

"The First Testament of Jesus Christ"

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:

How can you clearly find Jesus Christ in the Old Testament without getting lost in its difficult passages? Dr. Josh Sears explores practical ways to identify Jesus Christ in the Old Testament through prophecy symbolic scripture and modern prophetic guidance bring clarity to challenging passages.

Part 2:

Dr. Sears continues to show how the Old Testament complexity is intentional, how it grows alongside Restoration scripture, and how understanding covenants as relationships helps readers wrestle with the text and liken its stories to their own lives.

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Part 1 -

- 00:00 Part 1 - Dr. Josh Sears
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- 05:03 Challenges to reading the Hebrew Bible
- 06:45 *Come, Follow Me Manual*
- 09:56 Types and shadows
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Part 2 -

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- 08:05 Why should I wrestle with these books?
- 12:39 Heroes with character flaws
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- 43:43 A preview of God never forsaking His children
- 47:28 Trusting in Jesus Christ and encouragement to participate in 2026

- 54:25 End of Part 2 - Dr. Josh Sears

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Biographical Information:



Joshua Sears grew up in Southern California and served in the Chile Osorno Mission. He received a BA in ancient Near Eastern studies from BYU, followed by an MA from The Ohio State University and a

PhD in Hebrew Bible from The University of Texas at Austin. His research interests include biblical polygamy, the book of Isaiah, and Latter-day Saint translations and editions of the Bible. He has presented at regional and national meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature, BYU Education Week, the Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, and the Leonardo Museum Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls. He is the author of *A Modern Guide to an Old Testament*(Deseret Book, 2025). His wife, Alice, is from Hong Kong and plays in Bells at Temple Square; they live in Lindon, Utah, with their five children.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:00	Coming up in this episode on followHIM.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:00:03	You see him do different things in these different states, and if we're so focused on just the gospels for our understanding of who Jesus is and what he's like and what he does, we are going to miss a much bigger picture that we can get when we see him in his Old Testament role.
Hank Smith:	00:00:22	Hello, everyone. Welcome to another season of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith and I am your host. I'm here with my Old Testament loving co-host John Bytheway. Now, John, you are not my old co-host. You are my Old Testament loving co-host.
John Bytheway:	00:00:44	I was talking with Methuselah just the other day. I'm excited to go back through the Old Testament again. Every time we've done it, we've learned more. This is gonna be great.
Hank Smith:	00:00:54	John, I have found that each book of scripture, when you understand it, contributes to your understanding of all the others. I don't think I realized that years ago, that if I understand the Old Testament more, I understand the Book of Mormon more, that happened to me four years ago. If you really wanna understand the Book of Mormon, you stay with us this year in the Old Testament, all the way through to Malachi.
John Bytheway:	00:01:15	That is exactly what happened. It was like, oh, oh. I had a lot of those oh moments. Look at the backstory here. Look at the parallels. Oh my goodness. If we're supposed to read the scriptures again and again, let's go through them again and again.
Hank Smith:	00:01:28	Let's do it again. John, thinking of oh, wow moments. Old Testament year, it was our guest for 2 Kings 17 through 25, and he's back with us today. Dr. Josh Sears. Josh, welcome back.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:01:45	Great to be here.

Hank Smith:	00:01:46	We are so excited to have you. It's been too long. You've been out of the country.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:01:51	Yep. Our family spent the last year living in Israel, so it's been an adjustment, but we're happy to be home.
Hank Smith:	00:01:55	You were prepping for followHIM.
John Bytheway:	00:01:57	Preparing for this.
Hank Smith:	00:01:58	That's right. Had to go back there and do some field research. Josh, give us a little overview of what are you hoping the listeners are going to feel today?
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:02:10	Well, in Come, Follow Me this year, they added a new lesson that wasn't here four years ago. Introducing the Old Testament. Rather than jumping right into the Creation, like we have done before, it's just a chance to step back and really think about what am I hoping to get out of my experience this year? What am I excited about? What am I a little bit nervous about? And get ourselves prepared. So I think this is gonna be really exciting.
Hank Smith:	00:02:32	I wanna mention that we are going to do the series Thoughts to Keep in Mind this year. We're gonna bring Dr. Ross Baron on a few times to walk us through those portions of the manual, so lots of helps this year. John, Josh has just paid the price in scripture. He is so pure in heart and good, genuinely good. He is as good John as I pretend to be. But there may be some people here who don't know Josh. What do we know about him?
John Bytheway:	00:03:01	I'm so happy to be able to introduce some people maybe for the first time to Joshua Sears. He's from Southern California, served in the Chile Osono mission and received a bachelor's in Near Eastern Studies from BYU and then went to the Ohio State University for a master's, a PhD in Hebrew from the University of Texas at Austin. Listen to these research interests, Biblical Polygamy, the Book of Isaiah, the Latter-day Saint Translations and editions of the Bible. He's presented at regional and national meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature. In fact, we were talking about that before we pushed record. Education Week, Sydney B. Sperry Symposium, the Leonardo Museum Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls. I'm sure we'll talk about those this year. He's the author of this is great. This is brand new, Hank. Just came out. A Modern Guide to an Old Testament. Isn't that a great title? Hank, I think you have one, you should hold it up.

Hank Smith:	00:03:59	I have it right here. Great cover.
John Bytheway:	00:04:01	Yeah. He wrote a lot of this in the Holy Land. What a great backdrop to be in to write about it. Josh and his wife, Alice, who is from Hong Kong, plays bells in the Bells at Temple Square, and they live in Lindon with their five children. We're really glad that you're back, Dr. Sears. Thank you.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:04:21	It's great to be here.
Hank Smith:	00:04:22	John, I frequently tell people, look, you're not going to get wealthy writing books for Latter-day Saint. Less anyone think Josh is out here trying to... He's not gonna get a cabin in Midway through this.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:04:35	Some Lincoln Logs maybe.
Hank Smith:	00:04:36	Yeah, yeah. Josh. Tell us about the book. What are you excited about and where do we find it?
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:04:45	Like he said, I wrote most of it during the year that our family was living in Jerusalem, which just happened to be that way. We were there at the BYU Jerusalem Center, and that's the year I was writing the book. The synergy of getting to write about ancient Israelites while visiting the places where they lived was really incredible and a unique experience. The book isn't intended as a commentary or a history or anything. It's more like taking a step back to say, what are the things that keep us from having a great experience reading the Old Testament? And then strategizing ways to improve our overall reading experience.
Hank Smith:	00:05:17	I'm looking at the table of contents here. It's a lot about the covenant, a lot about how to read Israelite poetry, Israelite prophecy. And then I love this hurdle number 10, conflicts with modern science. That comes up all the time with some of my students who are going into medical school. How do I deal with this? I'm being taught this in my biology classes, yet here I am reading this in the Bible. Josh, it sounds like you take that right on.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:05:44	I've had years of experience telling people, I do the Old Testament and they say, "Oh, well, I have a problem with the Old Testament," and then I hear what their story is. I had a lot of different conversations in the back of my mind as I was putting this chapter list together.

Hank Smith:	00:05:59	I am excited for this. I have a feeling, John, this is something I'm gonna use all year. As I've started my reading of it. I think, oh, I'm gonna put a note in my scriptures to bring this up for our listeners. Josh, thanks for taking the time to write this. When all is said and done, you'll probably get like 20 cents an hour. Hopefully you feel like it was a good investment. Let's read from the Come, Follow Me Manual. The first lesson of the year starts this way. When you consider studying the Old Testament this year, how do you feel? Eager, uncertain, afraid? Wow. Afraid. Some fear. All of these emotions are understandable. The Old Testament is one of the oldest collections of writing in the world, and this can make it both exciting and intimidating. These writings come from an ancient culture that can seem foreign and sometimes strange or even uncomfortable.
	00:06:50	Yet in these writings, we see people having experiences that seem familiar. We recognize gospel themes that witness of the divinity of Jesus Christ and his gospel. Yes, people like Abraham, Sarah, Hannah, and Daniel lived lives that in some ways were very different from ours, but they also experienced family joy and family discord, moments of faith and moments of uncertainty and successes and failures like all of us do. More important, they exercised faith, repented, made covenants, had spiritual experiences, and never gave up on the promise of a savior. As we learn how God moved in their lives, we also see him in ours, and we say with the psalmist, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Therefore, thy servant loveth it. " Wow. That is an awesome introduction to what's gonna be an awesome year. All right, Josh, what do you wanna do? How do you wanna start?
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:07:47	Well, this lesson's a little bit unique because unlike most weeks of the year, we don't have a scriptural block that we are looking at. Right here in the lesson, they've got four different subjects, topics that they think that we can cover that will really help us get ready for this year. I quite like them. I think I would've probably chosen the exact same four. The first one is titled The Old Testament Testifies of Jesus Christ. In fact, the title of this lesson is the First Testament of Jesus Christ, which I think is a great way to look at it. We have a First Testament and a New Testament and then Another Testament. We have all these testaments of the Savior. The manual says this, "One way to find spiritual nourishment in the Old Testament is to look for the bread of life, Jesus Christ." Like you were reading, people that lived in Old Testament times look forward to the promised Messiah.

00:08:38 We can find a lot of value as we try to connect with the Savior in our own lives by looking for the ways that they prophesied about Him and looked forward to His coming. There's some general guidelines that can help us out as we're doing this. First, one of the things that we're trying to do is look for prophecies of the coming Messiah. It's important that we recognize that really explicit, direct, clear prophecies of Him coming are actually more relatively rare than sometimes we assume, especially if we're used to the Book of Mormon, which is just dropping these left and right every chapter. As much as we love this aspect of the Old Testament, it's important to be realistic about how often are we gonna encounter explicit prophecies, and it's more rare than sometimes we think. I have heard some teachers with the best of intentions tell a class, the Old Testament is a book of prophecies of the coming of the Messiah, and they frame the whole book as if that's all it's about. And I get why they're enthusiastic about that, but we gotta be careful because we might set up readers to be a little disappointed when they're searching and they're like, "I can't find very much in here," and they think maybe they're not spiritual enough to notice it or something like that. We've gotta recognize that they are there, but they're a little bit more rare when you consider how gigantic the Old Testament is.

00:09:56 What you're gonna find a lot more of though is symbolic teachings about the coming Messiah. We talk about things like types and shadows, other kinds of symbols that would point Israelites forward to His coming. Those you can find a lot more frequently. And it's significant then that in the manual here, when it's giving examples of looking for the coming Messiah in the Old Testament, it actually doesn't list any of the direct prophecies, it just lists a bunch of types and shadows. I think it's maybe suggesting that those are what we're gonna find most often. For example, it says, "How do you see the Savior in the following?" And then it has the example of manna. Well, manna is the heavenly food that we read about in Exodus that gets connected to Jesus when he defines himself as the bread of life, and Jesus will even connect himself back to that story.

00:10:44 And the daily nourishment from the manna was a way that they could recognize the daily nourishment that we need from the Savior. The second example is the sacrificial lamb from the Passover. That can connect us to the gospel of John where it describes Jesus as the Lamb of God who sacrificed himself on the cross, gave his mortal life so that we could have everlasting life. We can see symbolism and foreshadowing there in the Passover lamb. The third example it has is the brass serpent from Numbers chapter 21. And you recall the story is they're

dying of poisonous snake bites and the brass serpent gets lifted up and whoever just looks at it will be healed. The New Testament and the Book of Mormon connect that with Jesus' crucifixion, that just as the Son of man was lifted up on the cross, we looked at him for healing just like those Israelites did with the brass serpent.

00:11:32 We can see this serpent as a type of Christ. It's things about the brass serpent are typical of things about Jesus. And the final example they give is Jonah, right? Jonah was in the whale's belly for three days and three nights in the New Testament and Jesus connects himself with that and foreshadows his own days that he's gonna spend in the tomb before coming out. In these and many other places, the Old Testament will give us types where they're typical of something Jesus will say or do, or they're shadows, they foreshadow things that Jesus would one day come and do. And in these symbolic ways, those that were attuned to those things could recognize intimations of the coming Messiah.

Hank Smith: 00:12:13 When I see a type and a shadow, I've heard that so many times in church and in lessons. I think I understand this shadow idea. If John Bytheway is standing in front of a light and I see his shadow on a wall, that's a shadow of John Bytheway. It's not John. I don't go talk to the shadow and high five it, but it does look like John. What do you mean by type?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:12:35 A type is something that represents the characteristics, something that's typical about something else. So it's kind of related to the ideas of shadows and that the shape of the shadow will tell you about the real thing. So that's why we usually just say types and shadows and it rolls off the tongue. But for example, if we look at the story of Judah, one of the 12 sons of Israel and how he volunteers himself to go to prison in Egypt in order to get Benjamin out of prison, we can call Judah a type of Christ because that willingness to sacrifice oneself in order to rescue another is typical of the attitude that Jesus will show. Judah's a type of Christ, we can look at Joseph, we can look at Moses. There's a bunch of characters in the Old Testament where we'll say, "He is a type or this thing is a type." In that, like you said, they're not Jesus, but indirectly, they can teach you something about Jesus or remind you about something important about Jesus. And so in that way, it becomes a valuable teaching tool.

Hank Smith: 00:13:35 That's great. Josh, can I ask you a question? And I didn't prep you for this. All three of us have spent time in the Holy Land. We've become friends, especially you, Josh, being there for a

year. We've become friends with some of the most wonderful Jewish people. Now, this is originally their scripture, Josh. They don't call it the Old Testament. They call it the Hebrew Bible. When I see all of these things about Jesus in the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible, tell me your thoughts on when I think of my Jewish friends who don't see that. How do they not see that? How come I see that? Is it because of the Gospels? Is it because Matthew and John said, "Hey, there it is" and now I see it?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:14:15 "Yeah, a lot of our classic types and shadow sorts of symbols in the Old Testament, we recognize that way because the New Testament will describe them that way or the Book of Mormon or even the Doctrine and Covenants will draw that connection for us. But if you're just living at the time period, that might not have been the obvious meaning. When we have Jewish friends and neighbors who read the Hebrew Bible, they don't see the Christ center significance of some of those things. It's not because they're not intelligent. It's because we are looking through a certain lens in order to recognize these things that are meaningful and impactful for us. That's helpful because it helped people in ancient Israel who were spiritually in tune or could learn from prophets and recognize things in advance, they might have seen those things. And it's also possible that even some of the original prophets who taught about these things didn't recognize the full significance at the time, but we can with the benefit of hindsight.

00:15:10 I imagine in a few cases, we might identify something as a type of Christ. If I were to talk to Moses in the spirit world, he might go, "That's a great interpretation. I love what you have done with that story. I didn't think of it at the time, but that's fantastic." So it's not necessarily inherent in the original meaning of the story in all cases. These things, we are interpreting them this way, and it's an interpretation that we value as followers of Jesus Christ.

Hank Smith: 00:15:34 Absolutely. It's important to me when I'm working with my BYU students or even, you know, those who maybe come on a tour to Israel, that this originally wasn't ours. There's value in seeing it the way our Jewish friends see it. I've heard before someone say, kind of like what you've said, Josh, is, "Hey, when I read the Old Testament, I just look for Jesus." That's all I do. I just look for Jesus. There is value, of course. There's also value in seeing it the way our Jewish friends see it, seeing it from that perspective. You've done that a lot. When you came here four years ago, you helped us do that.

Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:16:10	So many of the stories in here can be read in more than one way. You can look for what might this have meant for the people way back in the 10th century BC, and that might be one lesson. And then you might say, "Well, if I look at it from this angle where I recognize Jesus and His Atonement, what can I get reading the story through that symbolic lens?" And that could be something else completely. I love that there's the multiple layers and angles and ways to appreciate these stories because it means they are so rich and multifaceted that we are never gonna exhaust all the possible beautiful meanings that we can derive from so many of these prophecies and poems and stories and teachings.
Hank Smith:	00:16:43	One more question on this area, Josh. When you studied the Hebrew Bible in graduate school and in your doctoral program, what was the view of Jewish versus Christian lenses on the Old Testament? Was it seen from professors? I'm sure it ranges between professors. Would they say, "This is why Christians see it this way, this is why Jews see it this way?" What did you learn there?
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:17:09	When you're doing a graduate program in biblical studies, the focus tends to be on finding what they call the original context, trying to determine as best we can using the tools available to us. What did the original author probably mean? What did the original audience probably understand this to say? The question of how Christians interpret this is an important question, but that might be a question that comes next, and it's not part of that original looking at it. Even how Jews interpret it is not necessarily the same thing, because when we talk about Jewish interpretations, that can include the last couple thousand years of Jewish readings of scripture that is itself 1 or 2,000 years removed from when the original authors lived. There's a rich field of learning about the reception history, it's called, of how different faith communities have interpreted a certain passage. Not everybody's experience in graduate school is the same, but for me, there was a lot of interest in learning what other people think about these.
	00:18:04	For example, I was often asked as the Mormon in the class, how do Mormons or Latter-day Saints read this? And I was welcome to share that. People were genuinely interested. It wasn't a spirit where we were competing, trying to see who had the correct interpretation. People love just learning about more meanings and more possible ways to do it. Even if they don't accept the Latter-day Saint interpretation, something about how we see a verse might make them notice something new about it. The same thing would be true when I'm learning about

how a Jew or a Catholic might see the same verse. I had a really rich experience with everybody sharing what they've noticed and we're all the better for it.

Hank Smith: 00:18:41 It's a term we use to sound really smart in our classes, which is, exegetical reading. Trying to draw out that initial, what that author meant and what the audience would have seen. And then I love what you said. There's so many different ways to receive this and interpret it, and it's fun to learn from everyone.

John Bytheway: 00:18:58 I really love this. When we read the Book of Mormon, we see Jesus from, almost from the beginning to the end, but in the Old Testament, it's, there's a Messiah coming. Then in the New Testament, we take that lens and go back and say, "Oh, that must have been what the Old Testament's talking about here." We're looking for Jesus in the Old Testament. I love what the manual does here. Instead of coming out with the name, Jesus Christ, it's gonna say, "Think about manna. What could that mean?" Think about the sacrificial lamb. Think about the brass serpent. That's kind of a fun way to look at it. You're gonna look for symbols, not the name spelled right out.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:19:36 And that leads us into the next principle that the manual outlines, which is Jesus Christ is Jehovah in the Old Testament. The background here is that for the Israelites, in the Old Testament, the name of their God was, we pronounce it in English as Jehovah. Even that, it's sometimes hard to recognize Jehovah in the Old Testament because of the translation we're using. The name Jehovah, if you look at the original Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament appears throughout these books nearly 7,000 times, which is a lot. It's hard to find a page without his name somewhere. But there's a Jewish tradition that developed after Old Testament times of not saying His name too frequently in order to respect the sacredness of the name. Jewish tradition developed a series of euphemisms that they would say in place of His name. They would either say something like the name or the Lord or God or things like that.

00:20:32 And our King James translation picks up that tradition. Whenever the name Jehovah was there originally, what the King James version will typically do is spell out a euphemistic title, The Lord. They give you a little clue about what's going on by putting the letters and little capital letters with LORD. That distinguishes it from regular old Lord, which they'd also had a word for. If Lord is printed with lowercase letters, L-O-R-D, that just meant Lord or sir or master or something along those lines. You could use that title to describe God or a human ruler, but when you see those small capital letters, that's your hint from

the King James translators that the divine name Jehovah is behind this. That's our first thing that we gotta recognize when we're reading in translation. Learn how to spot those important little capital letters so that we can recognize the name.

00:21:24 Like the manual said, for us next, there's a doctrinal step to identify Jehovah as the premortal Jesus Christ. There's a great little quote here from President Dallin H. Oaks in the manual talking about this. It's a quote from a general conference talk from the April 2023 conference. I'm actually gonna read from the conference talk to include one or two more sentences just to add some additional clarity here. This is what President Oaks said. "Before the fall, our heavenly Father spoke directly to Adam and Eve. Thereafter, meaning after the fall, The Father introduced his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as our savior and redeemer and gave us the command to hear him. "From this direction, we conclude that the scriptural records of words spoken by God or the Lord are almost always the words of Jehovah our risen Lord Jesus Christ. He's repeating something that Latter-day Saint prophets have long taught, like we have it in the Living Christ document where it says he is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

00:22:28 Recognizing that Jehovah is premortal Jesus is incredibly important for us because it drastically expands the number of passages and scripture that we have where we can learn about our Savior Jesus Christ. Sometimes as Latter-day Saints, we may not always appreciate the full significance of this. And to illustrate that, let me tell you a silly story if you're ready for that.

Hank Smith: 00:22:51 Okay.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:22:51 Imagine you have a friend, Latter-day Saint, who comes to you and says, I wanna learn more about Jesus Christ from the scriptures. And you, Hank or John suggest, Well, why don't we read the four gospels together? And he says, That sounds like a great idea. Together, he sits down, he opens up his scriptures and he gets to Matthew chapter one. He skims through it for a few seconds and says, Mm, nope, He's not here. And he moves on to Matthew chapter two. You would be thinking, No, hold on, hold on. I know he's in there. It's his genealogy and it describes his birth and the angel to Joseph. Jesus is definitely present, but he is already on to Matthew chapter three. And then chapter four, five, six, seven, eight, and he's going, nope, nope, nope, nope, don't see him there. Your mind is racing and you're thinking the sermon on the mount.

00:23:36 You're skipping his sermons and there's healing stories in there and there's teachings. What are you doing? He keeps flipping through the chapters until he gets to Matthew chapter 16, verse 27, and then he stops and he's excited and he says, I found Him. And he reads, For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with his angels, and then shall he reward every man according to his works. Then he keeps going. Chapter 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23. Then when he gets to chapter 24, he stops again and he's excited and he reads this. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." And at that point, you figure out what he's doing.

00:24:23 When he's looking for Jesus in the gospels, he's hunting and carefully for prophecies of the Second Coming. In his mind right now, that's what's important because he lives in the latter days and that's where he's gonna find Jesus. So he's hunting and pecking for prophecies of the Second Coming. Now, is there anything wrong with reading the gospels and looking for the prophecies that are there of the Second Coming? No, that's perfectly fine. It's a fantastic study, nothing wrong with it, but you're probably thinking if he limits himself only to those few passages prophesying of the Second Coming, he's gonna be missing the tremendous wealth of information about Jesus that's everywhere else in the gospels because what this guy is doing is effectively looking for things in the New Testament that take him out of the New Testament to go somewhere else, to a different dispensation and see what that tells him there.

00:25:15 And again, it's fine, but if you limit yourself to only that, you're gonna be missing out on so much. You might guess where I'm going with this. Although that strategy sounds absurd, we sometimes have this attitude when we get to the Old Testament where when we think, "I want to find Jesus in the Old Testament," what people mean by that is I want to hunt all over the place and find anything I can find, direct prophecies or symbolic teachings that point to His mortal ministry and His birth and His atoning sacrifice and His death and His resurrection. We think that's what it means to find Jesus in the Old Testament. It's fine. It's more than fine. It's great. It's fantastic. We should be doing that, but if we limit ourselves to these cases where the Old Testament is pointing outside of itself to a different dispensation, we are gonna be missing the rich feast of information about Jesus Christ that's right there in the Old Testament happening in real time, where he's teaching and prophesying and rescuing and healing and chastising in His role as Jehovah.

	00:26:23	If we take seriously the idea that Jehovah is Jesus Christ, then we should be looking for all that Jehovah does right there and all that teaches us about the Savior. I'll give one example just to illustrate this a little more. If I were to go to a class or you would or go to a class and tell them to open up to Isaiah chapter seven in the Latter-day Saint edition of the Bible. So in the Bible, that's page 870, and that includes Isaiah chapter seven, verses 3 through 22. Good sampling of verses there. And we were to challenge the class, find Jesus. I bet you that within a few seconds, most members of the class would hone in on verse 14. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel." For a lot of members of the class to be like, I found him and that's it. Now I'm done." Are they correct that you can interpret this as being about Jesus? Yes, Matthew does that. This is certainly about Jesus. Sometimes that zeroing in on prophecies of the mortal ministry blinds us to the rich resources that are all around that. Just on this page, verse three talks about the Lord said to Isaiah, and it's got the capital L-O-R-D, so that tells you this is Jehovah. Verse seven thus saith the Lord God. Verse 10, the Lord spake. Verse 11, a sign of the Lord. Verse 12, The Lord, verse 13, God. Verse 14, the Lord. Verse 17, the Lord. Verse 18, the Lord. Verse 20, the Lord shall do this. Look how many other references there are to him right here on this one page alone. And if you wanna count verses where Jehovah speaks and you have the words of Jesus Christ, that's verses three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, and 11.
	00:28:10	Too often we fall into this trap of thinking what I need to do is find that elusive prophecy or that hidden symbol that points me to the New Testament. Again, wonderful. I'm not trying to put that down. We are so focused on that method for finding Jesus that we ignore the many more references that are just right here on the page where you can see Jesus as Jehovah talking and giving correction and giving prophecies and giving counsel and warnings and all these things right there. We don't have to go out of the Old Testament to find these things. We can stay right here and enjoy a rich spiritual feast.
Hank Smith:	00:28:45	Josh, what a fantastic example. A fantastic example there in Isaiah chapter seven where you said, Okay, in Isaiah seven, when do we learn about Jesus? Oh, verse 14. Actually, he's talking to Isaiah. He's telling Isaiah to go meet with Ahaz. You should see him deal a little bit with Ahaz and the way he's responding to Ahaz saying, Oh, no, I don't wanna tempt the Lord.
John Bytheway:	00:29:09	To paraphrase, I think it was Joseph Fielding Smith, just this is a paraphrase, Since the fall, all dealings of God, the Father with

man have been through the Son. That made so much sense to me when I think of the nicknames, some of the nicknames that the Savior has like Mediator, Advocate, Intercessor. We're seeing Jehovah all over here working with the people in the Old Testament as Jehovah instead of just looking for when is he gonna be Jesus? When is he gonna be New Testament? We're seeing Jehovah work through. Why? Because he's our Advocate, our Intercessor, our Mediator, so he's all throughout here. Yeah, it's a great insight.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:29:50 We gotta recognize too that as wonderful as the four gospels are in showing us His mortal life, and I wouldn't trade those for anything, this chance to look at him in His Jehovah mode, so to speak, is also crucial for having a full picture of the breath and the depth of the majesty of Jesus Christ. Because when he's in his mortal ministry, he is doing certain things and setting an example of how a human being should live. But he's not disclosing every role he's ever had or every action he's ever gonna take. In His premortal role as Jehovah and His role as resurrected God after the resurrection, you get to see even more about Jesus. For example, his role as judge, which he is in, fully within his rights to do when he's acting as a God, even though as a human, he taught don't judge.

00:30:45 He's modeling that for us. Or his role as gathering Israel is something that he does when he's in God mode as Jehovah or after the resurrection, but not something he's doing on a global scale in His mortal ministry. It's more like that individual one-on-one helping people be gathered there. You see him do different things in these different states. And if we're so focused on just the gospels for our understanding of who Jesus is and what he's like and what he does, we are going to miss a much bigger picture that we can get when we see him in His Old Testament role.

Hank Smith: 00:31:17 And Josh, just to throw out a little teaser for Isaiah seven, verse 14, if I'm a Jewish reader and I read that, how do I not see Jesus? A virgin shall conceive and bear a son and call his name Immanuel. But if I'm a Jewish reader, who am I learning about here?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:31:33 I'm sure we'll cover this more in September. This is one of those cases where again, there's more than one meaning that you could have. Right. One that applies in ancient Israel and one that we can recognize with the help of later revelation. In this case, it's very clear that the Immanuel, the baby we're talking about, starts as a child in the eighth century BC when Isaiah lives, because the whole setup to the prophecy doesn't make

sense otherwise. Probably for Jewish readers either at the time or later, that's what they're gonna understand. That's the contextual meaning. Then Matthew comes along a few centuries later in Matthew chapter one, and he quotes that verse when he's describing the birth of Jesus. And what Matthew seems to be doing is identifying that maybe Immanuel from the eighth century BC as a type of Christ. That this baby is gonna mean certain things and do certain things in Isaiah's time, and in an even grander way, Jesus is gonna do certain things and represent certain things when he comes in the flesh. There's a lot of connection between these two passages, but unless you have the help of an inspired author like Matthew drawing that connection for us, you might not see it if all you're working with is Isaiah seven.

Hank Smith: 00:32:41 Beautiful.

John Bytheway: 00:32:42 Years ago, I wrote a little book called Isaiah for Airheads. You'll find it in recycle bins everywhere. The more I studied the history and context of Isaiah seven, the less sense it made to me that that was Jesus because before this child shall know to choose the good and refrain from evil, the land that thou abhorrest will be forsaken of the two kings. And you're like, "That's not a prophecy that's gonna make any sense 700 years later. That is exactly what I learned is that there are multiple sometimes fulfillments of things that Isaiah says, but then Matthew's gonna grab that and say, "Here's a later, greater fulfillment of an Immanuel prophecy of God being with us." It's fun to see the context. At first, I went, "This can't be Jesus." Then I see Matthew's saying, "No, it is, but this is a later greater fulfillment." It helped me to study the Old Testament context that way. It challenged me, but it helped me in the end to see it even better.

Hank Smith: 00:33:42 I just think it's a more responsible way of reading scripture and it actually is more fun.

John Bytheway: 00:33:47 How would a Jew read this? They would say, "Well, this couldn't be some prophecy of somebody coming in 700 years because this is happening right now in real time with these two kingdoms trying to set up their own puppet king." This wouldn't make any sense anyway.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:34:01 I would encourage people not to say, "Well, I've got two interpretations here, one in its context and one that Matthew gives, and I'm just gonna go with the Matthew one and not even learn about the other one." And I would say that would also be a mistake because Matthew knows the context of Isaiah seven.

He appears to be a Jew writing to Jewish readers and they know this. Matthew is drawing on the lessons and imagery of Isaiah seven and packing all that into the one verse he quotes. But the better you understand the message of Isaiah seven, the better you're gonna understand how Matthew's using that verse. These things build on each other, so it's not a one or the other. There's a synergy that happens when we study all these different contexts and interpretations.

Hank Smith: 00:34:42 That's a great word, a synergy that happens. Two plus two equals 40.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:34:47 The bottom line is, we want to read the Old Testament to connect with Jesus Christ. There's more than one way to do that. One way is to look for direct prophecies of the coming Messiah, which is fantastic when they happen. Another is to look for symbols, types, and shadows that preview things that Jesus will do someday that were baked into Old Testament stories or that we can identify later through our Christian lens. Another thing we can do, and the one I think you get to do the most often is look for Jesus acting as Jehovah right then, right there with the people. I'll just give one little story here. People struggle with this and they struggle to see Jesus in these stories. One thing you might do is when you see the capital L-O-R-D is substitute Jesus or Christ and see if that helps you read it a new way.

00:35:36 Now, the historian in me rebels at that kind of suggestion because the titles used in their proper time period mean something and they're not always interchangeable. As a devotional reader, I actually like this as a practice. For example, I'll just read a little story from 1 Kings 17. Starting in verse 17, this is where Elijah has visited the widow that we remember that she was starving, she fed Elijah, and then he miraculously provided food for her. But the famine waxed sore and things kept going. 1 Kings 17, verse 17. And it came to pass after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick, and his sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him.

00:36:22 And he, Elijah, verse 19, said unto her, "Give me thy son." And he took him up out of her bosom where she seems to have just been clutching him close, I imagine, weeping, and carried him up into a loft where he abode and laid him upon his own bed. Verse 21, "And he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried unto Jesus," and I'm substituting Jesus there for, you know, says the Lord in the King James, but that's our exercise, cried unto Jesus and said, "Oh, Jesus, my God, I pray thee, let

this child's soul come into him again." And Christ heard the voice of Elijah and the soul of the child came into him again and he revived. That's just a little something you can do if you want to substitute Jesus or Christ where you see the Lord in the capital letters and just see if that reframes it for you.

00:37:14 Just see if it gives it a different sense. And I bet that if you do that, it'll help you recognize Jesus Christ more in these verses and it'll make these Old Testament stories and what we're used to from the Gospels and the Book of Mormon feel like they're a little more harmonized. Because of cultural and linguistic and dispensational differences, they use different names and titles in different times and places, but recognizing those connections can help us see that this is the same Savior, rescuing and healing and helping from one dispensation to the next.

Hank Smith: 00:37:44 Yeah. Josh, don't you think this is gonna expand my view of the Lord? Because I've had moments, you both will laugh at this. For example, in Matthew 23, where Jesus really says some harsh things, I had a student raise her hand once and said, "He just is not sounding very Christlike." I thought, That's an interesting... right? Jesus, you're not being very Christlike. I think by default, anything he does.

John Bytheway: 00:38:09 You're not being very much like Jesus.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:38:11 Yeah, we sometimes follow into this pattern where we see him as a mortal, modeling how human beings should behave, and then it can trouble us when we get these reminders that he's actually much more than a mortal. He has roles and capacities and job duties that go beyond what we are actually expected to emulate. And part of that is chastising and judging and doing those things that we're not supposed to do.

Hank Smith: 00:38:37 Yeah. There's gonna be some moments this year where Jehovah commands some pretty, what you might say are harsh things instead of saying, "Well, that's not Jesus." Stop and say, "No, it actually is. " No, it is. "Let's learn about him. Let's let that inform us."

John Bytheway: 00:38:51 You mentioned the idea that they didn't like to too frequently repeat the name of Deity, so they made Jehovah into Lord in small capital letters. I love that that tradition or that principle maybe was continued when we learned the real name for the Melchizedek priesthood was the Holy Priesthood After the Order of the Son of God, but to avoid too frequent repetition of the name of deity, we called the Melchizedek Priesthood because Melchizedek was such a great high priest. It sounds like

we're doing that same thing. I like that little bit of reverence. Speaking of when Jehovah doesn't act the way you think that Jesus would, I'm thinking of a place in the Book of Mormon. Is it Amulek that says, "Oh, thou child of hell. Why tempt ye me?" I always look at the footnote, look at the footnote. It says John 8:44. Here's Jesus saying, "You are of your Father the devil." I love what you're saying, Josh. This is one of His roles. In this place, He's the role of the judge. He can talk that way.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:39:53 People do get concerned sometimes. In the Old Testament, there are some passages where Jehovah speaks very violently, graphically, or with what appears to be a lot of wrath, and we think, "What is going on here?" And I will suggest maybe just a couple things to think about. We can't get into every instance and case, but there's an interesting passage in the book of Enos, in the Book of Mormon, where Enos observes in chapter one, verse 23, "And there was nothing save it was exceeding harshness, preaching and prophesying of wars and contentions and destructions, and continually reminding them of death and the duration of eternity and the judgments and the power of God and all these things, stirring them up continually to keep them in the fear of the Lord. I say there was nothing short of these things and exceedingly great plainness of speech would keep them from going speedily to destruction." When we look at passages, we do have to think about why is the rhetoric that is being used being used in this case.

00:40:53 When people are being extremely wicked and extremely hard-hearted and they're committing acts of gross violence and they're being exceedingly resistant to repentance, the prophets will often amp up the rhetoric and it will get really harsh because Enos is suggesting that's the only thing that can get through to certain people. That's an inappropriate rhetoric when you're talking to other people that are more humble and contrite. Jacob laments this when he speaks to the Nephites. He says, I wish I didn't have to be so harsh with some of the men among the Nephites because what I'm gonna say is gonna pierce with daggers the hearts of the people that are more tenderhearted. There's often a balancing act for the rhetoric that they use and there's times and place for different kinds of rhetoric. Are we emphasizing tenderness and love or judgment and destruction? With the Old Testament, it is possible that in some cases, the rhetoric is fiery for those very reasons that they were trying to get through to people that were exceedingly wicked.

00:41:54 At the same time, I would caution us not to dismiss all descriptions of judgment as, Well, that's just them being harsh.

God doesn't really get angry and God isn't really gonna judge us. We don't wanna go to that extreme either because I think it's clear from all the scriptures we have that God holds us accountable for our sins, that He is going to stop wicked nations and societies and governments from continually oppressing the helpless, and that He does get angry about the worst of human crimes, about abuse and about war and violence, the things that we really would expect him to get upset about. I wouldn't wanna worship a God who looked dispassionately on sexual violence, for example. And we wanna be careful that we recognize that at one extreme, there may be some harsh rhetoric that we recognize had its time and its place, but not dismiss all of those.

00:42:50 We need to recognize this full, complete picture. When I'm wrestling with, "Well, does this passage depict God or how do I understand this? " My benchmark personally is what do I hear in general conference? 'Cause that I'm getting modern prophets with the latest revelation speaking my language in my cultural context to help me understand the nature of God.That's what I cling to when I then go to certain passages that are on one extreme or the other and I'm trying to wrestle with what does this tell me about the nature of God.

John Bytheway: 00:43:19 Yeah. That's a great example. I was just thinking the same thing. I was thinking, I've heard conference talks which were, to use Jacob's words, would heal the wounded soul and I've heard other conference talks where, uh, you guys gotta step it up. I've heard both of those too and how wonderful that when we need to be called out, we can get called out. And when we need to be healed, we can get healed. We can listen with discernment to that.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:43:46 No one verse and no one quote captures the full nature and scope of God. So we're gonna find verses on a long spectrum from one extreme to the other to describe him in different ways. And the beauty of having such a full rich canon of scripture is that we can put all of these together and come to a complete picture, but we don't wanna isolate a single verse and say, "Well, that's God or that troubles me that that's God." We've gotta look in that broader context.

Hank Smith: 00:44:12 Josh, I love having someone like you here. I was just texting my friend just today, Raymond Wadsworth out of Panaca, Nevada, great place, Panaca. We were talking about Acts chapter eight. Philip runs across this Ethiopian man who's reading Isaiah. Philip says, "Are you understanding what you're reading?" And the man says, "How can I except some man should guide me? " And

I read right there, "How can I except Josh Sears should guide me? " It really is helpful to have someone who has really spent years and years, even graduate school. You were here four years ago for a couple of lessons in the Old Testament. One of those, you taught us a little Hebrew poetry, I think in the book of Genesis. John, I'm gonna put you on the spot. Do you remember what it was? I'm gonna give you a hint because I can't remember entirely. Tofu? Tofu. It's no, tofu is what you eat.

John Bytheway: 00:45:06 It was not tofu.

Hank Smith: 00:45:07 Tohu.

John Bytheway: 00:45:08 It was...

Hank Smith: 00:45:08 Tohu.

John Bytheway: 00:45:09 It sounded like va va va voom, but it isn't.

Hank Smith: 00:45:12 Okay. Josh, what was it?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:45:13 Tohu, va bohu. Without form and void in the King James.

Hank Smith: 00:45:20 Now, Josh, I'm reading this in English, and maybe I'm a reader at home going, Can I trust this? These people didn't speak English. Here you are. You can read the Hebrew, but you're also teaching out of the English. So what would you say to someone who's a little nervous to teach things that they're uncomfortable with here, not knowing if it was, as Joseph Smith might say, translated correctly?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:45:44 I would first just say, remember that scripture for us is first not the ultimate authority. Elder Holland's talked about this. President Oaks has talked about this. Scripture is meant to point us to God. As do modern prophets, as does personal revelation. If there's ever like a scripture passage that just doesn't feel right and isn't fitting, it's not worth throwing everything out over and it's not worth getting way too worked up over because scripture is meant to point us to God and anytime it's not doing that, sometimes you just have to move on. Find the places where it's doing that for you and different things will affect different people differently in that way. If translation is something that is one of those stumbling blocks that's making us wonder, "What am I getting out of this? " It's been pointed out on the podcast before that the general handbook that the church has does permit us to use other translations that we can supplement.

One thing that I find handy is to have my King James on the left, either like in an app on my phone or my physical scriptures, and on the right sometimes will have a modern translation available and I can kind of compare and contrast. That'll help me sometimes if something in the King James doesn't seem like it's, it's making sense.

John Bytheway: 00:46:56 I remember being at Education Week in Hawaii. It was a big trial that somebody had to go. I remember I was listening to a David Thomas who taught at Highland Seminary years ago when I went there back in the 1900s. He talked about approaching the Old Testament and how he struggled and then he kind of looked both ways and said, "I got a child's version of the Old Testament and I read it and I understood it for the first time." Then he went back to King James and oh, that helped me because I went and got one that was kind of a conversational tone, but I could go back and forth. We've been blessed. We have the Holy Ghost. We should never be intimidated by scripture. That's Satan who would want us to back away from scripture. We should never be intimidated by it, but if you want to read a plain English version and then go back to King James because it's beautiful. I think King James is just beautiful language, go ahead and do that for your own understanding. Thank you, Brother Thomas, for pointing that out because that blessed me.

Hank Smith: 00:47:56 Our friend, John Hilton III, he is so great they made three of him. He is a big proponent of using other versions of the Bible, it doesn't do you any good if you don't understand. I use a website called Bible Hub that is really fun to put in a verse and it will give you a lot of different English translations of that verse. Quite a few times I'll read it and go, Oh, that makes a little more sense than how I was reading that. Right here on John Hilton's website, here's the 15 most popular Bible translations by reading level. I really like this. Now, I won't read them all to you. Grade three reading level is the New International Readers Version or the New Century Version. And then you can go up to sixth grade level, New Living Translation or grade seven and eight, the New International Version.

00:48:51 You might be surprised that the grade 12 reading level is the RSV, the Revised Standard Version, or the one we use, the KJV, the King James Version. There's nothing wrong with using these other versions of the Bible that can perhaps show you some things that it's difficult to see in the KJV.

John Bytheway: 00:49:08 You know, years ago, you know how the youth have a scriptural theme every year. The year was let no man despise thy youth, but be an example of the believers. King James says, "Let no

man despise thy youth." I didn't know what that meant. I thought could that mean, let no man look at the way you were when you were a teenager and say, "Well, I knew that kid when he was a teenager. Is that what let no man despise thy youth means?" And I did what Hank said, I got some other translations. It was don't let others look down on you because you are young. Paul was talking to Timothy who was apparently was young. That was a totally different meaning for me. Don't worry about your age, just worry about your calling.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:49:48 I had a student the other day brought a Bible to class. It was the Pirate Bible. Arrrgh. Where the Lord was the captain. She read it with a pirate accent and it was the most hilarious thing. The whole class was rolling.

Hank Smith: 00:49:59 Oh my goodness. Another version of the Bible. Lest any of our listeners out there think I have to turn this off, they've gone apostate, quoting other modern Bible translations. On April 15th, 2025, Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf gave a BYU devotional where he quoted the NIV three times. On October 28th, 2023, Elder Holland quoted Jeremiah 29 from the NRSV. In October 2022, General Conference, Elder Renlund refers to James 4:3 in the NIV, and it keeps going. Our leaders definitely see value in looking at those other modern translations. All right, Josh, what do you want to do next?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:50:39 Well, the next point that the manual goes over is titled The Lord Restored Many Plain and Precious Things Through Joseph Smith. The Come, Follow Me Manual says this, "In a vision, the Lord showed Nephi the coming forth of the Bible, explaining that many plain and precious things would be taken from it." Consider reading 1 Nephi chapter 13, verses 21 to 29 and 38 through 42, looking for how the Lord planned to make known the plain and precious things. Well, since the manual's not giving us a scripture block to read this week, I want to take their consideration very seriously, so why don't we turn there?

Hank Smith: 00:51:16 Josh, can I tell you, we had an incredible guest for 1st Nephi 11 through 14, uh, about two years ago. It was with Dr. Josh Sears. That's who it was with. This is lining up really well. We'll have to link all of Josh's previous episodes with us in our show notes or on YouTube because every time, Josh is the home run king over and over and over. All right, Josh, what did you want to take us First Nephi?

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:51:45 First Nephi chapter 13 is Come, Follow Me suggesting that there's something important here that we can learn about how restoration scripture and restoration insights are gonna help us

with our understanding of the Old Testament. 1 Nephi chapter 13, Nephi's in the middle of his big panoramic vision where he's seeing the future. He looks forward to the last days and starting in about verse 20, he sees a book carried among the Gentiles. Verse 21, the angel said unto me, knowest thou the meaning of the book? We know, of course, it's the Bible, but Nephi is still learning. So in verse 22, he responds, I know not. Then verse 23, the angel gives his description of what the Bible is and what it contains. He said, Behold, it proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew. And I, Nephi beheld it and he said unto me, The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord which he hath made unto the house of Israel, and it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets.

00:52:45 And it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many. Nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel, wherefore they are of great worth unto the Gentiles. This is an interesting description because the angel describes the Bible as containing the covenants of the Lord which he hath made unto the house of Israel, which is what he repeats twice. That's a mouthful, which is why usually in the church today, we simplify that idea to the Abrahamic covenant because the scriptural description of the covenants of the Lord which he hath made unto the house of Israel is really long. We say Abrahamic covenant, but that's what he means, that the Bible, contains the Abrahamic covenant and the angel is saying, this is what it has and this is why it's of worth. Then he goes on to explain that these Gentiles who are Christians have the Bible, but don't recognize the full significance of it.

00:53:46 He talks about plain and precious parts. Also, many covenants of the Lord have been taken away in verse 26. Verse 27, "In all this they have done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men." The angel describes there's a problem here that in the gospel itself, as well as this book, there's plain and precious truths that have been removed that keeps these Gentile Christians from fully appreciating and understanding it. The great thing is there's a plan to fix this. Jumping down to verse 35, "For behold, saith the lamb, I will manifest myself unto thy seed." Some Nephi seed, meaning the Nephites. "I will manifest myself to thy seed your descendants, that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious.

00:54:36 The repetition of plain and precious there is linking this back to their earlier account of things that were taken out of the gospel so that Christ is explaining very specifically what he's gonna teach the Nephites are these points that are gonna be removed from the gospel during the apostasy. After thy seed shall be destroyed, fall of the Nephites, and dwindle in unbelief and also the seed of thy brethren. Behold, these things, the writings shall be hid up to come forth unto the Gentiles by the gift and power of the Lamb. In them shall be written my gospel saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation. Then jumping down to verse 38, It came to pass that I beheld the remnant of the seed of my brethren, so Latter-day Lamanites, and also the book of the Lamb of God, the Bible, which had proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew that it came forth from the Gentiles unto the remnant of the seed of my brethren.

00:55:30 These Latter-day Lamanites get the Bible brought to them. Verse 39, And after it had come forth unto them, I beheld other books, which came forth by the power of the Lamb from the Gentiles unto them, unto the convincing of the Gentiles and the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the Jews who were scattered upon the face of the earth, that the records of the prophets, the Old Testament, and of the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb, the New Testament, are true. And the angel spake unto me saying, These last records which thou hast seen among the Gentiles shall establish the truth of the first, which are of the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them, and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father and the Savior of the world, and that all men must come unto him or they cannot be saved.

00:56:27 So to recap that then, we have removed from the gospel and to some extent from the Bible, plain and precious truths, but Jesus has a plan. He's going to give plain and precious truths to the Nephites and have them write down those things in the gold plates. Then in the last days, those gold plates will come forth, they'll be translated, and along with other records, will go to Latter-day remnants of Israel everywhere and establish the truth of the Bible and make known plain and precious things that were removed from the gospel. So that's kind of a summary of what Nephi learns in this vision. And the Come, Follow Me Manual identifies some of these other books that Nephi saw as the Book of Mormon and other records, including the Book of Moses and other passages from the Joseph Smith Translation and the book of Abraham that we found in the Pearl of Great Price.

	00:57:14	These latter day records and revelations that help us to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ and how to go back and read and understand the Old Testament. And as Latter-day Saints, this really is gonna be one of our great blessings this year, to read the Old Testament, not just by itself, but to do it in conjunction with the Book of Abraham and the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants and the teachings of modern prophets. This allows us to put on a lens where we see things in the Old Testament that would not be obvious otherwise. We do and we should read the Old Testament differently than our Christian friends and neighbors and our Jewish friends and neighbors, because we have all these additional tools that help us look at the Old Testament and go, aha. I recognize something significant here that might be escaping other people.
	00:58:09	One easy example might be the significance of temples. Because most other faith traditions don't have a living temple tradition, they tend to look at temples in the Old Testament as a relic of the past, something that they did back then, but that's not relevant for us now. Latter-day Saints, by contrast, of course, we go to the temple in the morning, do some work for the dead, we read our Old Testament in the afternoon, and we cannot but help look at the tabernacle and Solomon's temple and these other temple experiences they have on mountaintops and in other sacred settings and go, I'm picking up something here. I recognize the significance of covenant making that's happening here. I recognize the significance of coming into the presence of the Lord. All these things that we have from the Restoration are gonna inform what we see in the Old Testament.
Hank Smith:	00:58:59	When I hear that plain and precious truths have been taken out of the Bible, and then I read that Joseph Smith did a translation of the Bible, it might be automatic for me to think, Oh, he was putting all those plain and precious truths back into the Bible. Is that how I should see the Joseph Smith Translation as Joseph taking it back to its original form?
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:59:22	Yes and no.
Hank Smith:	00:59:24	Okay.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	00:59:25	If you go to the church website and search for Joseph Smith translation, there's a great church history topics article about it. That's fairly new. What it will explain is that, I'm paraphrasing here, but the Joseph Smith Translation does different things in different places, which I think is a great description. Joseph

Smith in some places may have been restoring texts that was lost from the Bible. Now we have it again. We can stick it right back in there and understand what's going on. In other places, Joseph may be revealing truths and stories about biblical character and what they did that were never in the Bible, but that thanks to revelation, we now understand. In other places, Joseph may be giving Latter-day Saint commentary on the Bible. So the Bible itself is fine. It says what either Moses or Matthew had written, and it's just as they left it, but Joseph is giving an expansion or some commentary to help us in a latter day context understand something that we can pull out of a passage.

01:00:28 And sometimes Joseph is simply making corrections to archaic King James English or something that's a weird translation. He'll fix a few things like that. The bottom line is, he can do a lot of different things. I love the Joseph Smith Translation. I use it every opportunity I spot it in the footnotes, but what I try to avoid is looking at the King James or another translation, noticing that the JST is different and then automatically assuming that the Bible version or the standard Bible version is somehow deficient or incorrect and that the JST is fixing it. That's possible that may be what's going on, but sometimes it's possible that the Bible translation has, is more or less correct what the ancient author wrote. Joseph is, again, giving me some commentary or a different way to think about it. When I see a JST entry, what I try to do is say, "How does this add to my understanding of what this verse is doing without making it an either/or where one is right and one is wrong." Sometimes maybe it's obvious that's what's going on.

01:01:25 Other times, I try to say, "What was Luke or John trying to tell me here? And what is Joseph Smith adding to that conversation?" Is there, for example, maybe something that Luke wrote that's based on modern revelation would say that's not quite right and the JST is helping flesh that out and helping us understand even better. There's a variety of things going on. I think we should use the Joseph Smith Translation whenever possible. Just be careful not to assume that it's always correcting what is a mistake in the Bible.

Hank Smith: 01:01:54 Yeah, that was well said. It's not an either or. Yeah. We wanna say, "Well, which one's right?" "Which one is the right one?" And the Lord might say, I like both.

John Bytheway: 01:02:04 Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears:	01:02:05	Exactly. I think there's a great principle from Joseph in section 128 of the Doctrine and Covenants, where he quotes a scripture from Malachi, this is a letter he's writing. He knows that it can read differently than in the King James version, because Moroni had quoted it differently to him. Moroni made the verse from Malachi chapter four, verses five and six say something quite different. In Doctrine and Covenants 128: 17, Joseph quotes it from the King James version, not what Moroni said, then he explains himself in verse 18. I might have rendered a plainer translation to this, but is sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands. He clarifies that you gotta ask what's the rhetorical function or purpose of a verse in different contexts and settings and the JST or revelation from Moroni, whatever it is, can provide a useful reading in certain contexts, but the biblical passage may have a perfectly good reading in other context. There's different functions and they can both be correct at the same time. Joseph didn't feel bound to say there's only one way this verse can possibly read. He was open to a variety of senses.
John Bytheway:	01:03:16	I think the Malachi is a perfect example. The turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers is right and it's beautiful and it's true. When Moroni came, he said he'll plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, which is right and it's beautiful and it's true. It gives us a little bit more. Then Joseph, like you just said, Well, I could have translated that bind or seal, he said in another place. There's not one right. One of the rules of textual criticism, right? Well, find the earliest version that's the most correct, but a prophet can come along and say, Huh, let me render that a little bit differently. It's also true. We don't look at scriptures as static. We look at it more as dynamic prophets can come along and give us some more.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	01:04:07	Yeah, I love the example of Jesus in 3 Nephi too. He'll quote passages from Isaiah to the Nephites on day one and day two he'll quote it again and he'll change the words because he's making a different point on day two. No Nephite's gonna go, Excuse me, I think you got that wrong.
John Bytheway:	01:04:22	You got that wrong.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	01:04:24	He has the authority to change up the words. Yeah. And that's totally okay.
John Bytheway:	01:04:29	Yeah. Pretty audacious if you're just a man. But then there's the question, was Joseph Smith a prophet of God? Well, I think he was. He was being guided and that's audacious, but if he's a prophet, that's not audacious. He can do that.

Hank Smith:	01:04:43	Coming up in part two.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	01:04:45	Maybe that was his understanding before that, no, we won't actually get destroyed, but now that that reality is staring him in the face, he's so upset he accuses God of being a liar, of having promised them protection before and now destruction is coming. And that startled me because one does not on a typical day call God a liar. And it made me really stop. This isn't providing answers about the plan of salvation I didn't know before, but it's raising new questions for me.



John Bytheway: 00:01 Welcome back to part two with Dr. Joshua Sears, Introduction to the Old Testament.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 00:07 The manual also suggests to talk about the relationship between the Bible and the Book of Mormon and other Restoration scripture that we read 2 Nephi chapter 3:12, which is the prophecy of the Lord to Joseph of Egypt and says, "Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write." Now we have our Bible and our Book of Mormon from Joseph and Judah. That which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins. Also, that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah shall grow together unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord. I really love this verse as a description of how ancient biblical scripture is gonna work hand in hand with modern revelation, that they're designed to grow together.

01:02 They're together, but they grow, which suggests to me a process of time that as we read them more and more, we're gonna see more and more how intertwined they are. Hank, you mentioned earlier that as we go through the Come, Follow Me curriculum, when you go through one year, it helps you appreciate the other years. We're constantly improving our ability to understand all books of scripture as we continually cycle through these books. You're just describing what I think is going on here, that the more we read the Bible, it grows to help us understand the Book of Mormon. And the more we read the Book of Mormon, it grows to help us understand the Bible. These are really meant to work together. I do wanna suggest, though, one kind of caution here, so to turn our whole discussion on its head, we've been talking about how restoration scripture teaches us how to read the Old Testament and understand it better.

01:50 Sometimes the fact that we have all this restoration scripture, if we're not careful, can keep us from understanding everything that the Old Testament has to teach us. Here's what I mean by that, and there's a few ways that this might play out. One is just the practical challenge that we have way more books of scripture than most Christians do. They have the Old Testament and the New Testament, and they get to focus on those, whereas we have so many more books of scripture as a practical challenge, it means that we're not rotating through as often as we might. And I thought it was interesting several years ago when Elder M. Russell Ballard gave a talk on the Miracle of the Holy Bible in the April 2007 general conference. He was talking about how important the Bible is, and then said, we tend to love the scriptures that we spend time with.

02:36 We may need to balance our study in order to love and understand all scripture. In context there, I think it's pretty clear he was saying, we might be reading the Book of Mormon a lot, which is great, but we gotta be sure that we don't leave the other scriptures out of the picture. That's one practical challenge, and it's just the burden of having a wealth of scriptural treasures available to us. It's a good burden to have. But another way that restoration scripture may sometimes keep us from fully appreciating all that the Old Testament has to offer is in how the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants teach is sometimes not the way the Old Testament teaches. And if we're so used to one, we might struggle with the other. And here's what I'm, I'll break that down, what I mean by that.

03:20 The Book of Mormon is many things, but it's not subtle. It's very clear. Nephi lets you know in the family who's on the right side of things and who's on the wrong side of things. Mormon, when he tells a story, he's famous for those and thus we see quotes at the end where he gives you the moral of the story. And that doesn't mean that you can't dig those stories deeper and find other interpretations, but Mormon doesn't want us left with nothing to work with. He wants to give us an initial meaning. He wants to hold our hand and let us know what he thought was important in this story. And the Doctrine and Covenants is the same way. It's not very ambiguous. It's the Lord speaking in most sections, and when the Lord's speaking, you don't question the authority of the narrative voice or any of that things.

04:05 You just accept what he's teaching and he tells you straight up what he wants you to know. Sometimes we get so used to that unambiguous, straightforward clarity that is the hallmark of restoration scripture. Then we go to the Old Testament and we

struggle because many of the books don't function that way. Rather than providing straightforward answers, the Old Testament is often better at raising questions and then letting us wrestle with complicated, difficult, interpretive decisions. Sometimes we struggle with that, I think, because we're just like, I want King Benjamin to teach me the doctrine, and I want Mormon to tell me about faith, hope, and charity in a straightforward way. We struggle with the lack of that doctrinal clarity in the Old Testament. Maybe some examples we'll get at what I'm talking about. I'll take one passage, Psalm 88. If we're going to the scriptures looking for answers, Psalm 88 challenges us because it's a poem by an anonymous author who just is having a hard time.

05:13 He's going through maybe the most excruciating thing ever, doesn't say what it is, and I'll just read some of the verses here. It's a prayer to God. Oh Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee. Let my prayer come before thee. Incline thine ear unto my cry. For my soul is full of troubles and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Thou hast put away mine acquaintances far from me. Thou hast made me an abomination unto them. I am shut up and I cannot escape. Mine eye morneth by reason of affliction. Lord, I have called daily upon thee. I have stretched out my hands unto thee. Lord, why casteth thou off my soul?

06:10 Why hidest thou thy face from me? I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up. While I suffer thy terrors, I am desperate. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me. Thy terrors have cut me off. They came round about me daily like water. They compassed me about together. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me and mine acquaintance into darkness.

06:40 And that's the end. Now, if we're looking for a King Benjamin style doctrinal discourse that says, here are the doctrines, here are the answers. We can wrestle with this because there are no answers to be had. What is a text like this doing? I don't think it's trying to give us answers. It's just inviting us into the space of this person who is hurting and it's asking us to sit a few minutes with them in that pain. That's a different kind of learning than we're gonna get from Alma teaching the people of Ammonihah or the Lord giving amazing doctrinal expositions in a section of the Doctrine and Covenants. It's a different kind of teaching, but I think it's also very important. We don't wanna miss out on this. This is inviting us into a space just to wrestle. We might wonder what is going on with this poor guy.

07:36 Why does he feel like God is actually the cause of all his problems? Why does he feel like he has no friends and that God is not answering his prayers? Have I in my life ever felt like that too? I can think of people, for example, who've had depression since their teenage years. They could relate to this line that I'm ready to die from my youth up. It's just an expression of pain and there's no resolution at the end. There's no way that this is fixed and I don't think it's designed to do that. It's just intended to draw us into this experience of pain and let us sit there and wrestle with this. There's a lot of places in the Old Testament like that where it's not designed to give answers, but to really kind of complicate our life. For example, someone might say, why should I wrestle with the book of Jeremiah?

08:27 I know the plan of salvation. I know about the premortal life and the spirit world and the three kingdoms of glory. I have all these answers. I have all this clarity. Why should I put in the effort to read Jeremiah and struggle to understand his cultural metaphors and his symbols and the history just to at the end of the book arrive at the answers that I already know? It's a good question. And I would just suggest that when we get out of this mindset of I'm always looking for the answers I already know, sometimes the wrestle itself is the journey and the destination, just the struggle that it brings up. So for example, in Jeremiah, years ago I was visiting my wife's parents in Hong Kong. I don't remember why, but I was reading Jeremiah on the couch one morning. I was in Jeremiah chapter four.

09:11 God tells Jeremiah that the Babylonians are gonna come destroy Jerusalem. So verse seven, the lion has come up from his thicket and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way. He has gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate, and thy city shall be laid waste without inhabitant. That's hard stuff. And in verse 19 you can see Jeremiah's emotional state reacting to this. My bowels, my bowels. I am pained at my very heart. My heart maketh a noise in me. I cannot hold my peace because thou hast heard, oh my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Jeremiah's upset, and I'm reading through this, and then I notice a verse in the middle of verse 10 that startled me. Jeremiah says to God, then said I, ah! Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people in Jerusalem saying, you shall have peace. Whereas, the sword reacheth unto the soul.

10:08 But to put that in more modern English, he's saying, Oh Jehovah, you lied. You have greatly lied. You deceived this people saying you shall have peace. When in reality, the sword reaches to the soul, there's a sword right up at our neck, we're about to die. It's hard to say what he's responding to. There was

a common assumption in Jerusalem at the time that Jerusalem could never be destroyed and that God would always swoop in and protect His temple at the last day. There's prophets that had predicted such things. Maybe that was his understanding before that, no, we won't actually get destroyed, but now that that reality is staring him in the face, he's so upset he accuses God of being a liar, of having promised them protection before and now destruction is coming. And that startled me because one does not on a typical day call God a liar.

Hank Smith: 10:57 Typically.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 10:58 And it made me really stop. This isn't providing answers about the plan of salvation I didn't know before, but it's raising new questions for me. I'm thinking, what led Jeremiah to think God has lied to him? And I thought to myself, have I ever questioned God's integrity like that or his promises? I thought of people I've talked to who struggle because their patriarchal blessing promises something very specific that either has not happened yet or seems impossible to happen at least in this life. They wonder, did the Lord through the patriarch promise me something that he never intended to fulfill? In essence, did he lie to me? That's a hard question. The story in Jeremiah while not providing me new insights about the plan of salvation and the ultimate big picture answers that I didn't know before raises those kind of questions and does it in a provocative way that makes me ask that.

11:51 It made me want to read the rest of the book of Jeremiah to see how did he resolve this? Did he come to resolve this tension? And what does Jeremiah do? I was suddenly excited to keep going in the book because I had this burning question. The text provoked me with something startling. And I think we have to allow the Old Testament to challenge us like that and not be dismissive because I already know the answers, but to let it ask us new questions and really let us wrestle. We see this in narrative stories too. In the Book of Mormon, again, there are heroes and there are villains, but it's very hard to find any shades of gray in Book of Mormon characters. Even people who like Alma change and go through a conversion process, they go from all bad to all good. But you don't find a lot of moral ambiguity in Book of Mormon characters.

12:39 And I think that's an important teaching tool that the Book of Mormon uses. But in the Old Testament, that's not the teaching style. Most of the heroes have deep character flaws. It's often unclear how we're supposed to read something because the Old Testament doesn't tell us. One more example, there's a

character called Jephthah in Judges chapter 11. The Israelites in this story are under attack, and he makes this oath to Jehovah saying, if you rescue us and deliver us from our enemies, when I get home, I will offer as a sacrifice to you the first thing that comes running out of my house. Since he has a farm, he's probably expecting that an animal's gonna run out because that's typically what happens is there's animals running everywhere. Lo and behold, after Jehovah delivers them, he gets home and it's his daughter, his only child who runs out of the house first to greet him.

13:30 Then he mourns and laments because of the oath that he had made. What happens next? Sometimes people try to interpret it as anything other than he sacrificed his daughter, but the plain sense of the text is that's what he did. We'll just assume that for the moment. So he sacrifices her so as not to violate the oath. Now, is what he did praiseworthy because he was true to his covenant promise no matter the personal cost or is this a horrific act of violence because he murdered his child? You might have an instinctive response to that, but my point here is that the Old Testament doesn't say. It just stops the story and leaves it to you, dear reader, to come up with what you think the answer is. If we say, well, that's a simple answer. I know what the answer is. Well, that story can start to challenge, what about other cases where it's a little less black and white?

14:22 Should you stick true to your covenants no matter what the practical on the ground reality is looking like? It raises maybe more questions than Judges 11 is equipped to answer. That's where the Old Testament is challenging for us and also where maybe some of its richness lies because when the stories more often than not don't provide a simple answer, but instead raise challenging questions, there's a lot to wrestle on and chew on and think about and maybe other people will come to different answers than we do, but that is, I think, where some of the beauty lies in this book of scripture and that it's so open-ended that it invites us to really wrestle and the wrestling is maybe where we're gonna find the Holy Ghost and we're gonna find personal revelation. Rather than being given an answer, the struggle is how we get there.

Hank Smith: 15:17 That's really great. The scriptures can become a place where we meet God, learn about God, and stretch, stretch our understanding, stretch our soul. I love it when I read scripture and I come out with more questions. I thought I was supposed to get answers in here, but I think I'm being stretched.

Dr. Joshua Sears:	15:35	Yeah. Some people wrestle with the scriptures when it's not providing clear answers every time. Sometimes we expect the scriptures to be a handbook or a manual. Turn to section 3.4.2.1 and there's the answer. That's how handbooks and manuals work, but the scriptures are inspired literature. These narratives and these poems and these reflections are designed not to just be plop, here's the answer, although they do that sometimes, but just as much, here's three new questions to your question. It's gonna be messy and it's gonna be complicated, but really that is where the beauty of it lies.
John Bytheway:	16:11	If I go out and throw the ball over and over and over, my arm gets sore, but it gets stronger. If I run, my legs get sore, but they get stronger. If I wrestle, everything gets stronger. Why would God put you through a wrestle? 'Cause you'll get stronger. I think of the brother of Jared. Hank, I know you love this story. I love it too. How do we get air? I mean, he has those three problems. Can't breathe, can't see, can't steer. The Lord answers the first one, make a hole in the top, make a hole in the bottom. The second one, he says, What will you that I should do for you? I just love that because, I mean, the brother of Jared could have said, listen, one day you're gonna have this scripture that says, if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask. I'm asking, you're supposed to tell me. He doesn't. He says, go wrestle with it, and he figures it out. There's some fun footnotes of maybe he went to the record of Noah to see what Noah did, but he figured it out. The wrestle was a good part of that process.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	17:13	So the bottom line here to bring this section all together, we have the amazing blessing of having the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price and the teachings of modern prophets. Latter-day Saints, we should be reading the Old Testament through the lens of the doctrines that they teach and the things that they point out are important and what they comment on and say about the Old Testament. So we should be using that constantly this year. Then at the same time, it provides us a challenge that with so many other books of scripture, we wanna be able to still give our attention to the poor Bible, not let it get left behind with all these fun new toys we have, and that we don't wanna let the relatively straightforward clarity of teachings that we find in restoration scripture get us frustrated when we go to the Bible and find that there's so much gray characterization, moral ambiguity, open-ended questions and unresolved, messy things. That I think is a design feature. It's how the Bible's always been. We want to appreciate both teaching methods. I love it when I get a passage that just gives me the doctrine straight and tells me the way things are. I've also learned to appreciate passages that asked

		me to really think and lets me know that I'm gonna have a lot of work to put in here, but that the insights I can get about myself and about God at the end of that process are very much worth it.
Hank Smith:	18:27	Beautiful. Wonderful.
John Bytheway:	18:30	I remember Dr. Robert Millet talking about this wonderful thing that happens at the end of third Nephi where it says Jesus expounded all the scriptures in one. That's what I keep thinking of with what you're teaching us, Josh, is that, no, don't just focus on this. Look at all of these together and see this broad, beautiful picture with what each of them has to offer. It doesn't say Jesus expounded their scriptures, all of them. That's what I'm taking away from this.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	19:02	The final point in this lesson says the Old Testament helps me understand my covenant relationship with God. The Old Testament is the story of God seeking to make us his peculiar treasure by covenant. For that reason, a good way to prepare to read the Old Testament is to learn about covenants. Specifically, the everlasting covenant God offered to ancient prophets like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their posterity. A great way to learn about covenants is to study President Russell M. Nelson's message, The Everlasting Covenant, from the October 2022 Liahona Magazine. If I can make a suggestion to all our listeners, since, again, there is no scripture block for this week and no one made you read 10 chapters of Genesis or whatever it is. This is about as a specific of a reading assignment as this lesson gives, and I would highly encourage people to go back, even if you've read it already, to the Liahona from October 2022 and read President Nelson's message on the everlasting covenant.
	19:59	I've been, as all of you, a little sad to see President Nelson go recently. I'm so excited for President Oaks. I sustain him and love him as our new President of The Church. I've also been taking stock of the years that we had President Nelson as our president and all that I've learned from him. I've got to say, I didn't think when he became president that at this point in my life, having already served a mission and teaching in religious education at this point in my life, that I would have learned so much that would so fundamentally improve and enrich how I understand the doctrines of the gospel. I really love President Nelson and all that he has taught me. This message is a great place to start so that we can learn about covenants, and I really love this suggestion in the manual that the better we understand covenants and covenant relationships, the better we're going to understand the Old Testament itself.

20:51 One of the things that President Nelson stressed that I think has changed how we talk about this in the church is understanding the purpose of a covenant. Often our way of explaining covenants, traditionally when I was growing up, and for example, when I turned eight and was getting baptized, what I memorized as a definition is that a covenant is a two-way promise. I think that's accurate and that's totally great and wonderful, but that definition focuses on the mechanics of how you make a covenant by promising each other and may fall short of explaining what is the ultimate aim of the covenant. It's not just to make promises, that's the tool you're using, but the aim of covenant making is to build and establish and maintain relationships. If we can take that one idea that President Nelson taught so often, I think it will go so far in helping us better appreciate so many points in the scriptures and the doctrines of the gospel.

21:50 From that article, The Everlasting Covenant from President Nelson, I'll just quote a few lines here as an example. President Nelson explained that when you and I enter the covenant path, we have a new way of life. We thereby create a relationship with God that allows him to bless and change us. The covenant path leads us back to Him. If we let God prevail in our lives, that covenant will lead us closer and closer to Him. All covenants are intended to be binding. They create a relationship with everlasting ties. He emphasized this frequently. You can find it in other places where he talked about this and as people have been quoting him in general conference, I'd love to see other people have picked this up and talked about it a lot. Sister Emily Belle Freeman in her general conference address from October 2023, Walking in Covenant Relationship with Christ said this, we call this walking the covenant path, a path that begins with the covenant of baptism and leads to the deeper covenants we make in the temple. Perhaps you hear those words and think of checkboxes.

22:52 Maybe all you see is a path of requirements. A closer look reveals something more compelling. A covenant is not only about a contract, although that is important, it's about a relationship. When we understand that covenants are about relationships, it helps us reframe the gospel of Jesus Christ. We understand that baptism is that initial ordinance where we bind ourselves to God and establish a covenant relationship with Him. We see faith in Jesus Christ as an expression of trust in this person we have a relationship with. We see repentance as relationship repair. We've done something that's created a wedge in the relationship and we go say, I'm sorry, I wanna do this better. Can we be close again? And we hug it out and we

come close to God. We see the sacrament as like a weekly date with God where we spend time with him and we make promises to each other again and we become closer through that act.

23:45 We see enduring to the end as walking a path where we're trying to get closer and closer and learn more about each other and we delight in each other's company. We're going through whatever it takes to be able to be as close as possible to our heavenly Father. President Nelson, again, I'm just gushing about him because I miss him dearly, really helped me re-see all those things, not as checkboxes and not as a list of dos and don'ts that I have to complete, but the entire gospel, everything I do every day as strengthening or weakening my relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. And that's helped me get over a checkbox mentality and find new joy in the things that I do.

John Bytheway: 24:25 I love it. When we talk about a two-way agreement, it sounds like that could be a contract. A contract, you sign it, it's kind of an event, and you put it on the shelf. But a relationship is an ongoing process and loyalty is involved. If I thought of my marriage just as, okay, we said that vow thing, now we're married, but didn't think of it as a relationship with an ongoing commitment and loyalty every single day. That's why I love that talk. I love what President Freeman said. It's a relationship and that changes everything. Thanks for emphasizing that.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 25:00 And President Nelson teaches that while we make a series of individual covenants and ordinances along our covenant path, that you can describe this relationship that God wants to build with us, this exalting relationship where he's gonna help us become like Him. In the scriptures, that relationship goes by a title called The Everlasting Covenant, or sometimes the New and Everlasting Covenant. The Everlasting Covenant, President Nelson says in his article consists of all the covenants and ordinances that we enter into. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the plan of salvation. This is a very broad, big picture term. Each title emphasizes something different about it. Calling it the gospel of Jesus Christ dresses the good news that Jesus made these relationships and its exalting power possible. Calling it the plan of salvation emphasizes that there's a system to this, there's a plan and it leads to our salvation. Calling it the everlasting covenant I love because by bringing that word covenant in there emphasizes the relational aspects.

John Bytheway: 25:59 Everlasting relationship, yeah.

Dr. Joshua Sears: 26:02 We have different titles for these broad ideas, but they're all getting at the same idea that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ

have made it possible for us to bind ourselves to them, overcome all our weaknesses and sins and mistakes and mortal infirmities to be exalted with them and experience the joy and richness of the life that they enjoy. In the Old Testament, how does this play out? Well, President Nelson teaches some things that are not super clear from the Genesis account of Adam and Eve, but that are more clear from the book of Moses, which is that Adam and Eve entered into the everlasting covenant. From the very beginning of human history, God wanted to bind himself to us and invited his children to participate in ordinances that would do that. Adam and Eve were baptized, they entered the covenant path, and thereby initiated themselves into the new and everlasting covenant.

26:53 Joseph Smith's revelations help us then trace that everlasting covenant being given to those that come after. For example, Joseph Smith's new translation of the Bible explains that Enoch received the same covenant that was given to Adam and Eve. The Joseph Smith translation also says that Noah received the same covenant that was offered to Enoch. In the book of Abraham, it says that Abraham sought for the same blessings that were given to Noah, so we can see there's a little chain that Joseph is building, establishing that these aren't separate groups of people that are all doing their own thing, that God is offering the new and everlasting covenant to his children consistently from Adam and Eve all the way to Abraham and Sarah. It's at that point where the Old Testament really picks up the story, right, because we sweep past these characters quickly in the first dozen chapters, but starting in Genesis 12, we get Abraham and Sarah and God offers covenants to them.

27:44 I'm gonna read Genesis chapter 12, verses one through three. Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house into a land that I will show thee. I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee and make thy name great. Thou shalt be a blessing. I will bless them that bless thee and curse them that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. I wanna stay big picture here because I'm sure we'll cover this in more detail in a few weeks. The covenant being offered to them, we call this the Abrahamic covenant, but what's important to recognize from a Latter-day Saint doctrinal framework is that this is still essentially the new and everlasting covenant. In his article, President Nelson says, the new and everlasting covenant and the Abrahamic covenant are essentially the same.

	28:33	Two ways of phrasing the covenant God made with mortal men and women at different times. There are some differences that are introduced with the covenant at this point in history. With Abraham, we create this new covenant family, Israel, Abraham and Sarah's descendants. It's gonna be a covenant people, a covenant family called Israel. From this point forward in history, those that want to bind themselves to God in the new and everlasting covenant also need to be born into or adopted into this covenant family of Israel. At its heart, the Abrahamic Covenant is still aiming for the same blessings that God offered to Adam and Eve and to Enoch and to Noah and to all his kids. Now we have this new program with the creation of this covenant people, and we're gonna watch these people for the rest of the Old Testament history. Israel's told here, in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.
	29:26	I really think this is one of the most important scriptures that we have in all the standard works. And I have Numbers on my side for this. It's one of the only scriptures quoted in the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. That emphasis tells us something. This program by which Israel's gonna receive the everlasting covenant and all its blessings, then take that to all the other families of the world is God's missionary program for the rest of human history. That's why it's so significant.
Hank Smith:	29:54	Someone might say, wait, I thought God loved all of his children. Why would he have a chosen people, it's because he loves all of his children, that he has a chosen people because they are under covenant responsibility to go share and work.
John Bytheway:	30:09	Chosen to mow the lawn. Does it mean chosen to sit on a throne and be admired? No, it's chosen to, to get to work.
Hank Smith:	30:17	Yeah, chosen to share. We could change the song from called to serve to chosen to share.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	30:24	Certainly you see in the Old Testament that the history of the house of Israel, it wasn't easy for them. They go through a lot of difficult things, but what defines their experience is their relationship to Jehovah. The fact that he has bound himself to them by covenant and that he won't forget that. Like in the Exodus story, it opens up talking about how the Israelites are slaves and their cries go up to Jehovah. What does it say? That he remembered the covenant that he made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That's the rationale for why he's going to redeem them by taking them out of Egyptian slavery. It's

because he's family. He's bound himself to them. When God binds himself to us by covenant, he doesn't forget that relationship. He's determined to be the best partner in this relationship that he can possibly be. Even in cases where the Israelites choose to turn away and break their covenant promises and effectively sever the relationship, he's always inviting them to come back, to repent, to renew, to restore the relationship to the wholeness that it used to have. That's the consistent message you see that no matter how often they are scattered, that there are promises of gathering and renewal on the far side of that.

Hank Smith:	31:33	Despite giving him every reason to, God does not give up on this family. By the end of Genesis, you're thinking, get a new family. This is not gonna work. Choose someone else, but he won't. He's bound himself to them. I love that, Josh.
John Bytheway:	31:48	It's a relationship where loyalty is involved. And I also love what you're talking about because if I have a contract relationship with my wife, hey, we signed the document, we're married. But if I have a covenant relationship where she's strong and I'm weak, I have access to her strength in areas. If we have a covenant relationship with God where he's strong and we are weak, thank heavens we have a covenant where he can help us where we're weak. And that's a relationship. No wonder we wanna feel loyal to him, not just we made a contract with him, but we're loyal to him because we rely on his strengths when we're weak.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	32:28	Yeah. The title of this section in the manual was the Old Testament helps me understand my covenant relationship with God. One way that people struggle is that the Old Testament is mostly about a big group of people, the children of Israel. It can feel hard for some readers to take stories that are about a large group of people and think about what does that mean for me as an individual. The Book of Mormon is in some ways better with this because we have lots of cool stories about individual conversion, like say Alma the Younger, where we get to look into his heart and what Alma was experiencing and see that mighty change that occurred for him. But when you're looking at a large group of people in the Old Testament, that can feel a little more distant. The manual's promising, right? We can learn about my covenant relationship.
	33:15	What I would invite people to consider is that you do have to practice looking at how Jehovah interacts with the Israelites as a whole, and then you have to learn to translate that to you as an individual, if that's what you're wanting to focus on. The key to

		doing that is to remember what's consistent about this, despite the situational differences between a large group of people and myself. It's the same God who has the covenant relationship, regardless of it's with an entire people or with one person. It's the same God, it's the same everlasting covenant. The blessings of the covenant and the obligations of the covenant are essentially the same, that God is consistent in his nature and he's gonna work similarly because he's got these goals in mind that are the same for individuals and groups by and large. Sometimes we overthink the differences and we don't recognize the fundamental similarities that are there as God works with the children of Israel as a group of people and me. When the manual promises that the Old Testament can help me understand my covenant relationship, I really think that's true. But it does require that we look at passages where he speaks to a large group of people, and then we learn how to translate that to, what does that mean for me? We'll find that very often there's so much that we can learn from the statements he makes to these large groups.
Hank Smith:	34:38	Beautiful. There's times where Josh, it seems like, and I wanna be careful here, but it seems like he has to allow them. I don't wanna say he has to hurt them, but he has to allow them to go through really hard lessons in order to be who they want to be and who He wants them to be. There's an important lesson for us there. You wanna be careful saying, well, look, every difficulty you go through in life is a result of you not being who you're supposed to be. That's not the case.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	35:08	I don't think we can say every difficulty is because God's putting you through a hard time, but we can say every difficulty could be a little better if I were close to the Lord and relying on his aid.
Hank Smith:	35:19	Right. The currant bush, the allegory of the olive tree, he's gonna scatter it in order to save it. He knows when to prune.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	35:30	Yeah. We can look at the people of Israel as they're going through these stories and again, see what lessons it teaches us about our own personal journey. One example, compare and contrast the Israelites when they're enslaved to Egypt and Babylon, which are your two big House of Israel enslavement stories that you get. What I find interesting is that it's not their fault that they're enslaved in Egypt. They're in the wrong place at the wrong time. A new Pharoah arose who knew not Joseph and he was suspicious of these people, he enslaves them, and it's not recorded that they did anything wrong, but they're slaves and Jehovah came and through his mighty arm,

		redeemed them, brought them out of captivity. Now, by contrast, when you get to the Babylonian captivity, there it's expressly their fault.
Hank Smith:	36:14	Right.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	36:14	Jeremiah and other prophets had been warning them and warning them that they're being grossly wicked and that they don't repent, then Babylon's gonna destroy Jerusalem and they're gonna be carried off. They were warned and they rejected the prophets and they stoned them. All the bad things that they were doing and Babylon takes them. This is very much a consequence of their actions. When they repent and turn to Jehovah, he gets them out of there. He uses the Persians to conquer Babylon. He has the Persians help the Jews return home and they rebuild Jerusalem and they're redeemed there as well. I find it fascinating to compare these to say, sometimes our problems are our own fault because we made bad choices and we're experiencing the consequences. Other times, it's just life. It's just mortality. You get sick, you get fired, you've done your best, but life is just rough that way sometimes.
	37:03	Regardless, as we turn to the Lord for aid, he will help us. He will come to our aid. He will be there with us in our afflictions. We see that consistent in both cases, regardless of how they got into the mess that they're in. That's a big national story, but what we gotta do is then make that personal. Think about times in our life where we've made bad choices and caused our own problems, or times in our life where life has just hit us hard through no fault of our own. Maybe it's the actions of other people or germs or something has bad happened in their life. Regardless, we can trust in the Lord to be there with us.
Hank Smith:	37:40	Absolutely. And we're gonna see that over and over and over. Josh, doesn't Nephi use the skills you've been talking to us about today? He knows that all of Isaiah isn't specifically about him, but they are of the house of Israel, and Isaiah's speaking to the house of Israel, so I'm going to liken the scriptures unto us.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	38:01	Nephi is fantastic at this. In some ways, he's kind of a guide to tell us, here's how you can read the Old Testament and make it relevant to you. First Nephi chapter 19, verse 23, Nephi says, I did read many things unto my brothers, which were written in the books of Moses; but that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; For I did liken all scriptures unto us that it might be for our profit and learning. This idea of likening, as you two know, is so powerful.

Sometimes people simplify it to the idea of I'm just applying it to myself. I think we can get a little more clarity about what Nephi's up to here. When you liken something, what the verb means is that you're taking two different things and you're comparing them to highlight how are they like each other or how are they similar to each other.

38:56 For example, I can't liken an apple to an apple because in every way they are exactly the same, there's no way in which they are similar. They're exactly the same. But I can liken an apple to an orange. I can say, how are these like each other? They're both round, they're both juicy, they're both nutritious, et cetera, but those similarities only have meaning because apples and oranges are different. When Nephi says I'm likening scripture, what he's acknowledging implicitly is that when I'm reading the prophecies of Isaiah, what I'm gonna say it means is not what it means. He's saying there's a difference between the original context of Isaiah and the application that I'm gonna give it, but what I wanna do is point out how are these stories similar? How are these like each other? That's a powerful method for looking at a story that at first doesn't look like it has anything to do with us and finding that there are ways in which this has everything to do with us, despite the differences.

39:56 For example, Nephi goes on in chapters 20 and 21 to quote Isaiah chapters 48 and 49. In their original context, these chapters are about the redemption of the Jews from Babylon, where the Jews have been captured by these mean Gentiles, the Babylonians, and they've been scattered and smitten, and these nice Gentiles show up, the Persians, who beat up the Babylonians and help out the Jews. That's what these chapters essentially are about. Then in 1 Nephi 22, Nephi likens those chapters to the future history of his people, these Latter-day Lamanites. To make this brief, since this is Old Testament day and not Book of Mormon days, much as we love it, Nephi has the story about Latter-day Lamanites, that they are gonna go into apostasy and that they're gonna be scattered by these mean European Gentiles who show up and beat them up and scatter them.

40:51 But then these nice Gentiles are gonna show up, Latter-day LDS missionaries who have the Book of Mormon. They're gonna give the Book of Mormon to these Latter-day Lamanites and bring them back into the covenant. The story where mean Gentiles have hurt the remnant of Israel and then nice Gentiles show up and help them out is repeated in the last days. That's how the two stories are like each other, even though they're very different. There's a difference between Jews and Babylon in the

		sixth century versus Latter-day Lamanites in the Western hemisphere in the latter days. They're different stories, but Nephi says they're similar, they're like each other. By pointing out how they're like each other, we can find great meaning and application for these passages. We gotta be like Nephi. We all struggle with that big block of Isaiah chapters that starts in 2 Nephi 12, but I love that in 2 Nephi 11, right before the big block, Nephi makes us this invitation.
	41:44	Now I write some of the words of Isaiah that whoso of my people shall see these words may lift up their hearts and rejoice for all men. Now, these are the words, and dear reader, you may liken them unto you and unto all men. It's like he's saying, I've modeled how to do this with my chapters, and I quoted Jacob's speech where he does the same thing, but you look at the Old Testament and then you liken them unto you. Ask yourself, okay, I'm in a different situation from you, ancient Israelites, but how are our situations like each other? And when we ask that question, that's a powerful tool for learning the principles and the application and the doctrinal points and all the amazing morals and lessons that we can glean out of that ancient story and realize this is just as relevant for me in my different circumstances.
John Bytheway:	42:34	'Cause yeah, how would it help ancient Nephites or Lamanites to know how the Assyrians were gonna attack? Something that happened in the past. Well, they're gonna draw from that. How's God gonna deal with us then? How's Jehovah gonna deal with us? I love how you've helped me see that. I've said to my classes, well, watch Jesus. Watch how he treats people. Watch how he treats people that can't do him any good. Now I need to expand that. Watch how Jesus and how Jehovah deals with people.
Hank Smith:	43:06	Yeah. Hmm. As Jehovah, yeah. Doesn't Nephi say that, Josh, that he's connecting Jehovah to the Redeemer, that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord, their Redeemer. There he is Jehovah, the Messiah, Jesus. I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet, Isaiah. He did exactly what you're telling us to do is see Jehovah as Jesus see and learn from him, not from the prophecies about his mortal life, but him as the Lord God of the Old Testament. Josh Sears and Nephi, probably the exact same category.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	43:43	Well, as we wrap up today, I did feel that one disadvantage today is that we did not have a scripture block where we got to dive deep into a lot of verses. We've talked about a lot of scattered verses, but maybe one way we can close is to let the

Old Testament speak for itself. Maybe I can go through some passages in the prophetic books where Jehovah's speaking or the prophets are describing him and just give us a little preview and a taste straight from the scriptures themselves about the promises that he offers that when we make a mistake or when we stray or when life is hard, that he will not forget us or forsake us. I'll just read a few passages without commentary.

Isaiah 1:18 Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

44:38 Isaiah 44:21-22. Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

Isaiah 54:7-8 For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.

Jeremiah 3:21-22 A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the Lord their God. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God.

Ezekiel 37:23 Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.

Hosea 2:23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

Zechariah 1:16-17. Therefore, thus saith the Lord, I am returned with mercies. The Lord shall yet comfort Zion and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

And Micah 7:18-19 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his

heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

47:14 I just wanted to read a few passages to give us a preview of what's coming and remind us that the central message of the Old Testament is redemption through a God who has bound himself to us by covenant. A few months ago, I was talking to a Latter-day Saint. It was a very tearful conversation where his life has not gone at all the way that he had hoped or planned. It seems like really that in years, nothing has gone right. The pain that he experiences on a daily basis really is excruciating. I don't have all the answers to give in a situation like that. I cannot explain why some people seem to have a life that goes pretty great and other people just have a life that's nothing but toil and pain. But what the Old Testament and the rest of our scriptural canon invites us to do is to trust in Jehovah, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, and our Father in heaven to trust in their love and to trust in the promises they have made for us.

48:22 The Old Testament is a story of redemption that no matter what kind of pickles the Israelites find themselves in, that somehow God has a way of getting them out of it. When the Jews were in captivity in Babylon, it must have seemed like the greatest superpower the world has ever known has us under their thumb. There's no way we're getting out of this, yet he's a God of miracles. Overnight, the Babylonian empire is overthrown, a friendly new government moves in, and they're able to not only go back home and rebuild, but they're given funds and temple treasures and assistance to do so. That was a miracle. It's the miracles like that recorded in the Old Testament that are meant to remind us constantly that we believe in a God of miracles and that because of the atonement of Jesus Christ, no matter what challenges we face and no matter how great the obstacles seem, that healing and hope are possible in the midst of the trials that we face. He has promised to gather His children home one by one. That includes us when we sin. It includes our loved ones when they stray. It includes everyone whose life has taken a detour that doesn't seem like it can ever get back on track.

49:35 And I want to testify and promise that these blessings that are promised in the scriptures are true, that inasmuch as God has bound himself to us by covenant, he will never forget nor forsake us. Somehow, He is going to make good on every promise that He has ever made for us. As we trust in the Savior

		Jesus Christ, we can have assurance that this life or the next, somehow or another, every promised blessing will be realized. I just want to say to everyone, read your scriptures, learn these stories, wrestle with all the challenges that are there, then trust in the goodness of God.
Hank Smith:	50:11	Thanks, Josh. There's a single sentence here in the manual. As you read the Old Testament this year, be watching for things God wants to teach you about your covenant relationship with him. Josh set us up perfectly to do that.
John Bytheway:	50:28	If anyone was not sure if they were excited about the Old Testament this year, they're excited now, and I am. Beautiful introduction. Thank you so much.
Hank Smith:	50:39	Absolutely. Josh frequently helps me find relevancy in antiquity, I think Elder Maxwell called it. Josh is my main man for that. He doesn't know it, but we're best friends. One more time, John, I just wanna mention this. Josh did not ask us to do this. A Modern Guide to an Old Testament, Joshua M. Sears. I hope everyone will go pick this up.
John Bytheway:	51:01	If you heard Josh today, you know, this is gonna be something that'll bless you. Same spirit.
Hank Smith:	51:07	And we're gonna challenge everybody, John, to stay with us the entire year. We have so many excited listeners. They're so excited. We're gonna do this, and then it slowly tapers off. Stay with us the entire year, all the way through Malachi. Let's go the distance. We will see all that Josh has promised us here, has shown us. Thank Alice and the kids for us for letting us steal you away.
Dr. Joshua Sears:	51:30	Will do.
Hank Smith:	51:31	Yeah, you got it. We are Josh Sears fans here at followHIM. With that, episode one for the Old Testament year 2026 is in the books. We wanna thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. And here we are starting a new year. He would love it. He would love that we're still doing this, John. Our founder, Steve Sorensen. Join us next week. We are jumping into Moses chapter one on followHIM.
	52:04	As a thank you to our wonderful listeners, we'd love to gift you the digital version of our book, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. It offers short, meaningful insights drawn from our

past Old Testament episodes. Visit followhim.co, that's followhim.co to download your free copy today, and you'll also find the link to purchase the print edition. Thank you for being part of our followHIM family. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, Heather Barlow, Amelia Kabwika, Sydney Smith, and Annabelle Sorensen.



Hank Smith:	00:03	Hello, everyone. Welcome to followHIM Favorites. If you're new to the podcast, each week John and I will share a story that we don't share on the podcast to go with each week's lesson. John, our lesson this week is a little bit different. We don't have a scripture block. It's basically an overview or a introduction to the Old Testament. The Old Testament, even in the manual, it says you might be scared to approach the Old Testament. And it made me think of a story. It made me think of something that happened to me when I was a kid. I'm excited to tell you this story. A little bit scared. It reminded me of something that happened to me when I was young.
	00:44	My parents loved to visit the cemetery every Memorial Day. I was not a fan. It was usually the first day of summer. I did not wanna get in the car and drive a long ways to go put flowers on graves, which I, as a kid, thought, what a waste. They're just gonna throw those flowers away anyway. But we would go to the store and pick up flowers and then we'd go over and we'd always pick up my grandmother. Who I loved, John, but I didn't want to sit next to her in the car for hours. You would see me and my brother on either side of her in the backseat leaning towards the door. We loved our grandma, we loved hugging her. We loved when we got gifts from her, but we didn't wanna sit arm to arm with her because we didn't know if being old was contagious. I remember this particular year, we get to the cemetery. I don't know how old I was. I must've been 11 or 12 years old. I'm walking around the cemetery. I thought they were so boring. My grandma was on the other side of this big bush.
	01:42	I was coming around it and I could hear her talking. I thougt grandma's lost it. She's talking to herself because my other family members were other places and she was alone. She saw me and she said, "Oh, hello, Hank, come here." And I came over and I said, "Grandma, who are you talking to?" And she said, "My family." And I'm looking around going, "No, your family's right here." She said, "No, right here on the ground." And she pointed to some headstones and she said, "These are my parents. This is where my parents are buried, and these are my

		siblings." She was the youngest in her family. It hit me, John, for the first time, here I am 11 or 12 years old, and I'm looking at my grandma and looking at these headstones, and I thought, "Wait, you were young once."
John Bytheway:	02:28	I remember those realizations coming, like I just thought everybody had a grandma and grandpa and I remember the day when it was like, wait, to my own mom. That's your mom? You had a mom?
Hank Smith:	02:41	I said, "Grandma, these are the people you had dinner with. These are the people you went on vacations with. " She said, "I know, yes, I know. " And I said, "Grandma, this is so sad." And she was funny, John. She said, "Well, don't worry, dear. I knew they were gone before we got here." I was like, "Oh, okay. That's better. You just didn't, you didn't just find out." It changed my perspective on her to realize that at one point she was young in living color, living her life with all the emotions of a young person. I think about that a little bit with the Old Testament. To us, it's always been old, but at one point, it was alive.
John Bytheway:	03:26	Yeah. And it was like your grandmother's family was present. They weren't old. They were there. For whose world was the Old Testament old? Maybe ours, but in Jesus' world?
Hank Smith:	03:39	Right. When Jesus says, "Search the scriptures." He's talking about the Old Testament.
John Bytheway:	03:43	That's what the scriptures were, the Torah. The first five books.
Hank Smith:	03:48	When Nephi goes back to get the brass plates, what's he getting? They're not old. He's getting what you and I call the Old Testament. One thing that can happen this year as we study the Old Testament is we can have this realization that these are real people in real situations who believe in the same God that we do, who worship the same God that we do.
John Bytheway:	04:11	There's great stories in the Old Testament. That's what I'm looking forward to people learning about God, interacting with God.
Hank Smith:	04:18	In fact, John, I think that's the time where I became more interested in my grandmother. What happened when you were younger? What was happening in the world? What did you do for fun? What was your world like? She would tell us those

		stories. In fact, that was my grandma Madelyn. John, you know my oldest child, my daughter, her name?
John Bytheway:	04:36	Is Maddy.
Hank Smith:	04:37	It is Maddy, is Madelynn.
John Bytheway:	04:39	When we look at the Old Testament this year, it doesn't have to feel so old, this was their world. I like what you said. These are people that believed in the same God that we do. What did they know and how did they interact and what do we know now?
Hank Smith:	04:52	Their lives were different than ours. Their circumstances were different, but many of the things they had to do in regards to believing, in regards to trusting in God, very similar to what we have to do.
John Bytheway:	05:07	We can be inspired by them.
Hank Smith:	05:09	We can get into these stories and all of a sudden that which was old becomes new. I remember Elder Maxwell said, with the Old Testament, you find relevancy in antiquity. It comes alive for you.
John Bytheway:	05:20	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	05:21	Yeah.
John Bytheway:	05:22	And these scriptures can become new friends.
Hank Smith:	05:25	We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcast. Maybe someone in your life has said, "Hey, have you ever listened to Hank and John's podcast?" We hope you'll give it a try this year. Each week, we bring on a new guest, someone who has an expertise, usually in scripture, but sometimes in other areas. This week, we're with Dr. Josh Sears. He has written a new book on the Old Testament. He has spent his career studying scripture, specifically the Old Testament. You will love the things he shares and the motivation he gives and the new insights, the new way you'll see the Old Testament by the time you're done, and then come back here next week. We'll do another followHIM Favorite.