. And the Savior gently says, I see your internal struggle, let me explain to you why there is a struggle for you to live your religion. It's because there's more to it than you've been taught. You just didn't know the whole story, Saul.
- Hank Smith: 09:50 I'm also fascinated by the Lord's question, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And you're going... I think Saul asked the question, "What? When did I persecute you?" It seems that the Lord takes the persecution of his saints very personally. And as much as you have done unto the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me. Why are you persecuting me? In persecuting them you have persecuted me. Does that make sense?
- John Bytheway: 10:21 President David O. McKay said something beautiful about what we were just talking about. It's hard for thee. He said, "Perhaps during those few days of comparative leisure, Saul began to wonder whether what he was doing was right or not. Perhaps the shining face of the dying Stephen and the martyr's last prayer began to sink more deeply into his soul than it had done before. Little children's cries for their parents whom Saul had bound began to pierce his soul more keenly and make him feel miserably unhappy, as he looked forward to more experiences of that kind in Damascus. Perhaps he wondered whether the work of the Lord, if he were really engaged in it, would make him feel so restless and bitter. He was soon to learn that only the work of the evil one produces those feelings, and their true service for the Lord always brings peace and contentment."
- Hank Smith: 11:15 I like that. I like that we're personalizing Paul here, that this conversion just didn't just happen because of the vision, it was happening. Something was already happening.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 11:25 Yeah, there's stuff stirring below the surface of him. It seems like he's starting to go down the road to conversion before the Savior appears to him and shifts him in the right direction. Because he's a good person. He recognizes that even with the paradigms of his religious faith, he's probably taking it too far. That he's splitting up families and causing problems and hurting people, even if he feels like he's doing it for a righteous cause. He must have started to question his motives. And again, that

idea of it's hard for you. It's hard for you to kick against the pricks. Goes back to a point I keep making with a lot of people recently.

- 12:09 I think it is easier to live the gospel than it is to not live the gospel. It's harder to not keep the commandments than it is to keep them. The Savior said, "My yoke is easy, my burden is light." Yeah, it's a burden, but the burden is lighter than it would be otherwise. And our lives are easier when we follow Christ than if we chose some other path where we didn't follow him. And that resonates with me because I hear so many people that have sometimes left the faith or that are questioning say, "It just seems really hard." And it seems like the Savior's trying to tell Saul, it's harder without the gospel than it is with the gospel. As hard as it is. Life is hard in general, just deal with it.
- John Bytheway: 12:56 I like how you've chosen your words carefully there. It's not easy, but it's easier. And that's what I like to say. The consequences of not living the gospel can be so hard that living the gospel is the easiest way to live. Not easy, but it's easier than the alternatives because of the peace that comes. And life is still hard, there will still be trials. Guaranteed. But it's easier than going through the consequences of not living it sometimes.
- Hank Smith: 13:24 Did you ever work with cattle out there in Delta where you grew up, Casey? What does kick against the pricks mean?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 13:30 Well, the only cattle I worked with was with cow tipping, which you'd be familiar with being from St. George. But a prick could be called a goad. It was something that you would use to get your animals to go in the right direction. And when they kicked against it, it injured them. And the Savior's just... This is his classy way, the Savior has such a way with words of saying, you're only hurting yourself here. What you're doing is hurting you. And there's all kinds of little ways in our life that the Savior goads us onto the right path, but usually it's us that are causing the injury, not the Savior himself.
- John Bytheway: 14:09 Yeah. I like the idea of, how's that working for you, Paul?
- Hank Smith: 14:15 What I find fascinating next is that the Lord has someone ready there in Damascus to go and minister to Paul. Almost like, let me shuffle you towards your new church leader.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 14:25 Yeah. And this guy I think is the real hero of the story.
- Hank Smith: 14:29 Yeah, he is.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 14:31 Paul's going to be a hero later on. He's a good guy. But Ananias, who only shows up in these simple couple verses, is really a great, great example of the virtues and teachings of Jesus Christ in action. That's one reason why I like the Book of Acts, is because it's like this laboratory where all the theories and teachings that Jesus puts out there are put into action. And Ananias is a love your enemies guy. In fact, the language here is so good.

John Bytheway: 15:01 Yeah, he's funny.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 15:02 "There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. And to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias behold, here am I Lord." So he's in tune with the Spirit.

John Bytheway: 15:11 Ready to go.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 15:12 "The Lord said unto him, arise, go into the street, which is called straight." Still there in Damascus. "Inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for he prayeth has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, put his hand on him that he may receive the sight." This is where Ananias bravely and boldly talks back, "Lord, I've heard by many of this man the evil he hath done to thy saints of Jerusalem, and here he hath authority from the chief priest to bind all thee that call unto his name." Ananias is, are you-

John Bytheway: 15:41 Are you sure?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 15:44 Yeah. Like, Saul? Really?

John Bytheway: 15:48 Have you read headlines? I'm ready to go. I'm ready to go.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 15:52 I don't want to question you, but...

John Bytheway: 15:53 It's got to be hard to say that to the Lord too. Do you know who you're talking about?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 16:02 I identify with Ananias because I'm that way too a lot of times. Do we have to do it this way? Are you sure this person? Gosh, I really don't want to. And the Lord said unto him, "Go thy way. He is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel." This is why I love Ananias. If I could tell a weird story, I found this book when I was a college student called, The 100, by Michael Hart. And he ranks the 100 greatest people that ever lived. And I opened it and expected Jesus to be number one. Jesus was number three.

His reasoning for why Jesus was number three is, pretty much everything Jesus taught, some other philosopher taught. And then at the end he goes, there's one original teaching that Jesus did contribute to world religion and philosophy, and that is the idea that you love your enemy.

16:55 Pretty much every other religion has a love your neighbor or be good to those that are good to you, a golden rule sort of thing. But he said, "Jesus taught this idea that you should love your enemy, which no other philosopher, teacher, or religion dared to teach." And then the guy that wrote this book said, "I would rank Jesus as number one if I thought anybody actually did that. But nobody does. And so he's number three." He goes after Muhammad and Isaac Newton.

17:23 Well, here's Ananias. Here's Ananias saying, not only is this guy my enemy, he's the enemy of my friends. And he's dangerous, he's got authority. He could throw me in jail. The Savior says, "No, I need you to do this." And Ananias goes. In fact, look at how he addresses him in verse 17. Brother Saul, he's his brother, even though he's the worst persecutor he knows. "The Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the ways thou camest, has sent me that thou mayest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith and arose and was baptized." Gosh, I love Ananias. And for that reason. I don't know if I would've had the fortitude or the faith, I guess, to go to someone that was actively persecuting me that could throw me in prison and address him as my brother, just based on the Savior's recommendation of who he was.

John Bytheway: 18:22 That sounds pretty confident. Was there a tremor in his voice? Hi, excuse me, brother Saul. Hi, the Lord that appeared to thee, or was it the Lord sent me? I mean, he just had a vision of the Lord, that's pretty cool. And apparently the Lord told him what happened. What happened to Paul. And another thing, isn't Ananiah the names of one of Daniel's friends in the Old Testament. He was named after him, maybe one of those friends?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 18:52 Yeah, probably.

John Bytheway: 18:53 Yeah. Brother Robert J. Matthews in a book called, Unto All Nations, or maybe it's an essay called Unto All Nations. He said, "Ananias was probably the presiding officer of the church in Damascus, since the Lord came to Ananias and instructed him to seek out Saul, teach him the gospel and heal his blindness. Ananias must have been the person in charge of the church in

that area. It is likely that he was the man Saul would've desired most to imprison. It is an ironic turn of events that the very disciples Saul wished to silence should become the one who taught, healed, and baptized him."

- Hank Smith: 19:29 That's great.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 19:29 That's a great insight. Is it possible that Saul was on his way to Damascus to arrest Ananias?
- John Bytheway: 19:37 Ananias, I stopped him for you. Go get him.
- Hank Smith: 19:42 There's a hint of a premortal life in Acts 9:15, because he is a chosen vessel unto me. And so far we haven't seen Saul do anything to earn that title chosen vessel. There's not a story in here that says he has done anything that the Lord would say, yes, he's my guy. Maybe this is a foreordination. This is something that has been in the works since before Paul was born.
- John Bytheway: 20:08 And I believe Elder McConkie said that very thing, that this was clearly a foreordination of Paul, and he needed to be stopped on the path he was on to go fulfill that.
- Hank Smith: 20:20 Yeah.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 20:21 And doesn't it speak to the fact that you can't really look at any person and really say what their story is going to turn out like. Externally, Saul is a persecutor of the church. He's overzealous, he's their worst enemy. They don't know that he's chosen, but the Savior knows and has this idea intent for him. It's interesting to me that this conversion story is so powerful that Saul, it seems to be his default setting. When he gets in front of him, his first discussion is to tell his conversion story. He does this in Acts 22, when he is in trouble in the temple. Then when he is brought before Festus and King of Agrippa, he tells the story again. And how just about every person that I know has some remarkable aspect of their conversion story. It's very, very rare that anybody's like, yeah, I just always did what I was supposed to do, and then...
- John Bytheway: 21:18 Nothing ever happened. Yeah.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 21:20 Yeah, nothing ever happened. Even before we started recording this I was talking to Lisa and David, and they were both telling me how they came from these surprising backgrounds. That sometimes we want to look at a person and just say, there's no

way. Don't waste your time. Let's move on and find more fertile ground. When you never really know where that's going to be, and you never know exactly what the Lord has in store for them, that we just can't dismiss people outright. I have that conversion story, and I think just about everybody does. I didn't go around persecuting Christians or anything, but I wasn't always the best person. And I'm grateful that the Lord sees potential in people like me and people like Saul, where sometimes we really don't. Even the best of us, like Ananias.

John Bytheway: 22:10

Yeah. I love the metaphor that all of us will have a road to Damascus experience perhaps. In preparation for this, I was listening to Michael Ballam talking about Paul at a CES symposium. Remember those?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 22:25

Oh, yeah.

John Bytheway: 22:26

Kind-of told, he was a good boy, he was doing really well in singing in opera, and he got a letter from his grandfather that was a loving road to Damascus type letter. And he spoke of it beautifully, the road that he was on. And it's pretty cool, because Brother Ballam talks about going to that theater in Ephesus and has this beautiful trained voice and he got up, was going to sing some classic. And he had this spirit say, no, go sing the Lord's Prayer. And in this theater with all sorts of audiences, Brother Ballam got up, and you can just imagine this, the way that would echo and resonate in that huge theater in Ephesus. He had people come up to him afterwards, embrace him, kiss his cheek, weeping when he's sang the Lord's Prayer. And he said, "I felt like Paul, I was there." And then he got to play the part of Paul in some of the earlier church movies. I don't know, I was touched by his idea that all of us will have a road to Damascus type of experience as you have been explaining.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 23:31

See, and John, I don't know what sparked this in me when you were saying it, but my grandpa was named Paul. My middle name Casey Paul Griffiths actually comes from my grandfather. And I never knew him, but my grandpa wasn't active in the church. Sort of a little antagonistic towards the church from what I hear from my dad. And then one day my dad's twin brother, my uncle Kevin, was riding a horse on the farm. Fell off the horse, got dragged a considerable distance by the horse. In fact, the horse, according to my dad, came along and hit my uncle into several fence posts. And by the time they were able to stop the horse, the kid's just a bloody pulp laying there on the ground. And my grandpa picked the kid up and took him to the hospital. And I never knew the guy, but while they were at the hospital he knelt down and made a covenant with God,

never really made covenants. And just said, "If you'll save my son, I'll change."

24:32 And my uncle's still alive today, just celebrated his 70th birthday. My grandpa came back to church, took his family to the temple, and then a few years afterwards was killed in a car accident. Everything in his life just boom, boom, boom, happened in time for him to make those covenants so that my dad and my uncle grew up in the faith, went to the temple, and then raised families within the gospel as well. And so sometimes when I hear the story I think of my grandpa, Paul. That he was a chosen vessel. That the Lord saw his potential and maybe it took some major shaking to get him to where he needed to be, but that the Lord knew exactly what he needed and how to get him there. Not that the Lord caused my uncle to be in an accident, and my uncle is just a big klutz. He sees us and he knows how our story's going to end, sometimes when we can't really see how that story is going to end.

John Bytheway: 25:32 Thank you for sharing that.

Hank Smith: 25:34 Yeah, that's fantastic. Elder Uchtdorf gave a talk back in 2011 called, *Waiting on the Road to Damascus*. And he says, "One of the most remarkable events in the history of the world happened on the road to Damascus. You know well the story of Saul, a young man who had made havoc of the church. Entering into every house, committing the saints to prison. Saul was so hostile that many members of the early church fled Jerusalem in the hope of escaping his anger. Saul pursued them. But as he came near Damascus, suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, and he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' This transformative moment changed Saul forever. Indeed, it changed the world."

26:18 Later on. Elder Uchtdorf says, "There are some who feel that unless they have an experience similar to Saul's or Joseph Smith's, they cannot believe. They stand at the waters of baptism but do not enter. They wait at the threshold of testimony, but cannot bring themselves to acknowledge the truth. Instead of taking some small steps of faith on the path to discipleship, they want a dramatic event to compel them to believe. They spend their days waiting on the road to Damascus." At the end of the talk he says, "Brothers and sisters, dear friends, let us not wait too long on our road to Damascus. Let us courageously move forward in faith, hope, and charity, and we will be blessed with the light we are all seeking upon the path of true discipleship." So interesting twist, he puts on the

story here that people want this vision, and so they just wait and sit and wait on their own roads to Damascus.

- John Bytheway: 27:10 That's great. Ananias had more than a prompting, it was actually a theophany. But he went right to it, maybe even sensing the danger of it. That's a cool story.
- Hank Smith: 27:22 And Casey, you point out he goes to him, Brother Saul. Ananias is a hero.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 27:28 Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 27:29 Yeah. That's cool.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 27:30 And whether that brother is an attempt to, hey, we're brothers, maybe don't arrest me and throw me in jail. Or if it's him saying, if Christ sees you as my brother, then you are my brother. I think both are incredibly noble to extend a term of familial endearment to someone who's persecuted your best friends and might be coming after you, it's Christian discipleship at its finest demonstrated here. Like I said, Acts is the lab where all the things that Jesus taught are acted out fully from the disciples carrying out miracles. The disciples just living what Jesus taught and seeing how it affects the world around them and makes good things happen.
- Hank Smith: 28:14 I think of Joseph Smith's statement, wasn't it to the Relief Society, the first Relief Society. If you would have God have mercy on you, have mercy on one another. That seems like Ananias is living that here.
- John Bytheway: 28:27 I think the Lord talked to him longer than what we have here, obviously. Because when Ananias went there he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way." How did he know that unless the Lord told him that. He's the one who sent me, and kind of like you prayed me here. Like you said, the Newell K. Whitney story.
- Hank Smith: 28:45 Casey, what happens to Paul next? Do we call him Paul from here on out?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 28:49 Well, that's another aspect to the story too, is his name's Saul, which is a very Israelite name. Saul means great one. He's the first king of Israel. But the real person we're going to know that writes a significant part of the New Testament is named Paul. Paul's a Greek name. Some people have suggested he goes by Paul because he starts to work primarily among non-Jews. But I

would also point out that the word Paul means little. He goes from being a great king, Saul. To Paul, which means small, basically. That gives something of his estimation, this regret that he sometimes feels because he didn't choose the path, he was pushed onto it, and then tried to do the best he could to follow it the rest of his life. Yeah, this is where Saul starts to transform into Paul, though the name formally appears a little bit later on in the Book of Acts as things go on.

- Hank Smith: 29:49 I love how you've been pointing out that Paul does seem to have some... Every time he talks about it, there's some regret. And I think we can learn a lot. Anyone who feels like, man, I had some years of not living the right way. Like you said earlier, Casey. And can I move on from that?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 30:07 Yeah. His regret never seems to fully go away, but he does more than enough to not only repair the damage he's done, but allow the church to flourish and grow. It doesn't seem like he lets his regret stop him from doing good. He's not paralyzed by it. But he does recognize, hey, a little different circumstances. If Jesus hadn't intervened in my life, I might've gone down a very different path, and one that I really would regret knowing what I know now.
- Hank Smith: 30:37 In verse 19, he's with them certain days?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 30:41 Mm-hmm. In fact-
- Hank Smith: 30:43 Is that he's just recovering from his vision?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 30:47 Yeah. He gives a biography, a little bit of himself in Galatians 1. He talks about that he went up to Jerusalem and he went to the apostles. He says that I went to see Peter and I abode with him 15 days. He serves a mission in Arabia. We assume that he returns to Damascus. Another lesson that we would learn here is that he doesn't immediately become the Apostle Paul, the great figure that we know of. There's a transition period. He sees himself as the lowest of the low. He seeks out the wisdom and guidances of good people like Peter and the other apostles. He serves within the church. And then he returns home, and it's really 10 years.
- 31:29 There's this lost 10 years of Paul's life where we don't know much about what was going on before he commences his mission and really becomes the Apostle Paul, the great preacher, the great writer, the great theologian that does all the good. This is another one of those situations where in the Book

of Mormon it sounds like Alma the Elder, or Alma the Younger, was just changed and immediately became good. When if you read into their biographies, it takes time to repent of the things that you've done. And you got to go easy on yourself as you're making this transition into being good, but you can be good. You can grow and change and take your life in a different direction. You can change the story.

Hank Smith: 32:12

And you might shock those around you. Look at verse 21. "Is this not he that destroyed them? They called this name in Jerusalem." People are, what? The shock of the century with this change.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 32:27

Well, that's a side of the story too, is how readily the saints embrace and forgive Saul/Paul for what he's done. You know what? I wasn't picked on in high school or anything, but there was this one kid who was a little bit rough around the edges. And I was a drama/theater kid, that type. It was hard later on accepting him in church callings and seeing him serve to not remember the kid he was in high school. But part of the lesson here too is if someone genuinely repents, they've genuinely changed. And the people that have known them have to accept the change too. That Ananias is the first of, I would guess, many, many disciples of Christ who have to get used to the idea of, oh, now Saul is one of us. And then, hey, Saul is a great, great teacher, and Saul's a great, great leader. And Saul's someone that God really did choose to do something amazing. The Lord saw his potential, even if we didn't.

John Bytheway: 33:32

Now he's an apostle. Not only is he a great teacher and missionary, but one of the absolute leaders of the church.

Hank Smith: 33:41

And changes Christianity, forms Christianity. A lot of the theology comes from Saul. Comes from Paul. What happens to him next here in Acts nine?

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 33:53

Well, he gets to have a couple more adventures where now the Jews, this is verse 23. Verse 22, sorry, let's back up. "Saul increased more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the very Christ." Early indications, he's good. He's very good.

34:12

He proves to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ, and now he's at the receiving end. He's the Stephen, verse 23. "After many days were fulfilled, the Jews took council to kill him. Then laying in wait was known of Saul, and they watched the gates day and night to kill him. The disciples took him by night and led him down by the wall of the basket." Then he goes to Jerusalem. He

goes into Damascus as a blind man, is healed, and then has to escape out of a basket. And this is a portend of what the rest of his life is going to be. When Paul says, "I was a Pharisee and I was good at it," I think part of him is saying too, and imagine what my life would be like if I had stayed there.

34:52 I don't know if he would've been happier, but his life may have been less troubled. Because there's other places where Paul goes through everything that's happened to him in his letters. We're talking about a guy who's going to get stoned a couple times, and shipwrecked and thrown in prison, and eventually killed for his beliefs. But his conversion's sincere. In everything that he was doing, it feels like he went in and he took his heart to work with him every time that he went out to teach the gospel.

Hank Smith: 35:24 I wonder what the disciples are thinking in verse 25. We are helping Saul escape the authorities who want to kill him. It's just got to be a, I did not see this day coming.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 35:38 And then in verse 27 he meets Barnabas, who's going to be his missionary companion. This is the great ones assembling and getting ready to go out and preach the gospel. Has an opportunity to meet with Peter too, he says in his later biography. And Peter and Paul are going to have a complicated relationship later on in the scriptures, but he's changed and he's genuinely repented, and this is the prodigal son in real life. This is a person who changes, changes for the better, and then lives the change and endures the end.

Hank Smith: 36:10 There's this phrase I want to look at in Acts 9:26. He's going to Jerusalem, he wants to teach and talk and be part of the group, but they were all afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple. They couldn't believe that he had changed.

John Bytheway: 36:26 That's why I like that Barnabas is here. No, really. No, I was there. I saw him. And Barnabas relates to them. This is the vision that he had, "And I saw him preach boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." And nice that Barnabas was there to say, no, he's not trying to enter in incognito, I watched him and he really did change.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 36:46 He's not a double agent, he's the real deal. But it does speak to his reputation among the saints that when he shows up in Jerusalem it's not a yay. It's a, are you for serious? Are you sure about this guy? Sometimes we can't see what miracles the Lord can do and conversion in people's lives. And we maybe need to recognize people's potential a little bit more than we do.

Hank Smith: 37:11 Yeah. Reminds me of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, being scared that the Nephites would accept them as they're going in. Are you sure they'll let me be part of this? And they let them in. Elder Holland, you both will recognize this has said, "Let people repent, let people grow. Believe that people can change and improve. Is that faith? Yes. Is that hope? Yes. Is that charity? Yes. Above all, it is charity, the pure love of Christ." He says, "If something is buried in the past, leave it buried. Don't keep going back with your little sand pail and beach shovel to dig it up, wave it around and throw it at someone saying, 'Hey, do you remember this?' Splat. Well, guess what? That's probably going to result in some ugly morsel being dug up out of your landfill with the reply. 'Yeah, I remember it. Do you remember this?' Splat.

38:00 And soon enough, everyone comes out of that exchange, dirty and muddy and unhappy and hurt. And what our father in heaven pleads for is cleanliness and kindness and happiness and healing. Such dwelling on past lives, including past mistakes is just not right. It is not the gospel of Jesus Christ."

38:20 I think this is from, Remember Lot's Wife. And later on in this talk he brings up something that Paul actually says, and I want you to think of it in these terms. Paul says, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before," meaning into the future. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." I wonder if Paul could be hinting a little bit to his past life. I forget those things which I did before, and I reach forward. I don't spend my time in the past. And eventually, I think the church here does take him in. They were all afraid of him. Believed not that he was the disciple, but they believe Barnabas. And they're like, okay, all right. And they accept him.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 39:09 Recognizing there's two little verses here I love too. "When he gets to Jerusalem, they're afraid of him. He spake boldly." This is verse 29. "In the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians, and they went about to slay him. Which when the brother knew, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him forth to Tarsus." In other words, this guy is so onboard with the gospel he'll take on anybody anywhere, so much so that the disciples of Jerusalem have to bundle him off and send him home because he's getting them in trouble. And that's Saul/Paul in a nutshell. He's a person who was all in, in every aspect of his life. And in this case, doesn't look to the past. Now that he's a disciple of Christ, now that he knows the full meaning, he's all in and go do everything he can. And this is a prologue to the rest

of the Book of Acts where he has some very, very interesting adventures and helps a lot of people.

- Hank Smith: 40:07 That's great. As we wrap up our discussion on Paul's conversion, I wanted to read this great opening paragraph from the manual. "If anyone seemed like an unlikely candidate for conversion, it was probably Saul, a Pharisee who had a reputation for persecuting Christians. So when the Lord told the disciple named Ananias to seek out Saul and offer him a blessing, Ananias was understandably hesitant. "Lord," he said, "I have heard by many of this man how much evil he hath done to thy saints." But the Lord knew Saul's heart and his potential, and he had a mission in mind for Saul. He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. So Ananias obeyed, and when he found this former persecutor, he called him brother Saul. If Saul could change so completely, and Ananias could welcome him so freely, then should we ever consider anyone an unlikely candidate for change, including ourselves?" Casey, walk us through the rest of this chapter. There's a story that probably gets overshadowed by Paul a little bit.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 41:13 Paul's such a big character, he tends to overshadow everybody, even though these chapters are a wonderful series of little vignettes about the church growing. They get Saul bundled off to Tarsus, because he is causing problems. It says, "The churches," this is verse 31, "through Judea, Galilee, and Samaria were all edified walking in the fear of the Lord." Things are going good. Then it just mentions a little story here. Peter, and Peter's walking around doing good, acting out what the Savior had taught in the gospels. Acts is the lab where everything's carried out. He finds a man named Aeneas, which kept his bed eight years, was sick of palsy. He said, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ, make it the whole. Arise and make thy bed. And all that dwelt and Lydda and Saron saw him and turned to the Lord." Then it mentions a woman named Tabitha who lives at Joppa.
- 42:01 Her name by interpretation is Dorcas, but for obvious reasons we'll use Tabitha here to describe her. Peter goes in and-
- Hank Smith: 42:10 She's full of good works, right?
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 42:12 She's full of good works. Yes, she's a righteous person. This woman was full of good works, verse 36. "And almsdeeds and all that she did. And it came to pass in those days she was sick and died, with whom they washed, they laid in the upper chamber." Peter comes and sees them. He sees the people weeping and walks in, verse 40. "Peter put them all forth,

kneeled down, prayed. And turning to the body said, 'Tabitha arise.' And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand and lifted her up. And when she had called, the saints and widows presented her alive. It was all made known throughout Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord."

42:52 You could say this is the end of the first phase of the Book of Acts. And the main thing that the early part of the Book of Acts seems to be teaching is that Jesus is going to give his power to his disciples. That Jesus is still pulling the strings, he's still moving people exactly where they need to be to carry out the gospel. But also, that exactly what Jesus had promised in the gospels, that his disciples would do the same miracles as him, and even greater, is fully carried out here. The ultimate miracle, the last miracle the Savior performs before he has to submit to his death at crucifixion is to bring a person back to life. Peter does that here. And it seems like the Book of Acts is saying, hey, there are miracles of healing. There are miracles of revelation, and there are miracles of conversion.

43:46 We're seeing two people in chapter nine being saved, Tabitha being saved from death and Saul being saved from a life bound up in the wrong cause. This is where phase one of the Book of Acts ends. And then phase two is going to be about Peter, because Peter's now in the place he needs to receive the revelation he gets in Acts 10 that directs the church to go to all the world. Now that we've established the church is healthy, it's doing good, Jesus's promises have come true, it's time for them to take all the good that they have and start to expand out of the areas they've lived in and take the gospel to all nations.

John Bytheway: 44:27 I like that comparison of raising someone. We both said it earlier, the Book of Acts of the Apostles could be called the Acts of Jesus Christ through the Apostles. And we've seen that his power is still here and it's being used by the apostles.

Dr. Casey Griffiths: 44:44 And we might add the Book of the Acts of Jesus through the apostles and the disciples. Because people like Ananias, people like Philip aren't apostles. They're ordinary men, ordinary women who are doing good things and carrying out miracles as great as the ones Jesus was able to perform.

Hank Smith: 45:03 Casey, you've walked us through these chapters beautifully. Acts 6, 7, 8, and 9. I now understand Stephen more. I understand Philip and Ananias, Saul of course. As you put these all together, what are you hoping our listeners walk away with?

Dr. Casey Griffiths:	45:20	Well, I hope they get the impression that there is a plan behind your life. That someone like Stephen wasn't a failure, he planted the seed that led to the conversion of Saul. Philip was able to do great and wondrous things. And finally, the Savior was able to take the exact opposite person, Saul, and turn him into the Apostle Paul, a mighty missionary that could go out to all the nations. I would say, don't make snap judgments about people and who they are and what their potential is. There's sometimes a tendency for us to look at people, especially those that believe differently from us, or those that are struggling with their faith and say, "That's it, I've seen the end of their story. There's nothing more I can do."
	46:06	The message here seems to be that even a person who seems to be the worst of the worst, like Saul, can become the best of the best. Can become the best and the brightest. There's a chosen vessel before God, and God sees all those potentials. It's not really our job to judge, our job is to be like Ananias and be ready when the call comes, no matter how difficult it is to do what the Lord intends for us to do so that we can bring about his work.
Hank Smith:	46:36	That's fantastic. I think you've shown us here that this work of the Lord is done on a one by one basis. Stephen touches Saul. Philip teaches the Ethiopian man. Ananias goes to Saul. Peter goes to Aeneas and to Tabitha. Every one of these stories is an individual going to speak to, uplift, and help another individual, and that's really how the work goes forward.
Dr. Casey Griffiths:	47:02	Amen, brother.
John Bytheway:	47:04	Yeah.
Dr. Casey Griffiths:	47:04	That's absolutely right. It's not about mass conversion, it's about individuals. I think this is part of the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy where he says, hunters and fishers, you go out and you affect people one at a time, and you never know how that individual act will result in a multiplicity of conversions. When Aeneas goes out into the street and goes to meet Saul, he's just doing the next right thing. He doesn't know that he's about to help convert the greatest missionary in the history of the world, he just does what the Lord wants him to do for that next little moment to help this one struggling individual who's really having a hard time. Small and simple things, tiny miracles multiplied lead to great miracles.
John Bytheway:	47:50	I think too, we can see the Lord is involved in his work, I think that's true today. And not just sitting back and watching, but

he's involved and he's giving people promptings and visions and things like that. And it's just fun to see this unfold. I like reading the Book of Acts because they really are acting now. It's a good title, because they're acting on everything they've learned, and it's fun to see all these different situations and how this person comes and that person comes. And as you've talked to us today, Casey, beautifully, thank you.

- Hank Smith: 48:22 And I can't help but think of Luke writing, who wrote the Book of Acts. Luke writing in Luke chapter five, here's Peter about to be called. And he says, "Depart from me, I am a sinful man, oh, Lord." And Jesus says, "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men." And we're finally getting to the vision in Acts chapter nine here, we're getting to the vision of what Jesus saw at that moment. Does that make sense? That Peter's like, I am just a sinful fisherman, I promise you don't want me. And what the Lord has in mind, probably beyond this, is the Peter of Acts chapter nine, going in and healing Aeneas and Tabitha. And what's coming up next with his visions. The Lord sees us as the glorious beings we are capable of becoming.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 49:15 Yeah. The Lord sees us as we can be, not necessarily as we are. In Acts chapter nine you get to see Peter in the full height of his power becoming fully what the Lord intended it would be. And then you get to see Saul at the start of his journey to become what he'll eventually become too.
- Hank Smith: 49:32 Perfect.
- John Bytheway: 49:33 And I think that each of us could talk about leaders we've had in our lives who saw more in us than we saw in ourselves, and that pattern is showed by the Lord here. And maybe we can do that with each other too.
- Hank Smith: 49:46 Yeah, we can be those type of leaders. We can be those type of parents. Try to see people as the Lord knows they'll become. Beautiful. We want to thank Dr. Casey Griffiths for being with us today. Casey, it's been fantastic. Before I let you go, you and a friend of the podcast, Scott Woodward, are working on a project. Tell us about that.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 50:06 Yeah, thank you for that. You guys actually gave us the microphones we're using for our podcast. Scott and I are working on a podcast called Church History Matters, and it basically is where we take a tough issue in church history, something like first vision accounts, Book of Mormon translation, polygamy, race and the priesthood. We do a deep dive into it. I'm talking a couple hours where we explore every

aspect of the subject and help you figure it out. We hope it's going to be helpful for people that struggle, or love people that struggle, especially in issues with church history. That's affiliated with Scripture Central, and we hope that you'll give it a listen, I think it'll be helpful.

- Hank Smith: 50:46 Awesome. It's followHIM stamp of approval on that. John, what a great day. The Book of Acts is exciting, isn't it?
- John Bytheway: 50:55 Yeah, it really is. I've got it all marked up. And I thank you, Casey, I'll remember you whenever I'm looking at these chapters again.
- Dr. Casey Griffiths: 51:02 Oh, thanks for inviting me on, guys. It's a pleasure.
- Hank Smith: 51:04 We've loved having you. We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen. We want to thank our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. And of course, remember our founder Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll all join us next week, we got more chapters in the Book of Acts coming up on Follow Him.
- 51:22 Today's transcripts, show notes, and additional references are available on our website, [followhim.co](http://followhim.co). Followhim.co. And you can watch the podcast on YouTube with additional videos on Facebook and Instagram. All of this is absolutely free, so be sure to share with your family and friends. To reach those who are searching for help with their Come Follow Me study, please subscribe, rate, review, or comment on the podcast, which makes the podcast easier to find. Thank you.
- 51:48 We want to thank our incredible production crew, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, and Ariel Cuadra. We also love hearing from you, our listeners.
- Speaker 4: 52:01 I'm sitting here at the park watching my kids while I'm listening to the Come Follow Me videos, and you invited us to share how Come Follow Me has changed my life. Well, Come Follow Me has converted me to my Savior. Because of studying, Come Follow Me, we received revelation that we needed to move, and we are currently living where we are because of studying Come Follow Me. When last year began, I was not excited to study the Old Testament because it has always been so weird, but last year I came closer to my Savior that I thought possible.
- 52:39 I'm so grateful for my Savior and his teachings, and our prophet who has invited us to have a home centered, church supported

study. Last year I learned about the Abrahamic Covenant, and all of a sudden all of the scriptures just made so much more sense, and they were so relatable to my life. I am so grateful that I've been able to have conversations with family and friends because we're all studying the same things at the same time, and everything just seems so exciting and so applicable, and I'm so grateful for Come Follow me. Thank you for all your contributions.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO  
RESIST THE HOLY GHOST?



- Hank Smith: 00:04 Hello my friends. Welcome to another FollowHIM Favorites. My name is Hank Smith. I'm here with the incredible John Bytheway. Welcome, John.
- John Bytheway: 00:11 Thank you, Hank.
- Hank Smith: 00:12 You know the drill. Today, we take on one question from this week's Come Follow Me lesson and the question we're looking at today comes from Acts 7. There's a moment where Stephen says to the people who are about to kill him, he says, "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart, you do always resist the Holy Ghost." And the Come Follow Me manual has this question. What do you think it means to resist the Holy Ghost?
- John Bytheway: 00:39 Oh, it's such a good question. I put in my margin, 1 Thessalonians 5:19 where Paul says, "Quench not the Spirit." You've got this Spirit and you dump cold water on it. You resist the Holy Ghost.
- 00:54 And one of my favorite little analogies I heard way back when Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, "We come into these congregations. Sometimes, the speaker brings a jug of living water that has in it many gallons, and he pours it out on the congregation and all the members brought was a single cup, and that's all they took away."
- 01:13 And then he said this. "Or maybe they put their hands over the cup and they didn't get anything to speak of." I thought, why would you put your hand over the cup? To me, that's an example of resisting the Holy Ghost. This could make me uncomfortable because I know I need to do better in this area, so I'm going to resist that. Is that what you think that means, Hank?
- Hank Smith: 01:32 I think you're right on there, John. It reminds me of Amulek in Alma 10:6. He says, "I did harden my heart. I was called many times and I would not hear." Like you said, I put my hand right over the cup.

01:45 It might be easy for someone today to just zone out on their phone. That would be a way to resist the Holy Ghost, right? I'm not paying attention. I go to church and I'm on my phone for two hours and I go home thinking, "Well, that didn't give me much." Well, actually, you are the one resisting the Holy Ghost.

John Bytheway: 02:04 I'll bet many times as a seminary teacher, you've had a really nice moment is coming or feeling, and somebody wants to spoil it.

Hank Smith: 02:12 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 02:12 And you think, "Don't do that." That's just a great moment. And sometimes I wonder if that could mean the same thing. So, good counsel, don't resist it. This is a best friend you could possibly have is the Holy Ghost.

Hank Smith: 02:27 Right here in chapter seven, they resist the Holy Ghost. They had crucified the Savior. They now kill Stephen. You don't want to resist the Spirit over and over and over, and you might get to a place where you're doing things you never thought you'd do.

John Bytheway: 02:41 You would never do. The Holy Ghost would try to warn you against so, boy. And the moment the Spirit acts, it was President Monson's strength. He'd get a prompting and he would just do it. I need to be more like that.

Hank Smith: 02:52 He would act. He wouldn't resist.

02:54 We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called Follow Him. You can get it wherever you get your podcasts. We're with Dr. Casey Griffiths this week. You'll love what he has to say about these chapters, and then join us back here for another FollowHIM Favorites.