

"The Matchless Gift of God's Divine Son"

Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

followHIM: 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 is receiving the Savior sometimes harder than celebrating Him? President Bonnie H. Cordon examines how to make Christmas intentionally Christ-centered, how to receive the Savior without fear or insecurity, and how T*he Living Christ,* family traditions, and the sacrament invite us to accept God's greatest gift.

Part 2:

President Bonnie Cordon continues to share powerful experiences from her years in Church leadership that testify of Christ's hope, healing, and confidence in the rising generation.

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Part 2 -

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- 51:02z End of Part 2 - President Bonnie Cordon

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Biographical Information:



On October 13, 2023, Cordon was announced as the 10th president of Southern Virginia University

Bonnie H. Cordon served as Young Women General President from March 31, 2018, to August 1, 2023.

Personal Life

Bonnie H. Cordon was born to Harold and Carol Hillam and was the third of seven children. She learned her work ethic growing up on the family's 80-acre farm in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

She met her husband, Derek, while they were both students at Brigham Young University. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple in April 1986 and are the parents of four children. She loves spending time with her grandchildren.

Her faith has carried her through her life. She served a full-time mission in the Portugal Lisbon Mission. Her Portuguese language skills came in handy when she served with her husband, Derek, as he presided over the Brazil Curitiba Mission from 2010 to 2013. She has served in her ward and stake Primary, Young Women, and Relief Society organizations. She also taught early-morning seminary.

She loves the outdoors and enjoys jogging, scuba diving, hiking, and skiing. She enjoys being with her family and traveling. "I love people," she said. "We are children of Heavenly Father. He loves us."

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Hank Smith:	00:00	Coming up in this episode on followHIM.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	00:04	Our wallets were really thin. We didn't have much money. We just had a lot on our plate. We were both working full-time and Christmas was coming. You just wanna buy the right present and you wanna have Christmas and it's your first Christmas. I honestly do not remember what I got Derek, but I will never forget what he gave me.
Hank Smith:	00:27	Merry Christmas from followHIM. My name is Hank Smith and I am your host. I am here with my matchless co-host John Bytheway. John, you are the best co-host I've ever had on followHIM. You are matchless.
John Bytheway:	00:45	Of all the things you've ever said to me, Hank, that's one of them. Yeah, that is.
Hank Smith:	00:52	John, Merry Christmas. Tell me about Christmas in the Bytheway home. Tell me what comes to mind.
John Bytheway:	00:58	You remember how when Samuel the Lamanite prophesied and there was the death of Christ on the other side of the planet, they could feel the vapor of darkness. I feel like on the opposite end with Christmas, it's almost a palpable feeling in the air. There's this joy of Christ in the air and you can almost feel it. That's what I think of now in my old age is just can you feel that Christmas spirit everywhere?
Hank Smith:	01:23	I love that John. We are privileged today to have with us President Bonnie H. Cordon. John she had the title of President earlier when she was in the General Young Women's. Now she's president again. President Cordon again out at Southern Virginia University. President Cordon, thank you for taking time for us. Thank you for being here.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	01:48	It's wonderful to be here. I'm just honored to be with both of you.

Hank Smith:	01:51	Oh, we are excited. We've been looking forward to this for a long time. Sister Cordon, if it's okay, I'm gonna call you Bonnie for our episode. Would that be okay?
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	02:01	I think that'd be a great idea.
Hank Smith:	02:02	Bonnie, tell us about Christmas and what you want to do today. Where do we want to go?
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	02:08	How do you have Christmas without Christ? I love the fact that for this Christmas study we get to talk a little bit about the Living Christ. I'm hoping to hear from you what does Christmas and what does Christ look like in your world and maybe walk through some of the things that help us to understand him a little bit better through our time together.
Hank Smith:	02:31	I may be incriminating myself here, but I think it's every year that I get to the new year and think I could have focused on Christ more. Seems to happen to me every January. You'd think that I'd improve and maybe I do a little bit every year. John, I'm sure all of our listeners know President Cordon, but let's give a bio anyway.
John Bytheway:	02:51	Yes, I'd love to. President Bonnie H. Cordon, she was the Young Women General President 2018 to 2023. You were navigating that during COVID, which must have been fascinating. Then in October of 2023 became the president of Southern Virginia University, the Knights, did I get that right?
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	03:13	We are the Knights.
John Bytheway:	03:15	And there's a founding family of the Knights that are out there at Southern Virginia University. She grew up on an 80 acre farm in Idaho Falls. The best talks I've ever heard in my life start with, I was raised on a farm. To her father is Harold G. Hillam and her mother, Carol Rasmussen. Bonnie also served as a full-time missionary in Portugal, Lisbon mission, and then later served with her husband Derek as president of the Brazil Coritiba mission from 2010 to 2013. She's currently coming to us from Southern Virginia University, so we're so glad you joined us.
Hank Smith:	03:56	John. I've talked about this before, but I have a very, very special place in my heart for Southern Virginia University, the Knight family. I've known them my entire life. I spent time out there back in the 19 hundreds when the school just opened. John, you talked about the feeling of Christmas that you can feel

		it in the air. Same thing at SVU. You can feel it when you walk around campus. There's a feeling.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	04:23	There's a great gathering going on.
John Bytheway:	04:25	Yeah. Hank, I have to add on a personal note. One time, I don't remember when it was, maybe after a Christmas concert at the Conference Center or something, I ran into President Cordon and mentioned I had a daughter serving a mission in Tahiti and the next thing I knew my daughter Natalie, tells me she got this beautiful email from the president of the young women, what that meant to her. A few years ago, I got a picture of my son who served in the Charleston West Virginia mission and served at SVU. I thank you for keeping in touch that meant so much to me and to my children as well. Thank you.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	05:09	Well, we're grateful that the Bytheway children are changing the world from Tahiti to Buena Vista. That's pretty good.
John Bytheway:	05:16	That's a good stretch.
Hank Smith:	05:18	John, I never told you I don't think, that my nephew Braxton, who I just adore, served out there as well. It's a special place. It really is, and it's not Buena Vista, it's Buena Vista.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	05:31	Yeah. I had his niece that served in this mission. She served on the campus of Buena Vista, knew a lot more about it than I did long, long ago. It's neat to see, in fact, our missionaries that walk on the campus now, I think what a great mission you have. They just had two baptisms, one on Saturday and one on Sunday and it's just remarkable to see the gathering. The young adults were the ones that are gathering each other as they teach each other what the Savior looks like on a college campus.
Hank Smith:	06:00	Wow, that's wonderful. President Cordon, if you don't mind, there's people listening who think what is Southern Virginia University? Can you give us a brief summary of what it is and how it came to be?
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	06:13	Southern Virginia University is private. It's a private university. As far as its mission, young people that come to the campus are primarily members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because the mission is based on the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, so it's not owned by the church, but is private and it's remarkable to be in classrooms where you have a professor speak bilingual, he can speak chemistry in Christ, philosophy and faith. It's remarkable to watch these young people come.

They have great abilities to communicate, to think critically and I thought, now why is it? Why is it that you're developing such soft skills that are so transferable and I realize it's because they get to study in a Socratic type of learning where it's a smaller, more tailored education. People know your name, the professor knows you as you walk into class. They know whether you're there or not and but more than anything they get to hear your perspective and your understanding, so it really is in a remarkable space to learn. It's been fun to walk the halls and to hear the stories of these young adults.

Hank Smith: 07:27 I'll tell you John, I work BYU in Provo and we have a beautiful campus, but if you go to SVU, go about the middle of October, you'll think you're in the Celestial kingdom. You might be.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 07:41 Yeah, you might be. I think that's what the Celestial Kingdom will look like. When we have a football game, our stadium just looks over the Blue Ridge Mountains and I have to remember, look down, watch the game. Don't look at all of the beautiful parts of the campus. It's remarkable.

Hank Smith: 07:58 If you have a high school senior in your home, it might be time to take a look, at svu.edu. Let's jump into the Come, Follow Me lesson for this week. I'm gonna read through the Come Follow Me manual and then Bonnie, let's hand it over to you. We can walk through the Living Christ. We can talk about Christmas. Let's do what you wanna do. Here's how the Come, Follow Me manual starts. The prophet Joseph Smith declared the fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the apostles and prophets concerning Jesus Christ that he died was buried and rose again the third day and ascended into heaven and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it. Over 160 years later, this statement inspired the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to publish the Living Christ, the testimony of the apostles in honor of the 2000th anniversary of the Savior's birth. As Latter-day Saints, we rejoice in the blessing of continuing revelation through modern prophets and apostles. We are thankful for their inspired words of counsel, warning and encouragement, but most of all, we are blessed by their powerful testimonies of Jesus Christ at Christmastime, of course, and throughout the year. These are more than just stirring words of skilled writers or public speakers or insights from scripture experts. They are the words of God's chosen, called and authorized special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world. How wonderful. Bonnie, what do you wanna do today? Where should we start?

Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	09:31	Well, when you just bring up the Living Christ in such power, we might wanna start there. As I looked at it, even the first line just makes me pause. It says, as we commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ two millennia ago, it's interesting, I was in the cafeteria at Southern Virginia University and I read it to a few of the students and I said, tell me what you know about the Living Christ, the document, the Living Christ. They all had some great insights, but then they realized that it was written before they were even born. All of a sudden I thought, oh, I'm kind of old. I said, when were you born? And you know it was 2003, 2007. It was fun to hear what it meant to them, but as we started with, as we commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ two millennia ago, I said, tell me about your Christmas traditions, and it was fun to see how they commemorate. What does commemorate look like to them and what does it look like in their home? I guess I would ask you, Hank and John, what does commemorate look like to you as the prophet so boldly declared? What does it look like to us to commemorate the birth of the Savior?
John Bytheway:	10:40	I have to give a shout out to my wife Kimberly, who brought home a really beautiful nativity scene once from Costco. It's beautiful, it's tall. Then my mother-in-law had this idea of putting a spread of Christmas lights underneath and putting kind of a cloth over it and then a Nativity scene on top of it. We want that to rival the beauty of the Christmas tree to make that the part of the room that you see when you come in is that nativity scene. That's one of the things that I really appreciate my wife and my in-laws teach me is make that the focal point when you walk into the room, not the stuff under the tree, but that that glowing nativity scene.
Hank Smith:	11:32	In the Bible dictionary under the heading of Miracles, it says that miracles are the natural result of the Messiah's presence. I read that once and I think it was around Christmastime that I read it. I thought, there are more miracles this time of year. There's more hearts softened, there's more relationships healed. People are kinder, they give more, they donate more, they're more generous. It hit me that it's probably because we have His name up, we have His name up in our homes and in stores and just His name indicates his presence. If you watch the moment we start taking those signs down or we put 'em in the closet and we put our nativity sets away, we kinda lose that sense of power that comes from his presence. I always look forward to that. And then the other one is spending time with my children and my wife being able to sit by the Christmas tree and enjoy their goodness. We don't have a perfect family. I don't want anyone out there going, oh, I wish I could enjoy my

children. It's stressful and busy, but there are some calm, quiet moments where you can just enjoy your family.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 12:46 I love Christmas. Christmas for me is very traditional. One of the things that we do and a lot of families do this is do the nativity play. I have been part of the nativity play since the first Christmas of my birth. My parents did the nativity play and at nine months old I was baby Jesus according to my mother. Then the second year, apparently I was baby Jesus again at 18 months and mom said that we used to practice and I would toddle over, get in the little wicker basket, lay down quietly and shut my eyes. My sister at that time I guess was Mary. As far as back as I can remember I was always, that Christmas Eve I was always Mary. We did that typical costumes that never changed. I always had a white crochet shawl that was around my, either around my head in the pictures or around my shoulders. My brothers wore bathrobes. We had angels with tinsels. Shepherds were carrying wrapping paper tubes as their staffs. It was charmingly, chaotic and very much homemade for me. My biggest moment right after the narrator read those very familiar words and she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger. So that was my cue and I would take my big breath and I still remember being nervous.

14:11 I had to sing the solo Away in the Manger, my little voice away in the manger, no crib for a bed. The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head. And it was anything but polished. It was messy. But every year it was interesting. There was something sacred that settled over all this little cast of homemade shepherds and angels. We didn't really understand it, but I realized as I look back on all those Christmases, that Christmas became my own sacred grove. We've heard that statement many times that there's events or times when we can come have our sacred grove. It wasn't trees or I wasn't in the woods, but it was in the living room filled with people that I loved reenacting a night that changed eternity. It was interesting for me 'cause it was year after year we retold the story and I realized I wasn't just playing Mary.

15:14 After a while I realized I was learning more about the Savior, line upon line, verse after verse each song. So we would sing a song, say a few verses, sing another song, and it was all of that mixed together where I first learned that Jesus was born and then it was interesting, I learned he lived and then eventually I understood deep in my heart that Jesus is the Christ and I thought it was really interesting that Christmas became my classroom. Those simple traditions became a temple where I

understood more about the Savior. To be honest with you, I think I played Mary until I was married and that crocheted shawl that I used, it was definitely tattered and worn. Truly looking back the traditions of my parents helped me understand the plan of heavenly Father every December and obviously throughout the year, but my spiritual roots got deeper and deeper because of those experiences and I thought, you know, you don't have to play Mary for 20 years or plus more, but to have the Savior part of your story 'cause that really is the miracle of Christmas, isn't it?

16:27 That the baby in the manger grows to be the Christ who invites us to walk with him. I'm always amazed at how traditions are so powerful. Derek and I have been pondering this and one time Derek and I were just studying, we noticed something that we hadn't noticed before that traditions can either anchor us to Christ or they can pull us quietly away from him. About a month ago, Derek and I were reading in Helaman and we learned that phrase that we hear a lot that says they dwindled in unbelief because of the traditions of their fathers. Two chapters later in third Nephi, we met a different kind of people. This people, they were watching steadfastly for the Christ coming. There it said something interesting it said their traditions gave them strength. When the unbelievers said a specific day to execute all the people who still believed.

17:26 I thought it was interesting in that narrative in 3 Nephi, it says when it came to pass that he Nephi the prophet went out and bowed himself down upon the earth and cried mightily to his God in behalf of his people. Yea, those who were about to be destroyed because of their faith in the traditions of their fathers, two chapters between each other. One, they were dwindling in unbelief because of the traditions of their fathers and this one at the time of the birth they were going to be destroyed because of their faith in the traditions of their fathers, because they believed in Jesus Christ and it came to pass that he cried mightily unto the Lord all that day and behold the voice of the Lord came unto him saying, lift up your head and be of good cheer. For behold, the time is at hand and on this night shall the sign be given and on the morrow come I into the world to show unto the world that I will fulfill all that which I was caused to be spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets.

18:30 When you asked about traditions, I thought, you know it's interesting what traditions draw me to the Savior and what traditions are President Oaks good, better, best? We have a tradition in our family right now for Christmas, in fact, my little grandkids called me and said, grandma, are we going to have

pancakes and pajamas? When are you coming home? Pancakes and pajamas was started when I was General Young Women President. I was trying to figure out another gathering that we could have that could connect us and Sister Craig, my counselor, she's the ultimate tradition grandma. She shared that she does this pancakes and pajamas. Now, every Christmas season our grandkids receive their pajamas or Christmas pajamas and we all match everyone from great grandma all the way down to the littlest one. So it's fun, it's cozy, it's noisy. We've made it ours. After we read those scriptures, Derek and I looked at each other and we said, how does this tradition connect us to Christ?

19:36 We thought, well there are some traditions, we gather as a family, we're praying, we're laughing, and those are all things that bring us to Christ. Derek so wisely said, is there something we could do to make it more intentional? I thought, yeah, what could we do for pancakes and pajamas this year? We're gonna try something new. We're gonna have little numbers that is attached to nativity sets that we have from all over the world and we'll let them unwrap the nativity set and organize it how they want in the house anywhere from the 4-year-old to the 10-year-old, so we only have little grandkids. We'll see. It may be a mess, but then we'll allow them to say, what did baby Jesus, what did Jesus do for you? What has our Savior of the world done for you this year or something that stands out, so we'll see. I'll return and report if this tradition brings us to Christ or if it's a mess. It's interesting, the power of a tradition.

Hank Smith: 20:27 Yeah, that's wonderful. We have some traditions I think we could tweak just a little bit. You don't have to throw it out like you did and say, well, let's get rid of pancakes forever. No, let's tweak this a little bit. I love it.

John Bytheway: 20:40 We do conference and crepes. We always have crepes at general conference. Now I'm thinking conference crepes in Christ, we should add okay, what are you hoping to learn today? That's a wonderful insight. Traditions can take us this way. Traditions can take us this way, dwindling or growing. Thank you for that.

Hank Smith: 21:00 As you were describing yourself as baby Jesus, it's very cute. I thought of first Nephi, it's chapter 11, the angel shows Nephi. He says, what do you see? I see Mary. Then he says, knowest thou the condescension of God? I don't think Nephi knows because he said, well, I know that he loves us but I don't know the meaning of all things. I've always told my students, if you don't know what to put on an exam, just put that, I don't know this, but I know God loves me. I've tried to think, what does the

angel mean? Knowest thou the condescension of God? In my mind he's saying, look at that baby Nephi, do you have any idea who that is? And then here in the second paragraph, he was the great Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Messiah of the New, the creator of the earth. And he chose this to become completely dependent on parents to experience pain and sickness and infirmity. Do you have any idea who that is and the condescension, like the person that he was, the being, the God that he was choosing to become this little baby is almost, I think even the angel is a little bit in awe.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 22:25 Tad Callister says the same thing you're saying when he says that night, God, the Son traded his heavenly home with all of its celestial adornment for a mortal abode with all its primitive trappings. He, the king of heaven, the Lord omnipotent who reigneth left a throne to inherit a manger. He exchanged the dominion of a God for the dependence of a babe. He gave up the wealth, power, dominion and the fullness of his glory for what? For taunting, mocking, humiliation and subjection. It was a trade of unparalleled dimension, a condescension of incredible proportions, a descent of incalculable depth. And so the great Jehovah, creator of the worlds without number, infinite in virtue and power made his entry into this world in swaddling clothes and a manger. It is interesting as you brought that up. We know that our Savior, one of the things I love that in Moses 4:2, the Savior said, when the plan was laid out, Father thy will be done and the glory be thine forever.

23:40 In the beginning, Jesus Christ was willing to submit to the Father. He wanted to come down not to seek his own glory, but to the glory of the Father and fulfill the divine plan. I love that. As he came down later, he testified in John 6:38, I come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And then of course the Book of Mormon says the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father. But I think it's interesting, so when we think about this through Christmas season, I think it's tender and actually quite profound, that heavenly Father chose Mary to be the mother of His Son. He wanted to choose a woman that had a heart that was equally aligned with his divine will. When the angel Gabriel came to her, her response revealed complete submission to God's plan. When she says, and we know this in Luke 1:38, behold the handmaiden of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word. The Lord prepares us to do the specific things that we need to do on this earth. And of course the Savior of the world, when he came down, he was going to learn line upon line but much faster. I mean we know who he was, but he had a mother who

was completely aligned with the Father to teach and walk those steps with him.

John Bytheway: 25:07 I love that you mentioned that he was constantly reminding us that he was doing the Father's will and that he was going to bring us back to the Father. One of my favorite Joseph Smith translation additions is that when Jesus who chose the time of his death, they didn't really kill him. He gave his life as a willing sacrifice. When he said, it is finished, the JST adds thy will is done. I was like, oh, it's not my suffering is done, it is thy will from the start at the very end, thy will is done was the last thing that he said according to the JST. When he came in third nephi, what does he say? I'm the light and life of the world. I have done the will of the Father from the beginning. It just reminds us of what a obedient son he was and gives us an example of that same thing

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 26:05 As I was thinking about this podcast yesterday, I canceled a meeting or two to ponder what are we gonna talk about? What does the Living Christ look like? And I just needed a little bit of time for myself and I had a lot of other things on my mind and I couldn't get settled. At Southern Virginia, we have these bells, they're computerized and they play different songs, you know, you hear on the hour. I was amazed because all of a sudden those bells started to ring and they started to ring How Great Thou Art. I love this hymn. In fact, I've instructed people that I want this to be sung at my funeral. So it has a great calming effect on me. When I was going to BYU I taught at the MTC when there were times when I was stretched thin or I didn't feel like I could get on top of things, I would always find an empty piano at the MTC.

26:59 I'd sit and play How Great Thou Art. Now I don't play the piano, so I plunked out the melody with my clumsy fingers, but it really truly brought a peace to what was going on and I thought about the Lord. He came to do the will of the Father and one of the greatest things about what our Savior does through His Atonement is he allows us to walk with him in such a way that peace comes. There is a peace like no other. So when I heard those, I thought the Lord knew precisely what would calm my heart. He knew what song would remind me of Him. I just wanna testify that the Lord lives, he is so aware of us and he knows what will bring us peace. He knows the language of our hearts, whether you're teaching Portuguese or whether you're plunking on the piano keys or even the chime of campus bells and sometimes he uses even computerized bells to whisper. I am here. I just, how great, we have a Savior. And I think that

		song, How Great Thou Art is remarkable of what it means to have the Savior in our lives.
Hank Smith:	28:09	And as you think about what He gave to come here, you think how great thou art.
John Bytheway:	28:17	The idea of God being aware of us. It reminds me of all the Christmases that I've had. They kind of blend into one and they're all wonderful, but there's one that stands out for me and that was in the Philippines on my mission. I love and will always love the Philippines. I met someone just this morning who had served there. It was so fun to talk about the fact that when I was there, there were four missions and one temple under construction. Now there's 22, 23 missions and about 13 temples announced. That's how old I am. When me and Wilford Woodruff went down there. No, that's an exaggeration, but it reminds me of when I was in the Philippines watching snowfall. No, it wasn't an unusual weather phenomenon. I was watching Mr. Krueger's Christmas with the rest of the mission. I'm from Salt Lake City and that was part of something we often did is go down to see the lights on Temple Square.
	29:18	I'm watching that old movie getting a little bit homesick. I was actually sitting next to Elder Andrew. We went to the same high school. We were friends. We ended up being companions, which was really fun. We were both looking at each other like, I don't know about this. This is hard to see this right now. See snow falling on Temple Square. We had a wonderful Christmas conference and after said goodbye to everybody, we went back to our areas. We spent Christmas Day doing what we normally did. Back in the area I was in Binalonan, down in the lowlands, nice and hot and humid walking around on Christmas. Something happened that Christmas weekend that I will never forget. My companion and I came walking around down a road there. There was a tree that was just aglow with fireflies. There was a ring of people standing around it.
	30:15	It was almost like they were reverent. They were speaking in hushed tones like they had never seen anything like this before. I had never seen anything like that before. I remember just thinking, is this a Christmas card from Heavenly Father? As I'm sure my folks were praying for their son in the Philippines and here was this treat glowing like anything on Temple Square. Then I had this battle in my mind of did God do that for me? No, no, no, you're not that important. But wait, I'm supposed to acknowledge his hand in all things. Which one is this? I decided, I don't know, but I'll take it. I just like to think Heavenly Father

was aware of me and my companion and we got to see a little touch of Temple Square in a barrio in the Philippines.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 31:07 That's tender John. It's interesting how many little things the Lord puts in our path, people in our path just to let us know that he's there. Our heavenly Father truly wants us to know that the most important thing is us and us returning home, and so that's why He gave His Son Jesus Christ to come to this earth and it's amazing that we realize that our Heavenly Father's here to help us return to His presence and if it's fireflies to help us know that hey, we're important that we matter or if it's bells.

Hank Smith: 31:41 One thing I love about being part of this work is seeing what you both described there is the Lord continuing His ministry. You read the gospels and it was very much a one by one. He went and talked to Nicodemus and he talked to the woman at the well and the woman who touched his garment and the blind man and the leper. These very one by one experiences and what you both described there is almost a continuation of His one by one ministry. I have a little story here that someone shared with me. I collect these stories. I love little gifts almost like they come from Christ, so we can call 'em Christmas gifts. One woman sent me this little story, she said, when I was little, my mom was known as the neighborhood nurse. Whenever anyone had a question they would call Audrey down the street.

32:34 I knew she loved me because she took such good care of us. When we got sick or needed anything, she knew just what to do to comfort us and help us get better. Well, mom passed away a couple of years ago and I have no doubt she is my guardian angel. She said, last week I went in for a nerve conduction study on my leg. My doctor who recommended the study made it sound like it's not a big deal. They measured the time it takes for an impulse to travel along different nerves. They hook up leads along my leg, kind of like an EKG. Here's what she said. The word painful didn't enter my mind, but the actual test felt more like Dr. Frankenstein's torture survival day camp than an EKG. I asked the doctor conducting the test, do you ever have patients in tears?

33:21 Her response was, sometimes. I've only had one patient who actually liked the part of poking needles in the 30 years I've been doing this. After 45 minutes, my nerves were frayed and I was wishing I could talk to my mom. When I got home there was a voicemail from my good friend Carolyn. I had not heard from her in a long time. She said, I was walking through Costco after work and there was a lady who reminded me of your mom as she passed by. I got really emotional for some reason and I

thought, I hope you are okay, so I guess I just called to let you know your mom is watching over you.

John Bytheway: 34:02 Love it.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 34:03 I love that.

Hank Smith: 34:04 One by one.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 34:05 One by one. When you read in the Living Christ, he went about doing good. He's still going about doing good to make sure that we know that we are loved and he uses all of us, doesn't he? This last year our men's volleyball team won the NCAA Division three championship. It was a big thing on campus. It was exciting, but I think what made it really big, which actually touched me, was to watch them throughout the year. Now, these men had been with each other for a number of years. Every year they had this goal, national championship and they'd fall just a little bit short in the tournament, but this last year I noticed something different. They would go and they were the front row for everyone else's sporting event. They were there for the theater event. They were cheering people on for their choir concert.

34:59 They were helping tutor for biochem. Those volleyball men became quite a force on campus, but they were gathering each other. They were gathering them for the things that was important to each other. When we came down to the final game, by luck, it was already set to be in Roanoke, which is only about 40 minutes from our campus. What happened was every student wanted to come. Yes, it was a cool game they wanted to come because the volleyball team had become their friends. Everyone on the volleyball team had in one way or another pointed them to Christ and made sure they knew they mattered. As they came in, when the final spike hit, everyone felt like they had won the game, that their best friend was the one because they had become their best friend. The power of the Savior when he went about doing good and his gospel was a message of peace and goodwill, like it says in the Living Christ, He entreated all to follow His example. Of course, we can't raise the dead or cause the blind to see, but we can help people along the way to understand who the Christ is. I'm just grateful for the Savior's example at Christmastime, don't you love Christmas? It just feels happy. People are kinder. The the porcupines have lists

Hank Smith: 36:31 Quills.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	36:31	Sharp edges. It truly is electrifying. When I think about the Savior coming and it says so much in the Living Christ of who He is and what He does, you know, submitting His will to the Father. When those 15 men tell about the Savior, I want to receive Him. I want to have the Savior in my life. The power of receiving is an interesting thing. Derek and I were about to celebrate our first Christmas together, our very first Christmas as husband and wife, but if that wasn't enough, we were also expecting our first baby. Now, we hadn't planned on having a honeymoon baby, ready or not, this little guy was gonna come to our family. Now we were still full-time students at BYU. We were both finishing our senior year. We were trying to scrap together enough money to think about paying for diapers and textbooks and tuition.
	37:29	We were working. We were trying to figure out how to be married. All the while I woke up with morning sickness and I think I should have called it morning, afternoon, and evening sickness because it just never stopped on that first one. Our wallets were really thin. We didn't have much money. We just had a lot on our plate. We were both working full-time and Christmas was coming. You just wanna buy the right present and you wanna have Christmas and it's your first Christmas. I honestly do not remember what I got Derek, but I will never forget what he gave me. Before I was pregnant one of my greatest joys was running. Running is how I prayed. Running is one of the ways that I spend time with the Lord and I receive a lot of revelation is I just have great conversations with the Lord running.
	38:19	I love lacing up running shoes and letting everything else slip away. Derek knew this about me. He had watched me run. We used to run together when we were engaged. He told me after we got married that he actually doesn't like running. So he no longer was my running partner. He knew why it mattered to me and his kind thoughtful heart, he wanted to give me something that I loved. He saved his money and with his limited money, he bought me new running shoes. Now that is beautiful, thoughtful, perfect gift. Running shoes. But on Christmas morning, I was eight months pregnant. My body hurt. I was insecure. I couldn't sleep. I could barely walk up the hill to campus, let alone run anywhere. I was exhausted emotionally and overwhelmed. The fears of motherhood and graduation and what are we going to do with this baby?
	39:22	When I opened the box and I saw shoes, I didn't receive the gift. Least not very well. Instead of feeling loved, I actually felt exposed. I wondered if Derek thought I needed to get in shape,

if he thought I wasn't enough. If he thought that the gift was about fixing me. The truth is, the problem wasn't the gift. The problem was how I received it. Derek had offered me love and I received it as criticism. My response hurt him. It hurt both of us actually because the joy he had hoped to give me was all tangled up in my insecurities. It wasn't the first time I've ever struggled receiving a gift, but it was one of the most important. Last night I was watching Southern Virginia basketball. We had an exciting win, but something I noticed was how active receiving was. When they would throw a pass just out of nowhere, the person who was receiving it, I mean all eyes, all hands, feet, body focused on that ball.

40:31 They were receiving rebounds. They were even receiving directions from the coach. I noticed that when they were all in, they were all in. Receiving is a whole body experience. I thought receiving the Lord's gift requires the same readiness, I guess. So I thought, okay, what does it require of us to receive. Eyes on him, you think of all the things it says in the scriptures, an open heart, feet planted, hands open. We really do need a heart that doesn't push away the gift because of fears or insecurities. In 1 Nephi 11, I love this, Nephi hears the angel ask, believest thou the word which thy father has spoken? When you think about receiving Nephi answered, yea, I believe all the words of my father. Then the Spirit cried with loud voice saying, Hosanna. The Spirit doesn't, is usually whispering. Pretty quiet. Doesn't often shout, but when someone receives truth heaven I think rejoices loudly. Receiving is holy, receiving brings joy. I think receiving brings transformation as we receive the Savior. I love the end of Living Christ when it says God be thanked for the matchless gift of his Divine Son, and I thought, I hope this gift, the power of this gift is never measured by the giver, but measured by the receiver. Christ is the greatest gift ever given. I always ask, do I even receive him? What does that look like? What does it look like to receive this great gift?

Hank Smith: 42:08 That's a very impactful story. The Savior is offering us so much. How we receive is critical to what we experience.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 42:19 Bethlehem is God's offering, don't you think? And the Atonement is God's giving, but discipleship is us receiving all of that.

John Bytheway: 42:28 I like the line from Joy to the World. Let earth receive her King. What a vulnerable story. Boy, thanks for sharing that. Here's the Lord offering us this gift of repentance. He doesn't want us to hide from that. He wants us to repent. He wants to forgive. That's what's so amazing. He's offering and wants us to forgive

and receive that gift of His mercy. That's a beautiful way to put it.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 42:55 I'm just always amazed at what it looks like at Christmastime to receive. Have you ever received something fully that has just been a joy for you or received something that you think, I didn't receive that so well?

Hank Smith: 43:07 Yeah. I hate to say this, but you told us this story so I can tell you I have yet to come to appreciate homemade gifts. When my kids would bring me, hey, I made this. Thanks. My wife would get after me. She'd say, you need to respond better than that, and I, oh, what am I gonna use this for? It's a homemade gift. I'm gonna throw this thing away really quick. I really had to think through how to receive it. I really had to think, okay, let me envision my child doing this thing and really working hard and how excited they are to give it and it became easier. I hate to say that I was that guy for a little while.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 43:50 Receiving's an interesting thing. You know, you think about the birth of the Savior, what it was like to receive the message to go for the shepherds to leave your flocks. What'd you do with that message to receive? What does it look like to leave the flock and go and then you think about them after they saw the babe saw the Savior of the world, they went and told everyone. They didn't go back up to the sheep. They held off those things of the world and they told the world about Him. It's just so active. I pondered what does it look like to receive Him at Christmas.

Hank Smith: 44:27 Bonnie, this has been wonderful so far and thank you for that story. Let's keep going. What do you wanna do next?

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 44:34 There's a part of Living Christ that was really monumental for me. I was at an FSY over in Germany. We happened to be studying the Living Christ as part of the FSY experience. It was multilanguage. There was Armenian, there's German, languages everywhere, and so everyone was studying the Living Christ in their own language, which made it a little bit difficult to have a discussion. It was really kind of a quiet study within yourself and so I was reading the Living Christ pondering and a part stood out to me and it's the part where it says he taught the truths of eternity. The reality of our premortal existence, the purpose of our life on earth, and the potential for the sons and daughters of God and the life to come. All over the Living Christ, He taught the plan. He was so diligent in teaching the plan.

45:30 Two things that have stood out to me is one of the things of the plan that I think is really amazing is the opportunity to come to

this earth. I had read earlier about here the Savior of the world who's created worlds without number, who's done so much comes down baby. But I wonder if he was really looking forward to that opportunity to come to this earth because he's gonna receive a body. That is one of the greatest plans of our heavenly Father, is that we get to progress and actually have a physical body. I was studying in Doctrine and Covenants 138. Of course, they were talking about what was happening during the time of the Resurrection, the space of three days. What did he do? He went to the spirits in prison. What does that look like? He actually went to those and taught them so that they could go. Then the righteous could go and teach the spirits. But Doctrine and Covenants 32:50 is interesting. Maybe read 49, 50.

John Bytheway: 46:28 Here's Section 138 starting in verse 49. All these and many more. Even the prophets who dwelt among the Nephites and testified of the coming of the Son of God mingled in the vast assembly and waited for their deliverance. For the dead had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage. These, the Lord taught and gave them power to come forth after his resurrection from the dead to enter into his Father's kingdom, there to be crowned with immortality and eternal life.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 46:59 When you think of verse 50, tell me what comes to your mind.

John Bytheway: 47:03 We are going to want our bodies back. They viewed their long absence as a bondage. We need it to progress, because of the Savior's resurrection we'll get our bodies back.

Hank Smith: 47:17 It sounds like it's a gift that once you have it, you never really wanna be without it. I can't find peace without it.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 47:25 That's great insight. One of the purposes here on earth obviously is to return to our Heavenly Father's presence, but you think the importance of a body, it's interesting, the adversary will never have a body. He attacks most abundantly the body. Something that he can't have and I think it's important for us to remember what a great principle and concept that is and a gift that we have to have this body. That's why it's so remarkable that part of that Atonement is the Resurrection that the Savior was resurrected, his body and his spirit came back together. When we stop and think about the power of our physical bodies and the importance of them, sometimes we underestimate taking care of them what it looks like. I was intrigued at the next, he says he instituted the sacrament as a symbol of his great atoning sacrifice and as you stop and think of that symbol of his great atoning sacrifice,

everything that he did so that we could return back to the Father. What are the symbols of the sacrament?

John Bytheway: 48:28 His body and blood.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 48:31 Of all the things that they could have chosen to be a symbol for the sacrifice of the great Savior and Redeemer. I think it's interesting that what was chosen for the symbols is the body and the blood. It's a fascinating thing that we think about as we realize the great gifts that the Lord gives us coming to this earth. It is a joy regardless of what situations our body has that we actually get a body.

John Bytheway: 48:58 Sometimes it's easy to take it for granted when everything's working okay, but when you're sick or you're injured, all of the sudden I am so thankful for my foot because this foot hurts right now, I want it back the way it was when it was working. We've all been through that where all of the sudden you're like, can I just get back to normal? When your body's functioning great boy, be grateful for it.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 49:26 As we think about this Christmas season as a sweet little baby was born in a manger and Mary held the Savior of the world, you could probably put a Christmas song to every part of the Living Christ that would connect abundantly to any of the doctrines. In fact, it would be a fun thing to do is to read the Living Christ and then put a few songs in there, read another section and put a few songs in there. As the Son of God, he probably was thrilled to come to the next step to be able to possess this body. I'm grateful for the Savior, for him saying yes to that. I'm also grateful that his teachings are the same no matter what season. They're always the same. Faith, repentance.

Hank Smith: 50:12 I had never thought about that before Bonnie, but we commemorate his body. We really do. We could commemorate an action or maybe a parable, but we focus in on the Savior's body and it seems he cares about it. He redeemed his body. If he didn't want his body, why redeem it in the first place? Why bring it back with him?

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 50:37 And the dead, even those that are there now, they look upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage. It's an interesting opportunity. We realize, yes, the opportunity that we have to help those that are on the other side because we currently have bodies so we can do our temple work for them. Those things, we take it as, oh, we're just gonna go to the temple and we're gonna go do baptisms for our ancestors.

We're going to do their work. But the opportunity to have a body to be able to do that regardless of the natures of our bodies as they're mortal right now, it's messy with bodies, but really is a great thing. The opportunity to take care of this great body that we have and note that the Savior wants us to remember him each week when we take the sacrament and we're remembering his Atonement. We do that through remembering his body and the blood that was spilled for us.

John Bytheway: 51:45 Yeah. Hank, you mentioned the Bible Dictionary in that beautiful entry under miracles. If you look in your Bible Dictionary, the word Bethlehem means house of bread. Jesus was born in Bethlehem and as he grew up that great sermon in John chapter six, I just love the story 'cause he fed them with the loaves and the fishes. If you feed thousands of people loaves and fishes a free lunch, they're gonna follow you. And they did to the other side of the lake. He said something like, you follow me not because you wanted to keep my sayings, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Then I'm paraphrasing, I could give you bread that if you ate it, you would never die. Wait, what? Yeah, evermore. Give us this bread and then I am the bread. It's fun. I love to ask my returned missionary students, where did you serve and did they have bread? And it's like everybody around the world had some sort of bread. Jesus used such a perfect symbol for that, for the sacrament to remember bread and you know that's manna too as a breadlike substance that came down. I'm glad you brought that up 'cause then we can think of that every single Sunday as we take of the bread that this body is a gift. I love what you said. We can do things with our bodies. I mean, I'm wondering in the spirit world, can they say, Hey, let's go to the temple. Oh wait, what are we gonna do there? Well, we're just gonna watch those on earth and hope they do something for us. I mean, what are they gonna do there? It's an interesting thing. We have a chance to do something for him.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 53:28 We can do it. Really is interesting in Doctrine and Covenants 38, to your point, John, in 33 when the Savior visited there, he told them, what are you gonna teach the people? What are you gonna teach those that are in prison? I love in 33 it says, these were taught faith in God. Repentance from sin. What was the next thing that they taught?

John Bytheway: 53:55 Vicarious baptism for the remission of sins. The gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, the word vicarious is in there because they couldn't do it.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	54:05	They couldn't do it. So they're not taught about how you're gonna be baptized, but they are gonna be taught about you going to the temple because you are gonna do the work for those that have passed away. They're gonna be taught that you are going to be doing that vicarious baptism for them. What's the missionary purpose that the missionaries know dear to their hearts?
John Bytheway:	54:29	It's to bring people to Christ through faith, repentance, baptism. It's the same first principles and ordinances.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	54:38	So fourth Article of Faith.
Hank Smith:	54:40	Yep.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	54:40	So he doesn't ever change. I mean the way to come to Christ and to be able to receive the Savior in our lives when we say come to Christ, receive him. He's the living Christ. He's the bread, the life and the hope. He tells us the pattern of how to get there and it's fun that he tells everyone the same things. In primary He tells you in the fourth Article of Faith, when you're on a mission, he's telling you in the missionary purpose and when you're in the spirit world He does change that a little bit.
Hank Smith:	55:09	That's interesting. Yeah. 3 Nephi 11, it's the first thing he teaches. 3 Nephi 27, it's the last thing he teaches before he goes. I've always thought that when the Savior comes again, if we're not sure it's him, just wait to see what he speaks on first. We'll know when he says, I'd like to talk to you about faith.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	55:29	Faith.
John Bytheway:	55:29	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	55:30	Baptism. And we look at each other and think, it's Him.
John Bytheway:	55:33	That's Him.
Hank Smith:	55:34	Yep.
John Bytheway:	55:36	Hank, you've heard me joke before, that there's just so many different principles and doctrines and teachings and concepts. If only somebody would come out and say, well, here's the first principles and ordinances and somebody did.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	55:52	I love the Living Christ when they said, we solemnly testify that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in

		Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary because that same Jesus in the preexistence, in the pre-earth life was teaching faith, repentance because he was teaching the will of the Father. He did it while he was on this earth. He did it when he returned as the resurrected Savior in third Nephi. He even did it during the time between the death and the resurrection. He taught faith, repentance, vicarious baptism.
Hank Smith:	56:31	Someone pointed out to us earlier this year, Bonnie, that even Joseph Smith between 1820 and 1830 went through faith, the first vision, repentance.
John Bytheway:	56:41	Repentance, losing the 116 pages. Richard Bennett wrote this article called Carefully Schooled in First Principles and talks about he didn't just grab him out of the air, he experienced it.
Hank Smith:	56:53	Then baptism and then the Holy Ghost.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	56:56	I love that. You know, really even in the first vision, he went with the hope to be forgiven of his sins. He was, had a repentant heart.



John Bytheway: 00:01 Welcome to part two Christmas with President Bonnie H. Cordon.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 00:06 When they came out with the Living Christ. I love that the author of that, or the person who drafted the first one and then we had all 15 apostles and prophets at the time sign it was President Nelson. In one of his talks he said, much like when he said, I urge you to study the Living Christ. He said, I urge you to devote time each week. Then he says, for the rest of your life to increase your understanding of the atonement of Jesus Christ. When the prophets and apostles say, I urge you, there is a little level of intensity that goes up. What does it look like then for Bonnie and my crazy world to study and understand the Atonement? Every Wednesday I try to study with a lens of the Atonement. I realized that the Living Christ whole document is the Atonement. It was an aha to me, but I'm sure for everyone else they're like, welcome Bonnie. That's how it is.

01:10 What was really fun is at first I thought, well, it calls out doctrinally the Atonement in three spots in the Living Christ. Then I started to take each sentence, how does this apply to the Atonement? What does this mean? Oh, I have 14 different references to the Atonement and then I would look at another thing. I'm like, oh, I've got 15 and then 16 and 17, you know, now I'm like 29, 30, and I'm like, okay. The document is about that glorious gift of the atonement of Jesus Christ. To us it was a study, so that's an invitation. Take the Living Christ and see what does it look like through the lens of the Atonement. Even if you just take the last one, we bear testimony as duly ordained apostles that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel who stands today on the right hand of His Father.

02:04 He is the light, the life and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. So you say, okay, if you just took that one paragraph and broke it up, what does it look like? If you think about the Atonement, Jesus is the Living Christ. Christ is not

merely a historical figure. He is alive and because He lives, the Atonement continues in power, reach and affect today. The resurrection sealed and completed the Atonement proving that Christ overcame both physical and spiritual death and then you look at the scriptures that go with it, Alma seven, which I love, love Alma seven, He will suffer pains, afflictions and temptations so He may know according to the flesh how to succor His people. Then 2 Nephi 9:12, and this is just on the Living Christ because of the holy one of Israel, the resurrection of the dead becomes possible. Because He lives His power to forgive, heal, redeem, strengthen and change us is ongoing. It's not confined to the past. Then you talk about, what's the next statement? The immortal Son of God. How does the immortal Son of God have an Atonement connection? Now you guys are the scholars. I'm gonna ask you, how does the immortal Son of God have an Atonement connection?

Hank Smith: 03:28

It makes me think of Abinadi and King Benjamin. They both taught that the Savior was both human and divine, that he had a divine side to him so that he could endure the process of an Atonement. When I was younger I thought, well, of course it's easy for Jesus to do the right thing. He's half God. It wasn't until I really studied the Book of Mormon that I found out, no, he's half God, not so he can have an easier life. It's actually so he can have a harder life. When I read that word, immortal son of God, my mind goes to him volunteering to be both human and divine so that he could endure more pain than any other human being.

John Bytheway: 04:17

I love how President Christofferson pointed out John 3:16. You can hear like the whole plan of salvation in there. God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son. There it is right there. Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Then He gave the Son and Jesus gave himself. He offered himself as a sacrifice.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 04:42

Yeah, I love Alma 34:10 where it says it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice. To go to the next. He is the great King Immanuel. So what's the Atonement connection with that statement that he is the great King Immanuel.

John Bytheway: 04:57

The Isaiah prophecy was a child will be born and his name will be Immanuel. We have these three birth prophecies in Isaiah seven, eight, nine. Sounds like perhaps the first birth prophecy is perhaps Isaiah's own son, a prophecy to the king of Judah and then the next chapter is a prophecy to the people of Judah. Then Isaiah nine, we sing that one, don't we? Unto us a child is born unto us a son is given. The government shall be upon his shoulders. Name shall be called wonderful, counselor, the

mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. That sounds like the the King Immanuel and then Hank, somebody pointed this out when we did the New Testament a year or two ago, the last statement in the book of Matthew. Lo, I am with you always. That's Immanuel, God with us. It starts out with the prophecy of Immanuel in Matthew and it ends with Immanuel in Matthew.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 05:57 It's just amazing to see that Living Christ speaks to the Atonement even at the very end the gratitude. God be thanked for the matchless gift. President Oaks has said our most important resource is our testimony of the risen Lord and his Atonement. He is central to the Father's plan of salvation. He is the light and life and the only hope of the world. He is central to the restored gospel. It is remarkable. I'm grateful that a loving Father in heaven led us to understand more and more about the Atonement through the Living Christ.

Hank Smith: 06:31 Bonnie, as I'm looking at the names on the bottom of this Living Christ document, there's not too many of them still with us. Only three Dallin H. Oaks, Jeffrey R. Holland and Henry B. Eyring. I think our listeners would be interested in your perspective on these apostles and prophets for five years. You spent time in the hallways. What would you tell our listeners about your interactions with these special witnesses? Because to some of us they're names and we see them every six months, what's it like to see them on a a day-to-day level?

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 07:10 I'm grateful for that opportunity. It actually was seven years, seven years that I got an opportunity to be with them. Two years in Primary as a counselor to Sister Joy D. Jones. Then as the Young Women's General President, I don't know if there's exact words except they're better than what you even see on tv. Our prophets and our seers and revelators are truly remarkable men. I remember the first time that I had a chance to meet with before I was called Elder Holland and Elder Rasband and Elder Christofferson, now President Christofferson. They asked if I would come and meet with them. I had no idea. I thought, why do they need to talk to me? We had served our mission in Brazil. I was a stake Young Women's President. They came and they asked me random questions that I thought were random about the youth, which was wonderful to talk about the youth. Then they asked me what I knew about primary or just some insights about primary and I said, I haven't been in primary for years. I've got nothing for you.

08:20 So I'm sure they weren't very impressed. What I saw in their eyes was how much they knew about Primary, how much they

knew about Young Women's, these prophets, seers and revelators. They know so much. I was privileged to sit on the Missionary Executive Council for five years and learn at the feet of Elder Uchtdorf and Elder Cook and then be so involved with priesthood and the family department was so grateful for the Temple Department. I sat on the board of education, every interaction was, was sacred. One that really stood out and I think it's already actually been on this show, but I'm gonna tell it again because I think it really was important. Steve Lund and I got a little invitation that we needed to report on FSY. FSY had been going for one year. We had done a lot of work on it and the First Presidency wanted to have our return and report.

09:15 Elder Uchtdorf went with us to be there with the First Presidency. We went into the North Boardroom and it was quite sacred when you realize you had the First Presidency sitting there, Elder Uchtdorf on one side and then Steve and I were seated on the other. We gave our presentation that we had. Then we answered some questions. I remember that President Eyring had some thoughts and questions and then President Oaks asked some thought provoking things that we hadn't thought about that we reported on and then there was a lull. Elder Uchtdorf realized that it was probably done and he stood up. So Steve and I quickly stood up to leave and thanked them and then the prophet leaned forward, President Nelson at the time and he said, teach them to pray. So we heard and sat back down 'cause we realized, hey, this isn't over yet and to whom you pray, he went on to tell some pretty tender things about the importance of prayer.

10:16 I remember sitting there thinking, I'm hearing a prophet testify most earnestly of what I need to be involved with in my calling now. I just testified that these great men are called to be prophets, seers and revelators of Christ's Church 'cause Christ lives and it was really humbling to leave, walk out and Steve Lund was here on our campus and he was giving, here at Southern Virginia University, and he was giving one of the forums and we were talking about that experience of being in that boardroom and Steve asked me a question. He said, did we do enough to teach them to pray? I don't know if we did, but I hope on this podcast we can ponder what does it look like to pray and I think the Savior, as he was in the Garden of Gethsemane, it says that he prayed more earnestly.

11:11 What does it look like to pray to our Father and what will we receive as we learn how to pray? I have so many sweet stories. Some are funny, some are a little embarrassing but I loved the opportunity to rub shoulders with these great men, especially

during COVID. I remember many times getting a note from Elder Uchtdorf, Brazil is shutting the doors. We've got to meet as a missionary executive council. How are we gonna get them out of Brazil? So many great stories of how the Lord so abundantly opened the eyes of his apostles and prophets for what's happening right now on the earth. There's a quote, you may have heard it from a gentleman, it's Frank W. Boreham. He's an English Baptist preacher and he was speaking of events during the Napoleonic Wars and the early part of the 19th century. He said, men were following with bated breath, the march of Napoleon and waiting with feverish impatience for the news of the wars and all the while in their own homes, babies were being born, but who could think about babies? Everybody was thinking about battles. In one year between Trafalgar and Waterloo, there stole into the world a host of heroes. In 1809, Gladstone was born in Liverpool. Alfred Tennyson was born at the Somersby rectory. Oliver Wendell Holmes made his first appearance in Massachusetts. Abraham Lincoln drew his first breath at old Kentucky. Elizabeth Barrett Browning was born at Durham. But nobody thought of babies. Everyone was thinking of battles. Yet which of the battles in 1809 mattered more than the babies of 1809? He goes on to say, we fancy that God can only manage his world by big battalions when all the while he is doing it by beautiful babies. He says, when a wrong wants righting or work wants doing or truth wants preaching or a continent wants opening, God sends a baby into the world to do it.

13:22 That is why long, long ago a baby was born in Bethlehem. God uses that same pattern. When you think about the Living Christ and who signed it. I have a question. Consider the year 1940. What was happening in 1940? 1940 was World War II. There was the Battle of France. France was being placed under German and Italian occupation. The German forces invaded Netherlands. We were thinking a lot of battles. Then you wonder what about the babies in 1940? Do you know some of those babies that were born in 1940? One of those babies signed the Living Christ. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, born in December, 1940. Two other that we also say are apostles and prophets, Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf and Quentin L. Cook. It's interesting when you say, how was it? I was working with great men and great women that the Lord put down to this earth so many years ago to help His work move forward.

14:37 President Nelson gave a devotional to the youth and he told them, he said, you are among the best the Lord has ever sent to this world. Then President Nelson said, you have the capacity to be smarter and wiser and have more impact on the world than

any previous generation. Now, he didn't say they are smarter or they are wiser or they will have more impact. He did say they have the capacity. I see these young people walking the halls of Southern Virginia University and I think who are you? What type of capacity needs to be increased for you to do the mission you came to? Do you think about what the Lord needs in order to move his work forward so that the Savior can come again? It truly is remarkable what he has said. When I think about the great people that walk the halls of the church, I think about the great young people that walk in the halls of every university walking the halls of every high school, every junior high because Elder Neal Maxwell said something that you all know and love. He says, the same God that placed that star in a precise orbit millennia before it appeared over Bethlehem in celebration of the birth of the babe, has given at least equal attention to the placement of each of us and the precise human orbit so that we may, if we will illuminate the landscapes of our individual lives so that our light may not only lead others but warm them as well. It's a sweet time that we live in that we get to work, link arms with our Savior and his restored gospel.

John Bytheway: 16:26 That was a beautiful segment. Oh, battles and babies. I don't know if we can improve on that Hank.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 16:33 You've all heard that one?

John Bytheway: 16:35 I haven't. I was thinking Joseph Smith, 1805, all those in 1809. Wow. I don't know where we go from there. That was really beautiful. Thank you.

Hank Smith: 16:45 As you were talking about these young people, it made me think of a grandmother who told a story about her grandson who was the goalie of a soccer game. The game was pretty exciting and no one was watching little Tanner trying to defend the goal. Bonnie, you said you looked over and Tanner had become distracted and began weaving his left arm through the various holes in the net. Then he did the same with his right arm, next his left foot, then his right foot, and he was fully entangled in the net and then you said he had forgotten his purpose and what he had been entrusted to do. Then you gave a great lesson on we all occasionally get distracted and then caught in Satan's net. I've always loved that story because the young people you're talking about, these are such good, good pure souls. They're a lot like Tanner. They don't realize sometimes they're getting caught in the net of technology almost entertaining themselves to death. Yeah, fully distracted.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	17:48	President Nelson was so succinct in his words. He didn't throw out words just to throw out words. When he said, you have a capacity to be smarter and wiser and have more impact on the world than any previous generation. You stop to think about who are these young people that are actually on the earth right now. You can see why the adversary is so anxiously engaged in doing those things that would distract them if nothing else, just to distract them so that they're not even building their capacity. In Doctrine and Covenants 138, I think it's fascinating. In 56 there is a verse there that gives us a glimpse of what the pattern that our Father in heaven does for each one of us, which I think can give us hope as moms, dads, aunts, uncles, everyone who's working with youth and youth themselves that we have exactly what we need to be part of this great work. John, do you have that?
John Bytheway:	18:51	138 verse 56. Even before they were born they with many others received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	19:08	What stands out to you there John?
John Bytheway:	19:11	Before they were born they had their first lessons. What did somebody say? We don't really gain a testimony. We remember it.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	19:20	Yeah, that's good. Why then have a veil of forgetfulness? Maybe some of those things and those talents and all of the things that we had in the pre-earth life come with us. There's that yearning, that understanding. Anything else Hank in there that stood out to you?
Hank Smith:	19:39	I think the sense of, I came here with an assignment. Sometimes I wonder if our young friends think, why did I come here? Why am I here? That verse says, no, no, no. There was preparation for an assignment. John, what does the Young Men's theme say?
John Bytheway:	19:58	Young Women says with a divine nature and eternal destiny and the Young Men says are beloved sons of God and he has a work for me to do, which I love that. Imagine the opposite. I'm a beloved son of God and he's wondering if I might make a contribution at some point. No, he has a work for me to do. I'm on assignment.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	20:21	And isn't it amazing that he says prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord? We weren't prepared to come forth during the time of Noah nor Moses, but we were prepared and our young people were prepared for this time. The Lord knew that there would be AI. He knew that there would be cell phones. He also knew we as parents, aunts, uncles, friends, neighbors, bishops that we would have the resources that we need to move forward. I love that. It's all for one purpose. Labor in the vineyard. This is my favorite part for the salvation of the souls of men. When I was trying to decide what to do as far as this opportunity to come to SVU to be the president, I needed to be home and clean my closets. Just to be honest, after seven years of being in a general officer space, I thought I just need to stay home.
	21:19	As I took it to the Lord, I was overwhelmed with what the Lord saw. He said, there will be great miracles. You can be part of them or not. The miracles will happen in my vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men. Why would I not want to link arms with the young adults and the youth that are coming up as they gather and bring others to Christ? It is a remarkable season that they get to come and be so anxiously engaged in helping others know Christ. I have complete confidence in our youth. I have complete confidence in our young adults and what they're doing to help the world know that Jesus is the Christ and that He lives and that His Atonement is for all.
Hank Smith:	22:04	You were in this last paragraph of the Living Christ. It says He is the light, the life and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. I thought of the opposite of those, but we have people listening who feel dark and empty and hopeless, unhappy. They don't feel like they're on their way to eternal life. I've noticed that occasionally we think someone like President Bonnie H. Cordon has never seen difficult times that I've seen. I wanted to remind everybody of the last talk you gave in general conference. You told this story you said in 2011 I was serving with my husband in Brazil. My phone rang, it was my father. We mentioned earlier a member of the Seventy at one point. Unexpectedly his voice was filled with emotion.
	23:04	Hi Bonnie. I need to tell you something. I've been diagnosed with ALS my mind swirled with confusion. Wait, what is ALS? Dad was already explaining, my mind will stay alert while my body slowly shuts down. You talked about your whole world shifting and then he said, Bonnie, never give up an opportunity to testify of Christ and then you go on and give this incredible testimony of Jesus Christ. As I come back to this last paragraph,

He is the light, the life and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life. None of this guarantees me easy times. He is the light, the life and hope of this world. It sounds like I'm gonna need him because it's gonna be dark and hard and hopeless and unhappy. What would you say to our listeners who want that?

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 23:58 That's a great comment Hank. I truly believe He is the hope and the light and the life and sometimes our world is messy. Sometimes it's dark. You know when dad said never give up an opportunity to testify of Christ. I have thought about that 'cause sometimes life is just hard and you think, what am I testifying of today? When the prophet said, teach them to pray. As you get on your knees and you're praying even though you don't feel like praying and you're in a dark space to make a list of things that you do know and that you help others know Christ in anything you do know in good what is good. He went about doing good. I was on a cruise ship. We were enjoying some things so this wasn't a messy, this wasn't a hard but a little boy his name is Stewart, I won't forget his name.

24:53 He was probably seven. Stewart came up and this little boy has had some hard things. He said, my mom has passed away. I'm like, oh, hi Stewart. He came up and he said, excuse me, do you know where the bowling alley is? And I'm like, I don't think there's a bowling alley on this ship. He said, oh, well my name is Stewart, and Stewart proceeded to unpack his little world and Stewart said, my mommy passed away, but he turned with full hope and confidence and he looked at his grandma who was standing there. He said, this is my grandma and this is my little sister. Then he went on worried about this bowling alley and I couldn't give him any direction and I turned to walk away and the Spirit very gently said, testify of me and I thought, he's seven. I don't know Stewart, and he said, testify of me. I got on my knees, held his little hands, looked at his grandma and I said, Stewart, do you know your family loves you and your mom loves you? And he said, yes, Miss Bonnie, I do. And I said, Stewart, do you know that Jesus Christ loves you? And he said, yes, Miss Bonnie, I do.

26:19 As I got off my knees feeling a little bit ridiculous, the Spirit then testified to me, Bonnie, you needed to remember that it wasn't for Stewart, it was for you. Sometimes in our lives when we're just either busy, busy, busy with good things, busy, busy, busy with hard things to come back and know the Savior, I think it's interesting where it says in the Living Christ he will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords. This applies to us. Every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak in worship before

him. I know life is hard. Loss, jobs, it's a hard time even right now there are sticky things in this world, but I hope we don't wait till the very end to be able to speak and worship before Him. Just a little note, I was with a young woman who had her whole life been in foster care and her whole dream was to be adopted to have a family.

27:27 She wanted a family. At age 16, she was adopted. For whatever reason, I don't know, the family gave her back to the state. So at 17 she was pretty broken. She didn't know what to do and she was at one of the youth justice facilities to be placed with another foster family. That's where I met her and I sat down and I introduced myself and learned of her story. She had named herself Hope and I said, Hope, what do you want? I thought for sure she would say, I just want a family. That's not what she said. She said, I wanna know I matter to heaven. I want to know that Jesus Christ loves me and that He knows me. I want to hear the voice of the Lord. I said, Hope. Did you know I get to hear the voice of the Lord every day? And her brown eyes got really big. She flipped her hair around and she's like, what? And I said, you have some scriptures? She said, no, and I said, Hope. Grab the scriptures. She said, well, where would I grab some?

28:45 And I was trying to figure out where we could get her some scriptures and I don't even know who was there, somebody who was listening as they do all of a sudden handed a Book of Mormon to us and we sat down and we started to read the Book of Mormon. Now we know what's the first part of the Book of Mormon. I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents and I thought, oh, this is not a good way to start this discussion. She sat intently listening and I said, Hope. This is where you get to highlight. Write questions, circle, put notes. This is your scriptures. You're not doing this for anybody but you. Write down where you see God. Write down what's important to you. How do you feel? I said, when you do, you'll find that you will hear the voice of the Lord through the scriptures and you will see places that it stands out to you.

29:35 Spend time with the Lord. Well, I got a little note, so this was like on a Thursday. I got a note on my desk on Monday morning. It was from Hope and she said, President Cordon, I just want you to know I've heard the voice of the Lord. It is the faith. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith to move forward just as we talked. It's the simple thing that he taught. Just have faith in me. Trust me. Sometimes trusting him is hard and it doesn't make sense. Sometimes it's overwhelming and it looks so different. Our path looks different than our neighbors and to see the Lord is such a

		personal thing. We write down even where we see his fingerprint. We may not see the hand of the Lord. Maybe we can only see his fingerprint like I can breathe today, but He loves us.
Hank Smith:	30:28	I brought a story today that I'm guessing both of you have heard. I don't know why I didn't know this story. John, I bet you already do. It is the story behind the song I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.
John Bytheway:	30:43	Oh. The Tabernacle Choir did a whole production on it. It is incredible.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	30:49	Okay, I wanna hear. I wanna hear.
Hank Smith:	30:52	The story is about the author Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. He wrote this poem which eventually became the hymn. It was a time of national division, the Civil War. As well as personal loss for Longfellow. His wife Fannie had died when her dress caught fire. Henry tried to put out the fire by smothering the flame with his own body, but it was too late. He's so burned he can't go to a funeral. Then two years later, his 18-year-old son Charlie, left home and signed up to serve in the Union Army. On December 1st, 1863, Longfellow was having dinner with his family when he received a war telegram stating that his son Charlie had been severely wounded in battle. It would result in paralysis and would face a very long recovery. On Christmas day in 1863, Longfellow a 57-year-old widowed father of six, the oldest of which had been paralyzed as his country fought a war against itself, wrote a poem seeking to capture the dynamic and dissonance in his own heart and the world he observed around him.
	32:10	You both know the lyrics, but I'll read them here. I heard the bells on Christmas day, their old familiar carols play and mild and sweet, their songs repeat of peace on earth, goodwill to men. And in despair I bowed my head, there is no peace on earth I said, hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth, goodwill to men. Then rang the bells more loud and deep, God is not dead, nor doth he sleep. The wrong shall fail, the right prevail with peace on earth, goodwill to men. Then ringing, singing on its way the world revolved from night to day. A voice, a chime, a chance sublime of peace on earth, goodwill to men. Bonnie, he's the life and light and hope of the world.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	33:06	I love that. That little nativity that we did as a family growing up, there was a last little piece in our narrative that taught me a little bit about Christ that has been sweet. It says, here then we

conclude the known history of Christmas. All else that is added is man's homemade invention, but with it all, the most important thing still survives the spirit of peace on earth, goodwill toward man. Never at any other season does the peace come closer to universal reality. Not far from us, surrounded by his legions of heavenly hosts. This same Jesus works today toward the time when He will come again to the earth. It will be a glorious day, perhaps much nearer than we think and when it arrives, men will call it the millennium. A Christmas season of peace on earth that will last 1000 years.

John Bytheway: 34:05 The backstories of each of our hymns is sometimes much more profound than you even imagine. You think somebody just wrote a poem, there's a life experience behind it. A long time ago when Church News used to have editorials and the Church News is online now, a man named William B. Smart just wrote a quick little essay, very short called The Three Levels of Christmas. There's just some profound thoughts in there. He referred to the first level of Christmas is the Santa Claus level. That's ho, ho, ho and Christmas trees and stockings and presents and Rudolph the red nose reindeer and everything and he said, you know our lives would be emptier without that delightful first level. But he said there's another deeper level. He called the second level of Christmas, the Silent Night level. That's the story of the birth of Jesus in Luke two.

34:57 That's the shepherds. That's the wise men coming with gifts. We get to sing Silent Night. Then he made this great statement. He said, but there's some who want to keep Christ in the manger. The baby Jesus did not remain a baby. He grew up. The third level is the Easter level, the Resurrected Christ. That's what this document is all about. We would not be here talking today if it weren't for the third level of Christmas. That is that this baby came to do what Isaiah prophesied he would do that he would suffer and die for all mankind and conquer sin and death. That's where the joy of Christmas comes from. One of the things I've loved doing as I sing Christmas carols in church is to go, that's level two, that's level three, that's level two. That's level three. Like Hark the herald angels sing glory to the newborn King. Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled. Whoa. That's level three. That's the Atonement of Christ. As you read the hymns, watch for level two and level three. You'll notice that joy to the world, the Lord, the Lord Jehovah, the Lord is come, let earth receive her King. You're going okay, there's level two and level three in all of these. None of them work without level three.

Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	36:26	Oh, I love that. If all Christmas told us was that a baby was born in Bethlehem, it would be truly beautiful but truly not enough. Really the power of Christmas is that the baby and the manger became the Savior in Gethsemane and the Redeemer on Calvary and that the Living Christ of the empty tomb. I know how he's walked with my struggles and sometimes it's been, it's in the silence that I actually see the Savior, the silence of, I'm not hearing him answer directly, but I see him place people around me. In that silence I realized that he did answer my prayers and it's usually always different than I think it should be. I have it all outlined how he should answer. It never gets answered that way. It's so frustrating. It's so much better. How does it be frustrating and better all at the same time?
Hank Smith:	37:19	Bonnie, I'm sure like I do, you see discouraged students, they worry about the future. They don't let on that they're worried about the future. They smile and laugh and they listen to their music, but when you can get their attention I say, how many of you are pretty worried about having a successful marriage? Because they see marriages dissolving around them and I say, how many of you are scared to raise kids? They almost all raise their hand going, this world is a a pretty difficult, difficult place. Like we said earlier, they were born for this. What's your message to your students there at SVU?
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	37:53	Thank you. I love that 'cause I love walking the halls with them and I love asking them, what's your story? Tell me your story. And you're right. It is so different than what it looks like on the outside as you peel back the laughter and the camaraderie, so many of them are struggling. I remember one time I had been here just a few months and I was having some problems with my computer. A young student who worked in IT came in to fix it. As he was fixing the computer, I love how the Spirit works. I could tell there was something wrong and I looked at him and I said, are you okay? And he just broke down in tears and he said, I just found out that my dad passed away. I said, what are you doing at work? And he said, I didn't know what else to do. To be there at that sacred space to talk about eternity, to have an opportunity to talk and to listen and to mourn with him.
	38:51	One of the things that is the hardest for our students and this generation and probably all of us is we have this that we try to use as the consoling all-encompassing help instead of turning to those that you know will help you walk this path and I think the Savior has been so generous to put people in our paths that we need to be present with each other as we're struggling. I tell the students, collect friends, I want you to collect people. You're here to bless, not impress and the more you bless, I promise

they will turn around and in abundance, bless you, you will know the Savior, you will see Him and He will be ever present in your life because you're there with them. Then I also say the simple things. Don't forget the primary answers. Look in the scriptures. Say your prayers.

39:46 I said, God's really good at calculus. One girl said, I never thought to ask. As we're struggling with things, I think we think our prayers have to be like this and the Lord says, be specific. I am anxious that our young people become connected with each other, connected with the Savior, connected with things that actually matter. What matters? It's the good, better, best. There's a lot of good things. There's even better things. If you can choose each day the best things which is coming unto Christ. That is that simple walk by faith, choose Him. Best friend you can collect is the Savior Jesus Christ. You know him better today than you did yesterday. We have a lot of times, many guests on our campus and I have some students, anytime they're hosting, they come and we talk about what does it look like to host somebody? How do we help someone be a guest on our campus? Our students are really good. They're like, we know if it's a good visit, if they know Christ better than when they came.

Hank Smith: 40:53 John, you visit with the same young people that Bonnie and I do. What do you tell them when you know there's fear in what they face?

John Bytheway: 41:02 The answer is always Jesus. We've been taught that, but maybe they want more specifics. I love the council that we learned earlier this year for Martin Harris. Learn of me. Listen to my words. Walk in the meekness of my spirit and then this line, you'll have peace in me. If we're seeking peace in popular opinion, if we're seeking peace in money, if we're seeking peace in distractions, we won't get it. You'll have peace in me. He's the Prince of peace. I'm amazed how often the prescription for so many things, not just sicknesses but so many things, even temporal things like I don't have a job. Are you reading the Book of Mormon? Are you reading the scriptures? How often the Spirit will enlighten your mind or give you ideas or things like that or just open you to other answers from the Spirit. You know what Section 50 says? Continue in God. He that receiveth light and continue within God, receiveth more light. Don't discontinue God at the time of your sadness. Stay connected because he's got the answers. Sometimes I wish he'd answer faster. He knows how to best help you and if you really believe He loves you, he'll give you the answer in the best way for you.

Hank Smith:	42:21	You can trust him. You really can.
John Bytheway:	42:23	Yeah.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	42:24	One of my favorite scriptures is trust in the Lord with all thy heart. That is hard. It's hard to give your heart something that we sometimes guard. Next lean not to thine own understanding. Sometimes in my world it should look a certain way so if the Lord doesn't answer in the way I think it should be at times I don't think the Lord's listening. I'm like, I told you how I need to see it and the Lord's like that's not gonna be how it is. If I trust the Lord with all our heart and not have a prerequisite, I guess for the Lord, it's amazing what He can show us, but it's hard sometimes to trust. It's one step at a time.
Hank Smith:	43:01	Now I think I'm a lot like my dad where I say, that is hard now go do it. You were born for this. Remember what Joseph said to the Twelve. Now round up your shoulders and stand under it like men. I love what you both have said and I would say to our young adult friends, you can do this. It's inside of you. If you rely on Him, you're going to be okay. If they'll choose to stay faithful, if they'll choose to get into the temple, often they'll be connected with Him and they'll be okay more than okay. They'll thrive.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	43:41	I love that. When we talk about the pre-earth life, we don't remember who we were or what we did in the pre-earth life, no one does. We do know that the Savior remembers us and we know that heavenly Father remembers us. Why would we not put our trust into somebody who knows us better than we know ourselves? He knows all of those attributes, the qualifications, the talents that we came with. They will be magnified as we trust them because they actually know what we can do. Like you said, get up and do and the reason why we can get up and do is because the Lord knows we can do it and he's right there to walk with us on this journey.
Hank Smith:	44:23	Yes, it is scary. The world is a tough place to live, but you're tough people. You have divine help. Bonnie, before we let you go, not a lot of members of the church, I'm not one, John's not one, who grow up the child of a general authority, especially a presidency of the Seventy. Can you tell us just a little bit about your dad and what that was like?
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	44:48	That is such a great question. Well, when I was in his home, he wasn't a general authority. He was dad and what was great is he always said yes to the Lord even when it was hard, he was a orthodontist. When the Lord asked him to be in a counselor as a

bishopric, he said, yes, he was a counselor in a stake presidency. He said, yes. He went to the temple. He said, yes. He just, he did the everyday thing. We had a little Christmas tradition, dad and I that we had a little wager whether it would snow or not. Most of the time in Idaho Falls it was snowing and so he would slip a little dollar under my plate and if it wasn't snowing, I usually found a penny or two or a dime and put on his plate. He was a great man and he was my best friend. What I loved is he taught me that the Lord always comes first. He always said, whenever you marry someone, you make sure that your husband loves the Lord more than he loves you and everything will be okay. It was not surprising. I was married at the time when dad was called to be a general authority, but it didn't surprise me that the Lord tapped him on the shoulder because he knew he would always say yes. I was grateful for a man that loved the Lord more than he loved me.

Hank Smith: 46:08 I don't know if you remember this, Bonnie, the very last talk that Elder Harold G. Hillam your father gave in general conference was in April of 2000. It's called Future Leaders. We talked earlier about how the Lord gives us little coincidences. The very last portion of this talk is from the Living Christ, which had just been given just months earlier. I wanna read a portion of that talk and if you wouldn't mind, I'd like you to read the end. Here's part of what Elder Hillam says. He says, knowing about the Savior is a natural part of our religious education. Knowing the Savior requires personal obedience, prayer, a closeness to the Spirit and revelation. He's speaking to young people just like you did Bonnie today. He said, you will be the teachers and leaders

Elder Harold G....: 47:04 that will continue to establish the church throughout the world. You'll want to look in the mirror probably periodically and remind yourselves of the great mission that lies before you. May you stand straight and noble in your callings. I pray that you will learn to know of the Savior and have an ever-growing understanding of His Atonement. I ask the Lord to help you throughout your life, to join your testimony with those of today's living apostles and prophets who declared and I quote:

Pres. Bonnie Cordon: 47:34 We bear testimony as his duly ordained apostles, that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal son of God. He is the great King Immanuel who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the life and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son. To this I testify and witness. He was my best friend and it was

		pretty hard to have him go. I wish you had known him. You'd have enjoyed him. He played hard and he He worked hard.
Hank Smith:	48:18	Bonnie, thanks for doing that for me. I love the two of you testifying together as both leaders of the Church. Bonnie, we want to wish you a Merry Christmas out there at SVU. If it snows, John will give you some money.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	48:36	Put it under my plate.
Hank Smith:	48:40	We have loved being with you. Thank you.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	48:42	It has been a joy. I mean, merry, Merry Christmas. What a joyful time. Sometimes it's messy, sometimes it's celebratory. Hopefully it's a time of Christ.
Hank Smith:	48:52	Yeah. I'm gonna try to center our traditions on the Savior this year. Like you said, I don't have to change them entirely. I can take the traditions of our fathers and point them towards the Lord.
Pres. Bonnie Cordon:	49:08	Well, I hope that my kids and my grandkids and the students of SVU would say, God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son. I just hope that we can know Christ better today than we knew yesterday. Anyway, I'm just so grateful for great people that helped me know the Savior like you did today. Thank you for teaching me about the Savior.
Hank Smith:	49:29	With that, we want to thank President Bonnie H. Cordon for joining us on followHIM. We want to thank our executive producer Shannon Sorensen. Merry Christmas Shannon. We want to thank our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen, and every episode we remember our founder Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. John, it's time to read the Old Testament on followHIM.



Hank Smith:	00:03	Hey, Merry Christmas here from followHIM. This is followHIM Favorites where John and I share a single story to go with each week's lesson. John, it's the Christmas episode on followHIM, and you have told me that you have a followHIM Favorite, a story.
John Bytheway:	00:17	I do, Hank, and I got it from the December 2025 Liahona magazine. And it was really funny because I was reading it with my wife and the next day we met the author, it's brother Gabe Reid, who's in the Sunday School General Presidency and we didn't know. I felt really cool saying, "Yeah, I read your thing yesterday." This is what he said. This is quite the story. I grew up in American Samoa. As one of 13 siblings, all of us lived in a small three bedroom home in the village of, it looks like Leone, maybe it's Leone, Leon. Christmas was always special for our family, a time to reflect on the birth and the atonement of Jesus Christ and a time to serve and give. One Christmas season after working hard and saving up, my parents bought each one of us a gift and placed them under the tree. We were so excited.
	01:04	But before Christmas arrived, my older brother woke us up one morning with devastating news. Every single present had been stolen. Someone had broken in during the night and taken them all. From that heartbreaking experience, Brother Reid said, "A new tradition was born." Every Christmas after that, we'd sleep around the Christmas tree to protect our gifts. As funny and as tragic as that memory is, it taught me more than to be cautious about Christmas gifts. It reminded me how important it is to safeguard and prioritize our covenant relationship with Heavenly Father. And then he said this, "Just as we protect our gifts or we protected them, we need to protect and prioritize our covenant relationship. Many of us face big decisions about school, dating, careers, missions. It's easy to feel uncertain or inadequate. When I feel that way, I let my covenants guide me. " What do your baptismal and temple of covenants say to do?
	02:06	What blessings has God promised you? When you prioritize your covenant relationship, everything else begins to fall into

		place. President Nelson shared, and we've said this multiple times, "The joy we feel," and joy is such a great Christmas word, "has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives." Feeling the Savior's love and joy is certainly the best Christmas gift we can receive. Can you imagine? Sleeping around the tree from then on became this tradition. We both talked about it. I called it rough start, great finish. You called it trial or blessing or both.
Hank Smith:	02:46	Yeah. That's something so tough to have that all taken from you and then to turn it around and say, this is a new tradition in our family. We guard the tree.
John Bytheway:	02:57	We guard the tree and then he decided we gotta guard our covenant relationship that way. We're gonna surround each other and surround our relationship and to protect us. I love it.
Hank Smith:	03:10	I love it. Next time something goes wrong at Christmas, I might say, "Well, got a new tradition now." Wow. That's absolutely inspiring. I bet someone listening is going, "Oh, my Christmas is going bad. What could I do to make a tradition out of this?" I love it. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcast. We're with Sister Bonnie Cordon. This week, she's out in Virginia serving as the president of a university there. She talks about Christmas. She tells a story about a gift her husband gave her that is just wonderful. It's really just a tender, very vulnerable story. Then come back next week because it is time for a brand new year of followHIM Favorites.