

"The Lord is My Shepherd"

Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

followHIM: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Wednesday.

Podcast Episode Descriptions

Part 1:

Is the Lord actually listening or just cataloging your complaints? Steven Sharp Nelson joins Hank and John to examine the Psalms as the ancient "people's hymnbook," showing how prayers of praise and lament can heal burnout, quiet the inner critic, and turn everyday creativity into worship.

Part 2:

Steven Sharp Nelson continues to explore the Book of Psalms, showing how prayers of praise and lament can heal burnout, quiet the inner critic, and turn everyday creativity into worship.

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Part 1 -

- 0:00 - Part 1 - Brother Steven Sharp Nelson
- 0:33 Welcome
- 3:39 Victor Borga story
- 6:30 Today's roadmap
- 8:06 John's "translation" of Steven's bio
- 11:33 Steven's parents and his musical childhood
- 12:45 *Come, Follow Me Manual*
- 13:39 Why love the Psalms: The People's Hymnbook
- 16:34 Psalms, joy, and Team Jesus
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- 22:41 Wrestling with the Adversary
- 25:29 Jesus's final words were Psalms
- 28:32 Becoming psalmists
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- 36:29 Divine nature is creative nature
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- 42:09 Play to the one
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- 1:12:52 End of Part 1 - Brother Steven Sharp Nelson

Part 2 -

- 0:00 Part 2 - Brother Steven Sharp Nelson
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- 5:52 One hill, two eyes, one Savior
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- 18:47 the Shepherd and His Sheep misread painting
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- 31:22 Being the DJ of your own soul
- 33:04 Using autoplay for revelation
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- 53:34 How to actually turn your life over to God
- 59:26 Closing testimony of Jesus Christ and Psalm 119
- 1:03:02 End of Part 2 – Brother Steven Sharp Nelson

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Biographical Information:



Steven Sharp Nelson is an award-winning, Billboard-charting, YouTube rock star (in a cellist sort of way). His passion for music is palpable. His music invites people in – people from all different walks of life and tastes. He has inspired millions through his music, awakening a new-found love for the cello or classical music, rekindling a forgotten passion, or showing, by example, how to simply smile in order to enjoy life more fully.

Steven plays many instruments and combines multiple elements from these instruments, most notably guitar and percussion, into an innovative and revolutionary way of playing the cello. He is broadly considered a pioneer in exploring the versatility of the instrument. In addition to his cello prowess he is an award-winning composer, arranger, and entertainer. He has toured the globe performing his works.

In 2011, Steven joined "The Piano Guys" and now enjoys confusing everyone that wonders why a cellist is called a "piano guy." Whenever he goes to the airport and checks in with his multiple cello cases he inevitably is asked, "Hey, what band are you in?" … [awkward silence].

Despite this perplexity, Steven couldn't be happier using everything God has given him to write music and produce videos with The Piano Guys. Nearly every sound you hear as you listen to TPG's music was created by a wood, carbon fiber, steel, or electric cello – often modified from its typical state or tuning. To date, he has invented dozens of cello textures that have never before been heard – the sound of a trombone or an oboe, a Chinese fiddle, an Indian sitar, a saxophone, a kick drum, a snare drum, a timpani…Steven has spent countless hours creating sounds that are familiar, but completely unique – and all with a signature cello-continuity.

Most importantly, Steven subscribes to Johann Sebastian Bach's mantra: music is for the Glory of God and for the enlivening of the soul. He also believes that, as Beethoven once said, "Music is the electrical soil in which the spirit lives, thinks and invents." His performances are an incomparable mix of soaring melodies, infectious rhythm, and laughter. He doesn't take himself too seriously and insists that no musician should. He draws his inspiration from a firm belief in a loving God, two incredible parents that have sacrificed so much to offer him the opportunities he enjoys today, and most of all an amazing wife and four cute-as-can-be children.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:00	Coming up in this episode on followHIM.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:00:03	When I was 16 years old, I was asked to play at a very peer reviewed, illustrious event that had a lot of gravitas to it. And I played a Fauré Élégie which is very challenging on the cello, emotionally, technically. And I didn't play it super well. My dad, who was such a benevolent person, came up to me afterwards. I said, "Dad, how did I do?" He said...
Hank Smith:	00:00:33	Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with my musical co-host, John Bytheway. John, you are musical. I don't know about talented musically, but you are musical.
John Bytheway:	00:00:49	I play the CD player. I play the cassette player.
Hank Smith:	00:00:56	You are musical. You play the banjo, you play the guitar. Oh, you are good. John, I can tell that you're excited and I'm just as excited to have our guest with us, Steven Sharp Nelson. Steven, welcome to followHIM.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:01:11	I couldn't be more happy to be here, boys.
Hank Smith:	00:01:16	We've been talking for so long, I said we have got to hit record. We've got to get started because I want everyone to hear this.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:01:23	Don't give them FOMO. We've had like an hour of the podcast that was unrecorded so far.
Hank Smith:	00:01:28	Yes, unrecorded. We just failed to hit the record button. Let's get underway so we can hear everything that Steven has to teach. John, we have three weeks on the Psalms. What do you think of?
John Bytheway:	00:01:41	English is the weirdest language, but a long time to learn that a Psalm is a song and music is just the soul. You're way down there. When you read these, you're hearing the innermost

		feelings of the Psalmist, which is just exciting to see because we have all had a soul voice speak sometimes.
Hank Smith:	00:02:02	The language of God. The language of heaven, I think. Steven, what are we going to do today? You and I have been talking about this for a long time. It's so exciting it's finally here.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:02:12	Well, I first want to say condolences to the two of you. I'm sorry that we've reached the point where you've ran out of real guests and you're resorting to cellists. It's really sort of scraping the bottom of the barrel when, well, okay, we don't have any more guests. Are there any cellists available?
Hank Smith:	00:02:28	Yes. We don't mind jumping the shark eventually.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:02:32	Yeah. I got to tell you too. So I have an agent that is over my touring, and then I have an agent for my keynotes, and I have an agent for the book I'm writing. But I tell you, every agent that I have ever hired or been a part of is trumped completely by the agent of all agents, which is my wife, Julie. She said, "You need to be on that followHIM podcast." And I said, "Well, I don't think they'd ever want me on that podcast." So she just took matters in her own hands. What did she do, Hank? Did she just email you directly? Is that what happened?
Hank Smith:	00:03:04	She emailed me and I said, "Yes, absolutely."
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:03:07	She's like, "My husband's just sitting around doing nothing. Can you interview him, please?"
Hank Smith:	00:03:11	Can something happen?
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:03:13	Yeah, something like that. She's a giant fan, so am I. It's so fun that she's the connection here. That's how this all happened. When she told me about it, I want to say something that relates to the Psalms, and I want to say something that's so important to me. There's this man in the music industry that is a hero of mine, and he passed away a little while ago. His name is Victor Borg. Do you brothers know who Victor Borg is?
John Bytheway:	00:03:39	Yes. Piano player, comedian, hilarious. To this day, hilarious. No expiration date on his comedy. It's so funny.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:03:48	For those that don't know, he's this sweet Danish man that lived to his 90s and was entertaining until his 90s. And as a child, my father would take me to the symphony concert. This was ambitious for my father because I was an ADHD child. Sitting

through an entire symphony concert was very challenging, to say the least. But as an ADHD child, I didn't just watch the orchestra. I looked around and I really cataloged just about everybody that was there. And I noticed as I was going back that I would see mostly the same people that were there. Then my father took me to see Victor Borg. I watched Victor Borg. He didn't start in with the most challenging classical piece you can imagine or the most esoteric classical piece you can imagine. He started in immediately with self-deprecating, relatable humor. I was so drawn in by this.

00:04:43 He was so engaging. And then all of a sudden, he played a classical piece of music that I perhaps would've never fully appreciated or lost my attention span, but he showed me the majesty of classical music because he had opened my heart first. This is something I've learned time and time again in my life is you cannot really teach something important, especially the gospel of Jesus Christ. We learn in Doctrine and Covenants 42 is without the spirit, we can't teach. But what that means to me, we can only love and appreciate it in front of someone and hope they pick up on it. I have learned that if you start with this thing of like, I'm going to elevate your life with this and I'm going to impose it upon you, rather than starting with this inclusive, affable, relatable way that Victor Borg had, you lose people too quickly.

00:05:33 All that to say that Hank and John, I love you and I love that you are the Victor Borgs of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because you have shown that you invite people in first and have them sit at the table, serve them something to love. Then while they're enjoying that, you say, "Hey, you probably haven't ever tried this before. Try it." They're so excited because you already have loved them, welcomed them, and shown them something you knew they'd love. That to me is the best way to share the gospel of Jesus Christ is to love it so much in the Ammon way where it starts with love and service and then it just branches out from there so beautifully. Thank you for that example. I just wanted to start that off. This is going to be a very super silliest podcast at times because the three of us are jokers and we probably have a concomitant effect when it comes to that. So I just wanted to start with a serious point that I just love what you do, and I'm grateful that I get to even be with you today.

John Bytheway: 00:06:30 Thank you.

Hank Smith: 00:06:32 How kind. How kind.

Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:06:35	What are we going to talk about today? Oh my goodness, I'm so excited about the Psalms. Yes. We're going to be Psalm-mates by the time that this is over, you guys. This is going to be so good. We're going to break this up into three sections, and I want to keep you engaged. First, we're going to talk about the why. Why should we love the Psalms? Then we're going to talk about the how to love the Psalms. Then we're going to talk about the therefore what. Meaning, what do we do now that we love the Psalms? What does it mean for us? How do we become Psalmists ourselves? If we allow God to touch our personal experiences and infuse them with his spirit, our personal experiences are elevated to become our personal Psalms. The songs of our heart that we cannot sing. We cannot express other than simply to praise God. Or in some instances, the Psalms will show us, cry out in agony. The Psalms are the broadest range of human emotions ever offered to us in scripture.
Hank Smith:	00:07:38	Steven, we are so, so happy that you are here. Our listeners, I don't know if they feel happy yet, but they will. Now, John, there may be someone out there who doesn't know who Steven is. And they don't know that he's about to become a big part of their life because all they have to do is maybe use YouTube and just listen. I don't know how someone can be both a talented speaker and a talented musician, like top 1% in both, but he is. John, tell us about him.
John Bytheway:	00:08:06	This is what we know, Hank, about our friend, Steve. Steven Sharp Nelson loves to play the cello. He doesn't love bios. Every bio seems to sound the same. You just put the words award-winning in front of everything. In true biofashion here it goes. Steven Sharp Nelson is an award-winning sort of guy. He's an award-winning consumer of Thai food, sushi, and on very special occasions, kimchi, the pickled cabbage he fell in love with on his mission in Korea. Before his award-winning performances and content creation with The Piano Guys, Jon Schmidt is the piano player. And in honor of Jon, who's a friend of mine since high school, I cut my hair so I could look a little bit more like my friend Jon Schmidt.
Hank Smith:	00:08:49	You do! You do!
John Bytheway:	00:08:51	I thought I could suddenly play the piano like Jon, but nope. Before his award-winning performances and content creation with The Piano Guys. Hi, Jon. Steve is an award-winning failure at many startup businesses in venture capital. There were some successes as well, but the failures were the most valuable. That's a good line. Steven has award-winning lactose

intolerance. Which has won him critical acclaim for finding the best and worst dairy-free ice cream on the market. He's an award-winning pickleball and street hockey player, an acclaimed writer of words in music, a purveyor of world-class dad humor.

00:09:27 He can play America the Beautiful on the nose flute, which has yet to win any awards. The title awarded Steven that he treasures most is Daddy, which all four of his kids, ages 20 to 13, still call him sometimes even out of love. His greatest hero on earth is the truly award-winning woman, Julie Nelson. Thanks to her, his children have a chance in life. She is exceptional at everything except for her taste in men or man. Steven feels grateful that he's just barely famous enough to make a living, but plenty obscure enough to have a life. And that life he has found is best lived when striving to follow the teachings of the example of his best friend and savior, Jesus Christ. That's an award-winning bio right there.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:10:15 How ironic.

John Bytheway: 00:10:17 I just want to say, Hank, that I love watching Steve play because he has the most joyful countenance when he plays. You know that that music is coming from his soul. His family's talented. I have a Christmas CD that his sister made. Plays the guitar. It's beautiful. Tell your sister I listen to her every Christmas season.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:10:41 Everybody in my family's talented musically. My father believed in agency. He gave us two choices as we were growing up. One was to play an instrument and eat, and the other was to not. Most of us chose to live. It was positive. And my father was a benevolent dictator, and you have to be that way if you expect your children to continue with instruments. He's on the other side helping me and my children out every day. I just want to give a shout-out to him and my mother. I hope and strive to be an amalgam of my father who was an intellectual genius when it came to music. My mother, whose passion was so infectious, when she would sing, it would transport you to heaven. I will arrive to heaven and Jesus, after giving me a hug and being my advocate, will look at me and he'll say, I gave you the best. What did you do with it? But I want to say thank you to my mother and my father who are both on the other side of the veil, died both prematurely, but taught me to love music, not by teaching me, but by loving it so much in front of me, I couldn't help but pick up on it.

John Bytheway: 00:11:48 Wow. Beautiful.

Hank Smith:	00:11:51	He's as good as you hope, everyone. As you listen, you're like, "Is there anyone this good?" He is.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:11:57	No, that's not true.
Hank Smith:	00:11:58	I'm going to read from the Come, Follow Me manual. The title of the lesson this week, The Lord is My Shepherd. We don't know for certain who wrote the Psalms. Some are attributed to King David, but for most of them, the writers remain anonymous. Yet after reading the Psalms, we feel as if we know the hearts of the Psalmists, even if we don't know their names. We do know that the Psalms were an important part of worship among the Israelites, and we know that the Savior quoted them often. In the Psalms, we get a window into the soul of God's ancient people. We see how they felt about God, what they worried about, and how they found peace. As believers today, all over the world, we still use these words in our worship of God. It's almost like the writers of the Psalms had a window into our souls because they expressed how we feel about God and what we worry about and how we find peace. So well written. All right, with that, Steven, we are excited to hand the reigns over to you and sit in the back of the carriage and try not to fall out.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:12:53	No, I want you involved in this. This is really important for me to involve you too. I love that revelation is scattered among us, and as we counsel together, we gather it. Let's dig into the why. I am such a why guy. I think we live in a world that seeks the how and the what far before we seek the why, and it tends to lead to burnout. If we had time, I would dig into John and Hank, your reason for doing this podcast. When you give me an answer, I would ask you a follow-up why two or three times to really get down to where you are. Why should we love the Psalms? Well, first of all, and this was alluded to in the description. It was the people's book. It was the people's hymn book. They didn't just read from it. They sang from it.
	00:13:39	I am in the middle of writing a Broadway musical. I have learned that there is a hierarchy of expression when you're writing a Broadway musical. When a character is too emotional to express with words what he or she is feeling, it's time for a song. Use music. Then when it's too emotional to even sing, the character dances. Do you notice that in the Psalms? The Psalms is just that. You have some, what seems to be monologue. Then it elevates and transcends to something that's musical. And then eventually it gets to dancing before the Lord. I love that there's this hierarchy of expression. As you're seeking to love the Psalms, it was the book that was the most memorized, quoted, sung, and ritualistically used among the people of

Israel. Remember, not everybody has a book of scripture on their table or in their palm of their hand.

00:14:36 It's synagogue-based. If you have songs to memorize scriptures, which scriptures are you going to remember? Leviticus or Psalms? That's why there was so much more memorization of the Psalms, and that's why they flowed through their very lives. We have picked up on that. How many of our hymns do you think are based on the Psalms in the LDS hymn book? 71 of our hymns. Do you know the second most is Isaiah. Sorry, Isaiah. It's only 30. The Psalms by number one position, but by double in comparison to the next book. Now, it doesn't stop there. Let's go to the New Testament. How many times are the Psalms referred to in the New Testament? Is the number one most quoted book in the New Testament. 116 times. Guess what number two is? Oh, Isaiah gets the silver medal again. 56 times. 56 times. So twice as much as the book of Isaiah.

00:15:38 New Testament, Psalms are quoted. Do you see the majesty of this book? It's crazy to think about. Why? Because it was the people's book. Isn't the Savior the epitome of the one by one minister? What book is he going to use? The one that everybody's most familiar with. And that's why he quoted the Psalms the most. Now, here's what's great about the Psalms though. Luckily for us. In comparison with the Old Testament, do you know how much more the Psalms lean into joy and delight? 2.5 more times more likely to come across the word joy or delight in the book of Psalms than the rest of the Old Testament combined. Why is this important? Because I believe we belong to the Church of Joy. The Hymn book of the Church of Joy is the Psalms. It's proven itself in its literature. The proof is in the pudding.

00:16:34 2.5 more times likely to come across joy and delight in the Book of Psalms. Isn't that awesome? Isn't that so fun? And then let's go further. Okay. Number two, in my opinion, it is the best Bible book to build the kingdom and gather Israel. Why? Because it is so team Jesus. I am a big advocate of team Jesus. I'm very careful about ever trying to differentiate between our church and other churches. I leave that to the real professionals to do that. For me, I'm finding common ground. I'm trying to find connections between my fellow Jesus, Team Jesus members and me, regardless of their faith. I tell you, the shortest distance between me and someone else on Team Jesus is the Psalms. You ask what their favorite Psalm is, they'll be able to quote it right away or at least refer to it. I could guarantee that.

	00:17:29	Isn't that so fun that we've got this book that can be our connection with our fellow Jesus lovers out there that are members of other faiths? But it doesn't stop at Christianity. It is studied by all Christian faiths. Remember, the Jewish faith studies the Psalms. And it is respected in Islam because the Quran refers to the Zabur, which is traditionally understood to be the Psalms given to David. That's interesting. But then even beyond that, what about outside religious altogether, religion altogether? Sectarian scholars cite Psalms as immutable poetry. If you're going to gather Israel and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the more you know Psalms, the better off you're going to be. What a great book to be our lead when it comes to building the kingdom and gathering Israel.
Hank Smith:	00:18:17	The Psalms and the hymns can become part of the way you think. They're like good friends. You meet a terrible situation and they guide you through it. They help you navigate it. It becomes part of your vocabulary. Your spiritual vocabulary, your inner dialogue.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:18:34	The word I would use is repertoire. Because a musician can only perform and entertain and edify as far as he or she has repertoire. If the repertoire is shallow, then that's only as far as you can go. So you're absolutely right. It doesn't become only part of the parlance of how you interact with others, but it's your repertoire. So I'll give you an example. I'm at a keynote and I'm talking about creativity. I bring up this person on the stage that has epitomized creativity in the industry in which I'm speaking. She's nervous and she's never done this before. We have this fun Q&A and fun interaction. And she emails me afterwards and she says, "I cried all that day because I worried about what I should have said and what I should not have said. Oh, I just berated myself." Can I open up to some vulnerability here, John and Hank?
	00:19:25	I want some empathy from you for everybody, because I know you're so good at this. How many of us have rehash browns for breakfast? We wake up and we eat for breakfast, rehash browns. We are rehashing something we said the day before or something that we said long ago or didn't say. And we berate ourselves. We negate our progress. We stagnate over all of these instances of rehashing something. Tell me if that happens in your life. Give me a scenario where that happens and give me a scenario of how you deal with it. Because I think this is an important issue. We can just pause what we're talking about right now, and I'm going to relate a Psalm to it. But I want to dig into what you do when rehash browns gets put in front of you.

Hank Smith:	00:20:12	Well, I think before, I would just consume them and put even nasty ketchup on them. As I've gotten older, I start to see myself and others with more mercy, a little more gentler with myself. I'll walk away from a conversation. Even my interactions with John, I think I offended John. That was horrible. Why would I say that? Or, you know, I'll have a big social event and I'll come home and be like, "Oh, man, did I mess everything up?" And now, as I've gotten older, I think I'm able to see the Lord pull that plate away from me and said, "No, no, no. Don't do that."
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:20:54	So it isn't that he, that you try to add seasoning on top of it and just get it down. You can't pull that plate away, can you? I haven't been able to either.
Hank Smith:	00:21:02	Yeah. I think the Lord can come in and say, "Don't do that."
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:21:05	That's not on the menu. It's not on the menu. Oh, I love that, Hank. This is so good.
John Bytheway:	00:21:10	I feel the same way as Hank. I shouldn't have said that in the talk. I shouldn't have said it this way. I shouldn't have interacted with this person that way. Hank, in my age, I'm going to extend grace where I need it. That's all I can do at that point because I have been given much grace. I too must give grace and not hold people accountable for them in their worst moments. And I hope people won't hold me accountable in my worst moments. I always think, well, can I learn something? because I can't keep eating this. Let me learn something. And it usually is exactly what you said, Hank.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:21:47	I like that there's taking the plate away, there's learning something. There's importance of humility, I think, is a factor there. There's importance of maybe correcting something in an extreme case. But typically, what I have experienced, and this has taken me a long time to learn, and this relates back to this story of this woman that berated herself after being on the stage. I have had, I don't know how many thousands of experiences on the stage. And I have had such a large percentage of those that have come with a woulda, shoulda, coulda. I tell you one instance in particular that almost broke me. I woke up the next morning and the adversary was already elbow dropping me. I mean, this was WWF. He had gathered a tag team and they were tagging in and they were elbow dropping me. I was so suffocated by, You are the worst speaker.
	00:22:41	You have never made an impact. It was so bad. Where's this coming from? This adversary knew that this is a chink in my armor, so he totally exploited it, which he will do with you too.

Be aware of that and watch for it. Don't be surprised by it. He was pouncing on me with more ferocity than I had seen in many instances. I remember the moment I was on my knees, and I wasn't even on my knees on the floor, guys. I, all I could do is roll over in bed and get into the fetal position on my knees. In bed. Remember, prayer doesn't only count when you're on your knees in the right position. Remember that. Pray wherever you can, whenever you can. Don't act like you have to be in a specific posture to do it. So I did my best to get in whatever I could.

00:23:26 And I cried out. I said, "God, I can't take this. It is too much." Then I thought of Psalms 55:22. How this clarion call came to my head as music comes to us in moments when we need a balm. And it was cast your burdens on me. Cast your burdens on me. Do it. Throw them on me. Whatever you can do. And in that instance, I said, Jesus, take this from me. I'm casting it on you. And it was so cool, you guys. It didn't go away entirely, but I felt a hundred times lighter. And instantaneously, I felt the power of Jesus Christ and his atoning grace come upon me and chase away my demons because they could not have power over me anymore because I cried out for Jesus. This is something I believe in. If you are stuck, and I'm speaking to you listening right now, if you are stuck in a situation where the adversary has you in a headlock, cry out for Jesus and cast it upon him.

00:24:37 He has overcome it already, and so he can help you overcome it. I sensed Team Jesus in this woman. I just sensed it. And you know what? When you're authentically yourself, people really admire and respect you for it. They don't automatically get on guard. And I would say that we should be more authentic about this, even though it's a little scarier here. I understand that. But I emailed her and I said, look, I told her this story and I said, Psalms 55:22 is my go-to, and I believe it works. I have never seen anything else work in my life. I am so excited. You know what came back? Her favorite Psalm and how excited she was that I had quoted the Psalms. And then I sent my favorite Psalm, another favorite. And then she said, and we're now in a Psalm study group together. Thanks to the book of Psalms, we are building the kingdom of God together across religions. And I love it. It is so wonderful. Don't underestimate the connecting power and the inclusive power of the Psalms.

Hank Smith: 00:25:37 That is just so good. So wonderful. John, I could listen to Steven all day.

John Bytheway: 00:25:42 Yeah, me too.

Hank Smith:	00:25:43	I'm like, just keep, just keep talking. It's as good as his music.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:25:48	Let's recap real quick. We've learned that it's the hymn book of the people, and it still is for us today. It leans into joy and delight. We've learned that it's the best book to build up the kingdom and gather Israel, which is a great why. And now we're going to learn how to do that later. But the last why I want to tell you is the most important of all. What were Jesus's last words as mortal on the earth? Where did they come from? They came from the Psalms. Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then Psalms 31, Luke 23 quotes it, "Into thy hands, I commend my spirit." David was speaking messianically, but he was also referring to his own personal life. And as people heard this quoted from the cross, how beautiful would it have been for them to hear the Psalms that they loved and have sung coming from their savior's mouth at the time of his greatest suffering?
	00:26:46	What does that mean for the Psalms? How important can they be? It's the number one quoted book by Jesus. Does that mean the Psalms were his favorite book? I could say Jesus was so good at connecting to people. He was the perfect example of it. So of course, he's going to go to the hymn book of our heart to connect with us, right? Matthew 22, when he gets confronted about who is Christ? It's the Son of David. He defends that very thing by using Psalms 110. Psalms 118, Hosanna, blessed be that cometh in the name of the Lord. His triumphal entry was the Psalms. Now, here's the big one too. The last supper. What did they do before Gethsemane? It was Psalms 113 through 118 were the Halal Psalms. Those were typically really hymnbook central. Did you know Jesus loved the Psalms? Loved, loved, loved them, and quoted them as His very last words. Even beyond the grave in the resurrection. And the Psalms show up. 110 and 16, exalted on the right hand of God. Thou will not leave my soul in hell. So that's the why.
Hank Smith:	00:27:53	Incredible.
John Bytheway:	00:27:54	If you want an endorsement of the Psalms, you've got it from Steven. Now listen to the Savior. Luke 24:44. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses. There's first five books, right? And in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning me. There you've got the Lord saying, You want to see me, you'll see me in the Psalms. And I love that you brought out, he's going to quote them a lot.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:28:32 I love it. Thank you, John. That is the capstone. And that's exactly what I wanted to round off that with. Thank you. That is the scripture. Let's move on to the how. We know why to fall in love with the Psalms and become a Psalm-mate. Sorry, that's just dad humor coming out, right? Right? I want us to all be psalmates, but I want us to be psalmists. And what does that mean? The more we ingest the psalms and we make it part of our repertoire, part of our digestive system, part of the fleshy tables in our hearts, the more we do that, the more likely we are to be a psalmist ourselves in our own story. What does that mean? We're more expressive in our relationship with God. We're better about recording stories that are important to us. And we're going to be better about being bolder in sharing our emotions relative to our testimonies because all of those are inherent in the Psalms.

00:29:20 And as we ingest them, you are what you eat. We're going to become a psalmist. How do we do that? Well, let's get started. First of all, I want to tell you to not be overwhelmed because you already are a psalmist. I could quote so many different scriptures and hymns that you could complete or finish even just by virtue of the hymns. Remember, 71 hymns. Let's talk about the Spirit of God. Let's talk about Redeemer of Israel. If I were to cite some of the words in there, you would, High on the Mountaintop. You would already be able to finish a lot of those phrases. So you're already well on your way of becoming a Psalmist. This is not a fresh start. This is just a continuance. This is just the second or third movement of our Psalmist symphony that we're building right now together.

00:30:06 And what beautiful melodies you will construct, and I will tell you that your Psalmist melodies are unique to you, and they are part of the work that God has for you to do. No one can write symphonic Psalmist melodies like you. I want you to really take that on. I'm going to say it again. Nobody can do the work that God has for you to do except you. He has given you unique gifts, unique personality traits, unique experiences, unique failures, and unique weaknesses that will make you strong in your work. The worst thing you can do is try to do somebody else's work out of comparison because it looks more fun or more challenging or more praiseworthy or whatever it may be. Focus on your work and go to God and ask him to open up the majesty as a Psalmist would, to open up the majesty of this symphony that he is composing alongside of you.

00:31:10 Now remember, your life is not a Benson Boone song that is three and a half minutes long, all equalized and limited, one emotion the whole time. We expect it sometimes to be a pop

song. It isn't. Your life is a grand symphony with largos and laments and ritardandos, accelerandos, and majestic cadences, but it's a grand finish, but you cannot have that grand finish without the abysmal dissonance and the moments of absolute abject despondence. We have to have valleys for these peaks to work. I tell you, the symphony that God is writing with you, if you could step back and listen, wow, you would be so amazed. But remember, that symphony is your work and your work alone. So that's why I want us to become psalmists. How do we turn our lives over to God? In this podcast I did recently, which was with Faith Matters, I talk about ADHD and why God loves your ADHD.

00:32:10 I'd recommend that if you or someone you love is struggling to discover why it should be your superpower and why it's misdiagnosed. Attention deficit is not attention deficit. It is attention abundant. Let's talk about how making the Psalms personal can level up your faith and your joy in life. We're going to walk through a Psalm highlight reel, and we're going to come out the other side a Psalmist ourselves. Our experiences when touched by the hand of God can become our own personal parables and Psalms. As we strive to turn our life over to God, our stories can be raised to the divine. What I was going to say in this other podcast, Faith Matters, this is what's coming back to me. I talked about turning our lives over to God, and there was a little bit of an irate comment. I've lived my life on YouTube for 15 years.

00:32:56 Nothing can offend me anymore. I've heard it all. So I was not offended. He said, "You know, I can't stand when people talk about turning their life over to God and they never explain how to do it." I would love to talk about how to do it. I'm going to put a pin in that. I want you to want that later, okay? Suspense is a teaching tool. So we're going to come back to that, but I would like to talk about how the path to turning your life over to God, if there's anybody out there that wants some help with it. But first, let's go baroque. Bach is considered the father of the Baroque period typically. Then we go into Classical, which is new and exciting and innovative, and that was Mozart, right? And then what happens? Romanticism comes onto the scene and Beethoven brings fire. Fire to music. Now, the instruments were even evolving as this was happening. Did you know that? In the Baroque period, we only had the harpsichord. The harpsichord had two variables, pluck or not pluck. That was it.

00:33:57 So there was no emotion and no dynamics. Beethoven said, "We cannot merely practice our art." What is your art? It could be anything from cooking to relationships, to service, to

whatever. Don't limit it to artistry. Artistry and creativity are related, but they're not to be conflated. They're different. He says, "We cannot just practice our art. We need to force our way into its secrets." Oh, that is so good. That is so good. He said, "We need to force our way into its secrets, and then it will raise us to the divine." Why is this? Because we are naturally creative beings. We are born creative. And as Picasso said, every child is an artist until they get handed a report card. Right? So we are born creative and we should always consider ourselves creative. I don't want to ever hear words out of your mouth to say, I'm not a creative person. That is inaccurate. Dismantle that belief system right away. You are ultimately creative. Why? Because your heavenly parents are creative and you are their child. And I'll prove this to you. John, I want to talk to you about this. You're a painter. Aren't you a painter?

John Bytheway: 00:35:09 I draw.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:35:10 What's your medium?

John Bytheway: 00:35:12 My favorite is watercolor.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:35:14 Why is it your favorite?

John Bytheway: 00:35:15 Watercolor's a challenge because like with an oil or acrylic, you can go over it and fix it. Watercolor, you got one shot. To do the sky or to do nothing and call it snow. It's really fun with watercolor, but you go over it once and you don't want to go over it again. It takes a little bit of planning and challenge.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:35:37 What happens when you're engaged in that? Describe the feeling.

John Bytheway: 00:35:42 I lose track of time. My watercolors are not great, but I love when I read the creation story that even God could look back and say, "I looked and it was good."

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:35:56 I love that too. That connects me to him. John, I love how you said you lose track of time. This is the proof in all of us that as we create, why do we lose track of time? Alma 41 helps us to understand this. In Alma 41, Alma gives us a little sidebar. He talks about the nature of God. And then he says, the nature of God is this, which is also the nature of happiness, by the way. Then he moves on and it's like, hold on. Wait, wait, wait, whoa, whoa, whoa. Pause, pause. What happened there?

00:36:29 I mean, maybe ADHD. He was a little ADHD. Bless his heart. I love that because I'd love him even all the more. He's like, "Oh, by the way, it's this." But then all of a sudden I'm like, holy cow, wait a minute. Does that mean when we're aligned with our true nature, which is the nature of God, we forced our way into the secrets of the eternities, and we've aligned ourselves with our divine nature, which is the nature of God. Then we automatically align with the nature of happiness because it's the same thing. Then I took that one step further and I said, okay, then if I'm creative, then do I align myself with my creative divine self, which is also the nature of our creative God? Why does this get proven? Because as we create, we lose track of time. C.S. Lewis says, we don't belong in time.

00:37:13 It's not our natural habitat. We're a fish out of water. God is not a being of time as we understand it here. This is why creativity is the most underutilized, underestimated treatment for our own burnout and mental illness. But it has a caveat. It cannot be creativity for the sake of being posted, graded, or sold. That is admirable, and it's a wonderful pursuit. Not to negate that in your life, but if you want the true healing balm and burnout antidote and mental wellness treatment that comes from pure creativity, you need to be like John Bytheway, who's watercoloring because he loses track of time and he loves it. It's a wonderful pursuit. So this is the last thing I'd say to this as we become psalmists, but I want to stress this. If you feel burned out, if you feel that you're doing the dance steps and not hearing the music in the gospel or in any aspect of your life, or if your child, especially your teenage daughter, who is thrust upon by all of the wiles of the devil has ever come up with, and bless her heart, she is struggling in a world that is meant for her to struggle in.

00:38:31 If she is experiencing depression, try to see what you can do about encouraging pure creativity in her life. And in your case, in your own life. The only definition of that is creativity, not for the intent of being posted, graded, or sold. If you want to learn the piano, it's fair game. But when you're purely creative, it cannot be a should. It has to be a want. As you connect, and this could be a nature walk, that is creative without any headphones in. It could be as simple as finding a recipe you've always wanted to try. Guess what? You'll be closer to God because you are being divine. It's such a passion of mine to teach this as best I can, or at least to exhibit it in front of people. This is what's happening on my face when I'm playing the cello. Two reasons.

00:39:28 My daughter asked me, she's watching my YouTube video. She's six years old. She's like, "Daddy, why do you always smile when

you play the cello?" I say, "It's because I'm thinking of you." That was one of the reasons. But the other reason is this. When I was 16 years old, I was asked to play at a very peer reviewed, illustrious event that had a lot of gravitas to it. And I played a Fauré Élégie, which is very challenging on the cello, emotionally, technically. And I didn't play it super well. My dad, who was such a benevolent person, came up to me afterwards. I said, "Dad, how did I do?" And he said, "My son, I felt like I was every part of every mistake you made." And I said, "What do you mean?" He's like, "I don't want to disparage you, but every mistake was written on your face and you pulled me into it.

00:40:24 Instead of being lifted, I felt pulled down with you." Maybe that's the illusion I'll use. But from that moment on, I decided instead of grimacing and exhibiting my mistakes, which we often do in life, I will smile every time I make a mistake. And that's why I smile a lot. It has elevated my performance. It has elevated my relationships, and it's elevated my relationship with God and my relationship with myself. But I've also discovered that instead of dwelling on my weaknesses, I can transcend to another level and be in touch with the divine in me and be elevated to be with God as I'm performing and be co-creators with him in the performance of each of the notes that I'm playing. It's this eternally significant experience that occurs because I become purely creative. All of a sudden, I'm not doing it for the fear of mistakes.

00:41:22 I'm doing it to praise God. And I had this incredible moment that when I'm on the side of the stage, I always say a prayer before I go out. And we say a prayer before we perform as The Piano Guys. And the reference point of this is 2 Nephi 32:9. It's the, we will pray that he will consecrate our performance. But what is the end result? It's for the welfare of thy soul not to be graded, posted, or sold. So that's critically to understand. This is what I've understood about my music is I can't pray that I'm going to be really good. I can't pray that I'm going to impress people because that's not what 32:9 tells me to do. 32:9 is before you do anything unto the Lord, pray unto Him that He will consecrate thy performance for the welfare of thy soul. And by extension, the welfare of the souls that are around.

00:42:09 I said, okay, if this audience is not into this performance, which by the way is really difficult, that's the most difficult thing for a performer, is to feel like you're pulling the audience along. It's a miserable experience because it drains you rather than energizes you. But when you're with an audience that's with you and you're feeling the Spirit together and there's mutual edification, the fourth wall is down, you feel energized from the

performance. It doesn't happen every time. And if it did, then we'd lose the appreciation of it, of course. I pray, Heavenly Father, let me play to the one. If all the audience is not into it, but there's one person out there that is touched and his heart opens or her heart opens and the Spirit can come in and do the heavy lifting. The Spirit can tell them things that I could never come up with, with my notes or my words that I will utter from the stage.

00:42:55 Let me play to the one. Oh my goodness. And let me tell you what happened one day. I was so tired and I was saying the prayer out of rote, sort of like, okay, here we go. Let me say my prayer before I walk on the stage. Let me play to the one. And my heart was struggling. The Spirit said, tonight, I want you to play to the One. Not the one lowercase O, the One uppercase O. And all of a sudden, this was so cool. And I want you to experience this in your life. Brethren, when you speak next, I want you to try this. I want you to imagine Jesus sitting in the center of that hall where you are. And despite your mistakes or the silly things you say or the misquote that you have, wouldn't he have the greatest smile on his face ever?

00:43:48 Wouldn't he love that you're showing up and bearing testimony of him as imperfect as you are? My intent that night was to play to the One and praise God with my music. And that is what I have tried to do over and over again. And that's why you see what you see on my face. It's because Jesus has given me everything and I'm giving him a tiny bit back and just letting him have a little bit of cello music. All of a sudden, comparison falls away. All of a sudden, why are people paying so much money for my concert when Yo-Yo Ma's next door and he's way better than I am? That note I missed, if you're a cellist out in the audience, you got to think, I can't believe this guy is quote, world-class, which I'm not, but the world considers me okay, I can be in Carnegie Hall. Why is this guy, he's making too many mistakes. All of that goes away. And I'm playing to the One.

Hank Smith: 00:44:42 That's beautiful. We have a little phrase we use here. Right John? Before we record, we try to remind ourselves we are here to bless. We are not here to impress. And just that focus changes the way you speak, changes what you're thinking about as you teach, as you are going through the scriptures. We try to think of those who are hurting. Those who need some healing. That's different than I wonder if I'm impressing everyone.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:45:12 My favorite calling in the church by far was when I got to serve in a YSA stake presidency. Because that's my jam. Those are my people. I could be myself. I could be goofy. I could be energetic.

I could be overbearing and oversharing, and they were forgiving of me. Oh, I was so at home and I miss it with all my heart. What I discovered was something very interesting. I would hear the phrase, "I'm going through the motions, but I'm not feeling anything. I'm not feeling revelation. I'm not feeling the Spirit." Hank and John, you both have spoken to this so much. You've said far more things than I could ever speak on the subject. I will only give my personal experience. There's a few ways that we need to answer this. First of all, is that I love that C.S. Lewis said that when we say this, we're as a fish in water wondering where all the water is.

00:46:02 We're swimming around in it and we're wondering, when do I see the water? And that's what Elder Bednar said. You're living in it. And I said, oh my goodness, if you had any idea how much the Spirit was guiding you already, if you had any idea, that was number one. We ask the question too often, is that me or the Spirit? I love that Elder Bednar says, stop worrying about it. And I love that Sister Eubank says, "Hey, guess what? It's both." I love that answer. Let's take our focus off of the, is that me or the Spirit? And instead ask, "Is that me or the adversary?" Why aren't we asking that more often? When awful self-doubt, crushing self-hate, and crushing negativity, and crushing negative self-talk hits us, why aren't we asking, "Is that me or the adversary?" If you suffer from negative self-talk, stop asking, "Is that me or the Spirit?" And start asking, "Is that me or the adversary?" It's a life changer.

00:47:02 If you feel like you're going through the motions and you're not feeling it, can I say you're not alone? It's a very big club. Whether we admit it or not, we've all felt it. Many of us have felt it. And this is the one thing I would advise. If your expectations of the gospel and the church are based on what you're going to get, you're going to find yourself disappointed. If your expectations are based upon what you can give, you will always find happiness in the gospel of Jesus Christ. A testimony is not built in what you get. It's what you give. So the next time you show up to a situation where you're like, "Well, I hope I can get something out of this." Can you flip the script and say, "What can I give?" If you're feeling spiritual burnout, or if you're feeling work burnout, or if you're feeling family burnout, I promise there's a way out.

00:47:52 As you turn your life over to God, there is a way out. Part of that way is to connect with him through pure creativity. I'll give you an example, and this is a painful one to share. So I've been at the Piano Guys about 15 years now. The Piano Guys started from a space of pure creativity. We were doing videos like

Michael Meets Mozart, Cello Song, Cello Wars, Me and My Cello, Moonlight. These were videos that were, had been in my brain for decades. They wanted out. And I'd never thought once about them being graded, posted, or sold. I did them purely because of the joy of creation and the craft that's in and of itself. I was focused on the process, not the end result, which, oh my goodness, that's a road to perpetual energy rather than burnout. If it's the opposite, you're focused on the outcome instead of the process, burnout's only around the corner. I was doing that. And then what happened? After eight years, nine years, we're signed with Sony. And I start buying into the music industry's greatest lie, which is you're only as hot as your recent hit.

00:49:11 And you have to sacrifice everything to make it successful. And this is maybe across other industries, but I experienced that firsthand. And it was nobody's fault. I'm not pointing to malicious evil in somebody or something. It's just the tradition and culture of the industry in which I've been working. And that is, you sacrifice everything to be graded, posted, or sold. And you bank your self-worth and value upon the result, not the process. And burnout was only a matter of time, and I became absolutely, completely burned out. Isn't it ironic that I was living and swimming and saturated in the world of creativity, and yet I was the saddest, most despondent cellist on the earth? That doesn't make sense. But this is the Halversonian contrary here that we have to observe. It's this pull and push between creating something vocationally and creating something purely. They're at odds.

00:50:11 They can be at odds. They don't need to be, but often they are. I found myself in a place of burnout. Why? Because YouTube was too hard to catch up with. The algorithm had changed. People weren't watching our videos as much. The view count was way down. Social media had changed. Our likes count were way down. I was exhausting myself, trying to find the next great cover. And I was doing it why? So that I could be hotter than my last hit. And that was so burnout. So I had to actually take a completely big, giant step back. And I love my brothers in The Piano Guys. Al van der Beek, Paul Anderson, Jon Schmidt. Did they put their hands on their hips and say, hey, you're committed to this. Don't you dare back out. You know, don't... No, no, no, no. They put their arms around me and they said, We got you.

00:51:01 We got you, brother. Whatever you need. That is the true greatness of The Piano Guys is in its brotherhood, not its content. And I love my brothers. I love them. They supported

me in this step back. I had to have complete cessation of what I'm doing, which does not make sense. Financially, it doesn't make sense vocationally. But I was burned out and my family was struggling. I was spinning all the plates in my life and my family plate was wobbling. My faith plate was wobbling. My spirituality was in a slump. It was not a happy place to be. I was feeling great depression despite the fact that I was pushing productivity. Here I was, what do I do? I backed away. I got on my knees and I said, "God, please help me out." And I listened. He brought to my mind something that I've wanted to do my whole life, which is to write a Broadway musical.

00:51:54 It was the worst idea ever because I might as well try out for the NBA for heaven's sakes. That's how hard it is to get a hit Broadway musical. It's about the same level, especially if you've seen me play basketball, which is deplorable. But I said, "Okay, God. Okay, I'll do it." And then what's interesting about what happened next is in the silence. God didn't say, Here's how you build a ship, Nephi. Here's the blueprints of a Broadway musical. He said, Steve, that sounds great. I love that idea. I was like, okay. Next day I'm like, how do I do it? Nothing. I'm so grateful we have loving heavenly parents that can back away. Let us struggle. Let us explore. Let us strive and build without their direct intervention at all times to become slothful servants. But this is what he did do, and this is what I will tell you. If you're in a situation when you're in burnout, Arthur Brooks, the great social scientist who was a former French horn player, by the way, it's another reason why I love him, beautiful Catholic faith. I love his faith. I have holy envy for his faith. He says in his book, From Strength to Strength, which is very good if you're struggling with this, he said, when our arc declines in life, which is inevitable, we often will try to artificially bend that arc up.

00:53:18 And that's where midlife crises come from. That's where irrational decisions come from. We try to bend that arc up because we get afraid that that arc declining means we're declining self or, and I can go way into this, which I won't. But he said, instead of giving up altogether or trying to bend that arc up, he said, jump to a new arc that is related, but still on its way up. I love this though because instead of starting over altogether, which is discouragement in a package, and instead of sticking with what you have entirely, find something that's related, but still on its way up. And I bet, John, you, and Hank, you probably have some stories in your life where you did this either intentionally or unintentionally. I love writing music. I love directing things. I love writing itself. I'll jump to this new arc, which is on its way up at this point.

00:54:06 And what's happened has been beautiful. I have discovered my creativity again. Why? Because I am determined to enjoy the process, not look to the end result. And I have to rely upon God because I'm in a relatively new setting, even though it's related. And I have to be humbled because I'm starting to do things that I've never done before, even though they are related. And then here's the best part of all. As you go after this in your life, you were listening, I love you. As you're going after this in your life, look for the packets. Elder Scott describes this term. He's coined this phrase and I love it. He calls them packets of life, but think of them as physical packets that are dropped from heaven with a parachute, however you want to picture it. This is what I've found. When we go where the energy is, when we go after something that is not wrong, and it's a green light, not a red light, which is typically how I operate, either you're in commotion or you're in motion, you decide.

00:55:02 If you're sitting still waiting for God to tell you what to do, you're in commotion, not in motion. I find that revelation comes when I'm in motion, not in commotion. I often say, stop me prayers instead of start me prayers. That's the difference. God, I'm going to do this. Stop me if it's wrong. Rather than, Hey, God, I'm going to do this. Start me. And then nothing happens. So I'm in the process, I'm in motion. And he places a packet. This is the critical point. He places a packet just far enough away for me to exercise faith to look for it and to get to it. But not far enough away that I lose my way. Look for the packets that could be in a person, place, or a thing. And you look for it with intensity, with expectation, like you're expecting miracles as President Nelson insists on.

00:55:46 If you look for the packets, they will come. I'll give you an example of one. I'm losing steam on the musical. I'm on an airplane. Who knows where I'm traveling? And this guy I haven't seen for 15 years, he comes up to me, he says, "Steve, what are you doing right now in your life?" I'm like, "Oh, hey. Wow. Okay. Um," and the Spirit says, "Tell him about the Broadway musical." And I'm like, "I don't want to tell him about that." And the Spirit's like, "I said tell him about it." "Okay." And I start telling him, "Oh, I'm writing a Broadway musical." He's like, "No way. You have to talk to my neighbor. He's a seven-time Tony Award-winning Broadway producer." I'm like, "Wow, that's coincidental. Cool. Thanks. I'll write his name down, you know, write his number down." Then the next day, I've forgotten it.

00:56:27 And I'm sure in the floating table in heaven, they're all like, "Okay, well, we've got dense Steven Sharp Nelson again. We tried, and he's just tossed it aside. We give him one packet."

		And then Jesus will say, "Try again." I could just picture him saying that. All the angels are like, "Oh, man, this kid is so dense." And Jesus says, "No, no, no, try again." So the next day, you guys, I'm not kidding. The next day I have a piano recital in my house. My son's teacher needs a location. I say, "Yeah, have it in my house." This guy comes up to me after the recital and he says, "Hey, thanks so much for hosting this recital. You know, what do you do?" And I said, oh, you know, I'm a cellist of Piano Guys or, you know, I'm, I, whatever I say.
	00:57:11	I don't say the Broadway musical thing like I usually don't. And he says, "Oh, that's really cool." I said, "What do you do?" And he's like, "Well, I produce Broadway musicals." And I said, "Your name wouldn't happen to be..." And then I say his name. And he's like, "That's exactly who I am. How did you know?" This was the guy that my friend from 15 years told me I should meet and talk to. In my house that was probably 30 miles away from his house at his child's recital that happened to be my child's recital. You can't make this stuff up. So pray for packets and look for them. Go where the energy is. Don't ask God to start you. Ask him to stop you if it's not right. Go, go, go. Then look for the packets. And if you're running out of steam, ask for another.
Hank Smith:	00:57:54	John and I are just mesmerized. What do you want to do next?
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:57:58	Let's mesmerize you some more. Okay. Are you ready to memorize the top five Psalms with me? Very easy. I promise these are ADHD friendly ways of memorizing where the top five Psalms are. Why? Well, we've already talked about the why. Now it's the how. Let's start with Psalms 46. This isn't one of the top five Psalms, but maybe this is John Bytheway's psalm in honor of his haircut. Psalm 69:4, they that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head. It proves that John doesn't have a lot of people that hate him.
Hank Smith:	00:58:40	He doesn't.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:58:41	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	00:58:41	I don't know if he has anybody.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:58:43	Top five hymns. Let's start with 46, which is the most ironic way to start this podcast. 46 is this. I will read it and you already know it. Be still and know that I am God. This is such a good Psalm. Okay, how do we remember this? Well, you all know Be Still My Soul. You all know that hymn upon which this Psalm is

based, right? I want you to remember, be still my soul is four words. Be still my soul, four words. Then what are the next ones? The Lord is on thy side. Four words, six words. It is Psalms 46. Psalms 46. Be still my soul. The Lord is on my side. Now you remember where Psalm, the be still and know that I am God. This is so profound. Before we even talk about this, is there a moment in your life when be still and know that I am God was relevant for you?

John Bytheway: 00:59:43 I can think of probably numerous times. I remember as a bishop reminding myself of President Hinckley that went through a time, "This is not your church. This is my church. I've got this." And that happened to Alma. It's not your church, this is my church, and I can hear that. Be still. I've got this. As you talked about you meeting that producer twice in a couple of days, God is playing this incredible game of five-dimensional chess all over the universe, and he just pulls it off flawlessly. We can be still and exhale and trust him. And one last thing, you brought up that those negative thoughts are coming from the adversary. Sometimes just going through the Savior's titles, Deliverer, Redeemer, Advocate that you've used a couple of times. Think of those in your mind, and then think of what the book of Revelation says Satan means. He's the accuser of the brethren. If you feel yourself accusing yourself, where is that coming from? Not the Deliverer, not the Advocate, not the Redeemer, not the Savior. He doesn't act like that. Those help me during those times.

Hank Smith: 01:01:05 This phrase comes to me not in words, but in experiences or insights that other people share. I'll give you an example. John and I both are, and our whole team, we want this podcast to be good. Not for us, but because we want to help people. And there's some anxiety there that can be healthy a little bit. But I think it was becoming overwhelming for me at a point where I thought, what if something goes wrong? What if we choose the wrong guest or we offend? Whatever it was. I had a lot of thoughts. I was a talk show host of, yeah, why don't you sit down too and tell me what could go wrong? And anybody else want to tell me what could go wrong? Let's fill the room.

John Bytheway: 01:01:46 What if my co-host gets a bad haircut?

Hank Smith: 01:01:48 Yeah, yeah. What? That one actually didn't cross my mind, but it will now. So we were interviewing Dallas Jenkins, and he shared an experience he had creating The Chosen where a family who didn't speak English, I believe they were in China, they were watching The Chosen. The show is not in Chinese, and they were loving it. He said, "Do you think I could do that? Do you

think as a filmmaker I could say, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to create a show that's so good that someone could watch it in a different language and love it." He said, "I can't do that. Nobody can." It became a very settling feeling to me of, "This isn't up to you."

Steven Sharp Nelson: 01:02:34 Dallas Jenkins, hero of mine, I've met him on several occasions. We've done collaborations with The Chosen, which by the way, Chosen is, I just want to be a second witness of Chosen and say that is, if you haven't had that into your home, please invite that into your home. And my children, after watching it, said, "I want to be best friends with Jesus." And that is the ultimate result that you want out of something. And if you haven't partaken in that, get through the first couple episodes. It's a little rough at the beginning, but it gets better and better and better and just so inspired. It's a multi-faith influenced project that is completely inspired. I just want to emphasize that that's such an important thing to add to your repertoire spiritually. I'm a big fan of Dallas. I love his principle that it's not my job to multiply the loaves and fishes.

01:03:18 I just bring the loaves and fishes. And I will say that there are some days, and I say this out of dad humor, but I want you to remember it as there are crummy days. There are crummy days where all you can bring is crumbs. And you know what? Jesus can multiply crumbs. So when The Chosen portrays the loaves and fishes, this boy whose name Telemachus comes. And I love his interaction with Jesus. He says, "It's not much. That's all I have." How many times have I said that to Jesus? It's not much. And you know what Jesus says back? He looks at him and he says, "No, no. I can do a lot with this." This is the definition of The Piano Guys. It's four dorky dads from Utah showing up. I mean, for heaven's sakes, we make classically influenced music videos in nature, and somehow we're surviving on the internet.

01:04:17 I mean, who could have called that? That's a miracle. We didn't bring much, but Jesus said, "That's good. I can do a lot with that." And he could do that with all of us because when we find ourself in the work that he has for us to do, miracles happen. And magnification happens, and the two and the five become thousands. It's pretty cool. Remember, be still my soul, four. And the Lord is on thy side as six. Psalm 46, be still and know that I am God. Now, if you want to read into this further, go to D&C 123:17, memorize that scripture. It is such an underrated scripture. And John can quote it verbatim. I know he can. Therefore, dearly beloved sisters and brothers, let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power. All things that lie in our power, not outside. And then may we stand still. With what?

		The utmost assurance. To see the salvation of God and for his arm to be revealed. Make no mistake. Psalm 46 is about trust. Far more than it is about movement or not moving.
	01:05:23	If you cheerfully do all things that lie in your power, and cheerfully's hard sometimes, but do your best. Cheerfully do all things that lie in your power, you may have the utmost assurance that his arm is going to be revealed. Let's go to Psalm 91. This is really easy because it's just 911. It's really easy. 91 is the chapter, and one is the verse. 911, emergency plan. This is God's protection Psalm. This is used so much, especially amongst our friends of other faiths. It is He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
	01:06:04	Now, before you start thinking of the shadow, sometimes the shadow has a negative connotation. We're not thinking Bette Midler shadow. Like, must be so cold there in my shadow. Which is the funniest lyric ever, by the way. It's not the coldness of the shadow. In Hebrew and in ancient Israel, to be in someone's shadow was to be close to them and under their protection. Now, he that dwelleth in the secret place. What do you mean secret? It's the Hebrew word satare, which is concealed or a sheltered place. But more so, remember how we in our faith, we love to change the word secret into what? Sacred. He that dwelleth in the sacred place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Is this not one of the coolest temple scriptures you've ever read?
Hank Smith:	01:06:56	And if you've ever been out in the hot sun down by the Dead Sea or at a place called Masada or Qumran, you're thinking a shadow would be really nice right now. So I can imagine if you've been out in the Jordanian desert, I can be under the shadow of God. It's not only his protection, but perhaps comfort.
John Bytheway:	01:07:16	It's a shadow by day and a pillar by night. It, the shadow is, is a refuge from the rays of the sun when it's so bright in the desert. Yeah.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	01:07:25	We have to remember this was written pre-AC.
John Bytheway:	01:07:28	Pre-air conditioning.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	01:07:29	This was not AD, it was AC. So let's talk about the temple a little bit. I'm taking President Nelson up on his challenge and his invitation rather, which was to go more instead of less. How am

I doing? I'm a C-minus. I'm passing, but I could be better. And that's just how it goes. But I will tell you about a couple instances that have proven what the temple is that I never understood prior to. The temple is about covenants, but we misunderstand the temple as being an obligatory perfunctory thing in order to covenant. We misunderstand it to be a place of covenants, and maybe even more so, appreciate it as a place of connection. Connection with Christ. I love this. I saw this on social media the other day. It said this girl was portraying a prayer. She's modeling a prayer. She says, "God, I want to talk." And God replies, "Okay, sounds great. Your house or mine?" And she goes, "Your house."

01:08:29 And I love that. I love thinking about it that way. God, we need to talk, your house or mine. Jesus wants to spend time with you there. I want to be best friends. I want you to trust me. I want you to have faith that I've overcome the world and that I can overcome anything that is trying to overwhelm you. When you feel overwhelmed, come to me because I've overcome it already. Let's spend time together so that I can help you understand that. And I've had some instances in my life that have been so powerful. Try this. I go into the temple. Then one of my favorite things to do is wherever I choose to sit, wherever I end up sitting down, I grab the scriptures in front of me, and I go to the place that's marked.

01:09:08 I go to the place that has a ribbon in it, because I feel like anywhere angels can manipulate where a ribbon is in the scriptures, it's the temple. And I read wherever that ribbon is. I've had so many cool experiences of direct, divine help coming from that page of the ribbon. So I'll give you an example. So in my mission in Korea, my first experience speaking Korean was in front of the youth of the ward that I was in. And it wasn't a very large group. It was just a few youth that were sitting around. Do you guys remember when you really tried to make a good impression? So I'm sitting down and I've done my best with Korean. And they're going around and we're introducing ourselves. And I'm like, "I'm not going to nail this. I've got to nail this. I got to nail this." And it comes to me and I say, in Korean, "hi, my name is Elder Nelson." I'm like, I got it. I got it so far." Uh, and I'm like, What do I say? What do I say? And I have, uh, uh, two brothers and three sisters in my family. And if you're not, you're not watching YouTube, I have this smile on my face like, I got it. I nailed it. I totally nailed it. And everybody around me, it was like the most awkward reaction I've ever had. And then the person that ended up speaking next he was like, okay, that's great. Okay, let's go on to the next person. And so I go home, rehash browns, and then it comes to me. Guess what I

had said? In Korean, the word sister and tree is almost the same thing, but to Korean, it doesn't sound the same at all. In sister is nunat, and tree is namu. I said to them, in my family, I have two brothers and three trees. With no explanation whatsoever.

Hank Smith: 01:10:55 With a big smile.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 01:10:56 Yeah, with a big smile. They're like, "Okay, what are these Americans? Now they're adopting trees. They're so weird. Let's move on." You know? Why am I telling this story? It's because for some reason, the adversary decided to pull that experience to my memory. And I'm laughing about it now, but you know what came back to? Was those feelings of inadequacy and embarrassment and humiliation. And I started to get this downward cycle that I am so dumb. I'll never make an impact. I go to the temple. I go to the marker. And it's Isaiah 61:3. Great scripture. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion to give unto them beauty for ashes, beautiful symbolism, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and that they might be called trees of righteousness. The planting of the Lord that he might be glorified.

01:11:52 And I felt God laugh. It is a beautiful sound to hear God laugh with you. And he said to me, Don't worry about it. And I moved on and I've never looked back since without laughing. I just have faith that in the temple, God can connect with you and speak your language. What does Nephi say? In 2 Nephi 31:3, it says, God will speak to us according to our language. We can't mistake that for being English. It is your language of the heart, which for me is music and humor. I'm so grateful for that. So I believe in the power of spending time with God in his temple. Psalm 91:1, 911, if you're in emergency, go to the secret and the sacred place of the most High, and you will abide under the shadow of the Almighty. And that scorching sunlight that the world is pushing on you will be no more.



John Bytheway: 00:00:01 Welcome to part two of Psalms with Brother Steven Sharp Nelson.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:00:04 Let's go to 51. 51 is really critical. How do we remember Psalms 51? A very famous number for us is Area 51. Area 51 is where we keep things hidden, things we don't want anybody to know about. What do we do with our sins? We hide them. We don't want anybody to know about them. Area 51, we put our sins in Area 51. 51 is the beautiful Psalm of David. It's the repentance Psalm. Have mercy upon me, oh God, according to thy loving kindness. John, you talked about Jesus' titles. Is that not a great title? Loving kindness. My sin is ever before me, and I want to put it in Area 51, but it's ever before me. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. If you are struggling with something to repent, rather than beating yourself up and berating yourself, will you open up Psalm 51 and read it aloud?

00:01:13 And I bet tears will spring to your eyes because you'll feel that God doesn't seek to tear you down. He seeks to lift you up. His atonement is not chains, it's wings. There's a beautiful resolution. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness. You'll feel God's love. I hope you feel God's love. Pray until you do, but you'll feel it. I think of times in my life when I've had Area 51 moments. I will share one with you. One of the worst times of my life, and I will never forget it, even though I feel like God has forgiven me for it. I will never forget it. I was in a very stressed time in my life. Work was stressful. My church calling was stressful. My health wasn't very good. I wasn't getting enough sleep. All of these are this comorbidity that we experienced is like what Elder Holland talks about in Like a Broken Vessel.

00:02:10 He says often these things that are coming out are results of a concomitant effect is this cacophony of all of the things that we need to be addressing from a personal health standpoint. I was feeling all of that. Just from a history standpoint, I had a father

that had a temper, but I saw him completely overcome that temper when he was ordained a patriarch, which was the last calling he wanted. He was ordained a patriarch and we had patriarchal blessings in the home. The atmosphere of our home changed. He never showed his temper again after that day. Now that may sound like, oh my gosh, that's impossible. He did it. I was a boy with a major temper because of my ADHD. I couldn't quite figure out why everybody looked fixed and I looked broken. I would lash out and I would crash out and I would rage quit.

00:03:04 And I would do all these things that were so maddening to people because I was trying to come to grips with why I was broken, which I wasn't, but I thought I was. I overcame my temper after I saw my dad do it. This sounds weird, but I did it in the MTC. I hope you enter the MTC prospective missionaries with a good attitude because I will tell you, I've never felt the Spirit on a larger scale ever in my life than I have felt it in the MTC. Where so many people are coming together with a desire to learn and grow and strive to be like Christ at the same time. When I played cello when I was young, it sounded so screechy and horrible and my dad almost gave up on me. But you know what moment kept him going? It's when I played part of an ensemble.

00:03:45 All of us, even though we were screechy and we were sounding dissonant, somehow all of us together sounded consonant and sounded harmonious. I think that tends to be what we do in the gospel too. We're all struggling and making wrong notes, but when we come together, it somehow makes music. And that's what the MTC was for me and that Spirit thrust the temper out of me and I overcame my temper. I thought I was good to go until I had children. The temper came back. When I was in this moment of absolute abject, what do you call it? Just at the low point. My daughter just pressed that very right button. And I yelled at her and I was rough with her. And I saw in her eyes fear at her father. And that was the day I overcame my temper in front of my children.

00:04:37 And I read this Psalm, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness. My sin, my temper is ever before me. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." And the Spirit inspired me to go into my daughter's room. And she was sobbing. I crawled into bed next to her and I gave her a big hug and I said, "I'm so sorry. Will you please forgive me?" To this day, it's one of the most beautiful moments of our relationship instead of one of the worst moments of our relationship. Thanks be to Jesus. If you find yourself in that

situation, Psalms 51 can not only help you feel connected to Christ in your weakness, but can also engender promptings that can help you out of the hole you feel you're in. For me, that time when I cradled my daughter and asked for forgiveness, and of course she forgave me because she's Mosiah 3:19 already. She forgave me and said, "Oh, daddy, daddy, I forgive you." And yeah, that was a powerful moment. I wanted to be vulnerable in front of you. And if you've ever had moments like that, I hope Psalms 51 at least can be something of comfort to you.

Hank Smith: 00:05:52 Thank you for that, Steven. Yeah. I think everybody listening will say, "I've been there."

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:05:58 Next, this is four of five. We're almost there. You're almost an official psalmist. You're going to get a badge. 121. How do we remember 121? The Psalmist talks about one hill, two eyes, and one savior. One hill, two eyes, one savior. One, two, one. You can also think about it, you being one to one with the Savior. One, two, one. It's a scripture for help. This is why it's so important to memorize this one. I will lift up mine eyes. Two eyes. Unto the hills. By the way, NIV and every other translation uses mountain, which I think is significant. We could say one mountain. I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains from whence cometh my help. I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains from whence cometh my help. That's such a cool trust scripture. I'll tell you a quick story that typifies this for me.

00:06:57 Anybody that says they love tour is lying through their teeth. I mean, tour is so hard. Yes, I love performing, but I don't love touring. David Simone, our manager was also the Beach Boys manager. And I know John, you're a big fan of The Beach Boys. So this is a guy that knows his stuff. I went to him one day, I'm like, "David, how do people do this? Like, how do people tour for decades of their life?" Basically, you get on a bus, you go to a venue, you sound check. That soundcheck sometimes has an audience. Then you play a show. Then you do a meet and greet afterwards where you're talking to hundreds of people. Then you get on that same bus and go to the next city and do it over and over and over again. And he looks at me without a smile and he says, "Drugs." And I was like, "Well, David, I'm not going to do that." I mean, I said, "On a really rough day, I might do a Mountain Dew, but that's as tough as I get." He says, "Well, but you asked a question," and he wasn't joking.

00:07:50 He says, "What happens is an artist innocently at first will take a little bit of a downer to get them to sleep because they're feeling anticipation of tour and nervousness. Then when they get to the stage, they're too tired. What do they do? They take

an upper. Then they're too high on that and the adrenaline of the show. So what do they do? They take two downers. That's why it gets so horrible. My point was on tour, I was so tired. The tired I was feeling was the kind of tired that was right down to the marrow. I remember I was on the side of the stage, and we had committed as The Piano Guys that this wasn't just touring. We wanted to make it a ministry where we would hope that people would bring in their heaviness to our show and leave lighter.

00:08:33 Our effort was to help people feel the Spirit and let the Spirit do the hefty lifting. I was on the side of the stage, and I knew this was my ministry, and I was saying my prayer. All I wanted to do was I wanted to crawl into the fetal position in the darkest corner of that stage I could find and not talk to anybody ever again. Because I was so tired and fatigued and burned out of being on all the time. On for soundcheck, on for performance, on for meet and greet, over and over and over again, day after day, after day. And I was sitting on the side of the stage and I said, Heavenly Father, don't make me go out there. I can't do it. Just before I turned around to find that dark corner, I had the coolest moment. However God speaks to you, will you please not assume that how he speaks to me is the same he needs to speak to you?

00:09:23 For me, again, he uses a little bit of humor, and it's more of a voice that I can feel because I'm very dense and I need more obviousness than the little light hints. And he knows that. So I'm standing on the side of the stage just about to look for that dark corner. And I hear this voice and it says, "Oh, my dear son. When have I ever given you the impression that it's all up to you? You just go out there. You put one foot in front of the other, and I'll take care of the rest." And I walked out on that stage and I sat down on that chair. And for the whole night, I felt floating six inches off that chair. Carried, strengthened, helped. From whence did my help come? The mountain, which is Jesus Christ. The mountain of the Lord is sometimes the mountain the Lord himself. He can move mountains and he can move himself and he can move me. It's just so incredible to think about. We have this source of help, but when has he ever given you the impression that it's all up to you? And if you are despondent at the side of whatever stage you're on and you're feeling to crawl into the fetal position, remember that he's never said that it's all up to you. You show up, you pray for his help, and he'll help. He'll come. He'll come. Psalms 121.

Hank Smith: 00:10:48 I love it. 121. It was one, two, one.

Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:10:52	Yep.
John Bytheway:	00:10:53	I love Sister Chieko Okazaki. She shared this in one of her books, and I was like, "Whoa, whoa, wait, wait, what?" I found the January 96 issue of Guideposts. And I found the story of Captain James Ray, who was shot down in May of 1966 in his F-105 Thunder Chief, which I happen to know exactly what that jet looks like because I'm just weird that way, but -
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:11:23	I love it.
John Bytheway:	00:11:24	He's on the floor in a prison cell. He can only see out from under the door. This is what makes me weep. The guards are walking back and forth, and they can only communicate when the guards are at the far side. But somebody starts to whisper, introducing themselves and their names and their families. And then this voice, Bob Purcell, says, "Do you know any Bible verses?" Imagine this. He says, "I know the Lord's prayer." He says, "Everybody knows that. How about the 23rd Psalm?" Think of a prisoner reciting the 23rd Psalm. The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. He prepareth the table before me in the presence of my enemies." These Psalms are bringing him comfort. He said, "As the number of our prisoners grew, two of us shared a cell. My first cellmate was Larry Chesley, a Mormon from Idaho."
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:12:23	Does it actually say that in there? That is so cool.
John Bytheway:	00:12:26	Yeah. He said, "Though we had a few differences of belief, our common denominators were the Bible and Jesus Christ, and we were able to share and write down a great deal of scripture. It became vital to our daily existence, often racked with dysentery, weakened by a diet of rice, thin cabbage, and pumpkin soup. Our physical lives shrunk within the prison walls. We spent 20 hours a day locked in cells. Those Bible verses became rays of light. Constant assurances of God's love and care. We made ink from brick dust and water or precious drops of medicine. We wrote Bible verses on bits of toilet paper, slipped them to others, dropping them behind loose brick in the latrines. It was dangerous to do that. Communication was forbidden and anyone caught passing a note would be forced to stand with his arms against the wall for several days without sleep.
	00:13:21	One night, I lay with my ear pressed against the rough wooden wall of my cell to hear a thump, thump, thump, thump, thump. And somewhere, somebody was tapping in morse code. I-W-I-L-L-L-I-F-T-U-P. I would lift up mine eyes unto the hills from

whence cometh my help. It was these Psalms they were tapping out to each other in morse code, getting them through this time in prison. They were connecting to God that way. He scratched it on the floor with a broken piece of tile on the floor of his cell. I will lift up my eyes unto the hills. The thing that was just struck me is they weren't asking this new prisoner of war, who won the World Series? They were saying, do you know any scriptures? The one thing they were begging for was an English Bible.

00:14:30 One night, a guard brought in an English Bible and they started copying as fast as they could and comparing what they had remembered. And sensing they were gathering strength from this, they came and took it away. But he says this great line, this great paragraph, "From that, we learned a most important lesson. Bible verses on paper aren't one iota as useful as scriptures burned into your mind where you can draw on them for guidance and comfort."

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:15:00 Who would have more downcast eyes than a prisoner of war in a camp situation like that? How far up would he have to lift his eyes compared to you and me? That is the power of Jesus Christ. That is an incredible story and one that gives us some perspective as to our current situations. That's beautiful. Thank you, John. The last Psalm is the easiest one because you already know it. It is Psalm 23. It's the one that everybody knows. How do I remember it? You can remember it however you want. But 23 is significant to me, and this is why. I have insomnia. It can be debilitating at times. It is because of my overactive mind and my nervous system, which is a superpower, but it also is kryptonite for me. If you are like me, and heaven help you if you are, like I said, you often wake up at two or three in the morning.

00:15:54 There is something about that time of two or three in the morning. I don't know what it is. I find myself often awake at two or three in the morning. And this is what I've learned, that instead of counting sheep, you should talk to the Shepherd. Because if you're waking up at two or three in the morning, I guarantee God has something to say. Whether you talk with him then, which sometimes we don't want to because that'll extend our insomnia, but you can, and I've done it many times. Or you ask him in the next morning when you're doing your devotional with him, "What's going on with this two to three wake-up? Can you tell me, as my shepherd, what I need to be doing or what I'm not doing or how I can help through this?" So remember Psalm 23. When you are waking up at two or three in the morning, two or three in the morning, remember Psalm 23.

	00:16:37	The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not count sheep. I shall not die. This is the valley and the shadow. I mean, this is the Psalm that everybody should memorize, and it's so beautiful. I urge you to go into that and memorize as much as you can. But now you at least know where it is and you'll remember it. Even in the middle of the night, I will say that Psalm 30:5 needs to be connected to it, please. If you're waking up at two or three in the morning, this is a direct connection. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. If you are stuck, will you please remember the Satan's favorite lie, the adversary's favorite lie is it won't ever get better. It will never improve. You are stuck. It is his favorite lie. Why? Because we become angels to a devil, like Jacob says in 2 Nephi 9. We're stuck. We're not progressing. We're convinced that it's never going to get better. But we believe in a gospel of good things to come.
	00:17:45	We believe in the high priest of good things to come, which is Jesus Christ. He said, fear not. Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. Come unto me, ye that are heavy laden. That labor in heavy laden. I will give you rest for my yoke is easy. My burden is light. Is it easy? Well, it's a lot easier with him than without him. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. I've had times like that where the dark cloud is too cumulous for me to even hope past it and even to be grateful for it. Just utter the one-word prayer. Just say help over and over and over again. And then listen. He will come to your rescue because he is your shepherd and you will know his voice when it comes to you. I'll tell you a funny story to lighten the mood because we're getting a little too serious here. But you're a Highland High grad, just like I am. Go rams. Did you ever have Julie Hewlett for humanities?
John Bytheway:	00:18:47	Absolutely I did.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:18:48	Oh, don't you love Julie Hewlett?
John Bytheway:	00:18:50	I love Julie Hewlett. I had her for history. Well, she also taught boys glee or something.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:18:56	Yeah. Yeah. Right.
John Bytheway:	00:18:57	But I had her for American history, I think. Julie Hewlett was awesome. I loved her.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:19:02	I want to tell you something about creativity that relates to Julie Hewlett experience with Julie Hewlett. I'm going to preface that by saying this. If we do not exercise creativity in our life, it will

find its way out one way or another. Creativity that's not positively exercised becomes malignant. Let me say that again. Creativity not positively exercised becomes malignant. What do I mean by that? We start using our imagination and our creativity to make up false stories and to imagine the worst case scenario. We'll build grand castle-like frameworks around the worst thing that could possibly happen. Why? Because that's our creativity trying to get out. If we exercise it positively, our imagination creativity will have no room to create worst case scenarios that are just not possible. I had a friend of mine say the other day, I worry all the time, but 90% of the things I worry about never happen. Worrying works.

00:20:05 Hold on. Wait a minute. Just remember that if you're finding yourself overthinking and overanalyzing and building worst case scenarios and telling yourself stories of what somebody said behind your back, which they didn't, it's because you're not exercising enough positive creativity. It's a natural function of creativity trying to get out one way or another and becoming malignant. Why do I tell you that story? Why does it relate to Julie Hewlett? Well, Julie Hewlett was teaching humanities and she taught me this principle in a funny story. She's pulling up slides. We're doing art. You know, this is art history. You got to memorize all of these pieces of art. She pulls up this modern piece of art. And I'm not a huge fan of modern art. I think it has a place, but I think sometimes it's about innovation rather than aestheticism.

00:20:49 I'm seeing this and it's this stark, roughly bucketed piece of canvas with splashes of red paint all over it. And it just looked like, you know, a toddler was busy at work. She looks down and she says, "This is called The Shepherd and His Sheep." Then she analyzes it. And with her incredible prolific imagination, predigious imagination, she says, "You see in the top corner how this abstract representation of a splash could be the shepherd's call." And then she interprets the painting and all of us are like, "Wow, how are you seeing any of this?" And in the lower corner, you see the sheeps coming and we're just like, "What?" She hits the slide, and the next slide comes up, and it's a shepherd and three sheep.

00:21:37 She had mislabeled the painting and had described this modern piece of artwork based upon the false title of Shepherd and His Sheep and spent a great deal of time doing it. And this is what we do in our life. We attach a label to something. We overthink it, overanalyze it, build worst case scenarios, and get to the point where we're not, it's no longer about art and creativity and joy. And it's about getting caught in this mire, this absolute

mire of overthinking. So if you're caught in that cycle, remember the Shepherd and His sheep and how young David, when he was growing up, he wasn't doing what his older brothers were doing. What was he doing? He was out tending the sheep. Can you imagine how pastoral his life must have been? How meditative, how simple, how clear it was, his purpose? Rather than being grandly out for other people's approval in grand Israel, he was just tending the sheep.

00:22:34 And that's a beautiful way to look at life is, okay, maybe I just tend my sheep instead of trying to win over this grand thing that I'm making into a worst case scenario. Now we move on to Act three. We're in the third act of our three-act play here on the followHIM podcast. Ladies and gentlemen, what's the next contestant if you're the game show host, prefrontal cortex like I am? What do we do with the Psalms? As we become Psalmists, part of that is recognizing and utilizing the power of music and writing words in our own life. Let's talk about the power of music. Listening, learning, and lifting. We can listen, learn, and lift with the power of music. The first thing I want to do is open this up, and I want to ask you as the listener this question. I will ask you the question that I'm going to tell my story while you're thinking. I'm going to use Psalms 126:5-6. This is a great Psalm. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

00:23:42 I want to ask you this question. Where were you the first time music made you cry? Or if you're not a crier at all, the first time music breathed life into you or picked you up and dusted you off or compelled you to live more fully? Where were you the first time that happened? If you can remember. Maybe you don't remember the first time, but then just tell me about the first time you remember. And I'll tell you my story. I was 11 years old. I was up in the second floor of our little home in the Sugarhouse area in Utah. My father, who was trying to encourage me to use my spare time for good, would incentivize me. He was a very smart father. He said, "Steve, I need your help. I have a record that needs to be converted to cassette." Now, none of us understand that except for John in this podcast. But what I mean to say is it was older formats of audio that needed to be updated.

00:24:42 So the record, I needed to convert to tape. And he said, I bet you're a techie guy. You know, you could figure that out. And I said okay. And he said, "I'll even pay you to do it," because my dad was just good that way. I went upstairs and I remember this little chest of drawers that had these little, this opaquely off-white painted drawers that were sticky when I'd open them up.

Inside one of those, I found a tape deck that I could plug an RCA cable into from our record player and play the record and hit record. You hit record and play at the same time. I pushed play and record and I placed the needle gingerly on that record and the scratches began.

00:25:22 And what I heard next changed me forever. I heard the voice of an angel, a soprano, the likes of which I had never heard in my life. It was so transcendent, so effortless, as if it were upon the wisps of clouds. It lifted me to a new place. Tears sprung to my eyes for the first time in my life. Music had made me cry and my heart opened. As an 11-year-old struggling with the peak of our self-esteem junior high stage, yikes, I felt one with who I really am inside. That feeling has never left me since. I said, "What is this music?" I looked at the back of the record slip that the record had been in the jacket of the record. And it said the soprano listed the soprano as Lynne Sanders. Now you don't know that name, my friends, but I did. That was my mother's maiden name.

00:26:34 I had never heard her sing. We discovered a brain tumor when I was two years old. It robbed her of her voice. And as a child, I wasn't aware enough to ask my dad, hey, what did mom do before this brain tumor inhibited her? What was my dad doing? Can you believe that? That he found a way for me to connect not only with music to, but to my angel mother, who at the time I was recording from record to tape, was in bed, struggling, who is living the law of charity. And mom, in my scriptures, it says and charity, instead of and charity, it says, and mom suffereth long. And envieth not, and is not puffed up. Thinketh no evil. Hopeth all things. Beareth all things. Maybe you have someone in your life where you need to write their name above charity in Moroni 7:45. Maybe they're suffering long. Why? Because my mother taught me a thousand sermons without uttering a word. That's just who she was. And watching my dad take care of her was the finest instruction of spirituality I could ever have beyond scripture.

00:27:43 Here I was having this moment of connection with the divine. As Beethoven talks about, I was raised to divine, facilitated by my mother's voice, which was now from the dust, essentially. The dust of a dusty record. And I played that over and over and over again. And the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, but don't make a mistake that you have to sing that song. You can be listening to somebody else's song and it can be your prayer. It was my prayer that day. From that moment on, I committed to God that I would praise him with music as my mother so effortlessly had done. To this day, I'll never forget that feeling.

So my question for you is, when did the power of music find its way into your heart?

John Bytheway: 00:28:40 Oddly enough, it was the Beach Boys. You're going to laugh?

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:28:47 No, I love this already.

John Bytheway: 00:28:48 There's a song The Beach Boys sing called The Warmth of the Sun, and I had a break up and the lyric, I think, is the love of my life, she left me one day. I cried when she said, I don't feel the same way. And then this line, Still, I have the warmth of the sun within me tonight. And suddenly, S-U-N was S-O-N.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:29:11 Wow.

John Bytheway: 00:29:12 I have the warmth of the Son. I had a page in my Franklin Day planner. This goes back to cassette tapes and LP records, that I would sometimes just turn to that page and read phrases from my patriarchal blessings and read phrases from hymns to buoy me up. And one of them said, What more can he say than to you, he hath said. And I remembered how many times in my blessing and that the Lord was saying, and I actually had on that page, Steven, be still and know that I am God. All flesh is in my hands. It was all there. I would go over those verses and the Lord would say, Have I already told you? What more can I say? There's a line in, O Holy Night. There's a phrase, the thrill of hope. And Jesus is hope, and it's a thrill to know there is always hope. It changes everything, that because of Christ, there's hope. It's a thrilling thought. There's always hope. And so all of those things together is my contribution to that question.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:30:23 Wow. I had a YSA approach me who was suffering with scrupulosity. You leaders out there, you, men and women that are offered a leadership position temporarily to lift others, please be so gentle and give grace to these situations. It is so tricky to navigate. He cried to me and said, I feel so guilty when I'm listening to music that is not tabernacle choir. I said, Hold on. Hold the phone. Wait a minute. Where do you get that from? Where does that expectation come from? And we explored it and found that it was completely baseless. Sister Bonnie Parkin, General Relief Society President, truth is truth no matter where it's found. The Spirit is the Spirit no matter where it is found. If it's found in a Beach Boys song, it's found in a Beach Boys song. You be honest with yourself. You are the DJ of your own soul.

	00:31:22	You know what's helpful and you know what's hurtful. You don't have to pretend otherwise. You decide, you work it out with the Lord, but he trusts you. He trusts you. Work it out with him to make sure that the music you're listening to is not monophonic, is not insistent upon one particular genre. That's like insisting on living in the same one room of your house the whole time because it's the nicest room. No. Live your life out there. Explore every genre of music you can. Rule out things that chase the Spirit away. Bring in things that bring the Spirit. The shortest distance between me and the Spirit is the right song at the right time. I have found songs that have come out of nowhere. You've had that happen to you. I know you have. Where the song comes out of nowhere and you're like, are you kidding me?
	00:32:11	Really? Right now? This is exactly what I needed to hear. And I'll listen to that song with my ADHD hyperfocus over and over and over and over again until it wears out its welcome. It's good we don't have records anymore. They'd all be scratched in my case because I just do that. But this is what I would advise. Here's a practical way of helping. We have an incredible opportunity with technology to be helped in the process of finding good music. It can be the reverse. If you turn on the radio, chances are you're going to be fed a bunch of garbage. But here's a way to use technology against itself and for your benefit. There is something called, and every platform uses a different term, auto-play on YouTube. I believe on Spotify it's called Smart Shuffle. On Amazon, it's called like my soundtrack or my station.
	00:33:04	Here's how it works. I want you to pick out the song you want to hear in that moment, but make it a good one because here's why. You can go to Spotify, Amazon, or Apple Music and say create a playlist or smart shuffle or auto-play based on this song. Now, here's what's cool about what happens. I don't want to get weird, you guys, but I do believe that there is angelic power that can overcome technology sometimes. We've seen certainly the other way, anytime somebody presents a Sunday School lesson, there's some kind of devilish power that tries to take over technology every time it doesn't work.
Hank Smith:	00:33:46	This worked five minutes ago, right? This worked five minutes ago.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:33:50	Well, I believe the opposite is true. And I don't say that superfluously. I say that with sincerity. I will listen to an Elder Holland talk that I love, and I will turn on auto-play and I'll let it play. And often as I'm doing, it's sort of my body doubling with ADHD, someone kindof working on something, somebody

talking in the background. Often it'll auto-play to something I need to hear. I will play a song that is my favorite song in the moment and I'll put headphones in or I'll have it in the background and I'll say auto-play based on this song. And I choose that song very carefully. And auto-play will bring songs, some which I've heard and some of which I've never heard before. I have seen this work wonders. I've heard a song come on where it's like, oh my gosh, that's exactly what I needed to hear.

00:34:34 Give God a chance to create an episode where you can actually hear something that you need to hear. I'll give you an example of this. So I'm driving in my car and I use this smart shuffle and I'm heading to a meeting that I'm dreading. It's a really toughie. I believe we can pray for specific angels to come to our aid. I don't say this lightly, what I've studied and what I've experienced in my life. You can say, God, I need help. I need a specialist. I remember one time when I was underprepared for a concerto I played, I said, God, I know that my mom was really good at showing up and just making it up. Having the Spirit lift her to a level of expertise and acumen that was not natural. She told me that story. Can she come and help me somehow in that?

00:35:23 Enabled by the atoning power of Jesus Christ. And that concerto, I played flawlessly and I had never once played it flawlessly before in my life, no matter how many times I practiced it. I believe that specific angels, people, our lost loved ones can come to our aid and to our rescue and that we can specifically ask for them. This is why we cannot be saved without them. They cannot be saved without us. Why do we want to learn family history? You can come up with a lot of reasons that aren't good enough for me, but the reason for me is the more I know about my family history, the more I can call on specialists. I didn't know my grandpa died early and I never knew him, but I found out he was an incredible public speaker through family history. When I go into a keynote and I'm nervous, I say, God, send Grandpa Elroy.

00:36:14 Can you send Grandpa Elroy? I know he was really good at this. And I feel him. And you imagine in the next life when I never knew him in this life, do you imagine how much more connected I'm going to be with him in the next life when I see him? Thanks, grandpa for helping me out. Why doesn't Jesus come to our rescue every time? Because he wants to delegate that so that people on the other side of the veil can have the joy of being involved in our salvation. It's so cool. Think about all the people you've done temple work for. Wouldn't they want so

desperately to do something for you? I did this the other day. I'm writing my Broadway musical and I'm hitting major roadblocks. Writer's block like you wouldn't believe, my friends. I actually did a walking prayer because I'm ADHD I walk pray a lot.

00:36:57 And out loud is really helpful. Speaking out loud, I say, God, I know among the people I've done temple work for are really good writers. Could you send one or two of them to help me through this writer's block? And I sit back down. This was so cool. It flowed, it flowed, it flowed so beautifully at that point. And I felt divine aid. And I can imagine the joy of these people that are like, you know, when God created the plan, remember what he said? He said, whom shall I send? Don't you think there might be a microcosm there for us as we say, you know, Hank Smith is praying right now and he really needs help with this. He needs help with this specific thing. And God's like, who wants to go? Isn't that a cool agency moment that your great-grandfather who happens to be really good at the thing that you're struggling with is like, ooh, ooh, pick me.

00:37:49 That is such a cool thought. He's like, oh, I want to be there. I want to be there for my great-grandson, Hank. And maybe it's as you're walking out the door, he just gives you a little bit of a thought. I just think there's so much more of that that goes on behind the scenes than we realize. And I'm going to switch it to my dad because he died prematurely of vascular dementia as well. As he was going through dementia, he's sitting in the passenger seat. And I wrote a song for him. It was an amalgam of Fight Song together with Amazing Grace. Because my father taught me that when the fights of our life grow too fierce to fight on our own, you can turn them over to grace and let grace do the fighting for you. That was his legacy for me to teach me that.

00:38:27 I'm driving in the car and I just say, play this song and then give me smart shuffle based upon it. Well, after that song was done, guess what second song came up? That song that I wrote for my dad. And there he is in the passenger seat, one of the last times I spent with him. The chances of that are zero. Zero. But that's what came. And so I think it can happen. So if you're looking for a little boost on helping God to just inspire you with music, try that principle.

Hank Smith: 00:38:54 I was thinking about your question. I thought of a couple of things. One, I don't know how old I was. I had to be, you know, 13 or 14 when I listened to Les Miserables for the first time. Just the story of a redemption, it really moved me. It's probably a

very common experience because it's a step below scripture, but it's right there. It's a good room in the house, like you said, Steven. I also remember reading the words. This had to be even further back. I remember reading the words and I had to be single digits. I had to be eight or nine years old. I was reading towards the words to There is a Green Hill Far Away. I was sitting at church and they sang it for sacrament meeting and I just sat and read it. I'm not sure why.

00:39:42 Little ADHD brain. I read there's a green hill far away without a city wall. And I could see it. Where the dear Lord was crucified who died to save us all. Oh, dearly, dearly has he loved? We must love him too and trust in his redeeming blood and try his works to do. I still remember it. I had to be eight years old, but I remember reading those words and them having impact. I don't think I cried. The last time I cried was when the Jazz lost to the Bulls in 1998. But I think it does something very similar to crying as the movement.

John Bytheway: 00:40:22 Hank, did you ever sing that hymn in the Jerusalem Center? The first time I ever went to the Holy Land, we started singing There is a Green Hill Far Away. And I just remember going, well, actually, it's right over there. It was.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:40:37 There is a green hill right next door.

John Bytheway: 00:40:40 I was just so shocked that I was there. Actually, it's just over that. Oh, my goodness. To be there and to think how close you were to it. Thank you for bringing that one up. That was the sacrament hymn I asked for at my mission farewell and still remember because I loved the message of it as well.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:41:01 Let's talk about music helping us with one of the biggest pain points of life right now, especially for parents, parents out there, grandparents that are listening. One of the biggest pain points is there are lots of testimony meetings where a grandparent or a parent will get up and lament over a lost child. A lost sheep. A sheep that has strayed, whatever term is used, leaving the church. The term is used faith crisis. And brethren, I would invite you to be on a little crusade with me on trying to change, reframe faith crisis. I don't love that term. I'm with Elder Holland. He says, "To have faith is to be in crisis." So to single out people that are maybe taking more of a circuitous route and finding other journeys, I would say, let's say faith journey instead of faith crisis. Words can be powerful.

00:41:56 I think we should all consider ourselves in some sort of crisis. And that's why we need Christ. Instead of singling people out

like we're not in crisis, you're in crisis. I think that it separates us. And it delineates some kind of chasm between us. It's not helpful. But I want to tell a story of something that's really helped me with this, and I hope it's helpful for people out there. It's the parable of the meet and greet line. I want to share this in light of what it means in relationship to two pain points. Let's push pause on the parental pain point of a child that is taking an extended faith journey. And let's go to another pain point that is often expressed to me, but relative. I will have people that will wait in line two to three hours in a meet and greet line. The first thing they say to me when they shake my hand after seeing the show, after waiting that long is, oh, I'm so sad my child didn't keep up the piano or the cello. I'm so sad that I didn't do enough. It was a downer. You know, here I tried to play this show and meet and greet line, I'm keeping my energy up as much as I can. And somebody's like, I'm depressed. I'm like, oh.

Hank Smith: 00:43:14 I waited in line to tell you.

John Bytheway: 00:43:15 I waited in line to tell you that you failed.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:43:20 It's like, okay, thanks for coming. Anything I would say would be so lame after that. It happens so many times that Alma tells me I can pray over my flock, and this is the flock. I said, "God, I'm struggling with this. It's such a downer. I don't know what to say. Can you help?" What came to me was really cool. Really cool. And it relates to our pain point, our parental pain point that I was talking about. He said, "The next time you get to meet and greet line, I've got you." He just said, "You open your mouth. I'll put the words in." I said, "Okay. I've seen that happen before. I'll try it again." A woman comes up to me and she says, "I'm so sad that my son gave up the piano." I looked up kind of like, "Here's the moment." And I looked at her and I said, "Every second your son spent at that instrument was worth it.

00:44:19 Every second he was at that piano bench, expanded his mind, improved his confidence, increased his self-discipline. Every second counted." She looked at me as if she took this burden off her shoulders and let it go. I know that sounds so silly, but it was such a profound exchange. From then on out, I have discovered so many things about this. It was so special. We had this wonderful moment. I've used it countless times since then. Every second spent at that instrument counted and mattered and exercised both sides of the brain. And I use that for people who have remorse over their own giving up of the instrument. Now let's put that into the pain point of a parent who feels like they haven't done enough. A grandparent or a parent who feels

like they haven't done enough for their child who's taking an extended faith journey.

00:45:15 I'm talking to you. God loves you and loves your effort. And I can say with enough confidence that I would suppose, and I would hope, that if you came to God and said, "Oh, I wish my son or my daughter would've stayed in the church." He would look at you and said, "Every second they spent in that pew mattered and counted and enriched their life forevermore." And here's where it gets especially good. Let's look at Psalm 78, verse seven. It's they that might set their hope in God and not forget the works in God. I'm going to relate this to Proverbs 22:6, which is the pain point. Train up a child in the way he shall go, and he will not depart from it. That can't be true in every case.

00:46:10 This is another way you can read it. Train up a child in the way he shall go, and it will not depart from him. Every second you read scriptures, every second you attempted and failed Come, Follow Me. Every second you insisted they were in that pew, every second mattered and counted and will never leave them. The last thing I will say to that is this. If your definition of family success or success as a parent or a grandparent is predicated, contingent upon something you can't control, you will never be happy. If your definition of success as a parent or grandparent is dependent upon something you cannot control, you will never be happy. Instead, what if your definition of success was I love my child and they know it? Base your definition of parental, grandparental, or family success on something you can control and your life will change.

Hank Smith: 00:47:17 Wow. That was wonderful, Steven. It shall never depart from him.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:47:22 There's a word that occurs commonly over and over again in the Psalms, and it's selah. Selah is significant. Why? Because selah means pause. To me, selah is the Psalm's version of the fermata. Fermata in music. For those of you can't see and are listening, it's like a arc that's over a dot. So it looks like a bird's eye kind of. What does that mean when it's placed over a note? It's actually my favorite musical symbol.

John Bytheway: 00:47:53 Look at the conductor.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:47:54 Yes. Hold. It means hold that note. And the greatest thing about it is it's up to the artist's discretion to decide or the conductor's discretion on how long that's held. All of a sudden, it's in your hands. Even if it's God's music, all of a sudden it's like, how long

do I hold this? It's beautiful because this is where we come back to Mozart too. Mozart said that music is not in the notes, but is in the space between. I would say that the Psalms, the meaning of the Psalms isn't necessarily in the words, it's in the space between. That's between you and the Lord and how you burn them into your mind, like we talked about, and how you become a Psalmist yourself. How your experiences become your Psalms, your stories, your parables. I would also say this. I have discovered that life is not in our expectations, but in the space between them.

00:48:50 We often have these expectations that are imposed upon us or self-imposed that come from a system or a person. And when those are not met, we feel this tension. It's a tension between human time and divine time. We're in living in abundance, and that can create a sense of control over our outcomes. So when an outcome doesn't come about the way we want it, we feel not only like it's broken, but it's betrayal. That's where our trust issues come from. But to reconcile this, expectations in this world can be held lightly while faith anchors on the belief that ultimately resolution and deliverance will occur, but on God's terms.

00:49:30 President Nelson's Expect Miracles. Let's think about that. His teaching encourages an openness to divine intervention, but not entitlement to a specific timing or form. Often, if you are caught in the expectations rather than the space between, you may feel unhappiness in your life. Remember selah, which is pause, be still. The fermata is on you to hold that as long as you can or want. But also remember, the symphony is the Lord's. The tension between our time and God's divine time is tense indeed. But this is what I would say is look at the space between the expectations in your life. Find meaning there. Find happiness, find joy, find solace, find stillness in space between the expectations. And that's what selah is to me.

Hank Smith: 00:50:19 Steven, this has been fantastic. I have pages of notes. John, have you just been trying to jot down these, this wisdom?

John Bytheway: 00:50:27 Yep. It's really good.

Hank Smith: 00:50:29 He doesn't even let us know that it's coming. He just says this very insightful, profound thing and moves on. And I'm like, "Well, hold on. Hold on. Let me write that down." Yeah, let us know when you're about to, to change everything, change my whole paradigm. Before we let you go, give us a last note. Hey, do you see what I did there? What do you want our listeners to remember?

Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:50:50	I think I'd like to talk about something that is sort of an unfinished subject in a lot of our lives. I have discovered that there are no unanswered prayers. There's only unfinished prayers. I remember a while ago, I was in the middle of an interview. We had had so many interviews at the outset of The Piano Guys because people were scratching their heads. They're like, why are The Piano Guys successful? These guys are not rock stars. They don't fit the mold. You know, nobody's pinning their pictures up in lockers anywhere. Like, who are these guys? But we got the question a lot. How have you been doing this? Like, what if people want to do what you're doing? Those people out there that are also nerdy like you are, how could they do what you're doing? What advice would you have for them? And that was a lot of pressure.
	00:51:30	And I felt like I just spit out platitudes. So I was like, well, practice hard. Work hard. Live your dream. It was so nauseating. I remember one day I started into that, and it was this liberal publication. So I was really being careful about spirituality, which I'm not anymore, by the way, because people will criticize you no matter what you say, you might as well be yourself. I'm just myself, so I just express my testimony whenever it feels natural and not overbearing. And I said, "You know what? The only advice I could give is the only way we've seen that's worked in our lives and the only explanation we have for a success, and it's a quote by a man named Ezra Benson." And I quoted verbatim the quote that John is just about to read for you.
John Bytheway:	00:52:10	President Ezra Taft Benson said, "Men and women who turn their lives over to God will discover that he can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends and pour out peace."
Steven Sharp Nelson:	00:52:36	First off, if you are asking the question, how do I turn my life over to God? You are already doing it. You've already started. Your feet are on that path. And in closing, I want to recite my favorite Psalm and my favorite words from him. I'm going to close that. And it has to do with feet on the path. Your feet are already on that path, number one. Number two, what to do next. I will say that the reason why it's hard to express this and why we shy away from the how is because it's different for everyone. It is personal. It's between you and the Lord. If we go all Instagram influencer on you and explain exactly formulaically how to do this, it actually might hinder you more than it'll help you, because that has to be between you and the Lord.

However, I don't want to disappoint you with a answer that is a deflection.

00:53:34 I would love to offer at least what worked for me in hopes that it will help you take the next step. After the first step of asking, take the next step. There was a great talk President Oaks gave called Good, Better, Best. The inspiration for what I'm about to tell you is derived from that. However, there's a very personal spin on this. When we hear a talk like that, sometimes we feel the pressure. And I love this. When we were talking about this talk in Elder's Quorum, one of my good friends, Mike, he raises his hand in Elders Quorum. He's like, "Can I get something straight here? You guys are all talking about good, better, best, but there's a lot of us who are really struggling just to get to good." And I really related to that. Put aside the scrupulosity. Put aside the toxic perfectionism.

00:54:25 I know how that feels. I grew up in classical music for heaven's sakes. Put aside all that. I want you to clean the slate. Will you clear your mind and start over with me? Start instead with simply your relationship with God. Let's start there. I worked with my YSAs a lot on this. There's so many expectations. Well, you got to do this. You got to do that. You got to fulfill a calling. You got to get married. You got to go to school. You got to get a job. Put all of that aside. I want everything off the plate. And I want one thing only on that plate. And that's you and your relationship with Jesus. Start there. How do we turn our life over to someone like Jesus? Well, we've got to get to know him. We've got to talk with him. This is the beginning of the journey of turning your life over to God.

00:55:17 The reason why I call it good, better, best is because I don't want to place an expectation on you that every day is going to be a hit record. Just like every song I write will never be a hit and every baseball swing will never be a home run. Every day you try to turn your life over to God will not be best. But it'll be good. And there are some days when good is good enough. Pick your favorite book of scripture. And I would strongly suggest that this be the Book of Mormon. Why? Because it's the book that draws us nearest to God. It's the book that says Jesus the most. And it's the book that talks about Christ the most. It's my favorite book. I would strongly recommend that you use the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is a conversation starter with God.

00:56:04 That's it. Let's start there. What we're going to do is we're going to have a piece of paper out or a computer screen or an iPad. I'd hesitate using your phone because there's so many distractions.

A keyboard's better. Do you write or type? You decide that. It needs to be write or type. And this is where the psalmist comes in. If we're not writing enough, it's just not going to work. I want your planner out, your calendar out. I want everything that is your life, it's on the table. This is your life we're talking about. We got our Book of Mormon open. And you say an out loud prayer to God, and you pour out everything. This is not a nourish and strengthen or a moisture prayer, okay? I know those are great prayers, but this is a real dig into it prayer. Cast your burdens on him.

00:56:48 Pour out your thoughts. Ask him for help. Say it out loud because you won't wander. Then you go to the Book of Mormon and you start reading. It could be where you left off. It could be an open page to random. It could be in Come, Follow Me, whatever you want to do. Open the book. Start reading. When a word or a phrase or a verse stands out to you, could be one verse, could be two verses, could be three verses. When it stands out to you, that's God signaling I want to talk. I'd love to talk. Then what you do is you've opened the door, and now I want you to type and write until there's nothing left in that ink, in that pen, nothing left in your fingers. That first paragraph will likely be garbage. That's how I write music too. It might be stream of consciousness.

00:57:33 You just write and pretty soon it'll get really good. And the things you talked about in your out loud prayer, it could be maybe about the scripture you just read. It might not be. It could be about something you were struggling with mentally. It could be about something you're trying to repent of. It could be about somebody you're trying to love. And whatever impression comes to you at that point, I want it out on the paper and out in that writing. Just go, go, go. And then when you get to the end and you think there's nothing left, I want you to pull an Elder Scott. And I want you to say, "Is there more?" And the flood gates will often open at that point. And you will have a conversation with God and begin turning your life over to him, asking him, "What do I do today? How do, what do I do to turn my life over to you?" And he will tell you.

00:58:17 This I have described is the best scenario. It will not happen every day, but good and better will support best. What do I mean by that? If you're having a rough day and all you do at the end of the day, all you do throughout the day is listen to the Book of Mormon on audio as you're driving. That is good. And some days that's good enough. Start there. Better as you're opening it up and you're underlining a few things. You're pondering over it. You spend 10, 15 minutes, maybe longer.

That's better. Good, better, best. Best is what I've described, the out loud prayer followed by this writing session where you're working with God to glean revelation for your own life. That is how I've discovered how I can turn my life over to God. He has given me insight after insight on those best days, which honestly for me are once or twice a week, if it's a good week. Those best days, they elucidate so much for me and expand my mind, magnify me so much that you'll find yourself in the work that God has for you to do and miracles will happen and you can expect them to.

John Bytheway: 00:59:26 That's beautiful. I have never been disappointed by the Book of Mormon. I just want to add that testimony to yours that that's where that connection can really start and grow and continue. Thank you for that.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 00:59:42 Open your whole life to God, put it on the table, literally and figuratively, and let him direct your life for your good. And that's turning your life over to God. You can do it every day, but remember, it's not going to be best every day. And give yourself grace for that. Good, better, best.

Hank Smith: 00:59:58 I can already see that the things I've written are going to have serious impact on the way I parent, the way I think, the way I treat my wife, my desire to go to the temple has increased. Satan's favorite lie is, things will never get better.

John Bytheway: 01:00:13 And I'm going to change my diet. No more rehash browns.

Hank Smith: 01:00:17 Yeah. No more rehash browns. Steven, thank you. Thank you for being part of followHIM.

Steven Sharp Nelson: 01:00:23 Thank you so much. I just want to end you with my favorite hymn. My favorite Psalm ever is Psalm 119. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Jesus is real. He is so real. He loves you and wants to connect with you and spend time with you. That's what he's after. And I promise you can attain that. But remember this, lead kindly light amidst encircling gloom. Lead thou me on. The night is dark and I am far from home. Lead thou me on. Keep thou my feet I do not ask to see the distant scene. One step is enough for me. As you end this podcast, don't worry about the distant scene. Take ye no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for itself. Even if the night is dark and you're far from home, he will lead you on. What I hope we've gleaned from this is that Jesus has not only inscribed on us on the palms of his hands, he has inscribed us on the psalms of his hands, because the Psalms are of Him. And your personal psalms can be from him if you turn

		your life over to him. I bear my testimony that Jesus is the Great Deliverer, is the Great Advocate, and his loving kindness is supreme.
Hank Smith:	01:02:05	We love you, Steven Sharp.
Steven Sharp Nelson:	01:02:06	Thank you. Love you back.
Hank Smith:	01:02:08	Yes, we do. We want to thank Steven Sharp Nelson for being our guest today. We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen. We love you, Shannon. We want to thank our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. In every episode, we remember our founder, Steve Sorensen. He had your energy Steven. We hope you'll join us next week. We're going to do more of the Psalms on followHIM.



Hank Smith:	00:03	Welcome to followHIM Favorites. This is where John and I share a single story to go with each week's lesson. John, we are in the book of Psalms this week. It's the first of three lessons, and I have a story for you. Have you ever heard of Admiral William H. McCraven?
John Bytheway:	00:19	Yes.
Hank Smith:	00:20	He gave a speech at the University of Texas graduation in 2020, and it went big.
John Bytheway:	00:27	Yeah, I have his little book. It's a three-word title. Imagine a General giving a talk that starts like this, make your bed. Are we talking about the same guy?
Hank Smith:	00:36	The same guy. The same guy. He gave this speech at the University of Texas. He talked about all the lessons that you learn in Navy SEAL training and it sounds so hard. Like, when I was listening to this, I was like, oh, oh! Well, for Favorites today, I wanted to do one of the lessons that he learned. He says, "Basic SEAL training is six months. Long, torturous runs in soft sand, midnight swims in cold water, obstacle courses, unending calisthenics, days without sleep, and always being cold, wet, and miserable. It's six months of being constantly harassed by professionally trained warriors who seek to find the weak of mind and body and eliminate them from ever becoming a Navy SEAL." Holy cow. This is where he starts to go through the lessons. He says, "The ninth week of SEAL training is referred to as Hell Week.
	01:31	It is six days you don't get to sleep. Constant physical and mental harassment and one special day at the mudflats. The mudflats are an area between San Diego and Tijuana where the water runs off and creates the Tijuana Slews, a swampy patch of terrain where the mud engulfs you. It's on Wednesday of Hell Week, which you paddle down to the mudflats and spend 15 hours trying to survive the freezing cold in the mud. The

		howling wind and incessant pressure to quit from your instructors. The sun began to set on Wednesday evening and he's with training class. They're ordered into the mud. The mud consumed each man until there was nothing visible but our heads. The instructors told us we could leave the mud if only five men would quit. Just five men. We could get out of the oppressive cold. When he means quit, he means quit like the whole program.
	02:35	They won't be a Navy SEAL. Looking around the mudflat, he says it was apparent that some students were about to give up. It was still over eight hours until the sun came up. Eight more hours of bone chilling cold, chattering teeth and shivering moans of trainees were so loud it was hard to hear anything else. Then one voice began to echo through the night. One voice raised in song, because we're studying Psalms this week. They're songs. The song was terribly out of tune, but sung with great enthusiasm. One voice became two and two became three. And before long, everyone in the mud was singing. The instructors threatened us with more time in the mud if we kept up the singing, but the singing persisted. And somehow the mud seemed a little warmer. And the wind, a little tamer and the dawn, the sunrise, not so far away. And he says this, "If I have learned anything in my time traveling the world, it is the power of hope, the power of one person that can change the world by giving people hope." So, he says, "If you want to change the world, start singing when you're up to your neck in mud."
John Bytheway:	03:51	There's power in music. I've heard people say that. I'm thinking of, you know, the handcart pioneers singing W.W. Phelps as they went.
Hank Smith:	04:00	Absolutely. John, do you ever hear any songs and it reminds you of like your mom or your dad? Whenever I hear the Cougar Fight Song, I think of my dad early on a Saturday morning wanted to wake us up. Rise and shout, the Cougars are out. It was his idea of like, let's build some enthusiasm. Let's get going.
John Bytheway:	04:18	Yeah. And I remember being on camping trips and having somebody that was way too cheerful that early in the morning start walking around the camp singing to try to wake everybody up. So, oh, it's good to get up in the morning when the sun begins to shine, one, two, three o'clock in the gold summertime... stop it!
Hank Smith:	04:35	Oh, that's so great. Oh, what a beautiful morning. And you just start singing. But I love it. Songs, like what we're going to read

		this week in the book of Psalms, they can bring hope, maybe when nothing else can.
John Bytheway:	04:49	That Hank, somebody mentioned that Psalms was like the hymn book of the ancients. Those were all songs.
Hank Smith:	04:55	Yeah. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcasts. We are with Steven Sharp Nelson this week. He's a member of The Piano Guys. You'll know him. The cellist in The Piano Guys. And wow, can he teach! Oh, you are going to love what he does in the book of Psalms. Then come back here next week. We'll do another followHIM Favorites.