



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:

Is the secret to a longer, healthier life hiding in the Book of Numbers? Dr. David Thomson brings his expertise in physiology and aging to uncover why complaining might be killing you, spiritually and physically, and why keeping your eyes on Jesus Christ changes everything.

Part 2:

Dr. David Thomson returns to unpack the twelve spies, the science-faith relationship, and what Balaam's donkey teaches us about the people who see what we can't.

Timecodes:

Part 1 -

- 00:00 - Part 1 - Dr. David Thomson
- 00:38 Giants vs. Grasshoppers
- 02:27 Teaser
- 03:43 The Bronze Serpent: Beholding vs Glancing
- 08:57 Complaining to one another vs Talking to the Lord
- 15:18 The Rabble: Who do we listen to?
- 24:55 Why study aging?
- 26:54 Aaron's Death
- 30:44 President Nelson: Length vs. Quality of Life
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- 53:20 Being set apart
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- 1:05:17 Miriam's leprosy—consequences and mercy
- 1:09:46 Waiting for Miriam
- 1:10:58 End of Part 1 - Dr. David Thomson

Part 2 -

- 00:00 - Part 2 - Dr. Dave Thomson
- 01:34 Giants and grasshoppers: "We're toast!"
- 02:34 Caleb and Joshua vs the ten—focus on God
- 05:10 Believing Jesus Christ
- 07:18 Trust what Jesus Christ said He can do
- 11:51 "We're not earning heaven, we're learning heaven."
- 13:42 Elder Renlund reminds to choose to keep the commandments
- 16:46 2 Nephi 25:23 reimagined
- 20:45 Science and faith—a perceived conflict
- 23:44 President Nelson: All truth is compatible
- 29:59 Alma 32 and the Scientific Method
- 33:43 Balaam and his donkey
- 29:43 Who are the donkeys in your life?
- 41:30 Dr. Thomson's donkeys
- 49:39 President Hinckley taught that faith is like a muscle
- 51:48 Muscle growth and faith

- 59:17 Closing testimonies
- 1:47:18 End of Part 2 - Dr. Dave Thomson

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Biographical Information:



Dave Thomson grew up in Orem, Utah. He served a mission in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. He came home and married his wife, Kendra, and together they have 5 daughters. He studied Athletic Training and Exercise Physiology at BYU before earning his Ph.D. in Bioenergetics from East Carolina University. He is now an Associate Professor of Cell Biology and Physiology at BYU, where he teaches physiology and studies why muscles break down in old age. He's served in many church callings - his favorite was teaching primary with Kendra. In his spare time, he likes reading, learning new things (currently Python Coding for Dummies), hanging out with his family (including his dog, Chappy), and traveling (usually to a beach somewhere).

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Hank Smith:	00:00:00	Coming up in this episode on followHIM.
Dr. David Thomson:	00:00:04	And so they looked at a bunch of old people. They used cognitive tests to see how they were doing over time. They hypothesized that a major factor in those who actually improve cognitively in their older years, and there are people who will actually get better, our cognitive abilities will improve. Even after age, say, 65. They hypothesize that there's got to be a factor there that could predict who's going to do better and who won't. What they settled down on in their data was ...
Hank Smith:	00:00:38	Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with a giant among men. My co-host, John Bytheway. Now, John, physically, you're not a giant, but spiritually, you're a giant among men.
John Bytheway:	00:00:57	Probably not a giant there either, but thanks.
Hank Smith:	00:00:59	Yes, I think you are. In fact, spiritually, I think you'd be Goliath. You would tower. Me, on the other hand, would be more like a grasshopper. Now, that might sound like a weird comparison, John, but it actually is a comparison made in the Book of Numbers. Numbers 13:33, Giants versus Grasshoppers. John, we are excited today. We are joined by Dr. Dave Thomson. We call him Dr. Dave. He deserves the full title. Dr. Dave Thomson is here. Welcome to followHIM.
Dr. David Thomson:	00:01:28	Thank you. I am thrilled to be here. This'll be fun.
Hank Smith:	00:01:32	Yeah. I'm excited to have you. John, let's start with you. Some people out there, including me at one time, have said, I have never read the Book of Numbers, but you have, John, so what comes to mind?
John Bytheway:	00:01:44	If I had to put it in one sentence, we find out that this huge, massive people in the Exodus were numbered. They were numbered by the Lord. Even though there were so many of

them, he numbered them and they had to be led through a spiritual as well as a temporal wilderness to get where they needed to be physically and spiritually.

- Hank Smith: 00:02:05 Yeah. The Lord's census is different than a government census. I like how you said that. It's a one by one numbering. Dave, as you've been looking at the Book of Numbers, when you and I talked earlier, you thought, the book of Numbers, really? That's what you're going to have me do? And I said, that's what we're going to have you do. What have you been thinking about?
- Dr. David Thomson: 00:02:27 Before you said it was going to be Numbers, you asked what my favorite book in the Bible was in an email. Then you just tacked right on. How do you feel about the book of Numbers? I was... Numbers? And I think what I told you, the only thing that came to mind was the talking donkey a little later on, right? And I was like, yeah, that was a fun story right there. As I started really digging in and doing the work to see what was really in there, man, it's incredible. There is so much in Numbers that is directly applicable to us in our daily lives. There's some weird stories, for sure. Man, it's awesome. I loved it. All of it, in my mind, comes back to keeping your eyes on the Savior, looking at the Savior and not letting your attention get placed on something less.
- 00:03:21 Everything from facing the giants and feeling like a grasshopper and what you should do if you're scared, to what should you think about dying? There's just a little bit in there that just really grabbed me. All of it in my mind comes back to where are you looking? Where is your focus? Where is your attention? The bronze or brass serpent. Are your eyes on the Savior?
- Hank Smith: 00:03:43 Beautiful. Already, I'm excited. I remember when I was a kid, the book of Numbers was the phone book. I had no idea there was one in the Bible. Now, John, I'm guessing there's some listeners out there who are loving [Dave](#) so far, but don't know who he is. John, what do you know? Do you know anything about [Dr. Dave](#)?
- John Bytheway: 00:04:02 This is hot off the printer.
- Hank Smith: 00:04:05 Okay.
- John Bytheway: 00:04:06 I have a little [bio](#). Let me introduce him. He grew up in Orem, Utah. He served a mission in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Came home, married his wife, Kendra. I think he told us they met at an Institute dance. They have five daughters. He studied athletic

training and exercise physiology at BYU before earning his PhD in bioenergetics from East Carolina University, Go Pirates. He's now an associate professor of cell biology and physiology at BYU where he teaches Physiology and studies why muscles break down in old age, speaking of me. He served in many church callings. His favorite was teaching primary with Kendra. He likes reading, learning new things. Currently, he's reading Python coding for dummies. He loves hanging out with his family, including his dog, Chappy, and traveling usually to a beach somewhere. That sounds really nice today. Welcome, Dr. Dave, to followHIM.

- Dr. David Thomson: 00:05:04 Thank you, John.
- Hank Smith: 00:05:05 That's exciting. Now, all the parents out there listening, Dave has already helped me. Before we even hit record, so if you're a parent and you're out there listening, I want to have a quick 30-second conversation with Dr. Dave. He said something that I immediately wrote down, and I'm going to share it with my wife. He said in high school I loved learning. I didn't like school. I hurried and wrote that down because I'm raising boys. And I have a couple of them who I think, what's going on? You like learning, right? Don't you like learning? He just articulated something I don't think my boys can articulate. Dave, what did you mean by that?
- Dr. David Thomson: 00:05:43 My mom and dad was always reading books growing up. They really emphasized that. And when I hit my teenage years, you know what happens in your teenage years, your brain just shuts off for a little bit, or at least parts of it. But I still loved learning. And like I told you, I would go and I would spend hours in the city library pulling out books and reading stuff, random things. You set me down in a classroom and have someone up there in front who's telling me what to learn?
- Hank Smith: 00:06:09 It just didn't happen.
- Dr. David Thomson: 00:06:10 No, not doing that. I loved learning, but didn't have a real great GPA, so to speak. But I did have a love of learning things.
- Hank Smith: 00:06:21 I have a couple of boys in which I think I understand them a little bit more. They don't lack a love of learning. Sometimes when we tell people what to do, they resist. I do that same thing, oftentimes. Well, I hope that was helpful for any parents out there. Let's start with the [Come, Follow Me](#) manual, and Dr. Dave, John and I are ready to learn. The lesson is in multiple chapters in the book of Numbers. The title, Rebel Not Ye against the Lord, Neither Fear. Even on foot, it wouldn't take 40 years

to travel from the wilderness of Sinai to the promised land in Canaan, but that's how long the children of Israel needed, not to cover the geographical distance, but to cover the spiritual distance. The distance between who they were and who they could become as God's people. The book of Numbers described some of what happened during those 40 years, including lessons the children of Israel needed to learn before entering the promised land.

00:07:19 They learned about being faithful to the Lord's servants. They learned about trusting the Lord's power even when the future seems hopeless, and they learned that being faithless brings spiritual harm, but they could repent and look to the Savior for healing. That's what Dr. Dave said earlier. We're all like the Israelites in some ways. We know what it's like to be in a spiritual wilderness and the lessons they learned can help us prepare to enter our promised land, eternal life with our Heavenly Father. Beautiful. All right, with that, Dave, how do you want to start this?

Dr. David Thomson: 00:07:52 I love the King James version of the Bible. Four years ago, I picked up a NRSV version, new revised standard version. That's close to the King James, just in a little modern language, and that was great. I actually loved that one. This year with the [announcement](#) from the church, I was like, oh, let's go try a different one. So I got the NLT, New Living Translation. So let's see what that's like. I was kind of surprised at how well it connected with me spiritually and emotionally. I've enjoyed exploring both worlds, both the King James and the NLT. When I read, I'll jump between them. Sometimes one's good and sometimes the other is better.

Hank Smith: 00:08:33 Let's do that. And our friend, John Hilton III, just smiled really big in his car as he is driving to work. I call him JH3. JH3, you'll have to text me and let me know how big you smiled when you heard Dave say that about other translations of the Bible. He's an advocate. Dave, with all those different versions of the Bible, what did you find? Where are we going to start?

Dr. David Thomson: 00:08:57 Looking over all of these, the biggest message is to keep our eyes on Christ. In Numbers 21, many people are familiar with this account. The people are whining and complaining. We'll see, they're doing this pretty much throughout these chapters. They've been wandering forever. The manna that they've been eating is getting really old. They're tired of it. They are not happy. God sees the need to make a correction here. John, I love your storytelling in the past. Can you maybe just give us a quick synopsis of what God does to correct the Israelites?

John Bytheway:	00:09:39	I remember hearing David Christensen years ago teach this. He said, how many of you like serpents? Would you like them more if they were on fire? I think fiery means poisonous or full of venom. So then, Moses has a way to deliver them from this. Verse eight says, the Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent. Set it upon a pole and it shall come to pass everyone that is bitten, when he look upon it shall live and Moses made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole. And it came to pass if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.
Dr. David Thomson:	00:10:19	It seems a little inconsistent with how faith in the Spirit and blessings that come from faith work. You just got to glance over there at the serpent and you'll be healed. In my mind, really, you just got to look so if I contemptuously look over at the serpent because Moses is telling me if I do that, I'm going to live and I don't believe you, Moses, and I glance over there. Is that going to really heal me? Is that how it works in our relationship with Christ? I don't think it is. Let's read that one more time.
John Bytheway:	00:10:52	Okay. Numbers 21:9, Moses made a serpent of brass, put it upon a pole, and it came to pass if a serpent had bitten any man when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived.
Dr. David Thomson:	00:11:04	Ah, good. Beheld. What does that word behold mean? Here's my one crack at Hebrew. I don't have any idea how to pronounce this, but it's something like vehibit. The meaning in that word is not just to glance at, but it means or implies to look with intense focus or intent. That gives you an entirely different feel than just glancing at this brass serpent and being healed, that you're focusing on it, that you are really paying attention. They focus on the serpent, they live, and in the Book of Mormon and New Testament, we learn more about that. In John 3:14-15, Christ himself taught, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." There's other references to this event in the Book of Mormon, taking it all together, healing when we've been bitten or when we're going through something hard isn't going to come just by going through the motions of glancing at the Savior once in a while.
	00:12:16	We want to focus on him with intent. We want our attention on him. Some days when I got a lot going on, I get up in the morning and I'm just craving, kneeling down and praying to Heavenly Father. And I just can't wait to get in that conversation. You just savor it. That's all you're thinking about

and all those problems are somewhere else you're just focused on God, on your Savior.

- Hank Smith: 00:12:39 I wonder if the sacrament prayer, if that could be an alternate word, that they will always focus on him, that they may have his spirit to be with them.
- John Bytheway: 00:12:50 I like that insight. When I was a kid and I was having trouble paying attention and mom would say, "Think about Jesus." I thought about the picture, a picture of Jesus, but as you go through life and as you go through trials, an intense focus is required. I like what you said there. Always have an intense focus on him.
- Hank Smith: 00:13:10 I think that offers a moment of pause and said, yeah, maybe I have lost my focus. I mean, in my mind it went automatically to [President Nelson's](#) quote, John, you know it better than I do.
- John Bytheway: 00:13:21 Yeah. The joy we feel has less to do with the circumstances of our life and everything to do with the focus of our lives.
- Dr. David Thomson: 00:13:28 Well, when I first started studying and digging into Numbers, again, with that idea that I don't know what I'm going to find here, the very first verse right off the bat really connected with me because, man, I'm a whiner. I think as academics, I think we're trained to just whine about things. We find little things that's not just right, the way it ought to be that we can argue about. That's totally how I am. This very first verse, chapter 11, verse one, this totally connected with me. King James version. It says, we're back to the people, they're complaining about their situation. "And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord and the Lord heard it, and his anger was kindled, and then the fire of the Lord consumed the people in the outskirts of the camp."
- 00:14:20 First verse, and I'm just like, oh, no, the Lord's speaking to me right now. The NLTs worded a little differently. I like it. It says, "Soon the people began to complain about their hardship, and the Lord heard everything they said. Then the Lord's anger blazed against them." I'm thinking, oh boy, I'm in trouble. I complain way too much. Is the Lord's anger blazing up there against me? I see what's happening here, but sometimes I find when I'm complaining to the Lord, especially in my prayers, when I'm trying to unload with whatever's going on, I feel like sometimes those prayers, I feel so blessed and, you know, that peace comes over you and you figure it out and I'm like, man, that was really good to complain to the Lord about whatever it is that's going on in my life. So what's the difference? We have

the children of Israel complaining and it really upsets the Lord. Whereas I'm saying that sometimes I go whine to the Lord and it's a huge blessing to me.

- Hank Smith: 00:15:18 That's a great thought. I've never put this together. Perhaps it's not complaining to him that is so irksome, rather complaining to each other. When we complain to each other, that can really tear down faith. I've noticed that. When I'm around someone who complains a lot, I think it does take away from my own optimism.
- Dr. David Thomson: 00:15:43 That's exactly the conclusion I came to as I sat and pondered on that. I imagine the children of Israel hanging out around the water cooler or the well. Just, man, I hate this wandering around. I wish I was back in Egypt and blah, blah, blah, and they're just complaining to each other. And yeah, that's not helpful. That tears us down. You go to the Lord with your problems, even if it's whining and complaining, again, I do it a lot. It's, again, it comes back to where your attention is. Is your attention on your trials, the difficulties, or is your attention on the Lord as you counsel with him about those trials and difficulties? Huge difference.
- Hank Smith: 00:16:25 John, you're a [Dr. John Lund](#) fan. He said something once, just listen to this, you guys. Often we take our problems to our family and take our love to the Lord. He said, "Don't you think the Lord could handle more of our problems and our family needs more of our love?" And I thought, I think I do that. I think I tell the Lord in prayer how much I love him, and then I tell my family how many problems I have. Maybe ought to reverse my strategy and tell the Lord how many problems I feel like I have and tell my family how much I love them.
- John Bytheway: 00:17:04 Yeah, that's exactly what he said. And I'm thinking too that if they're complaining among each other, what is that doing to the credibility of Moses, the prophet in their midst? That maybe he's not really a prophet. He led us out here. Look at all this stuff that's happening. Moses and God might be complaining about Moses and the Lord there. The spirit of complaining doesn't do much for anybody.
- Dr. David Thomson: 00:17:28 Yeah, I agree and we should try to not complain. 2 Corinthians chapter nine says that we should give not grudgingly or of necessity for God loveth a cheerful giver. We should obey the Sabbath in Doctrine and Covenants. We should do this with a cheerful countenance. I think that's something we can all look at. How much am I complaining? Can I do this more cheerfully?

- John Bytheway: 00:17:50 In 1 Nephi 17, in like one sentence, it's... This is 1 Nephi chapter 17:1, we did travel and wade through much affliction in the wilderness. They're hip deep in affliction. Our women did bear children in the wilderness. In the very next sentence, and so great were the blessings of the Lord upon us, that while we did live upon raw meat in the wilderness, which doesn't sound very good. They see that we're wading through affliction and we're being so blessed. I think another place at the conclusion of the war chapters, it says some were hardened by the great length of the war and some were softened. It's same exact circumstances, different personal reaction to it, which is kind of an exercise of agency, I guess, how we're going to react to things.
- Hank Smith: 00:18:43 With my family this week, because of what Dave has pointed out here, I might have us all watch The Tongue of Angels. Do you remember that talk from [Elder Jeffrey R. Holland](#)? It's been almost 20 years. It automatically came to my mind. I could read the whole thing here. I won't. I'll just give you a couple of clips so you can go hear it yourself. He says, "Speak hopefully. Speak encouragingly, including about yourself. Try not to complain and moan incessantly. As someone once said, even in the golden age of civilization, someone undoubtedly grumbled that everything looked too yellow. I have often thought that Nephi's being bound with cords and beaten by rods must have been more tolerable to him than listening to Laman and Lemuel's constant murmuring. Surely he must have said at least once, 'Hit me one more time. I can still hear you.' Yes, life has its problems and yes, there are negative things to face, but please accept one of Elder Holland's maxims for living. No misfortune is so bad that whining about it won't make it worse." He quotes James. He says, "Big ships are turned around by a very small helm." Then James makes his point, "The tongue is a little member, but behold, how great a forest a little fire can burn." Thanks for showing us that, Dave.
- Dr. David Thomson: 00:20:05 It was right off the bat, something for me. We go further on into chapter 11, verses four through six in the King James version, and the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting. Is that a great descriptor of our world today? They fell a lusting. The children of Israel also wept again and said, who shall give us flesh to eat? And in the King James version, that word mixed multitude, it's kind of what does that mean anyway? NLT clarifies that up. The way it puts it is, then the foreign rabble who were traveling with the Israelites began to crave the good things of Egypt. So what were they lusting after? They were lusting after the good things of Egypt that they had left. And the people of Israel also began to complain, oh, for some meat, they

exclaimed. They're getting tired of what the Lord's provided them with.

00:21:05 It says foreign rabble instead of mixed multitude. What's rabble? Dictionary says it's a disorganized or disorderly crowd. We have the term rabble rouser. You don't hear that very often anymore. What's a rabble rouser? It's someone who whips the rabble into a frenzy of complaint. I didn't realize that when the children of Israel left Egypt in the Exodus, they left with some foreigners, some non-Israelites. This was apparently what's being referred to here, the rabble, the mixed multitude. That's kind of interesting to me, but us, we have so much information, so many opinions, so many complaints just flying at us through social media as disciples of Christ, as members of the church. I think we tend to let a lot of information coming in from the mixed multitude, which isn't always a bad thing. There's great stuff out there, good, valuable gems to learn from everybody around us. But if we're not careful, are we letting the rabble start to infect our thinking with this complaining and this whining and this doubting? The Lord's not happy with this complaining and it turns into a pretty serious consequence for many of these people.

Hank Smith: 00:22:27 I can read John Bytheway's thoughts by this point in our time together. John, did you think something like there's people out there who get up in the morning and say, okay, what are we going to be angry at today?

John Bytheway: 00:22:43 I can't remember who I heard said it, but something about that's what social media does. It tells us, what are we outraged about today? What can we be mad about today and what can we comment on today that makes us so mad? I mean, I guess you can live that way if you want, but it doesn't sound like a very happy way to live.

Hank Smith: 00:23:01 I think we've discovered in the last, I don't know, however many years, Dave, that the term sex sells is still prevalent, but rage sells.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:23:13 Hmm.

Hank Smith: 00:23:14 It will create traffic which creates income for the person's account. It's very surprising that maybe people don't know that people who have enough followers on Instagram and TikTok and YouTube and Facebook, if you have enough followers, those platforms will pay you for certain posts. And what you find is that posts that generate a lot of back and forth anger between people generate a lot of revenue.

Dr. David Thomson:	00:23:43	A lot of clicks, a lot of engagement.
Hank Smith:	00:23:46	My rage is income for someone else.
Dr. David Thomson:	00:23:48	I have an aging physiology class where we talk about what goes wrong in our bodies as we get older. One of my students was doing a report. One of the things I have them do is they go to kind of a popular press book. They'll pull out some claim out of that book and then they're going to assess it scientifically, go and see if there's actually evidence for what that person said about what you ought to do to live forever. The student said something really interesting. She said she'd read this book that she'd picked a while ago and accepted it at face value, didn't question it, didn't think about it, just to say, okay, that must be true. But when she went to do this and went through this exercise of actually looking at whether those claims held up, she realized that they were pretty flimsy, that there really wasn't a lot of evidence for what was being said. We can do that not just in our bodies, but when people come with claims or complaints about The Church or about its leaders or about Christ in general, religion.
Hank Smith:	00:24:55	The Lord says, I gave you a brain. I didn't want you to suspend its use.
Dr. David Thomson:	00:25:00	That's right. And maybe we'll talk about that in a little bit more.
Hank Smith:	00:25:04	That's interesting. Dave, let me ask you about aging. One of the reasons I was excited about you coming on is your expertise. We haven't really had a chance to tell our listeners about your expertise. Is it interesting to study aging? I think for a lot of us, we'd say, I kind of want to avoid that topic.
Dr. David Thomson:	00:25:24	I love, and I've been interested in it since my PhD years. So I started off looking at aging, old muscles. When you're looking at kind of the cellular level, and it depends a little bit on what part of your body you're looking at, but we start going downhill at about age 25 to 30, somewhere in that range. When I'm teaching these students at BYU and they're all young and feel invincible, you would think, why should they be worried about aging that's so far off? It's not. The changes that are going to become really apparent in your body really begin happening when you're 25, 26, 27, 30. So we should be thinking about that if we want to have a long, healthy life. I'm not so concerned with how long life is, but I do want to be healthy. Everyone should be interested in it. Hopefully, we all get old. The alternative isn't great. Because if you don't get old, then you're dead. In the gospel context, I think it's really important because

the healthier we are, the better we can serve. When we're unhealthy, it limits what we can do. There's a motivation. We should be thinking about how we age.

- Hank Smith: 00:26:32 Dave, speaking of your expertise, we've been talking about complaining, we've been talking about outrage, and you know a lot about physiology. You've talked to me a little bit about our spiritual, emotional, physical selves are all intertwined. Does who we listen to and our complaining and our outrage, does that affect our physiology?
- Dr. David Thomson: 00:26:54 Yes, it does. Let's talk about that. One of the parts I really like in these chapters that we're studying right now, it's probably something that most people didn't even think about, but because I am really interested in aging and how we prepare to die, in the end, it really stood out to me. If we jump forward to chapter 20, at this point, the Israelites are wandering around. We've got these people the Edomites, they don't let them go through their land. Now the Israelites have to walk even more. Finally, they come to mount Hor. There's a really interesting verse in chapter 20, verse 22. One of you like to read that for me?
- Hank Smith: 00:27:34 Sure. It's my turn. Numbers 20:22, and the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh and came unto mount Hor. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor by the coast of the land of Edom saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son and bring them up unto mount Hor and strip Aaron of his garments and put them upon Eleazar, his son, and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people and shall die there.
- Dr. David Thomson: 00:28:15 I'm going to go to the NLT now and give some of the phrasing there. He says, "The time has come for Aaron to join his ancestors in death." He reiterates there at the end, you're going to go up on the mountain and Aaron will die there and join his ancestors. What are you thinking if you're Aaron? We have this big fear of death. We're like, oh, man, I'm not going on that mountain. I'm staying down here. I'm not going to do that, but that's not what Aaron did, and it doesn't get into a lot of detail. As we go down to verse 28, they go and, in front of the whole community, they go up, start climbing the mountain. At the summit in verse 28, Moses removed the priestly garments, like the Lord had told him to from Aaron and put them on Eleazar, Aaron's son, then Aaron died there on top of the mountain.

00:29:08 Moses and Eleazar went back down. It seems like for Aaron, this was a natural, not scary thing. He said, All right, it's time to die. Let's go do it. Some of the people in the field of aging are obsessed with extending lifespan, with longevity. They think if we can just tweak what's going on in our cells a little bit and in the right ways that we could live, there are some who think a thousand year lifespan would be totally feasible. There's one guy who, he wants to do this and he says, I want to cheat death. That's his goal. I don't know, in the gospel context, is that a good idea? We want to cheat death?

Hank Smith: 00:29:52 I wouldn't think so. It's a natural part of the plan.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:29:55 It's a part of the plan. That's exactly right. [President Nelson](#), when he gave his comments on his 100th birthday, if you remember that. One of the things he said there was really cool. He said, "My dear brothers and sisters, the length of your life is not as important as the kind of life that you live. For each of us, even for a hundred year old man, life passes quickly. My prayer is that you will let God prevail in your life. Make covenants with him. Stay on the covenant path. Prepare to return to live with him again." And this is President Nelson who had to be feeling a lot like Aaron. He had to know that there's not a whole lot of time left. We got to climb that mountain. I love the verbiage in the NLT. It's time to go join my ancestors in death. That's just beautiful to me.

00:30:44 I think that's neat. Our focus, and again, as an aging researcher, it'd be cool to live a few years longer. That's probably fine, but we're all going to die. That doesn't matter so much. It's, how do we age? Kind of gets to your question. [President Nelson](#) also said in his book, Heart of the Matter, he said, "Secular education generally ignores three major divine truths that are rarely addressed or even acknowledged. First, each of us is going to die. Second, because of Jesus Christ, each of us is going to be resurrected and become immortal. And third, each of us will have a personal interview with the Savior during which we will be judged. Those are three divine truths that need to be acknowledged. He said they are crucial to us. They are fundamental truths. Of course, that's it. Death is part of life. I think if we can live in a way that we aren't afraid of that, that is what will bring us peace as we get older.

00:31:46 There was an interesting relatively recent study where they were looking at cognitive decline when you get older. And I used to think, oh, 40's really old. And then when I was 40, 45, 50, that's going to be really old. I still don't feel that much older. 54, I'm pretty sure when I get to be like 65, I'm going to be really

old. And I think in our minds, after age 65, we're thinking, okay, it's really going to be downhill from there. Once I'm 65, my brain's going to slow down. I'm going to start breaking down. It's going to be the beginning of the end. For some people, that's definitely going to be true. But this study was super interesting because what it showed was your cognitive decline, whether you have like Alzheimer's or not, it's not inevitable when you get older. And so they looked at a bunch of old people.

00:32:36 They used cognitive tests to see how they were doing over time. They hypothesize that a major factor in those who actually improve cognitively in their older years, and there are people who will actually get better. Our cognitive abilities will improve, even after age, say, 65. They hypothesize that there's got to be a factor there that could predict who's going to do better and who won't. What they settled down on in their data was the more positive the people were in their mindset, the better their cognitive ability did over time. Getting to your point, if you're complaining about getting older, if you're complaining about life, if you're putting your attention on that and not keeping your attention on the Savior, on the beauty of the gospel, on the great things in your life, even when you get older, we get older, hey, we've got experience. We're wiser than we used to be.

00:33:33 Our processing power may or may not be very good, but we're smart. We're wise. We have grandkids. We have kids doing cool things. We have a lot of good things to look at. Those people who are able to focus their attention on those things. This obviously wasn't in the paper, but if we're focused on our relationship with Christ and the joy we can find in the gospel, that is what predicted whether their cognitive abilities were going down or were going up. Now, this is an associative study. We can't say that those positive thoughts caused the improved cognitive ability, but they're associated.

Hank Smith: 00:34:13 John, if that is true, you're never going to die. You are the most positive guy in the world. Did you love that as much as me? I'm writing this in my scriptures just by this complaining. I want to make sure I'm clear on this, Dave. If you have a positive mindset, it's not saying that that's the reason that you'll be less likely to experience cognitive decline, but those two things are associated.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:34:46 Yes. You're in good company if you're choosing to be positive and to create a positive mindset toward aging and life in general. Your likelihood of keeping those abilities, those

cognitive abilities, there's good evidence. Again, most of it's associative. It's not just your cognitive ability. I think your general health is associated as well. And you mentioned John and, you know, he's going to live forever. I think the same thing of my mother-in-law, Sharon, my wife's mother. Chronologically speaking, man, she's old. 82. We can talk about aging as chronological age, time since you were born. We can talk about it in terms of biological age, what your body is doing, what your cells are doing, how healthy are your cells, right? You look at her chronological age, again, 82, that's getting up there pretty good. Yet, if you were to meet Sharon, you would absolutely guess that she's much younger than 82.

00:35:42 She has this bright, sunshiny attitude on life, cheerful. We joke about her because it doesn't matter how trivial something you did was. She's going to make you feel like you were the best person on earth because of this little thing you might've done. Just complimenting people and looking at the bright side of everything and so resilient and not getting drug down by the challenges of life, and she's had some. Let me read you a quick quote from [Boyd K. Packer](#), who I miss. I liked Boyd K. Packer a lot. He said, "In your golden years, there is so much to do and so much to be. Do not withdraw from life into retirement, into amusement. That for some would be useless, even selfish. You may have served a mission and been released and consider yourself as having completed your service in the church, but you are never released from being active in the gospel."

00:36:42 You can see that in the brethren. They're not disengaging from life. They're not disengaging from the gospel. They're not deciding, oh, yeah, I've done my work in the gospel, now it's time to relax. In terms of longevity, even, not even, not just the quality of life. If you look at the average age at which the brethren have died since 1990, and when I say the brethren, I'm talking about apostles, prophets and apostles in the church. Average age for them at which they died is 89.6 years. On average, they die at about 90 years of age. Let's say you're age 50. You look at the actuary tables, what is your life expectancy? It's 79. This is just associative. This is just a relationship between facts, you know, facts of life and things. You look at them and they're living 10 years longer than you would expect them to live on average. I think that comes back to what you were talking about, Hank, our attitude, our view of our role in life and our engagement in life and the gospel. That all matters.

Hank Smith: 00:37:49 Wow. The chronological age and then biological age. I would say John chronologically is however many years old, but biologically, I think he's a teenager. So John, talk to me.

John Bytheway:	00:38:05	I like hearing that. Sometimes I'll tell people, well, I grew up in Salt Lake City, and then I'll say, well, it's debatable whether I ever grew up.
Hank Smith:	00:38:12	Grew up. Yeah.
John Bytheway:	00:38:15	What you're talking about is fascinating. And probably 30 years ago, there used to be a continuing education camp at BYU called, there was one called Academy for Girls. There was one called Be The Best You. And there was a faculty member who used to train young women to compete in pageants. I remember listening in on one of these talks once and I was like, wow, really? She would have these young women that she was training to compete in pageants write five thank you notes per day for the 30 days that they were with her. That's a lot of thank you notes. Association doesn't imply causation, but I think she believed it did because she felt like graciousness changes you internally. It actually changes your appearance to be gracious, be thankful. And I think that gratitude's kind of a twin sister of humility because when you're grateful and you realize where your blessings come from and you realize you didn't create or deserve your blessings, sometimes they just came. Humility and gratitude go together. I can't hope to live up to all of Hank's adjectives for me, but I hope the one thing I will never be accused of is ingratitude. Dependence on and a focus on the Savior, wouldn't that make you be grateful?
Dr. David Thomson:	00:39:41	I think that's absolutely right. There is a lot of data on gratitude. It's been a topic that's been studied heavily and it's a lot of associative stuff. I can't think of any of those studies that don't at least directionally say that if you have more gratitude in your life or you express gratitude more, that it won't improve whether it's your anxiety, your mental function, or general sense of wellbeing regardless of your stage in life. I think it's really important being able to see your blessings, count your blessings as the hymn goes. I think it is a very practical and well established way to make your life better and to feel more peace. Absolutely.
Hank Smith:	00:40:26	If any of my students at BYU for my New Testament classes, if they're listening, they are going to roll their eyes because this, I hit it so often. Around Thanksgiving time, I will hear someone, usually in church, quote the story of the 10 lepers. They'll say, "This story is about gratitude." And I just want to scream, this story is not about gratitude, it's about expressing gratitude. All 10 lepers feel grateful. There's not one of them that you would ask and say, you know, you're grateful for Jesus? No. What has Jesus ever done for me right besides heal me from leprosy?

They're all grateful. Only one takes the time to say the words or express the gratitude. So here's what the text says. Luke 17:14, the nine, and I guess you could say all 10. As they went to the priests, they were cleansed. The one comes back and Jesus says, thy faith hath made thee whole.

00:41:40 I think this is in the scriptures, Dave, what you just described, expressing gratitude, putting the words together and either saying them or writing them out like you said, John. Dave, you're the expert here, but I would think that has to change your physiology. In fact, during class, I will stop and I will say, get out your phone. We're going to text someone how grateful we are, and we're going to be specific. We're going to say these words. We're studying expressing gratitude in my religion class today. I thought of you, and then they express gratitude for something specific. Thank you for being someone who listens, someone who is consistent, whatever they want to say. And then I'll say, how many of you got something back? And by the end of class, most of them are raising their hand. And I say, what did they say? You should see the healing.

00:42:31 You can feel it in the room, the feeling that takes place. Oh, my mom said she was having a really hard day that switched it around for. One of my students said, one of my companions said, how did you know I needed to hear from you? I'm really struggling with my faith. We could even make that challenge right now, John. We could have everybody, unless you're driving, stop what you're doing, press pause on us, say something like this. I'm listening to a podcast today. They're talking about expressing gratitude. I want to say this to you. I thought about you. This is a thing you can try right now.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:43:07 There's a lot of studies out there that look at what the effect of the people you are around is on you, what their attitudes are. When they're excited, when they're grateful, it rubs off on you. That's been well established for sure. In my aging class, we talk about levers all the time. As we get older, there are levers that you can pull that will affect how you do, how your health is, how your mind's doing, and so forth. I always say there's four big levers. Number one, you should be exercising. You should move as often as you can and once in a while lift heavy things. Number two, you need to pay attention to what you're putting into your body, your food. That one is clear. There are different views on what that ought to look like. Everyone is in agreement that you should not be putting highly processed foods into your body, at least regularly.

- 00:44:10 Eat real food. Okay, so that's lever number two. Lever number three is sleep. The food makes sense. Sleep, yeah, we all know we should get enough sleep. We should all be getting 7-8 hours of sleep or so for the most part, and make that sleep as good as we can. Huge lever that will affect how you age and how you feel. The fourth one, though, is social connection and your relationships with people. That is the fourth one that I think is well established where there's enough [evidence](#) where we can say, yeah, that's a big lever we can pull. The reason why I make those four big levers, I call them big levers as opposed to little levers is those are things that if you'll go do them, you can feel the difference. You don't have to wonder whether it's doing anything. If there's some supplement that someone on some podcast said you ought to take, maybe it does something for you, maybe it doesn't, but those four big levers, you know they're going to make a difference because you can feel it.
- 00:45:10 And so again, with that social connection, going back to what we've been talking about, your mindset, the gratitude thing and actually expressing that gratitude to people, that's a big deal. It is a big lever, and we know that. I'm an introvert. Even as an introvert, I know that even us just conversing right now, it feels good to talk to people. I did this once when I was Bishop, I was on the stand a while back. In my mind, I just remembered, as I was watching the young men pass the sacrament, I remembered a bishop in my youth. All the efforts he made to try to help me get on the right path. At the time, that bishop couldn't have known that anything registered in my brain at all that he did. He couldn't have known because I pretty much rejected, at least on the face, everything.
- 00:45:59 I was just sitting on the stand looking at those young men, remembering myself as a young man, and I pulled out my phone. I know you're not supposed to do that in sacrament meeting, but I just went and searched him up, found his email and shot off an email thanking him and apologizing for being a punk. It felt really good. I could feel the difference. It felt right immediately. When it's stuff like that, when that happens, maybe it's the Spirit, maybe it's just your mind, doesn't matter. You can feel it. You can feel that was right. You hear about the blue zones, probably. You might have heard of these. These are places on earth where those communities tend to live a long time where they routinely live over 100 years of age. One of the common threads through all those communities, they have different things.
- 00:46:45 You know, all those four levers are in there. But again, coming back to that sociality, the social connection, the friendships, the

strengthening of each other, those are things that are common amongst all of those societies where people tend to live a long time. One of the base commandments is to love your neighbor. That is obviously of spiritual importance. I think have a direct relationship to things that will physically bring us health. I love that idea that what we're thinking, how we're thinking, how we're loving, how we're caring for each other, that really matters in terms of how our later years in life end up looking for us.

- John Bytheway: 00:47:34 The Apostle Peter, I think it was one of the great understatements of all time. When he's on the Mount of Transfiguration and he sees Jesus and then Moses, he's dead, right?
- Hank Smith: 00:47:48 Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 00:47:49 And then Elias? I wish I could hear the tone of voice in the scriptures, maybe new modern translations have emojis with the sentences that would help me. Peter says, "It was good for us to be here." That's the understatement. Listen, if you have a good day in seminary, and I had so many, and I thought, wow, I learned something and I didn't say anything, Hank. I didn't express gratitude. I had it, but I didn't express it. Please, walk up to your teacher, you don't even have to smile if you're too cool. Just say, "It was good for me to be here," and walk out. Make their day. Try gospel doctrine. It's so easy. This is not rocket science. It's so easy.
- Dr. David Thomson: 00:48:35 That reminds me when I was a youth of a seminary teacher who I had, and again, I was a little bit off course when I was in my teenage years and seminary wasn't my favorite thing. I had this seminary teacher. His name was Les Campbell. I just wasn't nice to him. I didn't connect with him for the longest time. And as the Lord would have it, I got him two years in a row for seminary, and I'm just not excelling in life at the time. If I'm him, I'm going to be, all right, that student, he's a lost cause. I'm just not going to pay attention to that guy I'm going to pay attention to the kids who like me. But he took me, I remember still, he sat me down, two chairs in this empty seminary room facing each other, and he talked to me for about, it was probably 10, 15 minutes or so.
- 00:49:30 In my mind, I'm rolling my eyeballs back because this is a guy I just don't like. He's going to tell me to do this or that. I don't remember everything he said, but what I do remember is him expressing confidence in me that I would be okay. He expressed his love for me, that he wanted me to succeed. I remember him

acknowledging, I don't think you like me a whole lot, but I just want you to know that you're going to be okay. I care about you and I know the Lord cares about you. Well, of course, I'm just punk kid. I just kinda say, okay. And I get up and walk out. It's one of those regrets in life that you don't get to repair. You got to wait till the next life, but he doesn't know it, but that stuck in my head. I thought about that many times since then.

00:50:19 Just his example in caring for me as a punk kid. Then I didn't think about it for a while. A year or two ago, I saw his obituary, and again, I was just like, oh, man. I am grateful for Brother Campbell. I wrote a note on the little obituary page. You can send a little message to the family and express my gratitude for him, that he didn't know it, but he made a big impact on my life. He planted a little thought in my head, which was an important one that was a blessing to me as I got older. Coming back to the point, that gratitude, it was a burden off me. I felt so good after having just sent that little note of gratitude, even though it wasn't to him, I figure he saw it too.

John Bytheway: 00:51:03 Wow. Even have gratitude for manna.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:51:08 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:51:10 Even if it's what you get every day.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:51:11 Good.

Hank Smith: 00:51:12 Dave, I think we could go another few hours on this topic, but we better keep going.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:51:20 I got a lot more that's super interesting to me. Let's talk about priesthood authority. We're still in chapter 11. We're going to go to verse 16. The children of Israel are complaining. Moses is at his wit's end because they're complaining so much. So I just got done with a stint as bishop about, which has been five months now, maybe. So I'm still pretty fresh out of that. Man, life is so good. I loved it, but man, it's a heavy thing, and how much more so for Moses with the whole children of Israel traipsing through the desert and so forth.

Hank Smith: 00:51:56 That's chapter 11, verse 14. "I am not able to bear all this people alone. It is too heavy for me."

Dr. David Thomson: 00:52:04 Too heavy. Yes, exactly.

John Bytheway: 00:52:06 Got to lift heavy things.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:52:08 Well, just start lifting weights, Moses. You'll feel it. I got to read one verse on this. Again, this is from the NLT and the verbiage here. This made me laugh. In verse 15, after he says that, Hank, in the NLT he says, If this is how you intend to treat me, speaking to the Lord, just go ahead and kill me. Do me a favor and spare me this misery. Being bishop was great in so many ways. There's some really heavy aspects of serving the Lord in that way. Then in verse 16 and 17, the Lord instructs Moses to delegate and tells him to call the 70 in verse 17. I liked both the King James and the NLT. Can one of you grab King James? 11:17.

John Bytheway: 00:53:03 I've got it. I love this verse. "I will come down and talk with thee there and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee and will put it upon them and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone." Isn't that nice?

Dr. David Thomson: 00:53:20 That is so good. That was a great thought when I was bishop, but let me tell you, I get released as bishop. The new bishop was my first counselor before. I'll tell you what, I told him I knew he was going to be bishop, so I made it really clear where I expected to end up after I was released. That is back in primary, teaching the kids. I thought he got the message, he did not. I got released. We were entertaining the idea and joking mostly about it that on the day we were going to be released before the stake presidency member got up to do the business of the stake that is releasing us. We were just going to go ahead and call ourselves to a primary calling or whatever calling we wanted before they did that and then get what we want. I don't think that's allowed.

00:54:10 Anyway, we didn't do that. I went a couple months without being called and then he calls me into the office and I got a calling and he sits me down and he extends the call for me to serve as the ward activity chair. Again, I'm an introvert. I told him, ward activity chair? I was just shaking my head, but here's where that ties into this. It was maybe a month and a half ago that I went in and one of the bishop's counselor put his hands upon my head. He set me apart as the ward activity chair. These verses just so connected with me. When he put his hands upon my head, he took some of that spirit that was upon the bishop and put it upon me. Well, he had that authority from the bishop to put it upon me. He took some of that spirit.

00:55:04 And where did the bishop get that spirit? He got it put upon him from the stake president, probably. Where'd the stake president get it? He got some of that spirit probably from a 70 or maybe an apostle, most likely a 70. You can keep on going up that chain. Where did that spirit come from? That came

ultimately from our Lord, Jesus Christ. That counselor puts some of that spirit upon my head specifically to go and help my bishop so he didn't have to carry it alone, so he didn't have to go plan some activities. Yeah, I would have picked a different calling if I were picking. But this is what my bishop asked me to do. This is where he's asked me to help carry the load. I'm excited for what we're planning to do with our ward activities. I want to do it the way Christ wants me to do it.

Hank Smith: 00:55:56 What a beautiful idea. I remember when [Dr. Wilcox](#) was here years ago, one of the times Brad was here, he said, all of us are in the bishop's storehouse. All of us. And the bishop can call upon us, our talents, to help our ward. This almost brings me to tears. Please take a portion of this. I need your help. It is too heavy for me to bear alone. But for all of us put together, we can do this. Many hands make light work. Maybe we could combine a couple of challenges here. Everyone, get out your phone, all our listeners and text your bishop. And this time it's not bishop I need. It's bishop, how can I help? Thank you for what you do. How can I help? How can I help you bear this burden? It is too heavy for him to bear alone and his family, his wife.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:56:54 One more quote from [Gene R. Cook](#). You remembered Elder Cook? He's actually my stake president's father and good friend's father. One thing he said, well, first he was speaking actually to priesthood holders who placed their hands on people's heads. He said, "Your hands are very literally representing the hands of the Lord." As priesthood holders, do you think about it when you go place your hands on someone's head? As a bishop, and as a counselor in a bishop, it can become such a rote, routine thing to go set somebody apart or to give a blessing. And it becomes like, oh yeah, I'll go do that, and you don't think about it a lot. Like Moses putting his hands on the 70, that is a really significant thing you're doing right there. It should have some weight. When someone's hands are on our heads, let's remember that in essence, those are the hands of Christ.

00:57:53 That changes things. He says, he taught that we should take the fifth article of faith literally. We believe that a man must be called of God by prophecy and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof. Do I believe that when my bishop asked me to do a job I don't want to do like lead the ward activities, do I think about that that wasn't the bishop? It is extremely likely that he prayed with his counselors and with the input of the ward council and he thought about this and he did

his best to determine where the Lord wants me to be. Elder Cook went on and further taught that when we understand that role of the bishop or the stake president or the elders quorum president or the relief society president, when we understand that they are acting for the Lord, then as Elder Cook said, we begin to respond very differently to our bishops than we may have before. My bishop's awesome. He was like a deer in front of the headlights when he got called. Oh, he is amazing.

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| Hank Smith: | 00:59:06 | I love it. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:59:08 | Moses' alternatives. If this is my calling, would you please kill me? It's like verse 14 and 15. This is too heavy for me, so if this is how it's going to go, would you just kill me instead? Wow. That's a big ward for Moses, so no wonder. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:59:26 | Common theme through this is keep your focus on the Lord. And I can see that now. Complaining. No, don't do that. Keep your focus on the Lord. Get caught up in outrage. Don't do that. Keep your focus on the Lord. Go help your bishop. Why? Because your focus is on the Lord and the Lord is saying he needs your help, his family, his wife, they need your help. Let's keep going. I'm guessing there's a few more. |
| Dr. David Thomson: | 00:59:52 | Let's move into Numbers chapter 12. We have Miriam and Aaron who we'd consider these to be phenomenal disciples in our day, saints, great people. But they are upset with Moses because of who he chose to marry. They've taken their focus off of important things. Now they're zeroing in on something that just isn't important. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:00:21 | It's a good thing this never happens in families. That there are some hard feelings about who chose to marry who. It's not like this could be applicable. |
| Dr. David Thomson: | 01:00:31 | That's exactly right. They lost focus on what's important and chose to focus on something little. And I think we tend to do that. It's something I know as a leader multiple times. Somebody didn't like something about how I was running the show or what I was doing or what breakfast I chose to eat in the morning. It seems like there's always some sort of complaint. Again, these are good people, Aaron and Miriam. When you go down that thought where you start thinking about your leaders and criticizing and looking at what they're doing and focusing on the wrong things, it ended up with them that they started to wonder why he's the prophet and they're not. In verse two, they say, hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he |

not spoken also by us? I know just as well what is right and wrong.

01:01:21 I don't need to listen to my bishop or my stake president or the prophet and apostles. I can figure this out. I have the Spirit. I can do this. Why do I need them? Why do I even need to go to church? I can be spiritual. We see this all the time. This is very common. NLT wording makes me giggle a little bit because sounds just like a parent dealing with their arguing kids. The record says, so immediately, the Lord called to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam and said, go out to the tabernacle, all three of you. So the three of them went to the tabernacle. I'm imagining three little kids, hanging their heads, shuffling out to the tabernacle.

Hank Smith: 01:02:03 That does sound like a parent. You three, out here, now.

Dr. David Thomson: 01:02:09 Then the Lord descended in the pillar of the cloud and stood at the entrance of the tabernacle. Aaron and Miriam, again, I'm just seeing a parent just David Morley Thomson. And they stepped forward and the Lord said to them, now listen to what I say. Listen up, get in line. If there were prophets among you, I, the Lord, would reveal myself in visions. I would speak to them in dreams, but not with my servant Moses. Of all my house, he is the one I trust. I speak to him face to face clearly, and not in riddles. He sees the Lord as he is. So why were you not afraid to criticize my servant Moses? I feel like I can feel the Spirit. I know I feel the Spirit all the time. I feel like I'm guided by the Spirit a lot. But when the prophet speaks, when those that we sustain as prophet seers and revelators speak, that's different.

01:03:14 And it reminds me of my mission down in Brazil when I was coming out of my teenage years where I hadn't really gained a testimony of much. I was down there and on my mission, I was getting so many cool experiences and gaining testimony of all those gospel basics. Christ himself, the scriptures. I remember the very moment when I gained a testimony of living prophets and apostles. That was when Richard G. Scott visited our mission. At the time I was a zone leader, and so we got to sit right on the front row in the chapel where he was instructing us missionaries. He's there at the podium and I feel bad for people who don't know Elder Scott and don't remember him or were too young. He was so unique in his preaching of the gospel. As I sat there in front of him, it was so powerful when he came to the point in his talk where he expressed his testimony of Jesus Christ.

	01:04:13	He talked to us about how he knew and loved his Savior. What the Spirit told me when he bore his testimony was that this is an apostle. This is different. I felt that testimony to my core and I knew through the Spirit that his relationship with Christ was a little bit different than my budding relationship with my Savior. At that point on my mission, I had a strong testimony of the Savior. I felt something in his words that told me this is different. This is indeed a special witness of Jesus Christ. I walked out of that meeting. I know that that's an apostle. It was incredible. I love that interaction between the Lord and Miriam and Aaron instructing them in that same principle.
Hank Smith:	01:05:12	Yeah. That's beautiful. Probably everybody listening has moments similar.
Dr. David Thomson:	01:05:17	Should we carry on with what happens? Heavenly Father puts them in their place, helps them understand what their role is and what Moses' role. The Lord's not very happy with them. We need to keep in mind that Miriam and Aaron are great people. The Lord was very angry with them, and this is from the NLT again, and he departed. As the cloud moved from above the tabernacle, there stood Miriam, her skin as white as snow from leprosy. People sometimes struggle with this. The God of the Old Testament seems like he's so harsh. You know, he curses someone with leprosy because they made a little judgment error. Is this the same God we worship today? That can cause a little bit of angst in people.
Hank Smith:	01:06:06	Josh Sears was here our very first episode of the year, and he said, "This is Jehovah. I trust him and his abilities." I imagine the Lord saying, I know how to teach these people.
Dr. David Thomson:	01:06:19	I think that's right. You know, it was a different time. The culture was different. The way you connect with the way you can teach people, we shouldn't assume that based on what our ideas, that that's necessarily the right way. I remember when I was a kid, parents need to make decisions and parenting on how they're going to discipline their kids. And some of the techniques that might have been used in the 70s and 80s maybe would feel a little uncomfortable for people right now, and that's totally fine. I don't think there's a right way and a wrong. But what I can say is, I remember I must've been five or six years old, and I was sitting in my bedroom with my window open, and I'd taken the screen out, and I had a box of matches. And I was just lighting these matches and chucking them out the window.
	01:07:02	Just I thought, that's cool. Ooh, fire flying through the sky. This is fun. Just chucking them out there into the bushes or

whatever. Anyway, well, I can't remember if it was my mom who saw me doing this or my next oldest sister who saw me doing this and went and tattled on me. Regardless, I was called in to my parents. As a young kid, I was really good. Super obedient. I didn't get in trouble very often. Obviously, this is a very concerning behavior. This is something you want to stop. I go in there and I don't remember what my mom said, but she slapped my hand. This was something new to me. Again, I was a good kid. This was slapped my hand. I'm like, this is terrible. It just shocked me. I'll tell you what, I didn't throw any more matches out windows.

01:07:49 I don't know if it completely cured my pyromania, you know? As a teenager, I might've made a few bombs here and there and blew 'em up and things. But man, I thought before I started throwing fire away, it corrected me for sure. You know, I think the big thing was I knew she loved me. We can see that as we continue on with Miriam. As you make mistakes, sometimes you make a mistake that you need to go talk to a bishop about, and that can be pretty scary. Well, we kind of see that here. Miriam has leprosy. Aaron appeals to Moses begging for mercy. He says, please don't punish us for this sin we've so foolishly committed. Again, that's the NLT version. Moses cried out to the Lord, Oh God, I beg you. Please heal her. The Lord then, using terminology of the day, said she'd remain defiled for seven days and then would rejoin the others.

01:08:49 In other words, even in the Lord's mercy in healing her, he kept consequences in place for the sin that she had committed. This is like us. When we make a serious mistake, sometimes we go to the bishop. I know from my experience as bishop, when you do that, your bishop's going to go to the Lord and plead for you, as Moses did for Miriam. I joked earlier about not liking people. Soon as those hands came off of my head, it was weird because I really cared about what people were going through. It just impacted me. It, I wasn't used to that. Man, you go talk to your bishop, they are going to care. They are going to plead with the Lord for you. That discipline from the Lord wasn't designed to hurt

[Miriam](#)



Rebel Not Ye against the Lord, Neither Fear PART 1



GUEST: DR. DAVID THOMSON

. The point wasn't to destroy her for her mistake. It was to help her learn a lesson. So I imagine Miriam, as she's spending that seven days separated from everybody, kind of as we talked about, doesn't feel good to be isolated. I'm sure she was thinking about her mistake and forging a stronger, better relationship with her Savior.

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| Hank Smith: | 01:10:03 | I really love verse 15 that while she is out of the camp for seven days, we don't journey without you. We won't move on without you. |
| Dr. David Thomson: | 01:10:15 | Not leaving. That is awesome. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:10:17 | We will wait for you. There's something beautiful about that as well. |
| Dr. David Thomson: | 01:10:23 | From this experience, the big take home message we can get from Miriam is don't speak evil of the Lord's anointed. Your bishop isn't perfect. The prophet isn't perfect. There may be some things in their conduct that you don't particularly agree with. Give them grace. Just as we hope for grace from God, give them grace. They've got a heavy load. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:10:46 | The Lord takes criticism of prophets, he takes that pretty seriously. |
| Dr. David Thomson: | 01:10:52 | Yeah. |

Hank Smith:	01:10:53	That's not a small issue for him. If you're going to publicly criticize a prophet now, if you want to complain to him, I bet he'll say, I can work with you. But if you're going to publicly complain or tear down faith of prophets, I don't know. Chapter 12 tells me he doesn't see that as a light thing.
Dr. David Thomson:	01:11:10	When I was a counselor in a bishopric, I'm kind of an opinionated guy and sometimes I say my opinions more than I should. My bishop, I told him, look, when we're in counsel, I'm going to tell you what I think. And if I disagree with you, I think you're doing the wrong thing, I'm going to tell you. I think he appreciated that. But I also told him once we walk out of bishop office doors, I am 100% behind you.
Hank Smith:	01:11:34	Who the Lord loveth He chasteneth. Miriam just got a lot of extra love in that chapter.
Dr. David Thomson:	01:11:40	She got a bunch of love right there.



- John Bytheway: 00:00:01 Welcome back to part two with Dr. David Thomson, Numbers 11 to 27.
- Dr. David Thomson: 00:00:07 That brings us to Numbers 13 and 14. And Hank, you talked about giants and grasshoppers earlier. The Israelites, they're near Canaan, they're near the promised land. God tells Moses to send scouts, [spies](#) in to scout out the land. They get one from every tribe, 12 of them in total. I'm imagining these are trusted people. Their judgment is going to be well valued. This wasn't the rabble. These were the leaders. Go in and scout out the land. Verses 13 through 24, maybe we'll just paraphrase right now. They go in, they spy out the land and they bring back their report. They bring along some pomegranates and figs because the land is awesome. There is all kinds of good stuff in there. It is flowing with milk and honey. It's wonderful. 10 of those 12 who went in there are afraid. They said, "The people be strong, that dwell in the land. The cities are walled." Worst of all, and like you said earlier, Hank, there's giants there. The children of Anak, they're huge. And they're warriors. In the NLT, next to them we felt like grasshoppers. And they convinced most of the people that taking the land would be impossible. It's great, but we're grasshoppers. Those are giants. We can't do it. No way.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:34 I don't think there's any way a grasshopper could beat a giant. I just ...
- John Bytheway: 00:01:40 Could be annoying, but-
- Hank Smith: 00:01:41 Yeah. I think there's a message there. Moses says, This is an odd metaphor, but I think I get it.
- Dr. David Thomson: 00:01:47 The Lord, he knows what's in that land. Why did he send them in there when he knew they were going to come back with a report that this is going to be near impossible, that there's no way this is going to happen? Why did the Lord do that? As a scientist, one of the things I'd like to chat about is, does Heavenly Father want us to have blind faith? Let's come back to

that in just a second as we see what happens as this plays out amongst the children of Israel. Two of the scouts, Caleb and Joshua, they saw how tough it looked, but they didn't agree with the 10. They tried to quiet the people saying, Let's go at once to take the land. We can certainly conquer it. They had faith that they could do this hard thing, a very different mindset than the 10. I sympathize with the 10, by the way.

00:02:34 I feel like a grasshopper right now sitting here with two giants, Hank and John. I totally get that. We sometimes are asked to do things that are hard that are way out of our comfort zone. In the face of the challenge, they ended up convincing most of the people. They made, I think, at least a couple of fundamental mistakes. Number one, they put their focus on themselves and their own inadequacies instead of putting their focus on God, instead of trusting God. It's an attention problem. They'd already seen miracles. They knew what God could do. They lost focus. Hank, could you read verses seven through nine?

Hank Smith: 00:03:19 Numbers 14:7-9. This is Joshua and Caleb. And they spake unto the company of the children of Israel saying, The land which we pass through to search it is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land and give it to us. A land which flows with milk and honey. Rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread for us. These people have funny metaphors. They are bread for us. Their defense is departed from them. The Lord is with us, fear them not.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:03:56 Don't be afraid. Who did they say was going to do this for them? They didn't say, Hey, we can do it. Who'd they say was going to do this? Jehovah, He will bring us into the land. Not us. The other 10 were relying on their own strength, their own ability. They're not persuaded. In fact, they're so unpersuaded that they want to stone Caleb and Joshua for suggesting that they go in for their faith.

Hank Smith: 00:04:24 That's what we do to faithful, optimistic people.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:04:29 Yes. Stop. Let's just kill them. They're going to convince people to go in there and then we're all going to die. That brings us to the Lord's response here. In verses 11 and 12 of chapter 14, John, could you read that for us?

John Bytheway: 00:04:45 Numbers 14:11, And the Lord said unto Moses... This is such a reversal. There's lots of people who say how long, but this time the Lord says it to Moses. "And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere

they believe me for all the signs which I have showed among them?" It's like they forgot what happened in Egypt already.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:05:10

They've forgotten. I love the verse just because I can feel that the Lord is a real person here. I can just feel his frustration. I get frustrated too. Can the Lord be frustrated? Is there godly frustration? It seems like there is. Maybe some of my frustration isn't godly, but that's a real emotion. That's something we have. The NLT phrasing makes it a little more real even. He says, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? Will they never believe me?" I love [Stephen Robinson's](#) book back in the 90s, *Believing Christ*. This is a quote from Brother Robinson. "Faith is the first principle of the gospel. We often think that having faith in Christ means believing in his identity as the son of God and the Savior of the world. But believing in Jesus' identity as the Christ is only the first half of it. The other half is believing in his ability, in his power to cleanse and to save, to make unworthy sons and daughters worthy. Not only must we believe that he is who he says he is, we must also believe that he can do what he says he can do."

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Christ has said that he can fix me, and man, I've done some dumb things. That is not the end of the story if we don't want it to be, because Christ can fix that. We're not perfect and we are going to make mistakes, and Christ, part of our faith has to be that he can fix all of those mistakes, no matter how severe they are, how they impacted the people around us. That's why he died for us. We need to believe that, that he can do that. No matter ... You think you're a loser? If that's what you really feel inside, be assured that Christ doesn't see you that way and that with him, that isn't your destiny. For me, it was transformative. I've got to believe Christ that he can do what he said he can do.

John Bytheway: 00:07:18

I know exactly what you saw in verse 11 when you made that jump to Stephen Robinson's book. Believe me. It wasn't believe in me or believe in my existence, but it was believe what I said and believe what they have already seen me do with the Egyptians. I liked Brother Robinson's idea of it's one thing to believe in him, but it's another thing to believe what he said he could do and that he really can do it as far as being mighty to save and to forgive.

Hank Smith: 00:07:49

Sometimes I will ask a group of young adults to close their eyes and say, How many of you believe you are going to live in the celestial kingdom? About half the hands will go right up because those students know the gospel. A quarter of the hands will just stay flat down and then another quarter will go back and forth. And then I'll say, Okay, put your hands down and let's talk for a

minute. You are going to go to the celestial kingdom, and it doesn't have anything to do with you. It has everything to do with him. Then I'll take them to a couple of places. 2 Nephi chapter two, you know this one, John. Jacob, I know that thou art redeemed.

- John Bytheway: 00:08:35 'Cause you've been such a good boy.
- Hank Smith: 00:08:37 Because of the righteousness of your Redeemer. We are to rely wholly upon the mercy and merits and grace of him that is mighty to save. John, you can back me up here. This is my work and my glory. To bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man, and then what does he say, John, in 2 Nephi 27?
- John Bytheway: 00:09:01 And I am able to do my work. I like the willing and able. We covenant to be willing, which our hearts are in the right place, but we mess up. But he is able. What's the song we sing? We are weak, but thou art able. It's the same thing.
- Hank Smith: 00:09:22 I know we quote this talk a lot, John, and it's because we love him so much and he did such a good job. The most downloaded talk at BYU speeches is a talk called My Grace is Sufficient by [Dr. Brad Wilcox](#). Can I just give you guys a couple of thoughts from it? If someone out there hasn't read it, they need to go and listen to it and read it. Here is one analogy Brad gives. "Christ's arrangement with us is similar to a mom providing music lessons for her child. Mom pays the piano teacher. Because mom pays the debt in full, she can turn to her child and ask for something. What is it? Practice. Does the child's practice pay the piano teacher? No. Does the child's practice repay mom for paying the piano teacher? No. Practicing is how the child shows appreciation for mom's incredible gift. It is how he takes advantage of the amazing opportunity mom is giving him to live his life at a higher level. Mom's joy is not found in getting repaid, but in seeing her gift used, seeing her child improve, and so she continues to call for practice, practice, practice. In the same way, because Jesus has paid justice, he can now turn to us and say, Follow me. Keep my commandments. If we see his requirements as a way of being too much to ask, maybe it's because we do not see it through Christ's eyes. We have not yet comprehended what he is trying to make of us."
- 00:10:59 A little bit further down, he says, "The older I get and the more I understand this wonderful plan of redemption, the more I realize that in the final judgment, it will not be the unrepentant sinner begging Jesus, just let me stay. No, he will probably be saying, Get me out of here. Knowing Christ's character, I believe that if anyone is going to be begging on this occasion, it will

probably be Jesus begging the unrepentant sinner. Please choose to stay. Please use my atonement, not just to be cleansed, but to be changed so that you want to stay." John, you've heard me say this before. I don't live the gospel because I think I'm going to earn a place in the celestial kingdom. I live the gospel so that I will choose the celestial kingdom when it is offered to me.

- John Bytheway: 00:11:51 Brad has a couple of other phrases that he uses, so we're not earning heaven. We're learning heaven. Have you been saved by grace? Have you been changed by grace? He asked that question because the Savior is changing us. I love David that you brought up [Stephen Robinson](#). The book he wrote after Believing Christ was called Following Christ. There's one line in there that backs up what Hank just said. The question is not, am I going to make it? The question is, do I want to stay? He goes through Section 25. "You are sons and daughters in my kingdom." If you're in the kingdom of God on earth, you're in the kingdom of God. Now, do you want to stay? Which is a totally different question.
- Hank Smith: 00:12:32 John, I say pretty boldly, "I'm going to the celestial kingdom." Why? Because Jesus is that good. I completely trust him. Now, does that mean, oh, I don't have to repent? No. No, not at all. It's, I want to repent. I want to be what he wants me to be. I want to do better. Sometimes us older folks, we hear this taught and we think somehow that we're telling young people, You don't have to repent. Jesus is going to save you. Maybe I just don't, I'm not articulating this carefully. In my experience, when you use fear against a young person, you say, If you don't do this, you're not going to heaven. That is not as motivating as the Lord loves you and he's going to take you to heaven, so go get to know him, and then the Lord will help them change. The Lord will help them repent. I get a little concerned, I do, that our adults are saying, Stop teaching this grace thing. It's too easy. Maybe it goes against the traditions of our fathers. I don't know.
- John Bytheway: 00:13:42 I'm thinking of [Elder Renlund's](#) statement, he doesn't want us to keep the commandments, he wants us to choose to keep the commandments, and we'll fail. We won't do it perfectly. That's why repentance is there. When our hearts and our minds are turned to how much he loves us, we want to choose to follow him.
- Dr. David Thomson: 00:14:00 Yeah, we'll fail sometimes, you know, as we're trying to get stronger or to get better at something, whether it's lifting a weight or learning how to throw a ball in baseball fast, right? Throw a fastball. A little kid's going to try to do that, and they

want to throw that ball hard and fast. They can't do it. Then as they get better, once in a while, they're going to do it. They're going to make it and it's going to be, they throw that strike and it was fast and it was great, and then they may have a few throws where it doesn't work. But they learned in that process a little bit more. If we take that to making our choices to live like Jesus, sometimes we're going to fail. The choice isn't going to turn out right, that we're going to make a mistake, but we're going to grow if we're doing it right, because if we really want to be like Jesus, then those choices gradually, we're going to become more and more like him.

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| Hank Smith: | 00:14:51 | And you'll get there. |
| Dr. David Thomson: | 00:14:53 | Yeah. Don't expect that you're there yet. You're not like Jesus all the way yet. I'm a lot more like Jesus now than I was when I was 15 and making the right choices now. Because I'm a lot more like Jesus, because I've become more like him, it's easier. I still got a bunch I've got to work on. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:15:13 | I want to be clear on this. If I'm having a conversation with someone and I say, Do you believe in Christ that he is who he claims to be? Yes. Do you believe that you can be saved in the celestial kingdom of God? I don't know. I think the Lord might ask you that question. Numbers 14:11. How long until you believe me? You believe in me, but you don't believe me. When I say I will save you. I will make you like Dave just said. I can make you that celestial person. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:15:54 | In our first trip through the Old Testament, Hank, we talked about one of my favorite verses in the Book of Mormon. "Thou art angry, oh Lord, with this people because they will not understand thy mercies, which thou hast bestowed upon them because of Thy Son. " It's Alma 33:16. They're just not getting it. How long until they get it? |
| Hank Smith: | 00:16:15 | Yeah, how long until you understand how merciful I am. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:16:19 | He is our advocate, my favorite title for Christ, and who is the accuser? In the Book of Revelation, Satan is the accuser of the brethren. Jesus is our advocate. I think we start accusing ourselves of not being good enough, but we have an advocate. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:16:37 | Someone told us once, instead of being so obsessed with obedience, we ought to be more obsessed with repentance. |

Dr. David Thomson:	00:16:46	A little while ago, I was reading 2 Nephi chapter 25, verse 23, which has to do with this. Hank, can you read that verse for me?
Hank Smith:	00:16:58	For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children and also our brethren to believe in Christ and to be reconciled to God, for we know that it is by grace that we are saved after all we can do.
Dr. David Thomson:	00:17:13	I think that I'm like a lot of people in the way I've read that verse throughout my whole life, which is, you could interpret this verse two ways, probably. First, I have to do everything I can do, and then I'll be saved by grace, because that won't be enough, but I got to do all that stuff, everything I can do, and then I'll be saved. And that's the way I've read that for a long time. Last time I was reading that, it came with a different meaning than I had always read it in. Even after everything I do, I'm still not saved. That's not going to do it. Even after everything I do that doesn't matter, I'm going to be saved by grace. And it makes sense when you look at it that way. You look at that literally. Do any of us do everything we can? We're all shot if I had to do everything I could do before grace kicks in. I don't do everything I could have done.
	00:18:17	Let me give you an example. I'll be super frank. I was bishop and everything, and still, I sometimes have a hard time kneeling down and saying my prayers at the end of the day. I'm tired, I climb into bed, and maybe I'm going to say you give a little prayer in my heart, prayer to God, laying there in bed all lazy. I know I should do it because when I do it, I sleep better when I do it, and yet I don't do it. Am I doing everything I can do? No, I could've kneeled down. I could have realized this laying in bed. I could've got out of bed, knelt down, and said my prayer. I didn't do it. It was just a few nights ago. I didn't do it. I didn't do everything I could do. I'm a lost cause now if I'm reading the scripture the way I used to read that scripture in 2 Nephi.
Hank Smith:	00:19:08	Yeah, that's it. It's over. You did not do all you can do. This is a point we've been through a few times on our show, but it's an important one. For we know that it is by grace that we are saved. Right there. It's in the verse. We know that it is by grace that we are saved, and you're reading of it, Dave, I think is right on. Even though we can do a lot, there's a lot we can do, we can serve. We can be obedient. We can pray. We can attend the temple, even with all that we can do. It is by grace that we are saved.
Dr. David Thomson:	00:19:50	Going back to the prayers, and again, to that obedience and repentance thing, when I forget to pray, it's pretty often that I

get up in the morning, you know, stretch and get ready to do my morning prayer. Morning prayers are easy for me. It's just part of my routine. It's what I do. A lot of times I'll think, Oh, man, I forgot. This is a goal. I have a goal this week, in fact, guys. Pray every night. I've already failed. I didn't pray, like I said, once this week. I get up in the morning, Oh, man, I feel bad about that. And I sheepishly kneel down before Heavenly Father, and I explain, Hey, Heavenly Father, I'm sorry. I forgot to pray last night. Invariably, I feel that grace. And again, I repent. I say, All right, I'm going to give this another crack. I'm going to try to become better at the way I prioritize my conversations with you, Heavenly Father. Invariably, I feel the grace.

00:20:45 It's all right. Keep on working on it. Keep going. So I'm a scientist, and I think there's a stumbling block that, again, going back to our giants and grasshoppers and the terrible prospects of having to go in and kill giants when you're a grasshopper. When you feel like a grasshopper, remember whose team you're on. Remember who's fighting your battles. It brings another question that I thought about as a scientist. God sends them in to go look around, to use their eyeballs, to use their minds to assess the situation, to see what's going on. [President Uchtdorf](#) said this is very important when we try to get revelation. He said recently, and this is something that many brethren have said over the years, "information brings inspiration." Revelation doesn't come by a strike of lightning, it comes by counseling together and learning. So gathering information puts you in a better position to receive inspiration.

00:21:41 True principle, right? Well, God sent, back in Numbers, he sent those scouts into the land to gather information. They made observations, and again, I feel for them, I get it. They went, they looked, they made an assessment of what was going on in that land. They made an assessment of whether they, the children of Israel, would be able to go in there and be victorious. And they come back and having thought about this, having assessed it with their eyeballs, having seen it, and the Lord then turns around and tells them, forget about what you saw. Forget about what you observed. It's not important. Why did he tell them to go look around when he was just going to tell them to go do it anyway, even though their minds did not tell them that that was a good option? Does he want us to follow blindly?

00:22:35 On the contrary, I think God wants us to know exactly what's going on. When we are asked to go do something really hard, he wants us to understand that he can do it, and it was him that did it as driving home that lesson of faith. We knew what the situation was. Then if you believe the Lord, he'll go in and make

it happen. Then what happens to your faith? Then what happens to your willingness to believe the Lord in the future? I don't see it as blind faith at all. Heavenly Father wants us to exercise faith that encompasses not just what our eyes and ears tell us, but he wants us to also include what we've learned through our spiritual senses and spiritual experiences and our spiritual observations. This brings me to this idea of faith and science. To me, there is an imaginary conflict between faith and science.

00:23:44 In fact, I see a perfect meshing of faith and science. Yet, this perceived conflict is a big stumbling block for a lot of people, and I personally know people for whom that stumbling block has unfortunately destroyed their faith. I think we get in trouble when we ascribe too much weight to the evidence from our eyes and ears and not enough to our equally valid intuition, our equally valid ability to feel the Spirit. The promptings of the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, I think it's sometimes a mistake to give no weight to scientific observation. Again, the two are completely compatible to me. [President Nelson](#) dedicated our building, I say new, it's not really new anymore, back in 2014 or 2015. This is what President Nelson taught at that dedication. He said, "All truth is part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Whether truth comes from a scientific laboratory or by revelation from the Lord, it's all compatible.

00:24:48 All truth is part of the everlasting gospel. There is no conflict between science and religion. Conflict only arises from an incomplete knowledge of either science or religion or both." This is a trap some people fall into. I know there are spiritual casualties when this conflict is ongoing. I know it was when I was in seminary. I'm concerned when a well-meaning Sunday school teacher or seminary teacher teaches as gospel truth something that the church does not take a position on. For instance, evolution. In other words, how the Lord created the earth. What is the key doctrine? The Lord created the earth. That is the core doctrine that we need to have a testimony of. How he did it, we don't know. The church doesn't have a position on it. That's super important to remember. It doesn't matter who's right on this. It's that we don't know.

00:25:50 That's a problem that certainly I think scientists like myself fall into the trap of we study something so deeply and all of a sudden we think we actually know that that's the case. Problem is we don't know. And science itself, we got to remember that. If you're not a scientist, sometimes it gets confusing. Science doesn't pretend to prove almost anything. Science doesn't prove things very well. It accumulates evidence for or against. It

can disprove some things in very specific narrow areas. I can do an experiment and under a given set of conditions, I can say whether drug A protects muscle from degradation. I can see that. I can hypothesize, yeah, I think this is going to protect it. I can do my experiment and I can either reject that hypothesis or I can say, Oh yeah, it looks like it, maybe it does protect it. But science doesn't pretend to actually arrive at the truth very often.

00:26:53 Even when it does, when we have a scientific law, sometimes it needs to be revised. For example, there's a scientific law, it's called conservation of mass, as it was formerly known. It kind of fits with gospel principles as well here. You cannot create or destroy mass. Can't do it. It's just converted from one form to another. That was considered an absolute law for a long time until, I'm not a physicist, so I could butcher some details here, but in general, the idea is correct. Einstein came along and he realized that in nuclear reactions, you can convert mass. You can get rid of mass. It becomes energy. That law that was assumed to be solid had to be tweaked just a little bit. Now we talk about the conservation of mass energy instead of the conservation of mass. Scientists need to remember that we don't really get to absolute truth in science, and that's important.

00:27:48 Sometimes if you're not a scientist, you hear people say things like, Science has proved this or that. The point is, is we have this conflict that sometimes gets invented between science and between faith. I'm not against going into the weeds. I believe evolution was, you know, God created the earth through evolutionary principles. And you guys may or may not agree with that, but I think the important thing is, is that we don't take stuff like that and present it with a fervency of testimony equal to that fervency of testimony we bear, with which we bear testimony of Christ, or that prophets are Christ's spokesman on the earth, or that the Book of Mormon is true, the core parts of the gospel. Let's make sure it's clear. I know of a couple of people grew up in the church solid. Problem is, if you've been taught that something like evolution, it could be a lot of things, is wrong with the same verbency that the gospel is true.

00:28:58 What happens to that student when they get into university and are confronted with an enormous evidence that that point that seminary teacher made isn't true? If that's been all lumped together into the same testimony, Jesus Christ lives, the Book of Mormon's true and evolution is of the devil. Now that student's going to have a big problem. They're going to have a crisis of

faith. Let's make sure we get a strong testimony at the core of the gospel. Let's play around in the weeds a little bit if we want to. It's fun sometimes. Let's just make sure that some things we don't know for sure yet, both on the scientific side and on the spiritual side. Yeah. Again, science and faith are 100% compatible, and I love Alma 32. That's where we learn about Alma's seed, where he asks us to do an experiment on the faith. I love that chapter because that's exactly what we should be doing.

00:29:59 I believe we should be doing it temporally, as we try to learn about the world around us, it's the same process when we do it spiritually. Our faith grows in the same way that our scientific knowledge grows. Just a few things Alma said. He said concerning faith, "faith isn't to have a perfect knowledge of things. Therefore, if you have faith, you hope for things which are not seen, which are true." And mere faith is awesome. That's a great thing. Then he said, "As I said concerning faith, it's not a perfect knowledge. Even so with my words, you cannot know of their surety at first unto perfection any more than faith is a perfect knowledge. But behold, if you will awake and arouse your faculties," that might include your eyeballs, it might include your ears, certainly includes your brain, and it probably includes some other senses that we don't classically associate with our body, our spiritual senses.

00:30:55 "If you arouse those faculties and exercise a particle of faith, even if you can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until you believe in a manner that you can give place for a portion of my words." Grow the faith a little bit. Then he talks about planting the seed. Plant that seed of faith in your heart and then observe. Watch what happens. Pay attention. See what happens to that seed. Make sure you follow the experimental protocol. You got to do it the right way. Then watch and see. Does the seed grow? If it grows, then you know it's a good seed. If it doesn't, throw it out. Do the experiment the right way, follow the experimental protocol. Then you'll know if the seed is good or not. That's how our faith grows. He tells us, at some point, your knowledge will then be perfect.

00:31:45 Now you know. Now you know that that seed was good. Your faith is dormant. You don't need the faith anymore because you have knowledge. That's what we want to do. It's the same process. I love science. I love even more my faith. Learn all that you can with your eyes, ears and mind. Go scout out the land. Get an assessment of what the situation is and your best evaluation of it is. So important is that we never should give mortally constrained perception greater weight in our decision

making than eternally learned and spiritually obtained truth. That, I think, is the key. We should go after science as hard as we can. We just have to make sure we don't let that overshadow equally valid, equally thought out conclusions in that process.

Hank Smith: 00:32:45 That's well said. I think you and Elder Talmage, Elder Widtsoe.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:32:50 Eyring, President Eyring's father, a lot of good people who, you know, I've learned from.

Hank Smith: 00:32:57 Dave, that is fantastic and very well said. And I love that it comes from a scientist. You have been trained. You teach at what I think is a very prestigious university who really expects a lot out of its students. I remember a student came to me once and said, I'm really struggling. I'm reading the book of Genesis in my religion class and I'm learning about evolution in my biology class and I'm struggling. We talked for a second. I remember we came up with a little conclusion. Let science teach you how. Let the scriptures teach you why. She felt good about that. Dave, before we let you go, is there anything else from this lesson that we need to see?

Dr. David Thomson: 00:33:43 Yes, one more. The story from Numbers that stands out more than any other is [Balaam](#) and his donkey. It really brought some important and deep thoughts to me that go back and connect to what we've been talking about in terms of gratitude and our association with other people. Israel arrives in the plains of Moab and the king of Moab, whose name is Balak, was scared because Israel now, again, they're not feeling like grasshoppers anymore. They've gone and slaughtered the Amorites who had attacked them. And Balak is scared because he's now worried that he has Israel sitting right there. There's a lot of them and he is convinced that they have the Lord with them. He sends messengers with money to Balaam to try to convince him to pronounce a curse upon Israel. This Balaam guy, he's not an Israelite, but he is presented in the scriptures as a prophet.

00:34:43 He is someone who talks to the Lord, and the scriptural record supports that. Balak thinks if Balaam will come and if he will curse the Israelites, then I can go defeat them. So these messengers go to Balaam to convince him. They've got money. And the message that Balak sent to Balaam was, "Come now therefore I pray thee curse me this people for they are too mighty for me," this people, the Israelites. "Per adventure, I shall prevail that we may smite them and that I may drive them out of the land. For I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed and he whom thou curses is cursed." In other words, Balak's

convinced that Balaam, because of his relationship with the Lord, has the power to bless and curse. He has a reputation. The messengers wanted Balaam to go with them back to Moab to curse Israel.

00:35:34 Balaam, to his credit, he told them to stay the night and he would tell them in the morning whether he'd do that or not. And he goes and consults with the Lord. During the night, God visits Balaam and the King James version, it says, "God said to Balaam, thou shalt not go with them. Thou shalt not curse the people for they are blessed." Balaam goes to the messengers and says, Sorry, can't do it. Not going with you. They leave. They go back to Balak. Balak tells them to go back to Balaam. I think it said maybe with more money, you know, offer him more money. Let's get him over here to curse Israel. So they go back. And again, Balaam says the right thing. In King James version, I like it. He said to the messengers, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, my God, to do less or more."

00:36:25 He's saying, I don't care how much money you give me. I can't do something the Lord doesn't want me to do. We're going to see later on in the scriptures, Balaam, he sounds like he's doing a great job here as a prophet. He goes a little bit astray later on, but right now he's looking pretty good. Then this is where he starts to go astray a little bit. The messengers, they beg him. He's told me he won't go, but they say, Come on, go talk to the Lord about it again. He tells the men to stay another night and he's going to go talk with the Lord. He says, Let me go check with the Lord again. Maybe he'll tell me something different. This reminds me of Joseph Smith and Martin Harris with the manuscript. The Lord already said, Don't give him the manuscript, and they keep on coming back. Come on. Let's give him the manuscript.

00:37:11 Same kind of idea here. This time, Balaam goes back to the Lord and says, Come on, are you sure I shouldn't go with these guys? God tells him to go with the men. And this is contrary to what the Lord told him first. Balaam's begging and God says, Okay, fine, go. But he says, Only do what God tells you to do. This is where it gets fun. Balaam gets up in the morning, tells the guys he's going to go with them. He gets on his donkey and they head out for Moab. God's not happy with him. It's unclear to me. God told him he could go and now God's not happy with him. There's probably a little bit of story that's in between the lines that we maybe don't know about, but in any case, God's not happy with him, so he sends an angel to stand in the road to block Balaam's way.

- 00:37:57 And now I'm going to shift to the NLT version in chapter 22, verse 23. Says, "Balaam's donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand. The donkey sees the angel. Balaam doesn't see the angel. The donkey runs off with Balaam still on it. Balaam beats the donkey and gets it back onto the road. Again, kind of a little comical vision in my mind of what's going on here. The donkey still sees the angel and tries to maneuver around it on the trail. In doing so, they're in between two walls, in trying to get around the angel, the donkey crushes Balaam's foot against the wall. Now Balaam's really mad and he beats the donkey again. Then again in the NLT in verse 26 and 27, the angel of the Lord moved farther down the road and stood in a place too narrow for the donkey to get by at all.
- 00:38:51 This time, when the donkey saw the angel, it laid down under Balaam. In a fit of rage, Balaam beat the animal again with his staff. Balaam's really getting mad and hitting his donkey. Then the Lord gave the donkey the ability to speak. Did the donkey really speak to Balaam? Again, that's not important. Maybe Balaam's talking to him and they're having a conversation the way I have a conversation with Chappy, my dog. Who knows? That's not the important part. What we get out of this, their conversation, whatever the manner of the conversation was, the donkey says, "What have I done to you that deserves your beating me three times?" Balaam then says, "You have made me look like a fool. If I had a sword with me, I would kill you." Clearly, Balaam has lost the Spirit now. We already knew he might have lost it because he couldn't see that angel.
- 00:39:43 He was on a path that he shouldn't have been on and he couldn't see. And then from the NLT, it says, "Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the roadway with a drawn sword in his hand. Balaam bowed his head and fell face down on the ground before him. Why did you beat your donkey those three times the angel of the Lord demanded? Look, I have come to block your way because you are stubbornly resisting me. Three times the donkey saw me and shied away. Otherwise, I would certainly have killed you by now and spared the donkey." If roadshows ever come back in the church, this is a great scriptural story to do a roadshow with. It'd be fantastic. And that's how I looked at the story, just a fun story. But as I stopped and pondered for more depth here, I thought, in what ways am I stubbornly resisting the Lord?
- 00:40:41 As I think about that personally, I could make a list. Number two, who are the donkeys in my life who have seen what I could

not see when I've been heading down the wrong path in my life? Number three, are there people in my life who perhaps cannot see something I can see? How can I be a donkey to them? Those are three really good questions to ask. I was mostly joking when I said I was going to go with the King James version of this story. It uses different verbiage for a donkey. My wife convinced me that it would be too crass for this podcast. So again, I'll stick with the NLT word donkey. There are many donkeys for whom I'm grateful in my life. I could list off many, many donkeys. I want to just talk about three of them. My mom, of course, she would be great.

00:41:30 She raised me. My dad died when I was 12 years old. She was burdened with raising a teenager who didn't have his head on straight. How many times was she a donkey for me? I love her. I won't go into much more from that. Let me talk about the three who I thought really were donkeys at critical times in my life. The first one is a guy named Expedito down in my mission in Brazil. Expedito was a member of the church down in Divinópolis, Brazil. And on your mission, was there like a member who was kind of like a Yoda to you. Old little guy. You know those members who just love the missionaries and are so full of wisdom. And as a missionary, you're looking at this old guy and you're like, Man, I hope I'm like him when I get that old. This was Expedito.

00:42:24 He was like Yoda in so many ways. To understand his impact, you need to understand how I ended up on a mission. This is an important one. When I was a teen, I had zero intention of going on a mission. In fact, I was very opposed to it. I was dating a good girl. My high school girlfriend once suggested that I serve a mission. I can't remember how she put it. She might have said she'd always dreamed of marrying a return missionary or something like that. Well, this presented a problem for me as a, my current mindset. Nonetheless, she had me wrapped around her little finger, so I decided to serve a mission. Why did I serve a mission? Well, at that point, it was for the girl. And, as I've said, it was amazing. It was really hard at first. It took some transition.

00:43:11 I had a lot of learning to do, but I loved my mission. I learned so much testimony-wise, learning who I was, learning to love other people, but it was still a mission that was being served on this foundation of my girlfriend. Serving my mission, everything's going great. November, I'm set to come home in March. November, I get the letter. This letter came and man, it crushed me because in my mind, she wants me to serve a mission. Okay, I'll go serve a mission because if I do that? The reward. The

reward. That was my mindset. And now all of a sudden, that foundation I was, that went away. Boom. It's gone. That didn't go the way I was anticipating at all. And I just fell into this darkest pit for about 10 straight days. It felt like it was longer, but I went and fact checked myself in my mission journal.

00:44:11 It was 10 days where I was in a really dark place and it was horrible. Okay, so where does Expedito come in here? Well, we had a lunch appointment with him. For most of us, I think a missionary shows up to lunch, kind of grumpy and a black cloud over our head. Maybe we ask him, "What's wrong? You doing okay, Elder?" And he says, "Yeah, I'm fine." And we're like, "Oh, okay, he's fine." And we move on. Feed him. That's the end of the story. Not Expedito. He left companion with his son, who I think was branch president at the time, and took me out into the courtyard, and he sat me down, and we had a talk for, like, 30 minutes to an hour. I don't know. It was a long talk. He sits me down. He saw I was turned the wrong way.

00:44:56 He could see that I wasn't on the right path. He put his arm around me while I cried. It was so good. I don't remember what he said. What I do remember is I got up. Wow. The difference between when I walked in that house and after that talk with Expedito, he was able to help me look to the Savior. He got those blinders off me. He let me see the angel. When we were done, I left his house with a new commitment to the Lord. It was miraculous to me. If I had to pick a moment in which I was born again, that was it right there. Wow. I'm grateful to Expedito. He must have died a long time ago. It's been a long time since I served there. I can't remember his last name. His son is, I think, Elson, if I remember right. Elson, if you happen to be listening to this in Portuguese or something, give me a call. I'd love it. But Expedito, man, what an impact. He was-

Hank Smith: 00:45:59 Yeah. Wow.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:46:01 Mega donkey. Oh, he got me on the right track. [President Oaks](#) said in his new book, he says, "We are challenged to move through a process of conversion toward that status and condition called eternal life. This is achieved not just by doing what is right, but by doing it for the right reason for the pure love of Christ." That is exactly how I felt like I was on my mission. I was doing a lot of really good stuff, but I wasn't doing it for exactly the right reason. Maybe it was a good reason. I think if we go to [Elder Oaks](#) and good, better best, but it wasn't the best reason, and it wasn't the one I should have been focused on. I didn't have my eyes on Christ. Expedito, man. That is going to be one meeting in heaven that I so look forward to.

Boy, that guy. You know what the bad thing is? I don't know if I ever really expressed that to him very well. I cried in front of him. For me at that time, that was like, Oh, I got to go hide. I don't want to talk to him again. That was embarrassing.

00:47:03 Boy, I love Expedito. That was donkey number one for me. Bishop Walker in North Carolina. We got out there. You know, we're married. I get done with my master's degree and we go to North Carolina for a PhD. We were kinda like 85 percenters, meaning it's Sunday morning, we wake up, there's 85% chance we'll go to church. But if we're kinda tired, maybe we won't quite get there. We're good. We'll serve. We'll do all the things, but maybe we're not all in yet. Man, Bishop Walker in Greenville, North Carolina, I am so grateful for him. He saw something in me that I didn't see at the time. I saw myself as a 85 percenter, which is good. That's not bad. That's okay. He saw something more. He called me to be young men's president, called me into the bishopric. I was a young guy.

00:47:50 He was just somebody who I looked at and I was like, He sees life the way it ought to be seen, and I wanted to be like him. That was amazing. Bishop Walker was incredible. My third donkey, and this is the superstar of all donkeys in my life, and that is Kendra, my wife. I so love her, even though we are so different and we butt heads sometimes and we have different ideas. She has an infinite supply of forgiveness and patience and just keeps on loving me. She has seen so many things in my path that I couldn't see. Again, that comes down to we're really different. I'm a real letter of the law kind of guy. She's a real spirit of the law kind of girl. It's a really good pairing because she has helped me grow so much. She's taught me so much about charity. My patriarchal blessing said I had to focus on charity, and looking back, that patriarch didn't know me at all. He couldn't have hit the nail on the head better than he did. Kendra has helped me learn charity, and hopefully I've been a donkey to her, too, in helping her along the way.

Hank Smith: 00:49:00 This is the funniest conversation.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:49:03 So take home message from Balaam here. There's going to be donkeys in your life. There's going to be people who are walking the trail with you who can see things you can't see. We've all got to decide, are we going to ignore them or are we going to listen to them? The experiences I just told you. It may seem bleak, but I am fully confident and have a strong testimony that in the end, if we keep our eyes on the Savior, keep our focus there, make sure we're building on the right foundation, it is going to be amazing.

Hank Smith:	00:49:39	Dave, this has been a fantastic day, and I knew it would be getting to know you over the last little while and the way you and I ended up meeting and chatting. I'm going to ask you to do something here, and I haven't prepped you for it. I want to give you a quote from one of my donkeys. This is such an odd way to talk, but one of my donkeys. John, you're one of my donkeys, just so you know. President Hinckley. He said, "Faith is like the muscle of my arm. If I use it, if I nurture it, it grows strong. It will do many things. But if I put it in a sling and do nothing with it, it will grow weak and useless." He said, "This is my prayer for all of us. Lord, increase our faith." Dave, you and I talked beforehand. We have a lot of people listening who are in trying circumstances, trying to work their way out of darkness and trial and maybe their consequences of their own choices. Can you tell me what that quote means to you and speak to those people?
Dr. David Thomson:	00:50:49	Oh, Hank, I love that quote. I remember it because when anyone says muscle, I perk right up. It's something I've studied for a very long time. A major part of what I study is how muscle grows and why it atrophies or why it gets smaller and weaker. From a biological perspective, when you go into the gym, you want to get bigger, stronger muscles when you're lifting weights. I spent a lot of time studying how that happens going from the obvious that, yeah, you lift weights and you get stronger down to what's not obvious, which is what's happening inside muscle cells that tells that cell to adapt and to grow and to strengthen. So you go in and you pick up a heavy thing and you lift it. It does a number of things. It strains that muscle. It puts stress on that muscle. It may even damage the muscle a little bit.
	00:51:48	That strain sets off a bunch of... Our bodies are so incredible. Just looking at a muscle, you have many, many sensors that are able to detect stress and strain and many other signals. But when you stress that muscle, it turns on some of these sensors. They set off a cascade of reactions, which ultimately tell the muscle to build more protein. It builds more protein, and as those proteins are added to the structure of the muscle, the muscle gets bigger. I think as you take that and you try to apply that physiological principle to our daily lives and our own spiritual strength and the strength of our faith, the lesson's pretty clear. If your faith isn't tested, if it's not stressed, if you aren't faced with questions that you don't know the answer to, if you sometimes think that you understand what you ought to be doing and you do it, and then you don't get the blessing you thought you should have got for it, these are all things that can really stress your faith.

- 00:53:02 Keep in mind that that stress, that difficulty, that resistance is part of the growth process. It is the stimulus that's going to help you grow. Without it, like President Hinckley said, you can't grow if you're not stressing. When you go in and lift weights, if you want to get stronger... and this is the hard thing. I guess if you look at it in the wrong light, it might be discouraging. I think it's absolutely true of faith just as much as it is for muscles. If I am new to weightlifting, let's say brand new, I haven't touched a weight and I go into the gym, I can get at the bench, get in... Let's say I want to bench press, and I might just have the bar. That's 45 pounds, and I might lift that, and I do it like eight times, my muscles are done.
- 00:53:53 Not only that, that stress made them hurt, and the next day, I might be in a lot of pain. Well, if I keep on going into the gym and I grab that bar and I lift, I keep on doing eight reps with that bar, pretty soon it's going to be a lot better and it's not going to hurt as much. But I'm going to plateau. I've gotten stronger, but I'm not going to get stronger still. I'm using a weight that now my muscles have adapted to. They've strengthened and they can handle that weight just fine. I'm still not going to look like Arnold Schwarzenegger. I've got more work to do. What do I got to do? I can't keep on using that bar. I've got to do something. Either I've got to do more than eight reps, or maybe I've got to do more sets of reps than I was doing, or maybe I've got to put some more weight on there.
- 00:54:43 I've got to do something to create more stress, otherwise the muscle's not going to grow. I think that's consistent with what we've been taught about our faith as well. We can't be complacent in our faith. Doesn't matter what experiences I've had up until now. If I stop trying to exercise my faith to continue to grow and to obtain new experiences and new knowledge, we've been told, "If you're not going upward, you're going to be regressing. You're going to go backwards." I can give an example of that. When I got done with my mission, we got married. Again, I'd had, my mission was amazing. Those five and a half months, after I'd gotten my mindset right and gotten my eyes on the Savior the way that they should have been, it was amazing. My mission. It was so good. It was easily the best months of my mission.
- 00:55:34 Then I got home, found Kendra, we got married and started our life together and had our first child. Kylie, I remember one of the first crises of faith I faced after I'd been born again and gained my faith. It was the dumbest thing. Kylie, she had colic. She just cried all the time. She was fine. But I was in a state as busy student. I had a lot going on. I was actually doing, like,

personal training for about 20 hours a week in addition to my studies to make money. And I was busy and I kinda let my gaze shift off of the Savior and I was paying attention to other important things, but I'd moved away. I've got a kid who just cries all the time. It came down to this, again, it's kind of that transactional thing with God. Hey, heavenly Father, this is really hard, so I'm going to pray to you and ask you to get Kylie to quit crying so much because I'm really tired tonight. We took turns at night. Sometimes it's Kendra's turn to be awake, sometimes it's my turn to be awake. It's my turn to be awake and I'm super tired and Kylie's crying and, Hey, Heavenly Father, let's do something about this.

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| Hank Smith: | 00:56:44 | It's like asking someone in the weight room, Can you take this weight? |
| Dr. David Thomson: | 00:56:48 | Yeah, will you lift this weight for me? Well, he didn't do it. For me, it was a crisis of faith and it made me weak. Got mad at God. Again, it was kind of like a week long funk where I just was down. I didn't feel good because I decided, man, I don't know that there's anything I wanted more than right now having Kylie go to sleep so I could go to sleep. It was like, I want this more than anything and God's just not listening to me. He must not care. He must not love me. At this point, there was, in my scientific mind that it makes no sense that God doesn't exist. It was that way at that time, but I just don't think he loves me because he wouldn't do this thing for me. It was my wife who pulled me out of the funk, because again, she's my favorite donkey of all time ever. |
| | 00:57:37 | I got out of that funk, got my head oriented back on Christ. She reminded me of some things that I just had lost vision of. I forgot about. She had to remind me. I don't know how I forgot about some spiritual experiences I had. She's like, David, this doesn't make sense. Why are you saying this? Remember this? Remember that? I was like, Oh, yeah, I do remember that. Yeah, I know that happened. She got me back on track. I love my wife. Funny thing is, I got back on track and it was, I remember I'd done my repenting. I apologized and I told God, Look, this is hard for me. You know it's hard, but I just want you to know I'm back in and my conversation was, I'd love it if you took care of this for me, but if you don't, I trust you and I'm in. |
| | 00:58:27 | Guess what? Kylie slept great that night for me. The next night it was like, boom, there it was. As we gain faith and strength, scarily, there's a chance that God may push us a little bit further. He may put a little more strain on us, not because he doesn't love us, but because he loves us and he wants to make |

us into something that we're not yet. I'm so grateful for those strains. There have been strains in my life. Universally, there's a few stupid things I've done that I think have hurt me and haven't been for my own growth. I can see the Lord's hand in so many things that have made me stronger. I do hope and have faith that the Lord continues to give me challenges that will help me to grow and progress.

Hank Smith: 00:59:17 Dave, this has been a fantastic day. We started out, focus on the Lord. We walk through the Book of Numbers and we finish, focus on the Lord. My book of Numbers has been filled up with notes, things I want to remember, things I want to implement. Don't know if I'm going to go tell my wife she's my favorite donkey. That might be something I hold off on.

Dr. David Thomson: 00:59:42 I don't know. Kendra seemed a little bit... She was enchanted by it a little bit. I think she liked it a lot, so my favorite donkey.

Hank Smith: 00:59:49 I might have to go on faith and give this a try. With that, we want to thank Dr. Dave. Dave Thomson for being with us today. We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. In every episode, we remember our founder, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week on followHIM.

followHIM Favorites



Hank Smith:

00:03

Hey, welcome to followHIM Favorites. This is where John and I share a single story to go with each week's Come, Follow Me lesson. John, we're in the book of Numbers. I know it's pretty exciting. And I have a story for you. I thought of this when I read Numbers 14, verse 11, where the Lord says to Moses, "Moses, how long until this people believe me?" I noticed he doesn't say believe in me. He just says, "Believe me." I think they all believe in him, but do they actually believe what he says? This story comes from Stephen Robinson in his book, Believing Christ. Notice it's not Believing in Christ, it's Believing Christ. John, this story's about Brother Robinson's wife, Janet. He's pretty sensitive to it. He says, "I need to say a word here about Janet. She is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me." He says, "When we get to heaven, they're gonna be so excited to see Janet and they're gonna say, Janet, what on earth is that sorry thing you're dragging behind you?"

00:56

Just so you know, he doesn't want to make her look bad. She gave him permission to tell this story, which I think is awesome of her. He said, "A number of years ago, we were living in Pennsylvania. We had our own little home in our little neighborhood. We liked our neighbors. I had a good job. Our family was happy enough." He says, "We had family home evening, we had family prayer. Janet and I said our prayers together every night. I was in the bishopric and Janet is Relief Society President. Janet had had a really exciting year. She was the Relief Society President. She'd graduated from college a second time. She passed the CPA exam and she gave birth to our fourth child, all in her spare time.

01:37

Janet was under a lot of pressure that year and like many husbands, I didn't notice how much pressure she was under until something blew. He said one day the lights just went out. It was as though Janet had died to spiritual things. She was burned out. She came very passive in her attitude about religion. When her Relief Society counselors called her, she told them they could do whatever they wanted and that she wanted to be released from her calling. She wouldn't talk about it.

Finally, after almost two weeks, I made her mad with my nagging one night and she said, Do you wanna know what's wrong? I'll tell you what's wrong. I can't do it anymore. I can't lift it. The load is too heavy. I can't do all the things I'm supposed to do. I can't get up at 5:30 and bake bread and sew clothes, help the kids with their homework and do my own homework.

02:22 Make their lunch, do the housework, do my Relief Society calling, have scripture study, do my genealogy, write to my congressman, go to PTA meetings, have our year supply of food organized, go to my stake meetings and write the missionaries. She just started naming all the things she could not do or couldn't do perfectly. All the bricks that had been laid on her back in the name of perfection had crushed the light out of her." She said, "I try not to yell at the kids, but I can't seem to help it. I get mad. I yell. So I try not to get mad, but I eventually do. I try not to have hard feelings toward this person or that person, but I do. I'm not very Christ-like. I don't have the talent that Sister X has, and I'm not as sweet as Sister Y. Steve, I'm not perfect.

03:05 I'm never going to be perfect, and I just can't pretend anymore that I am. I've finally admitted to myself, I can't make it to the celestial kingdom, so why am I breaking my back trying?" He said, "that was a tough moment." He said, "I need to make this clear. The reason I proposed marriage to Janet was because she is the finest, sweetest, most genuinely loving and selfless person I have ever met. So what she was telling me just didn't add up. So we went back and forth for some time with her cataloging all her faults, inadequacies and imperfections. And with me knowing she was a better person than most and trying to find out what was really wrong. And finally, it occurred to me what the problem was, and I was astounded. Here I was supposed to be a doctor in the field of religion, and I couldn't see right was in front of my nose.

03:53 When I finally realized Janet knew the demands of the gospel, but not the good news. You see, Janet was trying to save herself. She was trying to do it all with Jesus Christ as an advisor. Janet knew why Jesus could be called a coach, a cheerleader, an advisor, a teacher, an elder brother, the head of the church, or even God. But she didn't understand why he is called the Savior. You see, we believe in Jesus, but we don't trust him. We get so frightened and intimidated, so horrified by our own imperfections that we don't see how he can possibly save us from them and we lose faith." So he says he and Janet have a long talk about the Atonement and they both learn. He

says "at the end of the conversation, she just bloomed. I remember her saying through her tears, something like this.

04:40 I've always had a testimony of the Savior and believed that he is the son of God. I've always believed that he suffered and died for me, but now I know that he can save me, that he can save me from myself, from my sins, from my weaknesses, from my lack of talent." Brother Robinson finishes, he says, "In simple terms, this is the arrangement. We do what we are able to do, and Jesus Christ, the object of our faith, out of his love and mercy and grace, does all we are not able to do. And we must believe he can do it. We must believe Christ." Notice in Numbers 14, "Moses, how long until they believe me?" What do you think, John? What's the difference between believing in Jesus and believing him?

John Bytheway: 05:26 Such a good connection because believing in him is just that he exists, but believe? You can believe every word he says. Who else can you say that about?

Hank Smith: 05:37 Right.

John Bytheway: 05:38 Ever. And if he says, I am mighty to save. If he says he loves us, if he says he can save us, believe him. I love it.

Hank Smith: 05:45 Yeah, he is mighty to save. 2 Nephi chapter two, "I know that thou art redeemed because of the righteousness of your redeemer." Believe him. Yeah. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get any of your podcasts. We're with Dr. Dave this week, Dr. Dave Thomson. He walks us through the book of Numbers. You might not think it's very exciting, but it actually, he brings out a lot of principles that will really bless your life. And then come back here next week. We'll do another followHIM Favorites.