



EPISODE 35

GUEST: DR. JOHN WHITE



"I Will Declare What He Hath Done for My Soul"

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:

What does a former Baylor theologian see in the Book of Mormon that changes the entire trajectory of his life and career? Dr. John White, a convert baptized last year, continues the study of Psalms, tracing how mercy is at the center of the Psalter, and at the heart of his own unlikely journey to the restored gospel.

Part 2:

Dr. John White continues the study of the Psalms, showing how scripture invites us to bring God our real, unfiltered emotions and revealing what it means that we have a Savior that weeps alongside us.

Timecodes:

Part 1 -

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- 4:53 The beginning of a conversion story
- 7:50 Introducing Psalm 49-86
- 9:50 Reframing our vision of Him
- 12:06 The 5 books of Psalms
- 13:54 Bonhoeffer's 3 Ways to Pray the Psalms
- 15:58 His Book of Mormon ring and Alma 32
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- 24:29 Hebrew poetry and parallelism
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- 32:39 Wealth cannot ransom a soul
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- 1:07:36 A sacrament meeting in Madrid
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Part 2 -

- 0:00 Part 2 – Dr. John White
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- 31:44 Psalm 85: Mercy and truth kiss
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- 43:46 Consecration is the only surrender
- 44:02 The full circle of deliverance and mercy
- 47:03 A God who weeps
- 49:04 End of Part 2 – Dr. John White

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Biographical Information:



Dr. John White joined Brigham Young University from Baylor University, where he served for fourteen years as a tenured Associate Professor of Practical Theology and Ethics, Director of the Graduate Chaplaincy Program, and co-founder (with his wife, Cindy) of the Faith & Sports Institute. An interdisciplinary scholar, he brings moral theology, ethics, and practical theology into conversation with sport, chaplaincy, medicine, business, and culture, with a focus on character formation, applied ethics,

embodiment, discipleship, and moral agency. He has published widely, is engaged in multiple writing and research projects, and has led nationally recognized initiatives that integrate faith, spiritual formation, and adolescent development.

Dr. White earned his PhD in theological ethics from the University of Edinburgh (UK). As a [Research Fellow at BYU's Maxwell Institute](#), he contributes to scholarship grounded in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ through research, writing, mentoring, and collaboration. He co-founded Y-Sport camps in collaboration with BYU Athletics as part of the Worth and Excellence Initiative, which he and Dr. Jenae Nelson lead.

A native Hoosier and former rider in the Little 500—made famous by the film *Breaking Away*—Dr. White possesses a lifelong love of outdoor recreation, learning and reading good books, travel, cultural engagement, good food with good friends, and community service. He and his wife, Cindy, have three adult children—Jonathan, Estie, and Hannah—and two grandchildren, Blakelynn and Margot.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:00	Coming up in this episode on followHIM.
Dr. John White:	00:00:03	I joined a fraternity. I was really trying to fit in to be accepted and I had this father wound, this father hunger. I needed love and affirmation. Started partying quite a bit and I got kicked out of my fraternity for partying too hard. My parents had already paid the room and board and I didn't tell them right away because I was embarrassed. There was a lot of shame associated with that. I began to read the Bible seriously for the first time in 1987 as a sophomore in college. I remember coming in touch with God's mercy because I didn't think God could forgive me for the stuff that I had done.
Hank Smith:	00:00:44	Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with my doorkeeping co-host, John Bytheway. John, now, I know that doesn't sound like a compliment, but it really is. Listen to this verse. Here's Psalm 84:10. "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Isn't that beautiful?
John Bytheway:	00:01:13	I though you were saying dorky at first, but it was door keeper.
Hank Smith:	00:01:17	Dorky co-host. That might have worked, but this one I think is a little bit better.
John Bytheway:	00:01:21	I'm kind of both, so.
Hank Smith:	00:01:23	My dorky doorkeeper. John, we are privileged today to be joined by Dr. John White. Dr. White, if it's okay if we call you John, welcome to followHIM.
Dr. John White:	00:01:35	It's good to be here with y'all.
Hank Smith:	00:01:37	It's going to be a great day. I've been waiting for this one for quite a while. I think our listeners are going to be so interested, not only in what Dr. White has to teach, but in his story. Let's

talk about the Book of Psalms. John Bytheway, what are you looking forward to today?

John Bytheway: 00:01:54 One of the things I remember from four years ago is [Eric Huntsman](#) and how he called the Psalms a response. It's not so much a revelation. These are words of men responding to God, and I feel that.

Hank Smith: 00:02:09 I think that's beautiful. I've had many students through the years when we talk about the sacrament, they'll say, "I just leave the hymnbook open and read through the lyrics." It's such a sacred time. Dr. White, John, what do you want to do today? What are you hoping to do?

Dr. John White: 00:02:27 Well, I'm really excited to show how this block that we're going to be looking at, I'm not sure if you all had planned this, but it opens and closes with one question. What can ransom a soul from the grave? Then how it answers it. Then the second, I think listeners will really enjoy discovering at the very center of the psalter, the book of the Psalms, is mercy and what that means for anyone who might be struggling. Some people think that maybe God is more disappointed in them, and I think mercy will speak a word to them. Lastly, as we study this, I'm hoping it goes from simply meditation that the prayer book of the Bible, that's what a lot of people have referred to this as, would become part of their prayer life. I know for me, that's been significant in my own spiritual formation. I love at the end in Psalm 86:11 talks about that our prayer life should be such that it unites our heart with God in fear as far as reverence. And that's, to me, the destination of discipleship, what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Hank Smith: 00:03:27 I go from, "Oh, this'll be interesting," to, "Wow, I'm excited," in less than a minute of what John tells us we're going to do today. Now, before we go any further, Brother Bytheway, what do we know about Dr. White?

John Bytheway: 00:03:39 Dr. John White joined Brigham Young University from Baylor University, where he served for 14 years as a tenured associate professor of practical theology and ethics, director of the Graduate Chaplaincy Program, and co-founder with his wife, Cindy, of the Faith and Sports Institute. An interdisciplinary scholar, he brings moral theology, ethics, and practical theology into conversation with sport, chaplaincy, medicine, business, and culture with a focus on character formation, applied ethics, embodiment, discipleship, and moral agency. He's published widely, is engaged in multiple writing and research projects, and has led nationally recognized initiatives that integrate faith,

spiritual formation, and [adolescent](#) development, geared to PhD in theological ethics from the University of Edinburgh. As a research fellow at BYU's Maxwell Institute, he contributes to the scholarship grounded in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ through research, writing, mentoring, and collaboration. And I want to ask what people might be thinking, what brought you from Baylor to BYU?

- Dr. John White: 00:04:53 That's a great question. Do we have two years to talk about it? That's how long the investigation started, and I think you've had Dr. Janae Nelson on one of your podcasts. So it actually started in 2023. I was at a academic conference. I was presenting a paper. Dr. Nelson was mentoring a former student of mine, Elizabeth Perkins. She'd just gotten married, Elizabeth Bounds. All that to say, she was there to really encourage and support her. She was doing her postdoc at Baylor and at Harvard. That was a part of the session. At the end of the session, we connected through Elizabeth as far as what I was researching and working on. And I didn't tell people this for a while because I didn't know what to make of it. Because I'm a theologian and we work with oftentimes empirical proof. We're trying to support and corroborate claims about God. But there was a light over her.
- 00:05:53 I didn't want to tell her after about a month or two, but I said, "Hey, I just want you to know that day that you were there, I was focused on this light that was above you." And she goes, "There was no light above me." And I said, "Yes, there was." When I began to then read about the restored gospel and learning about the role of light and illumination, I often wonder if I was supposed to see this because it was supposed to catch my attention to what this person was going to talk about to me was more than just academic scholarship, but it was about something that had eternal consequences. That alerted me. We began this conversation. I visited BYU six times over the next year and a half. This investigation really got serious. I began to ask some big questions. It began to not only just rearrange the mental furniture of my intellect, but it began to rearrange things just spiritually for me.
- 00:06:45 There was an illumination that was happening there. I couldn't deny it. It was arresting. It was surprising. And I think it was Charles Dickens that talks about, he said that Mormons have visions and see things in a world where technology would tend to dispute those kinds of things. And as a theologian, I didn't expect to see those kinds of things. It shocked me and opened my eyes to begin asking more existential questions about who am I, where am I headed and those kinds of things.

Hank Smith:	00:07:10	Wow. I'm excited to hear more of this story. I know Janae. We know Janae well here on the show. We love Janae. Janae, thank you for bringing us Dr. White, getting this process started. But John Bytheway, this is quite a story.
John Bytheway:	00:07:26	Yeah. Miraculous. I mean, I want you to be able to tell the story, but how many years now has it been since you had joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints?
Dr. John White:	00:07:36	I converted in 2024 at the Sacred Grove. Then I was baptized in 2025. So just last year in October, here in the greater Provo area.
John Bytheway:	00:07:47	Just October. Wow.
Hank Smith:	00:07:50	Brand new member of the church. Theologian coming from Baylor. This is an extraordinary story. And I'm sure people want to hear it. Let's jump in. I'm going to read from the Come, Follow Me manual. Then John, we want to be taught. The title of the lesson this week is I Will Declare What He Hath Done for My Soul. Sounds like it's going to fit really well. The writers of the Psalms share deeply personal feelings in their poetry. They wrote about feeling discouraged, afraid, and remorseful. At times, they even felt abandoned by God, and some Psalms carry a tone of frustration or desperation. If you've ever felt that way, reading the Psalms can help you know that you aren't the only one. But you'll also find Psalms that can encourage you when you're having such feelings, because the Psalmists also praised the Lord for his goodness, marveled at his power and rejoiced in His mercy. They knew. They knew that we are burdened by evil and sin, but that the Lord is good and ready to forgive. They understood that having faith in the Lord doesn't mean that you'll never struggle with anxiety, sin, or fear. It means that you know who to turn to when you do. So well written. All right, John, with that, how do you want to start?
Dr. John White:	00:09:05	Well, I'd like to start with a question, who is God? And the Psalms spend a lot less time telling us what to do, and more about showing us who God is. That means that what we ought to do should always be in agreement with who God is as far as doctrine. When I've thought about my own walk with God, sometimes I've shrunk God. He's this resident policeman, or he's this law giver. He is that, but he's more than that. He's a managing director. He's the big man upstairs. We even hear athletes say that sometimes. The Psalms really get at this and help to reframe the way we see and know God. When I started this investigation, I started reading everything. In fact, my wife said early on, "Why are all these Mormon books coming in

through Amazon?" And I stopped her. I remember where we were at in the kitchen.

00:09:50 I said, "Well, I need to let you know something." This was shocking to her. It's still shocking to her as far as the decision. But I said, "I'm seriously thinking about converting." I felt like it was Nicodemus going to Jesus that I didn't know where this was going to end. So I was careful because I didn't want my colleagues to get alarmed. What if it didn't end in me converting? Then they would see this kind of like flirting with things. Why are you exposing your mind to those kinds of things? I discovered this quote by Joseph Smith and it says, "If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves." So what we see here is that our comprehension of God leads into our comprehension of ourselves. And even [John Calvin](#) said this in the book of his institutes, he says he's not sure what comes first, knowledge of God or knowledge of self. What's beautiful about this, as we grow in our knowledge of God, we grow in our knowledge of self. As we grow in our knowledge of self, we grow in our knowledge of God. And you see this all through the Book of Psalms.

00:10:45 This understanding of God is something that I think we all wrestle with. And we get our portraits of God from our culture, from our upbringing. I mean, ideally, God set it up to the family should be the ideal place where we get a perfect portrait or a good portrait, a good vision, a good window to God. But I mean, we all come from families that are less than perfect, and so it doesn't always work out that way. And I know for myself, that was a challenge. Some of the things I wrestled with early on. I had a father that did the best he could, very successful CEO, but he struggled with alcoholism. Well, I knew sometimes when I was coming home, what dad was going to show up?

00:11:18 Was it the successful, competent social dad that everyone knew? Or was the dad sometimes that the way he decompressed is that he would have a drink? That had me early on to become very hypervigilant. My view of God was one that I didn't think I ever really measured up. I was never good enough. My dad was very exacting at times. To give you hope, our vision of God will help crystallize our visions of ourselves. Hopefully, those will become more and more in correspondence and alignment. That's what I wanted to start with, big picture. Then I want to talk about how to read the Psalms. And then we're going to jump into the actual Psalms and get at some themes and get into dissecting some of the verses. I'm sure your

listeners know that there's five books of the Psalms echoing the five books that we see in the Pentateuch by Moses.

00:12:06 Book one, two, book three, book four, book five. What we're looking at is these Psalms fall in towards the end of book two and through, book three itself. Verse 15 of 49, "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me. Selah." Then 86:13, this is what we close with and it answers it. "For great is thy mercy toward me and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell, from the grave." We start off with this question and we get it answered there. Scholars talk about that rhetorical device as an inclusio or a bookend it envelops this whole section that we're studying. I like what the ancient Jewish tradition says at the center of the psalter is 78:38. In the middle verse, arguably people say this is the center. If you go right to the center of the whole book of Psalms, it says this in verse 38.

00:13:04 But he, God, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity. So mercy is literally in the middle of the book. And that shouldn't surprise us as Latter-day Saints, but you see, even though that doesn't function technically as a chiasmus, but we see in Alma 36, listeners will know John Welch. He's well known for this observation, that we see at the center, this phrase by Alma, Oh, Jesus, thou son of God, have mercy on me. So in both testaments of Christ, when the structure folds in half, mercy's in the crease. Mercy's in the crease. I mean, we have Christ, it's in the crease. When we come to the psalter, there's a triple register. So I did my dissertation on [Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#), St. Augustine, and John Paul II, Karol Wojtyła. He was, that's his name before he became Pope. And Bonhoeffer calls the psalter the prayer book of Jesus Christ.

00:13:54 He has an interesting way of setting this up that I think should register with our listeners. He talks about there's really three lenses when we read the psalter. First, there's the historical. David is praying. I mean, these Psalms, many of them are attributed to David. But then he talks about that Christ prays these Psalms. When you look in the New Testament, he was Jewish, so his piety was such that he was raised in the Psalms of the book of Psalms. Finally, the third register is that we pray the Psalms.

00:14:23 And I like what one great early church theologian said. The Psalms are like a mirror to the person singing them. And you said the last. Was it Huntsman? Eric Huntsman we saw on here? I feel like the Psalms are anatomy of the soul. John Calvin said that, that when we look at the Psalms, we see the emotion. I

think the psalter is wanting us to know that we have a God who will take anything that, I mean, he's there. He's our parent. He wants to hear from us. In fact, one could argue that those who haven't learned to express their anger to God oftentimes then find ways to act that out that might be inappropriate. I think at the psalter, we want to recognize that there's something significant there, that God is speaking as much for us in the psalter itself.

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| John Bytheway: | 00:15:08 | It's considered to be the center of the psalter. The center of all the Psalms is 78:38. I'm just writing this right. This is great. |
| Dr. John White: | 00:15:18 | That's. The Masoretes would say maybe it's verse 36, but most people, a lot of scholars say it's verse 38. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:15:25 | He being full of compassion forgave their iniquity. And I'm making my own footnote right now to section 64:7. I the Lord, forgive sins. I just love that. That's what I do. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:15:40 | John, it is so fun to hear you quote the Book of Mormon. I mean, you've been a member of the church for, it hasn't even been a year, and you're quoting Alma like it's just off the back of your hand. I just, take a quick tangent and tell us about the Book of Mormon. |
| Dr. John White: | 00:15:58 | I have in my ring here, this was my commitment ring to God to the Restored Gospel. I have Alma 32:28. When I got my first Book of Mormon, I had obviously some pre-understanding. Didn't give much credibility to it. In fact, people often say, "Don't read the Book of Mormon." And don't pray with Mormons. It'll change your life. Or God will change your life through them as witnesses. I started reading the Book of Mormon and I just started seeing my studies were preparing me for this a long time ago. So I did my dissertation, I told you, on John Paul II, he has written this Magnus Opus of theology of the body. As a former athlete and still want to be athlete, I've found so much life in the body because of the pain that was in my family growing up. Well, I did a deep dive on this theologically to understand that the body is a visible explanation of an invisible reality of divine and spiritual. |
| | 00:17:01 | That came home when I began to read the Book of Mormon. And I began to understand, for example, that God the Father consists of flesh and blood as we read in D&C. God the Father has a face. The work I was doing about human understanding and materiality and physicality began to make more sense even as far as theologically. And as I began to read the Book of Mormon, I saw how this book like Alma 32, the verse that I have |

here is verse 28, talks about that if you'll just exercise a particle of faith, what the Word does, if you get a portion of it to you, just a little bit, it'll enlarge, it'll lighten, it'll swell, it'll taste delicious. I remember this language standing out to me. I began to come in contact with God through the Book of Mormon. It changed my life.

00:17:47 How can people say that this doesn't have authority, that this isn't true? I think for so many people, it's because they're not an insider. They have chosen not to read it. They've accepted secondary tertiary witnesses. If I was to get to know you, John Bytheway, or Hank Smith, I would go directly to you eventually. I hope I wouldn't just continue to find out about you through others. The same thing is we have to go directly to the source and begin to investigate it and begin to read it and begin to own it for ourselves. And that's what happened with me in the Book of Mormon. It began to convict me, persuade me. And through witnesses like Janae, it was iron sharpens iron. And, you know, it was unconventional, but I think God chose another scholar to witness to me as a scholar. And it's interesting, I'm in Neal Maxwell Institute.

00:18:31 Elder Maxwell talks about that academic scholarship as a form of worship. He comes up with this title of Disciple Scholar. I needed Disciple Scholar. She was a missionary to me, though she wasn't necessarily a missionary in what she said, but she was a missionary in what she did and who she is. I think there's a general conference talk on this, right, as far as becoming a missionary? But nonetheless, through the Book of Mormon and through just multiple witnesses. In fact, it got to the point, folks, when I would call or text Matt Seeley or Janae or others or email them like, "Are you guys talking to each other?" Because there's like these coincidences that are occurring, but there are miracles. I finally had to throw my hands up and cry out, "Oh, Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me." I began my pilgrimage to fully trust in this and put my full weight and say, okay, this is legitimate. I need to live according to its principles and precepts.

Hank Smith: 00:19:28 You're speaking John Bytheway's language. You start quoting Alma 32. What does Alma say? I'm so joyful. My soul is leaving my body. Right, John Bytheway? I just watched you.

John Bytheway: 00:19:39 I'm listening through the eyes of my father who joined the church at age 24 and some of the things that he described. It's just fun to hear. How do you... the book of Alma, that's great stuff.

Hank Smith:	00:19:53	Alma 32 is one chapter of how many chapters that exude light and goodness and logic.
John Bytheway:	00:20:01	Alma's going among the Zoramites and saying, "Let me tell you what faith is." And then as you described, it'll be delicious to you. It'll enlighten your mind. It will. All these different ways. So you said that's the theology of the body.
Dr. John White:	00:20:15	Yeah, I really think so. John Paul II talks about the body as a sign. It's a sacrament. It's supposed to witness to something beyond it. But not to empty the body as just a receptacle or container, but it has value in and of itself, and it takes on that value as it's joined to a soul. In our theology, we would say the spirit, the person equals the soul. A spirit and the body equals the soul. You mentioned the Zoramites. That is a part of my testimony too. So professionally, I was going through some challenges at Baylor. Compelled humility happened to me. You'd like to voluntarily choose humility. That's kind of the way that God gives grace to the humble and opposes the proud. But I found myself struggling with some things and God humbled me, but that humbling was preparing me then to receive the restored gospel.
	00:21:04	The conditions in my heart weren't ready yet. The soil needed to be tilled and cultivated. There's more organic language you even see in Alma 32. Compares the word to a seed. It had to grow in me. It was good fresh soil that was being prepared. Independent before I met Dr. Nelson or anybody else. I was going through some difficulties. That just shows me God's divine choreography, God's divine providence.
Hank Smith:	00:21:30	Yeah. This is so much fun. Keep going. What do you want to do next? I
Dr. John White:	00:21:33	Just want to say a little bit about the kinds of Psalms because when we're reading any kind of literature, we wouldn't need what we refer to as the genre, the kind of literature. You don't read Paul didactic literature the way you read poetry. It has just as much meaning, just as much truth and theology in it, but you need to know the kind of literature you're reading. Let me dip my toe into this a little bit. There's wisdom psalms that I briefly referenced, but Psalm 49 asks what money can do at the grave. And we're going to come back to this Psalm because I think it's really important. "They that trust in their wealth, none of them can by any means redeem his brother." There's penitential Psalms. Psalm 51 is the most famous one. Perhaps the greatest repentance prayer ever written.

- 00:22:12 Then there's individual lament. We see in Psalm 86. That's a textbook case of a lament has address, complaint, a petition, a trust, a vow, a praise. And then there's communal restoration. Psalm 85, will thou not revive us again? Verse six, there's praise and thanksgiving. In fact, I really believe that as you read the book of Psalms, it's teaching us. It's spiritually training us with the right language of how to even praise God, how to thank God. The best way to praise and thank someone is to find something about them that's specific to their attributes, specific to their person. So the Psalms, for example, come and hear, I would declare what he hath done for my soul. What Eric Huntsman said, there's a response to God. We're responding to the great things that God and rehearsing those, remembering those. And that's a key idea in the book of Psalms. Remembering.
- 00:23:05 Then there's the Royal Messianic Psalms you see in Psalm 72. It's pointing past Solomon to Christ. Psalm 69 is quoted of Jesus more than almost any other Psalm. The only other Psalm quoted more is Psalm 22. Psalm 69, he references it a lot in his ministry. Then there's historical Psalms like Psalm 78, where you see the drama, salvation, almost like a sermon that's being preached and rehearsing and revisiting God's great plan of redemption.
- John Bytheway: 00:23:34 I remember, Hank, in our New Testament year, seeing Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22, all of these things really pointing to Christ. I mean, doesn't Psalm 22 start my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I like to put those up there in my classes now and say, "Here's the old testifying of the new" here in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. Jesus says, these are the things, What is he saying? Is it Luke 24? which testified of me in the Law and the Prophets and in the Psalms?
- Dr. John White: 00:24:07 Yeah. That's why Bonhoeffer talks about we want to have an historical understanding of Psalms. That through David, but then as you said, it kind of finds its fulfillment, its Christological arc is Jesus himself that he's using these Psalms. He's teaching us the significance of this as far as our, in our own piety formation. Yeah, that's awesome.
- Hank Smith: 00:24:26 Wonderful. What should we do next, John?
- Dr. John White: 00:24:28 I was going to talk a little bit about how Hebrew poetry works. Hebrew poetry is not rhyme as far as sounds. It's rhyme as, in thought. The key device that's used in Hebrew poetry is called parallelism, where you have two lines, and it's the second line that sharpens and interprets the first line. Well, let me give you

a couple examples. So you see synonymous parallelism. In 61:1, it says, "Hear my cry, oh God." Then it says, "Attend unto my prayer." So it restates that this cry he's attending. He's not only hearing, I mean, he's visiting us. Like he's close to us. He's near to us in these prayers. Then you have antithetical contrast from 66:18 to 19. It says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. But verily, God hath heard me." Here we see a contrast as far as hearing and not being heard.

00:25:23 Then you have synthetic which, teach me the way, O Lord. Unite my heart to fear thy name. So it's advancing. What does it mean to be taught God's way? Well, it should form something in us that actually brings together our hearts and reverence in God. And then there's what's called climactic parallelism. This is kind of works like a staircase. Psalm 77:16, the waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee. They were afraid. There's the power. And even the use of creation and nature in the book of Psalms. As a theologian, we talk about different ways that God has chosen to reveal Himself. There's general revelation, and that's something that's universal. Everyone can come in contact with that. But then there's special revelation, and that's specifically through the gospel to people. There's conditions that need to be satisfied to be able to understand that. And that's, for example, faith, repentance, and baptism as far as the restored gospel.

Hank Smith: 00:26:18 Would we see something similar, say, in the book of Isaiah? What came to mind when you were talking about parallelism was, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Then he repeats the idea. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. I'm going to say it and then I'm going to clarify it.

Dr. John White: 00:26:35 And clarifying with different metaphors. This is the beauty of poetry, right? It's pregnant with meaning and you can keep coming back to it as you understand something literally. You know, metaphors are bifocal utterances. You have the literal understanding of something, but then you have the figurative understanding of it. You can't understand the figurative until you understand the literal. This is the problem sometimes. People just jump to the figurative and spiritualize it. But you really need to understand the literal so that you know what actually crosses over and what doesn't. Not everything about a metaphor or image crosses over. So if I say that John Bytheway, when he gets up in the morning, he's like a bear. Well, we need to figure out, literally, what are bears like when you wake them up? But he has hair on him, that he has teeth like a bear.

	00:27:18	We would just get it like he's startled, maybe he's a little upset or something like that. That gets us to the emblematic then, the part of parallelism. This is where you have image plus meaning. My soul thirstest for thee in a dry and thirsty land. You understand soul and thirst in this parched dry and thirsty land. Then you see refrain, right? Like in a song, you see a chorus or repeated, he is only my rock and my salvation. 62:2,6. When you see refrain, this is important. It continues to repeat something. In this case, to understanding if we find ourselves in unstable and difficult circumstances, unpredictable, we need to latch onto the fact that God is our rock and our salvation. And what does it mean for him to be a rock? Well, he's not inert. He's not dead like a rock, but he's stable. He's strong. He can support us.
Hank Smith:	00:28:08	John, obviously, you've done a lot of research on the way Hebrew poetry works, the Hebrew language. Did that have any influence as you were investigating the church?
Dr. John White:	00:28:20	Yeah, it sure did. Early on when I was given my first Book of Mormon, I eventually read the whole Book of Mormon before I was baptized. I felt like that was kind of an important perhaps obligation that if I was going to step in the waters of baptism, take on the name of Christ, I needed to understand this, these scriptures. Early on, I started reading, in particular, the Book of Helaman. And the Hebrew language, they talk about this vav consecutive. It's what advances the narrative and it came to pass. And I saw that in the Book of Helaman. I saw that in the Book of Mormon, and I was just taken by that. I was like, "Wow, this resembles the Holy Bible itself." It was those kinds of connections, those kinds of relationships. It dawned on me. He began to disarm me. Or maybe I would've had kind of a defense that more of an apologetic to say, "This can't be the word of God." I began to allow that truth, that insight to penetrate my heart and awaken to me that, okay, wait, there's something spiritually different about this book. And it's not like other literature out there. It's, well, it's like the literature of the Bible. It's holy. It's divine. It's inspired.
John Bytheway:	00:29:23	Wow. If I understand right, vav is like the letter V in Hebrew? Or how does that sound? Like David is Dalith, vav Dalith?
Dr. John White:	00:29:33	David. Yeah.
John Bytheway:	00:29:35	What is a vav consecutive? Sorry, I'm just fascinated that that's in Helaman.

Dr. John White:	00:29:40	It's the syntax grammatically that moves the story forward. It'll say, "And this happened and this occurred." So it's a sequence. It moves the narrative along.
John Bytheway:	00:29:50	Is it the and it came to past type sequence or?
Dr. John White:	00:29:53	It's a prefix and it says like, "And he will remember. And he remembered and he observed. A past tense narrative sequence may begin with a perfect verb followed by a number of consecutive imperfect verbs. And Adam knew Eve, his wife, and then she conceived and then she bore Cain.
John Bytheway:	00:30:09	Interesting.
Dr. John White:	00:30:10	It's moving the narrative along.
John Bytheway:	00:30:13	There's a lot of verses in the Book of Mormon that begin with the word and, which is a no-no in English class. But it's all over in the Book of Mormon. Even the sermon at the temple that Jesus gives and blessed are the, and blessed. It adds the and in front of each of the beatitudes.
Dr. John White:	00:30:31	Is that in 3 Nephi?
John Bytheway:	00:30:32	3 Nephi 12, the beatitudes all start with and. It connects them together.
Hank Smith:	00:30:37	I need to read you both something. This is from our episode on Helaman one through six. If you go to followhim.co , you can just read the transcript of our episodes. This was at the very beginning of our episode with Dr. Janae Nelson. She says -
Dr. Janae Nelson:	00:30:55	I have to tell you guys, as I was preparing for this podcast, I reached out to a friend of mine from Baylor who's a theologian, not a member of our faith. And I asked him if he would be willing to read Helaman 1-6, and then give me his insight. It was so fun hearing his feedback. I mean, he could have done this in any part of the Book of Mormon, but he was like, "That's Hebrew structure. You see this in the Old Testament. You see this in the New Testament." And I'm like, "You know, it's almost like this is written by God."
Hank Smith:	00:31:29	She goes on to talk about it. When you said that about the Book of Helaman, I thought, "I've heard this story before." How wonderful.

Dr. John White: 00:31:37 Let's keep going. Let's look at Psalms 49 to 51 and 61 to 66. There's a couple themes that bring those sections together. First, we see the sacrifice God actually wants. God needs nothing from us. But what does he ask for? A broken heart, Psalm 51. It's really getting at this ordering of desire. This fits very well with the General Conference talk by [President Oaks](#) on desire. He talks about desire, starts with ranking your priorities, and then those priorities result in choices, and those choices result in actions. Let's jump into Psalm 49. The central claim here is wealth and status cannot purchase deliverance from death. But God alone can redeem the life of the one who trusts him, rendering merely earthly security and illusion. This is really important. Nowhere in the Bible is it attacking wealth, right? Because in the New Testament, it's not money is the root of all evil, it's the love of money.

00:32:39 But Psalm 49 is considered a wisdom song because he starts off saying, "All ye inhabitants of the world, both low and high and rich and poor together." So there's this universal summon. This is something everyone can understand. Then he even uses the language, this is a parable thing. We need to unpack this. Verses six and eight, you get that ransom is something no one can pay. Let me read that to you in verses six through eight. "They that trust in their wealth, none of them can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him. For the redemption of their soul is precious and it ceaseth forever. The word used here is kind of a legal payment that buys back a forfeited life. It has economic imagery. Jesus talking about, in Mark chapter eight, what will it profit a man? Or what will a man gain if he inherits the world but loses his soul?"

00:33:33 Psalm 49 seems to be in the background here as he's talking about that. Then we know two chapters later, he says, "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many." So there's that ransom idea that we find in Psalm 49. The ransom no one could pay, of course, was the Son of man who did pay it. Then you see verse 11 and 17. This, I'm going to bring in an interlocutor here or another conversation partner here because it's really important for us to understand. Verses 11 and 17, many commentators see wealth as an immortality strategy. It's a coping mechanism for death. How are we going to outlive death? It's going to be by accumulating. It even uses the words houses shall continue forever. They'll call their lands after their own names. I mean, universities do this. Museums do this. You put your name on it, and that's how I'm going to be remembered.

- 00:34:27 One commentary says this, "Behind the human fascination of wealth is a denial of death. It is an immortality strategy." There's a famous book that won a Pulitzer Prize. His name is [Ernest Becker](#). He wrote The Denial of Death. He talks about this immortality strategies, immortality projects. All kinds of projects that we can get co-opted in to think that this is how we're going to live forever. It could be wealth, fame, legacy. It's, this is significant that the Psalm is dismantling this, helping us to recognize the only thing that lasts forever is one who's found in a proper relationship with God, and he's the one who's going to redeem you. Look at verses 14 and 15. Here we have something that's antithetical to Psalm 23. Death is the shepherd versus the God who receives. Let me read that to you.
- 00:35:18 "Like sheep, they are laid in the grave. Death shall feed on them, but God will," I love the but here, so it's an important contrast, "but God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me." So this is considered kind of an anti-Psalm 23. The self-sufficient. They get a shepherd, all right? But it's named death. The pivot here is that this verb receive is the same verb that's used with Enoch in Genesis 5:24, that he has received. He was snatched, taken up. And Elijah, 2 Kings 2. Some scholars think this is an early imitation, because we don't have it developed in the Old Testament like we do in the New Testament, an early imitation of hope beyond the grave. And the hope beyond the grave is that God will receive us. God will redeem us. God will purchase us. This obviously has quick parallels and resonance with the Book of Moses.
- 00:36:10 In chapter seven, we know that Enoch and his whole city received into God's bosom. Psalm 49 glimpses what the restoration narrates here. Also, Jacob is preaching the Psalm right here as the only way to be redeemed is infinite atonement. Nothing else will suffice. Nothing finite can ransom a soul. Has to be an infinite atonement that covers everything.
- Hank Smith: 00:36:32 John, I have to read you just a little bit of this [article](#). And here it is. And I don't know who many of these people are, just so you know. It says Bryan Johnson swallows more than 100 pills every morning. Larry Ellison has written checks totaling 430 million to laboratories studying why human cells decay. Jeff Bezos quietly backed a \$3 billion startup built around one premise that aging is a disease and diseases have cures. These are longevity billionaires, a new class of ultra wealthy individuals who have decided that dying is a problem money can solve." So what do you think? Is dying a problem money can solve? The Psalmist takes that on. If you trust in your wealth, you can't ransom out of death. You can't pay God off.

Dr. John White:	00:37:18	I like what Billy Graham said that you've never seen a hearse with a U-Haul behind it. You can't take that wealth with you. But I think it's important. It's not as if the Psalms are saying the problem is with wealth. It's more our orientation to this that it can become a God substitute. That we expect wealth to be able to do something salvationally, salvifically that only God can do. Only God can purchase and redeem us.
Hank Smith:	00:37:43	Isn't that fascinating that it's still going on today?
Dr. John White:	00:37:47	Oh, yeah.
Hank Smith:	00:37:48	Got to defeat death. What did you call it? Wealth as an immortality...
Dr. John White:	00:37:52	Strategy or project. And this Psalm goes on to say that the great equalizer for everybody, whether you're wealthy or poor, is that we all die like animals. This is language from Ecclesiastes. The inextricability and inevitability of death. You're not going to escape this. There's no get out of death free card or anything like that.
Hank Smith:	00:38:15	It doesn't care how much money you have.
Dr. John White:	00:38:17	Yeah. I mean, it's indiscriminate. Exactly.
John Bytheway:	00:38:20	I like how Psalm 49 uses the language of money of ransom or redeem to be bought back, but then it shows that the only one who can do that is called a redeemer, but it's not with money. It's with laying down his own life, which is, I guess, the point of that.
Dr. John White:	00:38:37	That's a great insight. There's the irony there. It's going to use economic language.
John Bytheway:	00:38:44	To say money won't work.
Dr. John White:	00:38:46	There's a currency, but it's God's currency. Yeah.
Hank Smith:	00:38:50	Coming up to God. What's this going to take? How much? I've got my -
Dr. John White:	00:38:55	I've got my checkbook.
John Bytheway:	00:38:55	Do you Venmo?

Dr. John White:	00:38:57	Yeah. We see that in Psalm 50, right? People come to God with their sacrifices, and he goes, wait a minute. He's going to use heaven as his witness, but God is the prosecutor in Psalm 50. We're in the dock. C.S. Lewis talks about God in the dock. Well, in this case, it's reverse. We're in the dock. He's saying, I own all the cattle on a thousand hills. There's nothing you can give me. I'm the owner. I'm the creator of those kinds of things. If you're trying to buy or purchase or kind of a transactional religion or somehow you can pay homage and get God to show favor to you by something that you offer him, then you've gotten this mixed up.
John Bytheway:	00:39:35	I love this. We talked about this last week. Job says, "Naked came I into this world and naked go I out of it." What does verse 17 say? "When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away." That's why I love President Oak's emphasis on becoming. We can only take what we have become. Somehow our testimony fits in our spirit, which we get to take with us. And what we become fits in our spirit. For the rest, the checkout counter called death will unload our cargo, right?
Hank Smith:	00:40:09	Here's Ralph Waldo Emerson. Sorrow makes us all children again, destroys all differences of intellect. The wise know nothing. I loved what you said. Wealth is an immortality strategy. I'm going to beat this. Somehow I'm going to - I'm going to beat this.
John Bytheway:	00:40:26	With my millions.
Hank Smith:	00:40:27	Yeah, with my millions. I'm going to write Death a check, the grim reaper. See if I can pay him off.
Dr. John White:	00:40:34	There was a Yale scholar who was a critic and was not a believer in the restored gospel. He said this about Joseph Smith related to death. I think it's profound. He says, "This is a religion that most vehemently and persuasively defies and denies the reality of death." What's powerful about that is it's not as if we, Joseph Smith, don't believe there's such a thing that death , it does exist, right? But he reframes it that it's a doorway inside an eternal covenant. It's not the wall that defines life. We have an exit strategy right now. And the way that we're, that strategy gets to us is through the Atonement.
Hank Smith:	00:41:12	In fact, at a funeral, Joseph Smith said, "We mourn the loss, but we do not mourn as those without hope."

Dr. John White:	00:41:19	Yeah. Amen. That's 1 Corinthians 15. We're the most pitied people if there isn't such a thing as the resurrection. We don't have real hope.
Hank Smith:	00:41:28	Are we going to stay in 49? Do you want to keep going, John?
Dr. John White:	00:41:30	We're done. We're done with 49. Psalm 50, this is where, as I've already alluded to, God takes the stand. He's seen as this covenant judge. We see that he really desires heartfelt thanksgiving and a moral or ethical faithfulness over ritual sacrifice. That can easily get detached from any kind of covenant commitment or loyalty. Verse 12, this is the language of covenant lawsuit. This is heaven or earth is summoned as a witness. We see that in verse four. And the defendant is the congregation. That's us. And the fatal error is verse 21. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such and one as thyself. We've confused this. And the way that we can maybe quid pro quo each other, right? If I do this, you'll do this for me. You can't do that with God. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee. For the world is mine and the fullness thereof that the Lord owns all of this.
	00:42:31	If we really understand this, it should have us come into the world excited to know and serve God because we recognize that we operate from this position of a steward. We're caretakers. We have responsibility given to us. We can be advocates for all of creation. We should look after creation. The Lord owns all of that. In the same way praise, the way that we complete praise is by thanking God, right? And that brings joy to God and to us too.
Hank Smith:	00:43:01	God doesn't need our praise. We need to praise God. It does something to us.
Dr. John White:	00:43:06	Yes.
John Bytheway:	00:43:07	We seeing how great thou art, not because he's wondering.
Dr. John White:	00:43:12	Yeah. He's waiting. Come on, tell me.
Hank Smith:	00:43:14	Thank you.
John Bytheway:	00:43:16	But because it's like a spontaneous expression of gratitude for all he's done for us and given us and that we can be saved when we do stupid things. Oh, how great thou art. I'm so grateful. I like that.

Hank Smith:	00:43:31	It completes it. That's what Lewis said?
Dr. John White:	00:43:32	So to use a praise not merely expressive, but completes the enjoyment. You connect your joy to the giver. You connect your joy to the one who gave you the gift. And you say thank you. It's gratitude.
Hank Smith:	00:43:47	When God asks us to praise him, it's, I want you to bless your own life. It sounds like the Lord, doesn't it? Saying, I want you to do something that'll help you.
Dr. John White:	00:43:58	I mean, a good parent, right?
Hank Smith:	00:43:59	Right. Yeah.
Dr. John White:	00:44:00	This is for your good.
John Bytheway:	00:44:02	Good point.
Hank Smith:	00:44:03	Here was your mistake. You thought that I was like you. I just, I love that. That's a pretty fatal error. I am not manipulated.
Dr. John White:	00:44:16	And we see that as far as the problem of idolatry. The story is kinda like, what's the story about Black Beauty? This is a story about trust and betrayal. I think that's how it starts off, doesn't it? I think the whole Bible is a story about trust and betrayal. Idols are whenever we take something that's a created good and we elevate it to be a rival or on par with God. Problem is the created good itself. We, we're supposed to like good food, good friendship, but we make that as a substitute. We begin to assign worth and value that's reserved only to God for those things. Worth. Worship. Yeah. Well, that's the, the old English word is worth ship. Yeah.
Hank Smith:	00:44:59	John, this has been incredible. And we're only two Psalms in here. So what should we do next?
Dr. John White:	00:45:06	We're going to turn to perhaps one of the most well-known Psalms, Psalm 51. I refer to my conversion in two parts. The reason why I do that is because when I'm talking to non-LDS folks, they're like, "Wait a minute, you were a follower of Jesus. You taught at a divinity school, a seminary." Psalm 51 and Psalm 25 is when I really came in contact with God's hesed, his loving kindness, his mercy, that we know that he accepts us because of his loving kindness, because of his compassion. So I was in college. This is a very ironic story. I'd been on a three-year experiment to find life. My mom and dad had separated on and

off. My dad was struggling with his alcoholism. I found a number of surrogate gods. But I got to Indiana University and I joined a fraternity. I was really trying to fit in to be accepted.

00:46:03 And I had this father wound, this father hunger. I needed love and affirmation. Started partying quite a bit, and I got kicked out of my fraternity for partying too hard. My parents had already paid the room and board. And I didn't tell them right away because I was embarrassed. There was a lot of shame associated with that. I began to read the Bible seriously for the first time in 1987 as a sophomore in college. I remember coming in touch with God's mercy because I didn't think God could forgive me for the stuff that I had done. About a year or so after that, I started to ride bikes with a number of cyclists that were Christians too. And they began to share Jesus with me. And I'll never forget, it was very competitive. And in order to go on this, you had to get an endorsement by your local campus minister.

00:46:56 I knew I was starting to ask God questions. So I sat down with this gentleman in a library cafeteria at Indiana University. He went through the plan of salvation with me. Talked about God has a wonderful plan for your life. You've even probably heard of this. So I'd read in the Bible that God loves me and forgives me, but I didn't understand how that all related to the person of Jesus and his work and his sacrifice, the atonement. And he said, "Would you like to transfer your trust from yourself for your eternal destiny to Jesus and what he had done on your behalf and offers you this free gift?" I said, "Yes, I would. I've never heard of this." He said, "Well, you can pray a prayer." He says, "The prayer isn't magical." The language we used then. We said, "This is how you get saved. The trust, not the prayer."

00:47:41 So I prayed that prayer. And that began my journey with Jesus. I then went on staff for 18 years with a campus ministry. In fact, I was doing evange and discipleship on college campuses, just like 18, 19-year-old LDS missionary, right? That was my first conversion. And then my second conversion came almost 30 years later through the witness of many people. And the reason why I talk about two conversions is because I want people to understand that the second conversion completes it. It's the fulfillment of it. The same way you have the old covenant and the new covenant. It's all part of the progress of redemption. I needed to be completed. In Acts 18, the gospel more perfectly. And that's what happened to me in my conversion. I had found the restored gospel being expounded to me and eventually my missionary lessons that I went through. And it completed what started the good work that God started in Philippians 1:6. God began a good work and you'll bring it to completion. And it was

bringing to completion there. But the completion is an ongoing, so it's not like I just stop this growth. It's this eternal progression.

Hank Smith: 00:48:46 That's fantastic.

John Bytheway: 00:48:47 Absolutely worth it.

Dr. John White: 00:48:49 Psalm 51 was significant because I didn't know that there was a God who could forgive me. I love Psalm 51. It's really the liturgy of the broken heart. The big idea here is that true restoration with God requires not ritual compensation, but a mighty change of heart that we see in the Book of Mormon offered in genuine contrition. This is attributed to David, and I think we probably shouldn't whitewash this. David didn't just commit a sin against Bathsheba as far as adultery. There's a lot more that went on here. David's life is really kind of a tragic figure, if you want to think of it. Aristotle talks about what makes a tragic figure is that you didn't expect this person. They were kind of the hero and they fell. For David, he abused royal power. He exploited. He engineered death. And he was about a coverup.

00:49:41 Then he's greeted by Nathan and it zeroes in on him and he has no excuses. My sin, he says in verse three, is ever before me. David is not a defense attorney in this. He's not trying to defend himself. He's coming clean. The first key point here is a verb that we see in Genesis. Let me read that. It says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." One commentator says this, "Many of the prayers for help often talk about change my situation. So then I can praise you." But this commentator goes on to say, "No, this is a prayer that says change me. I am the problem." The verb used there for create in me a clean heart is the same verb that's used in the book of Genesis. I think this is important. We never want to separate the doctrine of creation and redemption.

00:50:30 The work that God does to create us is in continuity with the redemptive work that God brought us into mortal existence. David doesn't ask for repair, he asks for creation. That's pretty profound. And I mentioned too, that this is what you see in Mosiah as far as this mighty change of heart. In the Old Testament, it's really kind of the cradle of conversion is something that God creates, not something that we renovate ourselves.

John Bytheway: 00:50:58 Yeah, I like this because the Book of Mormon teaches it too. Nobody changes their own heart. They get to a point where they realize I can't do this myself. And then they say, God,

create in me a clean heart. If you can create me once, you can create a new heart in me. So I really like that distinction there. The important things that have to be done in us can only be done by God with His help. Yeah.

- Dr. John White: 00:51:22 I love that. And you know, this is another thing people say, "What did you have to edit or change when you became a Latter-day Saint?" And I said, "Well, one of the things I think is a misunderstanding for a lot of people on the outside, they accuse us. One, they say we're not Christians, but they say that we're guilty of work's righteousness." And I just like, "What book are you reading?" It's not in the Book of Mormon, folks. But what it does, it understands it takes serious that God only does relationship through covenant. Once you frame it that way, covenant always involves promise and obligation. Think about a marriage relationship. It was all built on promise. I promise to do this, but you never actually did it. No duty or obligation to it. That would be a license for abuse. You could just like, "Well, I promised you." Or the flip side, if it's all about obligation and no promise, that can be a form of legalism.
- 00:52:17 But God does both. We bind ourselves to Him. He binds Himself to us. And that's a beautiful portrait of how all relationships ought to be done. Even friendships, healthy friendships about promise and obligation. Do you have a responsibility to them? You have an indebtedness to them based on the good things and gratitude. You're not trying to pay them back for that. And obviously, we're utterly dependent upon God, so we could never pay him back. What's the scripture? Is that in Mosiah too?
- John Bytheway: 00:52:43 Always be unprofitable servants. You can't put them in your debt.
- Dr. John White: 00:52:47 Just so you know, I'm still playing catch up here as far as I'm trying to read the Book of Mormon.
- John Bytheway: 00:52:51 Well, you sure don't sound like it.
- Hank Smith: 00:52:52 Yeah, I was going to say that too.
- Dr. John White: 00:52:56 But I love this whole passage when we understand the reception of God's mercy and we trust in it. The Psalm is saturated with joy vocabulary here in verses 8 through 12. And [Elder Renlund](#) has a talk on repentance, joyful choice. And that's another thing that was new to me, that I don't fear repentance in the restored gospel. In fact, the repentance is a gift to restore, return me, keep me on this ever-renewing return to

God. Before, I always thought repentance is like, "Oh, man, you must be really bad that you have to repent." But as you grow closer to God, you start to see things in your life. And he allows you. I mean, think when you first trust, if he showed you everything in your life, you'd probably freak out. Like there's no way. But he slowly, and you start to grow in your understanding of holiness, you start to recognize, whoa, you're around other people who are holy.

00:53:47 You start to recognize where you fall short. But that's just this constant progression and that salvation is an ascent that we want. Even the Psalms of ascent, right, are about going up with a clean hand and pure heart. We are ascending to God. And that repentance is built into the logic as a resource of the good news, of mercy.

John Bytheway: 00:54:05 I like what you said before. You mentioned that some perceive that we are trying to earn our salvation, but the way you put it, say that again. It's because they see making a covenant as a work or something?

Dr. John White: 00:54:19 I think a covenant, it's two sides of the same coin, and God only does covenant. It involves promise and obligation. And people on the outside of our faith will see that we emphasize duty and responsibility. Well, that's a healthy relationship. You have obligations. What they don't hear us talk about is that it's equally about what jumpstarts this whole thing and why we have a response of obligation, responsibility is because God's initiated. He's the one who's moved. Another verse that's inside my ring here, I have Alma 32:28, and I have 1 John 4:19. We love because God first loved us. It's reflexive. It's a response to God's love. In fact, every command in the Bible is always a response to indicative. Look at the 10 Commandments. Remember, I brought you out of Egypt. That's promise. That's grace. Now, here's how you ought to live in this relationship with me.

00:55:10 You should have no other gods before me. You should not commit adultery, right? So as his vertical responsibilities, horizontal responsibilities. Jesus says, "Come unto me," command. "All you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That's promise. That's grace. Ephesians 2: 8, 9, and 10, "For by God's grace." And then it says that you've been created for good workmanship. You have obligations, but those two are meant to be together. You see it over and over. Covenant relationship is always conditions and uncondition. God unilaterally says this, but then there's a response to it.

John Bytheway:	00:55:44	I'm looking in my, these are my dad's scriptures. Psalms 50:5, he's got it underlined. "Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." This is just what you're saying right now, it sounds like.
Dr. John White:	00:56:02	That's the next point. In Psalm 50, you see what you just said, verses 16 and 17. The broken heart answers Psalm 50 and becomes the law of sacrifice verses 16 and 17. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. O God, thou will not despise. So that's 51:17. It's a response to the Psalm 50 that you just read. That's beautiful. Great segue there.
John Bytheway:	00:56:27	People will remember reading in the Book of Mormon, before Jesus appears personally, they hear a voice in 3 Nephi 9, and he says, no more animal sacrifice. I am the great and last sacrifice. What I want now is a broken heart and a contrite spirit. I hope people are noticing. Hey, that is articulated right there.
Hank Smith:	00:56:49	He's still quoting Psalms.
John Bytheway:	00:56:53	For the young people that are listening, the best way I heard a broken heart, because I thought as a teenager, a broken heart is what all those love songs on the radio were about.
Hank Smith:	00:57:03	Every country song you've ever heard.
John Bytheway:	00:57:05	Yeah, exactly. But a broken heart, what do we call the process of taming a wild horse? Breaking it. It's a heart that's submissive to its master is the way I try to remember it now. A broken heart and a contrite spirit. I'm giving my heart to God. I can't do this myself clearly. So I'm going to have a broken heart and a contrite, contrition, repentant spirit. So that's -
Hank Smith:	00:57:34	I like that.
John Bytheway:	00:57:35	Kind of in the Book of Mormon. And Hank, if you don't mind me asking, John, what other things in the Book of Mormon jumped out at you? I'm just so fascinated by how you would see that through the lens of your background and experience.
Dr. John White:	00:57:50	Yeah. Wow, that's a big question. There's a fancy word that theologians use, and they talk about this intertextual witness. It's just what you just did there. In fact, in my notes, as you said this, the next thing is 3 Nephi 9:19 through 20. I was like, "No way." I started to see this witness within the quad, within the scriptures. Catholics have other books too. When you start to understand that there's a chorus of witnesses here, and that if

you read the Book of Mormon and the Bible together, it only strengthens your faith. My son, shortly after me, converted, and I baptized him two months after me. He struggled because he was told, and I think this was with the best of intentions, but he was told that the Book of Mormon is more important than the Bible. I said, "Johnathan, we don't believe that.

00:58:45 They are in a complimentary relationship. The Bible's not a substitute, and the Book of Mormon is not a substitute." If Joseph Smith went into the grove because of a Bible verse, James 1:6, that led him to then get the plates. If one could argue, no Bible, no Book of Mormon, no Old Testament, no New Testament. Now, I want to be careful about saying this. It's not as if God couldn't have shown up to Joseph Smith independent of the Bible. He can. He can do what he wants, he can reveal himself. They work in harmony. So I started to see that as I began to read the Book of Mormon. I was like, wait, this kind of idea is an echo here in the Bible. And I started to put them together. And then I got a Book of Mormon, and I started to look the cross references, and that really helped me. And I started seeing this early on.

John Bytheway: 00:59:28 When Jesus, before he leaves, it says he expounded all the scriptures in one. I write crazy things in my margins. I didn't just put a underline. I put, "Can I get tickets for this?" I'd like to hear that lecture. He's going to expound all of the scriptures in one. And maybe what we're seeing is some kind of intertextuality.

Dr. John White: 00:59:48 I tell people the Bible is cliff notes to begin with. Are you telling me that you can read through the Sermon on the Mount Matthew five through seven in a few minutes? I guarantee you, Jesus preached longer than a few minutes. That people wouldn't have come and sat and listened to someone in authority like that. That just didn't work. Why wouldn't we want other scriptures to strengthen that testimony, that voice? So I love it. That we have a quad.

John Bytheway: 01:00:13 We should be thrilled to get more and we want more.

Hank Smith: 01:00:18 What about the Pearl of Great Price, the Doctrine and Covenants? Did you look through those?

Dr. John White: 01:00:23 Oh, I love the Doctrine of Covenants. Prior to coming to the Restored Gospel, I was confirmed in the Episcopal Church, and we have the Book of Common Prayer. I see the Doctrine and Covenants functioning like that. The Book of Common Prayer is a combination of the Bible and Thomas Cranmer and what he put together. It gets at the liturgy, the procedures of the church,

the prayers of the church. And the Doctrine and Covenants has kind of that organizational. I mean, it's all revelation, but I continue to find the Doctrine and Covenants as illuminating as the Book of Mormon. Now, there's parts of it that I'm still trying to figure out because it seems kind of administrative. Even that 3 Nephi 9, that same idea is found in D&C 59, isn't it? as far as this sacrifice unto the Lord of a broken heart.

- John Bytheway: 01:01:10 And contrite spirit.
- Dr. John White: 01:01:11 Yeah. Then what was profound to me, and this was another litmus, I wasn't going to convert that they don't get Jesus right. I just think it's beautiful that is it every 1.7 verses in the Book of Mormon, you have Jesus? Something like that?
- John Bytheway: 01:01:26 2.2 in the New Testament and 1.7, 1.8, was it [Susan Easton Black](#) who did that initially, that research? It has a high Christology.
- Dr. John White: 01:01:35 Yeah, I love that. Yeah, you're speaking my language. Exactly. What I love about Psalm 51 is that every sacrament meeting is Psalm 51 offering.
- John Bytheway: 01:01:46 Oh, I love it.
- Dr. John White: 01:01:48 I was so convinced of having the Eucharist. I think it should be every Sunday. Guess what? Didn't miss a beat when I came to the restored gospel. And like, I don't know if I could've got over that, because I was in the Baptist tradition for a while, and it was sometimes quarterly. I say this all with all sensitivity and respect. It just seems like Jesus said we should do this as often as we gather. This is a remembering. It's supposed to be going on. The sacrament meeting really is Psalm 51 practice.
- Hank Smith: 01:02:17 Yeah. Wow. Sounds like you came home.
- Dr. John White: 01:02:20 [Karl Rahner](#), he's a Catholic theologian. He talks about anonymous Christians. I was an anonymous LDS. I was incognito. I just didn't know it. This is one thing that the longer I go, I just. I'm so certain of this witness. I totally believe it. I'm all in. This is my background too. I'm an all or nothing kind of person. That can get you in trouble sometimes. I really like desserts, you know? Once I said yes, I was like, I'm not turning back. And God just continues to reinforce this. Sometimes I feel like this is just too good to be true. It's like I went through the wardrobe. The Lion, the Witch and the wardrobe. I went through. I see now. I see things. I remember the first time I got

glasses. My friends would say, "You're squinting." I remember I couldn't see very well. My biology teacher brought to my attention as well as some of my friends. And I got glasses. The first thing I recognized was like, "Whoa, look at the veins on the leaves of the trees." And I feel like that's what happened to me when I came to restored gospel. I started to see things. Mark 8, as far as the blind man's healing. My first conversion allowed me to see men were like trees. I could see things. So it was real. The second conversion was, I once was blind, but now I fully see.

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| John Bytheway: | 01:03:33 | Beautiful. In high definition. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:03:37 | Yeah. |
| Dr. John White: | 01:03:37 | Verse 11 of 51, notice that he wants the Spirit to stay. He says, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." This is one of only two Old Testament namings of the Holy Spirit. The other one is in Isaiah 63:10 through 11. One commentator says, this is stunning. He says, "The Spirit is present with the sinner during confession, acting already to create the clean heart." God's visiting him. He's present there. You see the democratization of the Spirit in the New Testament. We saw the Spirit more of just kind of this anointing coming on leaders and prophets and Moses. Moses says, oh, I wish everyone had this. Here we have the Spirit in relation to repentance and didn't want the Spirit to be taken from him. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:04:26 | The Book of Mormon does that same thing. The natural man is an enemy to God, has been since the fall of Adam, will be forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, puts off the natural man, and becomes a saint through the atonement of Christ, the Lord. The Holy Ghost seems to be almost a vehicle for the atoning power of the Lord to enter into my heart. Don't take that from me. |
| Dr. John White: | 01:04:53 | That's beautiful. Romans 8 says that the Spirit testifies with our spirit that we're children God. And this is where John Calvin got this right. He says you can have all this revelation from without, but you need this internal revelation. You need the convicting. You need the paraclete, the counselor, the language we use in the restored gospel. The Holy Spirit is a companion. He takes up shop. He resides in us, and we need that every day. We don't want to do anything that would push the Holy Spirit away. Right? Bonhoeffer, in his prayer book of the Bible, Bonhoeffer was a theologian in Nazi Germany. He was a part of the Nazi resistance. And he had a underground seminary in Finkenwalde. And he taught them that they start every morning with the |

Psalms. This is a part, that's why he calls the Psalms the prayer book of the Bible.

01:05:45 It was a part of the regiment of training seminarians. And he says this on the penitential Psalms. He goes, "Jesus prays for the forgiveness of sins, yet not for his own, but ours, which he has taken upon himself. Precisely in this it shows himself to be the true Son of God." This is back to that triple register that Bonhoeffer talks about. David prays it in guilt. Christ prays it in carrying ours. That's Alma 7:11 through 13 if you think about it. And we pray it as both, in guilt and for Christ to carry ours. If you think about it, only two people can pray Psalm 51 with complete honesty. The worst of sinners, we all fall short of the glory of God. And the sinless one who took the sin upon him. At the sacrament table, you kneel between both of them.

01:06:39 We kneel as sinners. We take on the name of Christ. That's why I think the sacrament in D&C 77, 79, I take a journal every sacrament meeting, every Sunday. There's this practice that I learned while I was a seminary professor at the Divinity School at Baylor, and it's called Lectio Divina. It's really the slowing down and paying attention to the words of scripture, and perhaps the Spirit's going to impress this idea on me. I take that lens to the whole sacrament meeting, not just whatever's read, but whatever the prayers are, but I'm looking for the promptings of the Holy Spirit. I'm writing it down. And I can tell you that I get met just as much in the hymns and the sacrament and the testimonies like this threefold witness that's going on there. I remember when I went to church with my parents before my first conversion, before I took, church was boring to me. I mean, I could go without it.

01:07:40 I don't want to miss church now. Wherever I'm at, I was just in Madrid with a number of BYU students, took them over there for this big conference we were doing, and we presented multiple papers and a great opportunity for these undergraduates. We went to a sacrament meeting in Madrid. It was all in Spanish. This is something I prayed. Talk about the Holy Spirit showing up. I said, "Lord, I just would ask that one person would speak in English." This woman got up. She looked out there and she goes. She said it in Spanish first and I didn't know this until she came up and talked to us afterwards. Then she commenced to speak in English. And afterwards, I said, "You're an answer to my prayer." And she goes, "I looked out there and recognized that there's some new folks, and maybe they don't know Spanish, and I'm going to give my testimony in English." I mean, that's just how God works. It's beautiful, isn't it?

Hank Smith:	01:08:29	Coming up in part two.
Dr. John White:	01:08:31	They knew I was working, going back and forth to BYU, and they were really excited for me. The last night before we fly home, the next day, we go out as a group. And they've seen that I stopped drinking. I mean, this group would like to go to pubs. They've seen these outward changes in me. The Lord said, "You're going to tell them tonight." I was like, "I don't think I can tell them. I just, I don't think I can do it. It's just, this is going to be so hard." But I thought if this is true, that I need to testify.



John Bytheway:	00:01	Welcome to part two with Dr. John White, Psalms 49 through 86.
Dr. John White:	00:06	We're going to look at Psalm 61. We get in here this phrase that the rock. We understand the rock, obviously a metaphor, is higher than I. The big idea here is the divine refuge taking comfort in God transcends geography at any kind of emotional distance, that security is in God himself and that we're guarded and vouched safe by God's covenant love, not our circumstances. I love what he says, Psalm 61: 2,4. It says, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. I will abide in thy tabernacle forever." This is verse four now. "I will trust in the covert of thy wings." That's a powerful passage. It really welcomes us when he talks about the end of the earth. He's not talking about miles, but it's at the end of your resources. The prayer from the place isn't make me taller. It's lead me to the rock that is higher than I. All formation starts with this admission. Building our foundation, the New Testament is on the rock, Jesus himself, which cannot fall. That's even kind of an echo of Helaman 5:12.
Hank Smith:	01:23	You're right on. I love how he says, "I don't know this..." And then we think,
John Bytheway:	01:28	"Yes, he does." You're doing pretty well.
Dr. John White:	01:31	I want to share a story here. On 2012, when I took the job at Baylor, similar to taking the job here at BYU, my son and I moved down, but Cindy and the girls stayed back because we had to sell our house and some other circumstances that postponed their move. There was this choir from Baylor that came and it sang, "My Shepherd will supply my need." And I'd never heard that song before. I started to look at who sings that song. And guess who I discovered? The Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

John Bytheway:	02:03	Tab choir, baby.
Dr. John White:	02:05	This is like this pre-evangelism that the guy was already starting to pull my heartstrings. And I love the line, "No more a stranger nor a guest." That peace and belonging that comes when you understand the Shepherd and what he supplies. And when I was a boy, we moved nine times. There was a lot of instability, a lot of unpredictability. One of the strengths is I can make friends very quickly. But I always work from this insecure attachment because I'm wondering, are these my roots? Are these my people? Can I trust them? I love what we see in this song that there's a love that does not move away. There's a love that says I belong. And this is one of the signatures of the LDS community that drew me in, is that I belonged before I believed. Sociologists talk about this, that oftentimes people start with this idea that you have to assent to some belief, some dogma, some structure of any worldview that one holds.
	03:08	But we often find ourselves enculturated. We're brought into a community. And as we belong, we believe. And that's exactly what happened to me when I began to come here and make six trips. I began to listen to the Saints pray. I began to go to these lab meetings with Dr. Nelson, with all of our students, the way they loved, the way they accepted me. And for someone who works from an insecure attachment, that was startling to me. Like these people don't even know me and they're accepting me and loving me. Again, that was a portrait of God's acceptance, God's love of me. As I began to then journey, I recognized that these people who often have been misunderstood because it was a they at that point, scripture says, New Testament, that you will be known by your love. They disciplined me without me knowing it.
	03:58	They tutored my heart. They schooled my heart. Then when I started to read the Book of Mormon, I started to get more evidence. It made the transition easy because I understood that I now belong. I'm just a decision away of fully trusting in this and getting baptized. I like that move there in Psalm 61. And then Psalm 62 is this idea of an unshaken rest of the soul was found exclusively in God. His power is always matched by a steadfast love. Again, no status or wealth can ground it. Six times in six verses, he uses the word only in verse one, two, four, five, six, and nine. Only God. Not God plus savings. Not God plus reputation. Only God. Then verse one declares the rest. Truly my soul waiteth upon God. Verse five, we must command that, my soul, wait thou only upon God. We see this stillness is not some kind of personality type. It's a practice.

- 04:58 Trust is re-chosen over and over. We wait, we trust, we wait, we trust. And as we get more drawn into relationship with God, that only increases our hope to continue to trust. I want to make a handoff now though. From Psalm 62, it stills the soul. Psalm 63 aims the soul. This is the one I've been waiting to talk about. Let me take some time to unpack this. There's a lot going on in Psalm 63. He says, "My flesh longeth for thee." Well, the big idea is that community with God so surpasses all other earthly goods, including life itself, that even the wilderness deprivation where we're parked and we're dry becomes the occasion for the soul's deepest satisfaction. Most people don't know this, the early church, meaning the broader early church tradition, not just the restored gospel early church. Psalm 63 was the fixed morning Psalm of every Sunday service.
- 05:57 For centuries, Christians began the Lord's day by saying, early will I seek thee. I'm a morning person. I had a paper route when I was a kid. It started at 4:00 AM. When I then became a Jesus follower, it wasn't hard for me to start seeking the Lord early in the morning. Versus my brother, when I gave the paper route over to him, my dad would look out there at 5:00 in the morning, he had fallen asleep over the papers. So my brother prays at night. He doesn't pray in the morning. Psalm 63 here, the first point is you don't have a thirst. I really like this. I don't believe you have a thirst. You are a thirst. O God, thou art my God. Early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee. My flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.
- 06:46 I like how it even starts there. O God, thou art my God. Notice it starts covenant relationship, that we belong to God. That should then catapult us, but that should dispose us to want to seek him. He uses the language of the soul. As human beings, we're no like ghost in the machine. This is very concrete. In fact, I love the Hebrew language here. It talks about the throat. That's the organ of thirst. The whole living, wanting self is thirsting. As embodied people, we're thirsting. And as early as the dawn, our first movement of waking consciousness should be for God. It escalates here. It moves from identity, thou art my God, to pursuit this soul thirst and this body ache. It's interesting, in the D&C, it talks about that the spirit and the body are the soul of man. The Restoration, I think, defines the soul the way Psalm 63 does and the way that it's prayed here.
- 07:43 David's flesh, bodily longing isn't sub-spiritual. It's the soul doing what souls do. We're supposed to reach out for these kinds of things as embodied creatures. The body makes possible a breadth and depth and an intensity of experience. And it's interesting, [Elder Bednar](#), he has a talk on things as they really

are. And he goes into the body there in ways that I've never, I mean, it's so enriching. I think you even seek resonance here, this idea that as human beings, we can't talk about what it means to be human apart from the body. In fact, a lot of philosophers talk about the difference between people who think they have a body, merely have a body, versus I am a body. That we are bodies. On one level, you can use the language, I have a body, but we are embodied creatures and we don't want to deny or suppress that.

08:30 Somehow that's sub-spiritual. There's a view early on in the first three or fourth century of church called gnosticism. Somehow the body is evil. Here we have way before that heretical belief. David's showing us that the body is good. In fact, the body has thirsts and longing. It ought to be ultimately longing for God. Moving this along, this is where [C.S. Lewis](#) has really helped me a lot. He has this argument from desire. The Psalm fits in there really well. He says, "If I find in myself a desire, which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." Lewis talks about that hunger corresponds to food, thirst or water. So why do humans carry a longing? Nothing that finite creaturely reality can satisfy? It's because we are made for God. Even Ecclesiastes says eternity is set in our hearts.

09:26 The only thing you can satisfy it is something that's infinite. In all the omnis that we know as far as the attributes of God. David's thirst ultimately is for God himself, we see. And even he says in verse two, the sanctuary. That's pretty cool. And this is something I'm really looking forward to. I can only go into the temple for proxy baptisms. So I'll get my, it's a temple endowment here in October. In fact, I meet with my bishop this week. We're working through reading [Anthony Sweat](#). Holy Invitation. I'm really excited that we see the role of this temple and sanctuary in the Psalms too. And I really can't speak to that from the Restoration Gospel completely because I haven't been. Unless you guys want to give me insights.

John Bytheway: 10:09 Just read Anthony's books. I've had my kids read those before they've gone through the temple.

Dr. John White: 10:15 Well, what we see here then that communion deepens longing. It doesn't retire. As we connect with God in the temple, as we connect with God in the sacrament meetings, this should only strengthen and fortify our worship, our trusting in God. Then point three here, better than life. This is a bold claim. If you think about it, he says, "Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." I love that quote by [Joseph](#)

[Smith](#). He says, "Could you gaze into heaven five minutes you would know more than you would by reading all that was ever written on the subject." The five minutes of seeing heaven reorders all our values. If we really understand God's loving kindness, we should value it more than anything than life itself. Now, some people say, "Well, what does that mean?" Well, God wants to preserve our lives, so by loving God, then we're getting a life with him that preserves us in eternal, the abundant life. The extremes that people go, we see people are martyred for the faith. They're willing to give up their own life because they've had this sacred encounter. They know God. Most of us aren't going to have to do that. But that's people who have been really caught up in this trance like Joseph Smith as far as gazing into heaven.

Hank Smith:	11:28	Stills the soul and aims the soul.
Dr. John White:	11:31	And that gets at that idea that rightly ordered love is always going to be done in and toward God. Augustine , this is where I think he's brilliant. Saint Augustine was perplexed by how can I love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and might and have anything left over for anything less than God? The way that he configured this is, we love everything in and toward God. In fact, Catholic theologians go so far to say that any instance of love needs to be properly suspended and connected to God. So you can say on one hand, I love ice cream. And make sure you love ice cream appropriate to the kind of creaturely good that it is. So I don't love ice cream the same way I love my dog. I don't love my dog the same way I love my spouse. And I don't love my spouse in the exact same way I love God. But God is the purpose, right? Everything is loved in and toward him.
	12:24	All earthly penultimate good should be loved properly in relation to God. And that's why we need to cultivate this, these thirsts in the right directions so that they're aimed ultimately towards God as our object of adoration and love. The Book of Mormon, Enos says, "My soul hungered." It's so embodied. Again, another witness to the thing that I discovered as I read the Book of Mormon. I just started seeing that it places a premium on our materiality. Theologically, we talk about the scandal of the incarnation. God became man. In the restored gospel, there's even a bigger scandal. Jesus only became what was already true of the Father. He is fully embodied. He has flesh. He has bones. He has a face.
John Bytheway:	13:06	Do you guys want another intertextuality thing here?
Dr. John White:	13:10	Yeah, let's do it. Let's do it.

John Bytheway:	13:12	Look at Psalm 63:5. In verse five, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." So my soul is satisfied with fatness. Now look at 2 Nephi 9:51, "Feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted and let your soul delight in fatness."
Hank Smith:	13:33	There it is.
Dr. John White:	13:34	Wow.
John Bytheway:	13:35	2 Nephi 9:51.
Hank Smith:	13:37	It's not often you see that word fatness.
John Bytheway:	13:40	I know. I thought this is one to put on your fridge. Let your soul delight in fatness, right?
Hank Smith:	13:46	Go for it.
John Bytheway:	13:47	I had never seen that until right now, but I know that's in 2 Nephi.
Dr. John White:	13:51	Good connection. That's awesome.
Hank Smith:	13:53	All right, John, what should we do next?
Dr. John White:	13:55	Look at in verses 4-6 of 63. Notice what the body does here. The body's being shaped. It's a performance or practice that's getting the body properly aimed. It says hands lifted up, not grasping, mouth praising, not consuming. Night thoughts meditating, not worrying. Every faculty is redirected from food, from wealth and worry to God. This is profound. These are daily habits. Even when I come to church, what am I doing with my body that's training me towards these right aims? I said I did my dissertation on John Paul II. He talks about that every human action has two directions. There's a transitive. There's something you're doing in the world. You're altering the world somehow. If I open the door, that door wasn't opened before by me, so I did something. But it's always reflexive. Whatever I'm doing outwardly, reflexively is doing something to me inwardly.
	14:52	When I think about my daily habits, what am I doing outwardly that's shaping my character inwardly? This Psalm is getting at this idea of very practical concrete when I lift my hands. When I open the door to help someone, not only am I physically opening that door for them to get through, but it's shaping me to be more generous, more other-regarding, more kind. If we

start to connect those dots, we start to see that God has given us ways and means here on earth to deepen his presence and his character in our lives. We need to become cognizant about the kinds of things that we practice.

- Hank Smith: 15:31 Oh, daily practice. Even just kneeling down for prayers. There's something different about that act. It's very small, but it's different than standing or laying in your bed. It's just a little different.
- Dr. John White: 15:45 Before you guys asked me to do the Psalms, I made a conscious decision to start 2026 to do the morning, evening prayers of the Psalms. When you asked me, I was in Psalm 128, I think. So I stopped because I wanted to go back and start preparing for this back in May, whenever it was you asked me. One of the first things I tried to do is before I put my feet on the ground to start my day, I would read a Psalm. Sometimes I get on my knees too. I like this idea. I wanted this practice to say that, God, you are, everything that hath breath, praise the Lord. The very breath that I'm going to use to pray these prayers, I just want to be cognizant that you sustained me through another night. I could have not woke up. And so just being conscious of God as the author and finisher of my physical body, but also the author and finisher of my spiritual direction too.
- Hank Smith: 16:38 And you're saying they're connected. What I do with my physical body affects my spiritual self.
- Dr. John White: 16:43 Absolutely. This is what John Paul II once again is brilliant that the body is a visible manifestation of invisible realities. I think if we understand that, then what we're doing with our bodies, how is it working in concert with divine and spiritual truths?
- Hank Smith: 16:59 Where does he say my arms are up?
- John Bytheway: 17:03 Verse four.
- Hank Smith: 17:04 I had written so much in verse five it went over that. In verse four.
- John Bytheway: 17:09 I noticed another reference like that in Psalms 119, verse 48, "My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved. I will meditate in thy statutes."
- Hank Smith: 17:26 John, this might be outside of your expertise. I don't know. But the idea of I will lift up my hands. Is that an ancient way of praying? Is hands up? Because we fold our arms. We bow. But it

seems that in the Old Testament, they say that frequently with prayer. My hands will reach up.

- Dr. John White: 17:45 I know in the Episcopal tradition when before they do the Eucharist, they say we lift up our hands and our hearts. They're oftentimes going back to the Psalms or going back to the ancient traditions. But you really see that the point you're making is that you see the body as in full exercise in worship. If we're not careful, worship can be kind of disembodied. And that's doing a disservice to the fact of how God has created us. Even when we die, we know that our body is separated from our soul. Paul says that's not natural. When the resurrection comes, we're getting those bodies back. A glorified body. God always intended for us to be in a body-soul relationship. This is an analog to the fact that the Father has a body too. We don't want to deny or suppress that. The body is a good thing when it's properly stewarded.
- John Bytheway: 18:33 When you first heard that doctrine of our theology, that was probably something you'd never heard before.
- Dr. John White: 18:42 When you look at some of the anti-LDS or Mormon literature, they take us to task on that.
- John Bytheway: 18:49 They pound that one.
- Dr. John White: 18:50 Yeah, they do. Sometimes we're privileging if we're not careful for the alternative view, somehow as if spirit is more important than matter. Most people believe in creation ex nihilo. God is the only one that's eternal. But I love it that we were all in this premortal relationship in this heavenly council. We're co-eternal. We're not co-divine. We're co-eternal. But we will evolve and become this participation in the divine nature. You see that in 2 Peter. The Greek church, you know, deification. I mean, for a lot of evangelical Protestants, that seems, you know, heretical. But even Lewis says that He became human so that we could become gods. We could become like God. I didn't have any problem with that once I started working through that. You know, a lot of this stuff too, I was taught, for example, premortal existence in my divinity courses. But they poo-pooed that and they talked about that that was seen as heretical by origin.
- 19:49 But I remember mentally shelving. There's something there as far as God bringing it to completion. But I didn't know what to do with it because everyone around me, I would've definitely been seen as the minority view, for sure. I've been probably the only person. But then I could go back and say, "Hey, I can get on

board with this." I remember having this discussion with Janae at a conference in Salado, Texas. And we had this lengthy discussion about premortal existence. And I was convinced that it's true. Seems like it was just an ongoing unfolding of me getting new revelations to explain where there was questions that hadn't been answered.

- Hank Smith: 20:28 Yeah. Is that why ritual is so important? We think of baptism. It's a very tactile experience. The sacrament. The temple is the same way. It's clothing and ritual. Is that because we need to involve our bodies in our worship?
- Dr. John White: 20:44 Absolutely. That's why I'm so excited about the temple, because people know that I come from more of a high, they call it high church, high liturgy. And they're like, "Oh, you're going to love the temple." Again, I'm being prepared for this. This makes me want to cry and just like, this is amazing. Now I'm going to get, one can argue the apex of this, I mean, this is a miniature form of what will, the new heaven and new earth will be. And I'm just preparing me for this to have these sacred encounters and expect to meet and know God in ways there that, that I don't know him in an ordinary time.
- Hank Smith: 21:16 Yeah. It's important to have that body movement. I really appreciate that. Yeah. I really like the way you've put this because it's, why are you doing that little thing? Why are we passing around trays of bread? Well, it's important for us to use our bodies in our worship. Why walk into this water and feel the water and go under the water? And it seems like it's a very feely, touchy experience.
- Dr. John White: 21:41 Yeah. I mean, think about all I can do is proxy baptisms, but those dead can't go into fleshly tabernacles. I can physically represent them in the here and now. See the connection there to the body? Well, Jesus and 3 Nephi, right? One by one, physically going to people. I had that hermeneutic, that interpretive grid from my dissertation, and now it's just like reified, amplified, blown up as I come into the restored gospel.
- Hank Smith: 22:11 Yeah. There's probably lots of times. I knew it. I knew it. I knew I was right.
- John Bytheway: 22:17 John, this has blessed me. I think it's going to bless a lot of people because they're seeing it through the eyes of somebody that has come from a different place. If I can speak for some of our audience, maybe I'm right. A lot of us are going, wow, I've always had this. I've taken this for granted. Hank, I'm writing down notes for my future classes, as I'm sure you are. And John,

did you strain friendships? Did you lose friends? What kind of sacrifices did you make to be here today?

Dr. John White: 22:44

After I was baptized in October of 2025, key events happened in October for me. Not sure why the month of October other than just happened that way. October 2023 was when I got my first visible witness from Dr. Nelson. Then I was in a conference a year later, same conference where I'd met Dr. Nelson or Janae, but it was in New York City. In advance, a team of us from Baylor and BYU were going to present some papers there. So I was joining a presentation with Dr. Nelson and one of her graduate students. And then some other Baylor folks were there too. But in advance, I said, hey, to Janae and to Jodie Jensen. I said, hey, we're going to be a few hours from this place called Palmyra and Sacred Grove. I was wondering, I said, are you guys familiar with it? So I was being genuine. They were real humble. They were like, yeah, we're familiar with it.

23:52

This is where I was starting to really, it was in the thick of my investigation. So I was like, "I need to go there. Yeah, I need to learn about this firsthand." So they agreed that we would go. So we went to the sacrament meeting. This is where my conversion happened. Moroni 10:4-5. And at that time, I didn't realize that that's a missionary promise. That's like John 3:16. I heard someone give their testimony and they cited those verses. And it really quickened my heart. I was like, "Wow, that's a profound verse." And I hadn't read through the whole Book of Mormon yet. Then when we ascended Hill Cumorah, we read it together.

24:26

We read, I think we read most of Moroni 10, not just those verses. Then we got to the top. That inscription is on the Angel Moroni statue. That's three times. Now, at that time, I was still Trinitarian. Father, Son, Holy Ghost. We still believe in the God had three personages. So I was like, wow, that's three. That's an incredible witness. After the Sacred Grove, we went to the Grandin Press and the senior missionary, I didn't even know there was such a thing as senior missionaries. The woman said to me when we got to the second floor, there was Moroni 10:4,5 scription. She goes, "Why don't you put your name in place of the ye and read it aloud?" It was just a small group of us. I could barely get through it. I started to weep. I started to cry. After that trip, I began to text and tell people I would put it in all caps, "I BELIEVE." They knew what that meant.

25:20

So I had converted. Then we decided with this fellowship that I'd gotten with Baylor University, the last segment of that fellowship to finish my responsibilities for the grant was to

come back in October and present a paper at the Book of Mormon Culture Conference. I decided to get baptized on October 26th, because that's when this all started. So I got baptized. I now am teaching at an institution that doesn't allow tenured folks to be LDS. I'm in a difficult situation. I can continue here for a little bit longer with integrity and just not teach anything against the restored gospel or against Baylor. I was going to postpone my baptism, and Kim B. Clark mentored me. He really took me under his wing and started to encourage me. He would text me regularly. I met with him and Sue. We went to their ward. His son, Jonathan, is the bishop there, and we went to lunch to his house afterwards.

26:18 And I said, "I just want to lay it out." I said, "Once I get baptized, I'm going to have to resign or get fired. Maybe I should postpone my baptism." He goes, "Oh, no. Do not postpone your baptism." This is just following through. He goes, "Basically, let's trust God on this." Here he was, former Dean of the Harvard Business School. So even-keeled, patience, his composure. He's believing the best and he's trusting God. And part of me is thinking it's easy for you to say that to me. You're not in my shoes.

Hank Smith: 26:49 Not your job.

Dr. John White: 26:52 I decided to go forward and to be baptized. And I came back home knowing that I had to make a decision. I knew I'd lose my job. I thought, well, I'm, I don't know where I'm going to work. So I started some conversation with people at BYU. Then it looked like months later that there's going to be a position for me. I go to this annual conference called the Academy of American Religion and Society of Biblical Literature. I have a good group of friends. We're talking best friends. They know everything. And I tell them pretty much everything. They knew I was working, going back and forth BYU, and they were really excited for me. The last night before we fly home, the next day, we go out as a group. And they've seen that I've stopped drinking. I mean, this group would like to go to pubs.

27:36 They'd seen these outward changes in me. The Lord said, "You're going to tell them tonight." I was like, "I don't think I can tell them. I just, I don't think I can do it. This is, this is going to be so hard." But I thought, "If this is true, then I need to testify." We'd finished dinner and I hadn't told them yet. They're going to a pub. I remember the Lord saying, "You better tell them earlier rather than later, because the more they drink, the more contentious or this could go in the wrong direction sideways." We were walking to the pub, and we see the Old South Church.

They wanted to go inside. And God said to me, I remember this. It wasn't audible, but it was impression. He goes, "Sacred sight. This is where you're going to tell them." And so I was like, uh. So we go inside. It's quiet. It was about ready to close. We were in the chapel area, the sanctuary. I turned to them, I said, "Hey, guys, I got good news and I got surprising news." I had to, I had to pitch it that way, right?

28:31 The good news is, it looks like I'm leaving Baylor and going to BYU. I hadn't signed a contract yet, so it's still by faith. I don't think God ever wanted me to convert, be baptized knowing I had a job. He wanted to make sure this is full trust. Said, "Looks like I'm going to get hired by them." And so they're like, "Looks like it." They're concerned for me contractually, right? I haven't signed anything yet, but it's really looking promising." Then they looked at me real quick and they go, "Wait a minute. Surprising news?" I mean, they're logicians. They knew. They're like, "Wait, you can't work at BYU. All things are equal. There are exceptions unless you convert or baptize." And I said, "Well, surprising news, I've converted and baptized." I mean, the rest of the night, the rest of the night, I left the gathering at about 10:15, 10:30, because I knew they were going to continue drinking and usually not much happens good after 10, 10:30 to begin with at night at a pub.

29:25 Next day I saw them, I said, "What'd you guys talk about?" They're like, "What do you think we talked about?" So this is getting at some of the opposition. My best friend, a renowned scholar, on Saturday or Sunday, I get a text from him, "Hey, are you available next Tuesday? I'd love to get together." I waited 24 hours before I replied to that. We got together and met for an hour and it was opposition. It was challenge. It was, why are you doing this? Why can't you postpone it? You could lose your family over this. I mean, all these reasons you shouldn't. All these objections. This could hurt you as far as occupation. You already have tenure. You're going to start all over. The academic guild, but you could be seen as an outcast. By the end of it, he said, "I'm not going to change your mind. Am I?"

30:12 And I go, "Nope." He goes, "I didn't think I would." What that meant though is that that was some opposition, some good friends. Then after I left, and they're asking all kinds of questions, they're like, "Was he converted when he was here? We heard he'd been baptized." In my letter of resignation, I just made it clear. I said, you know, I fully affirm the mission and values of BYU and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints." That was my way of saying, "Hey, I'm one of them." There's just been some awkwardness. People have talked to

other people, but if they're really my friends, why don't they come to me and talk to me? That's what's been hurtful about this whole process. I've been lonely at times. I know that I've done the right thing, but just a modicum of definitely persecution. You know, I've heard some stuff that just is absolutely not true. It's like, "What? Why would you say that? Come talk to me." That's a long answer to your question.

John Bytheway:	31:08	Wow. Thank you for sharing that.
Dr. John White:	31:12	Baylor's been good to me. I'm not leaving in hate. I'm just being candid with y'all.
John Bytheway:	31:17	Nothing but respect for you, John. Holy cow.
Hank Smith:	31:21	What a leap of faith. It's beautiful.
Dr. John White:	31:24	It's that promise obligation. I look at the beauty and grace of the promise of the restored gospel. I have to. It's necessary.
John Bytheway:	31:33	Yeah. And so what else mattered?
Dr. John White:	31:35	For me not to do it is sin.
Hank Smith:	31:38	Yeah. Hmm. I know what I know. Now, we don't want to let you go without walking us through a few more Psalms. What should we do now?
Dr. John White:	31:44	Let's go to Psalm 85 and 86. We already talked about Psalm 78, that where it sits in the center of the psalter about the compassion, forgave their iniquity. So let's turn to Psalm 85, and this is a great phrase. We see a parallelism here. We see where mercy and truth kiss. I like this because we see God's attributes. We see steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness and peace. They're not in competition. They converge and really guaranteeing a restoration already begun. It's already here in the very person and presence and it's near at hand through Jesus, but we await for his second return. There's kind of this dialectic, this tension, and you even see it in these different attributes. So let me just read this real quick. It says, "Mercy and truth are met together. And then righteousness and peace have kissed each other." I love how he uses this to show that these virtues are not pitted against each other.
	32:46	Shalom or peace isn't the absence of conflict, but flourishing in a right relationship. Justice is one of those necessary conditions. If things are really going as God intended, you'll find yourself in

equitable relationships. There's been a failure sometimes in Christian communities where we divorce these attributes. Justice is filing for separation from mercy. Psalm 85 shows that there needs to be this reconciliation. And you see this in Alma, is it chapter 42? He performs this wedding ceremony between justice and mercy. It's called the atonement. That's what brings justice and mercy together. As an ethicist, it's easy to fight for righteousness and a private morality. We live our lives upstanding with integrity, but there's no gospel without social justice too. And this is where I think Zion is so important, that we dwell in righteousness. We have responsibility to the poor and we're one heart and one mind, these attributes.

33:47 They don't compete against each other. That the kingdom of God embraces both of these. We want instances of Zion. And this is important because the evangelical background that I came out of, oftentimes the gospel that was preached, pedaled, and proclaimed was oftentimes for my personal salvation, which it is. You become so heavenly minded, no earthly good. Those who are most heavenly minded are the most earthly good. You talk about some of the greatest prophets, Martin Luther King Jr. is because he understood, had a big enough hope of these attributes staying together that he was disgruntled, dismayed when he didn't see it happening here on Earth. A proper prophetic anger when you see an injustice because you know that's not what God intended. We should be unhappy with that, dismayed with that, frustrated with that, because it's frustrating God's cosmic order and purpose in the gospel flourishing here on earth.

Hank Smith: 34:47 That's a beautiful idea that there's a future Zion coming, but let's build Zion now to the degree that we can.

Dr. John White: 34:57 Well, and we pray the prayer in the Lord's Prayer. Your will done on earth as it is in heaven. Your justice, your truth, your mercy, your loving kindness done here on earth as it is in heaven. It'll always be imperfect, it'll be impartial, but we don't give up. We should still be striving for it.

Hank Smith: 35:11 There's one of our [hymns](#). How great, how glorious, how complete, redemption's grand design, where justice, love and mercy meet in harmony divine.

Dr. John White: 35:25 What's the name of it? That's beautiful.

Hank Smith: 35:27 It's called How Great the Wisdom and the Love.

John Bytheway:	35:30	It's a sacrament hymn, isn't it, usually?
Hank Smith:	35:32	It's a sacrament hymn. Yeah. It was actually a talk from Elder Holland . It's called Where Justice, Love, and Mercy Meet.
John Bytheway:	35:40	It's a great line, isn't it? And they kiss, according to Psalms here.
Dr. John White:	35:46	Yeah, yeah, yeah.
John Bytheway:	35:47	They're not fighting. They're not outdoing each other.
Dr. John White:	35:50	Yeah. The physicality of that. It's a metaphor, but literally that there's this organic union communion between the two.
Hank Smith:	35:58	Yeah.
Dr. John White:	35:59	They're joining.
John Bytheway:	36:01	What do you make of verse 11? When you see that, does it remind you of anything, the first phrase there?
Hank Smith:	36:08	Truth shall spring out of the earth. That's a restoration phrase as well, isn't it?
John Bytheway:	36:14	The Lord speaks peace to his people. Truth shall spring out of the earth, in parentheses, the Book of Mormon.
Hank Smith:	36:20	Isn't it the Book of Moses, John? Truth will I send forth out of the Earth?
John Bytheway:	36:25	Some intertextuality. It's my new word for the day.
Hank Smith:	36:29	Moses 7:62. Righteousness will I send down out of heaven and truth will I send out of the earth to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten. And I've seen that maybe as revelation coming down, Book of Mormon coming out of the earth. I will cause to sweep the earth as a flood. To gather out mine elect. I think it says John White in there. To gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth.
John Bytheway:	36:58	I love that you brought up Zion. Zion in the early days was thought to be a place and then more like a cause.
Hank Smith:	37:06	When the Lord introduces it, he does it really slowly with Joseph. The cause of Zion. Oh, it's a cause? Yeah, it's also a people. It's also a place. It's all of a sudden an entire movement.

		If you would've been in the early church, the 1830s church, Zion was-
John Bytheway:	37:26	Was a place.
Hank Smith:	37:27	Was, yeah. It was a place and it was their point. It was a place. We are going to build Zion on the earth. Now we build stakes of Zion, trying to become Zion.
Dr. John White:	37:44	Well, I love that. It's both spiritual and literal. It's not reducible to one or the other. So some people want to build utopia here, heaven on earth, but we want to make sure we're doing it spiritually, that those are meant to be in congruence. I love that.
Hank Smith:	38:00	What the early saints learn is that it's buildings are easier than people. John likes to say when they brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, that it was easy to get them out of Egypt. It was difficult to get Egypt out of them.
John Bytheway:	38:13	Yeah, that's an old saying. It's not mine, but yeah. There's still a lot of Egypt in me. I'm just glad, John, that when you showed up at some sacrament meetings, you were welcomed and embraced. When I hear people tell that story, I'm like, "Oh, I hope, I hope, I hope everybody was just like, hi, how are you? Welcome. What's your name?"
Hank Smith:	38:30	Because as John, as you know, it's not always the case that when someone asks me, are Latter-Day Saints Christian? I say, oh, hopefully. Most of the days.
John Bytheway:	38:39	I hope so. I hope they're acting like it. Yeah.
Hank Smith:	38:42	Most of the time.
Dr. John White:	38:45	Well, my first sacrament meeting, though, it was interesting. The mics didn't work. The bread wasn't there. The bread wasn't there.
Hank Smith:	38:52	Oh no.
Dr. John White:	38:53	I mean, from all outwardly purposes, it seemed like a train wreck. But then the Spirit showed up when we sang, is it, I will walk with Jesus?
John Bytheway:	39:02	Uh-huh.

Dr. John White:	39:03	We sang that at my baptism, along with Be Thou My Vision. That's when I really felt the Spirit, was when we sang that. I hadn't been converted yet. This was, and it was a very meaningful experience for me. I think it's Robert Millet talks about that our gospel doesn't need any props. Even though those things had been kicked out from underneath in my first sacrament experience, the Lord showed up. The Lord proved himself and presented himself to me. Psalm 86, this is unite my heart. I like the movements here. Verses one through seven, there's this petition for poverty, for I am poor and needy. And verse 8 to 10, there's this incomparability among the gods. There is none like unto thee. And then verse 11 through 13, this is the center. Teach me, unite my heart. So here we have wholehearted praise.
	39:57	Deliver me from Sheol. 14-17, and then a renewed plea as far as God's own creed. My Lord, thy servant. You see that seven times my Lord and thy servant three times. My first point here is that notice how in verse 15, I praise God's self-description of who he is back to him. But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious, long suffering and plenteous in mercy and truth. What I see here is prayer's not based on one's personal faith alone, but on the ancient and continuing confessions of the whole community. The whole community is joining in this. And so I think it's really important that there's this community orientation. And then in verse two, he says, and you are my God. Answers that electing word. I am the Lord your God. And it's only answered if one dare to say my God.
	40:54	You have to say my God. You have to entrust yourself to be able to say my God, that you belong. That's powerful language you see in the Psalms over and over my God by David. So this gets at this personal relationship. And I like a rare petition here in verse 11, Teach me thy way, O Lord. I will walk in thy truth. Unite my heart to fear thy name. One of my hopes for this whole time together is that these texts have become our prayers. And that for listeners, they may feel that somehow maybe God is repelled by their brokenness, by their doubt, by their despair, even by their unbelief, people push back and say, why is unbelief and doubt so often in the Psalms? I think it's important because God recognizes that these are periods we may go through, and he's catechized them for us.
	41:48	He's put them in there to know that it's okay to doubt. This is a part of your journey. The problem is if you run from God instead of a place to actually entrust yourself to God, to actually call upon Him in your despair. My hope is that we would recognize that God stands ready to hear. He is joy and gladness from

Psalm 51. And we can then testify, teach, and live to this plan of the good news of happiness.

- Hank Smith: 42:17 One of my teaching assistants, her name's Danica Nusink. She wrote a paper on Nephi towards the end of his writing, switching from talking about Jesus to this I glory in truth, I glory in my Jesus. Something happens from He's the communities and He's my Jesus.
- Dr. John White: 42:45 Yeah, that's really good. I'm really impressed by the students at BYU. There's just a level of maturity. If you have to go out for two years as a male or 18 months as a female, that's a significant commitment. You have to grow up pretty quickly.
- Hank Smith: 43:01 John's on his sixth child heading out on a mission.
- John Bytheway: 43:04 My daughter's going to France. I'm like woow. Lyon France Mission. Which is really fun because her oldest sister went there too.
- Dr. John White: 43:14 Oh, wow. On this last point, as far as Psalm 86:11, I really see that this is kind of a form of, if you're uniting your heart, fearing in a form of consecration. We surrender. I'm in the Maxwell Institute, so I've been reading as much as I can about [Neal Maxwell](#). In fact, I'm finishing his biography.
- Hank Smith: 43:35 Quite a guy, Elder Maxwell, huh?
- Dr. John White: 43:38 I want to write a book on his discipleship ethic. I see so much in what he's doing. He loves C.S. Lewis too, like me.
- Hank Smith: 43:44 Yeah, he did.
- Dr. John White: 43:46 He has a phrase that he uses in one of his talks is, "Consecration is the only surrender." He's talking about the mind being surrendered, which is also a victory. I love that. It's a paradox. Normally, when you surrender, you think, ohhh.
- John Bytheway: 43:58 A surrender and a victory at the same time.
- Dr. John White: 44:02 Exactly. But it's because it's consecrated. It's set apart for God. And that's a victory. Verse 13 says, "For great is thy mercy toward me, thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." So that brings us back full circle to where I started. That this is where we see the deliverance, the answer to the ransom. It's God's mercy. And we see that that stands central to this whole section of Psalms we've been looking at.

Hank Smith:	44:28	John, this has been fantastic. We have walked through so many Psalms and you've told us of your experiences joining the church. And I think all of our listeners would say welcome. I loved when you would say we. You are part of this. You're in.
Dr. John White:	44:45	Amen.
Hank Smith:	44:47	We do have quite a few listeners out there, and we want to thank everyone for continuing to listen. What's your message to them? To our listeners as a new member of the church, but as a well-studied theologian?
Dr. John White:	45:03	That's a great question. One is, keep God as your highest good. It's easy to allow the things of this world to militate against, to challenge, to conflict with. We can do it in such subtle ways. I started off with this idea that is really our view of God that determines our view of self. So if we have a comprehension or misunderstanding about God, let's try to figure that out. Don't opt for easy answers, because the culture may be saying and questioning that knowledge of God. So stay in it. Read the Psalms. The Psalms give us the language. Think about a little child. A child has to be taught how to talk by the parents. And so the Heavenly Father has given us the language of how to talk to Him with raw emotions, how to express our grief, our sorrow. As we said, it's an anatomy of the soul, mirrors the soul.
	46:07	These are sacred texts that should be a part of your regimen of your spiritual diet and disciplines and practices. But let's continue to trust in God. And our trust in God is in direct correspondence to our view of God. When we teach this to student athletes, adolescents, we know there's this prevalent view. It's called moralistic therapeutic deism out there. That God is just a moralistic God. He just expects you to do good, be a do-gooder. He's just really here to meet your needs. The vending machine metaphor that we gave earlier. Deism, that God has got this world going and the so holy other that he's not involved in the near and present and imminence of your life. Well, that's a flawed view of God. We have a God who is intimately involved, so much so that his own Son came here to suffer for us and identify with us.
	47:03	He's a God who weeps. Even in the Psalms, we see echoes of Moses seven as far as the God who weeps. We see a God who has emotions. A God who actually feels for us. If you're brokenhearted, guess what? God is brokenhearted. If you are in despair, He's a good father. He wants to talk to you. Come and talk to Him. The Psalms give us that invitation. They give us that culture to shape us and how we think about God. And

therefore, once we think correctly about God, then we think well about ourselves and other people.

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| Hank Smith: | 47:41 | It's wonderful. We love that you're a part of this church, John. |
| Dr. John White: | 47:45 | I love being a part of this church. |
| John Bytheway: | 47:47 | Yeah. We need to talk to you again after you go through the temple. |
| Hank Smith: | 47:51 | When someone joins the church, like John. And we have hundreds of thousands that do. There's an energy that comes. An energy and an excitement. |
| John Bytheway: | 48:07 | If you have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, can you feel so now? |
| Hank Smith: | 48:14 | Thank you, John. Dr. White, thank you for spending your day with us. We first heard of you back when we were talking about the book of Helaman. Who would've thought then when Janae said, hey, I ran this by a friend of mine, that that friend would now be on the show two years later. I just think what a beautiful story. With that, we want to thank Dr. John White for joining us today. We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen, and every episode we remember our founder. He had that same excitement for the gospel John as you. Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We've got more of the Psalms to cover on followHIM. As a thank you to our wonderful listeners, we'd love to gift you the digital version of our book, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. It offers short, meaningful insights drawn from our past Old Testament episodes. Visit followhim.co , that's followhim.co , to download your free copy today. And you'll also find the link to purchase the print edition. Thank you for being part of our followHIM family. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, Heather Barlow, Amelia Kabwika, Sydney Smith, and Annabelle Sorensen. |
| | 49:35 | Whatever questions or problems you have, the answer is always found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Turn to him. Follow him. |

followHIM Favorites



Hank Smith:	00:02	Hey welcome to followHIM Favorites. This is where John and I share a single story to go with each week's lesson. Now, John, this week's favorite is going to be different than any we've done before. Instead of telling a story that fits the scriptures, I'm actually going to tell the story of the guest that we have on our show. His name is Dr. John White.
John Bytheway:	00:23	Incredible.
Hank Smith:	00:24	I'm going to read a little bit of what he has written about his conversion story. He said when he was young, they moved nine times during his childhood. So that's quite a bit. He said, "The house was not a happy one." He said, "I would hear my mother crying. I knew my father drank too much, even as a kid. I didn't always know which father I was going to get, the happy one or the angry one." He said there's a lot of shame in his childhood home.
	00:52	He felt like a stranger, he said, in his own house, like a guest who had to measure up, right, to earn his place. Then John, get this. He gets into drinking pretty heavily as well. He says at Indiana University, he was kicked out of a fraternity. I shouldn't laugh at this, but it is ironic. He was kicked out of a fraternity for partying too hard. Now, that's got to be impressive. I've never been in a fraternity, but I've heard stories, and I think that's part of the point. And they're like, "Whoa, you're going overboard."
John Bytheway:	01:21	Yeah, that's a lot of partying.
Hank Smith:	01:23	Now, listen to what he says. He says, "I was alone and empty. And in that emptiness, God found me." So he finds a Christian minister. They're sitting at a lunch. They're having a meal. And the minister says to him, he said, "I'd never heard this sentence ever. John, God loves you. He has a wonderful plan for your life." He said, "Now, I'd heard of a distant God, a formal God, a God you say the prayer to before you eat, but I'd never heard of a God who loved me." So he says, "In February 1989, in a library

cafeteria with students eating and laughing around me, I bowed my head and gave my life to Jesus." And he calls that his first conversion. He says what follows after that are like a campus ministry with his wonderful wife, Cindy. He got a doctorate degree in theology. John, you know, that's a big deal.

John Bytheway: 02:16

Yeah.

Hank Smith: 02:17

They moved to Scotland for that. Then he becomes a professor at Baylor University. Now, John, you know that Baylor is a very Christian university. Then John says some really dark, difficult things happen. He doesn't go into the details. He just said, "It was a long season of professional exclusion." So it sounds like it was pretty dark time. He said, "At the time, the breaking, the difficulty, the pain, the loneliness felt just like that. Difficult, painful, and lonely." But he says, "Looking back now, I can see that God was emptying the cup before he filled it. He was not punishing me. He was interrupting me." Isn't that interesting? He was not punishing me. He was interrupting me. He said, "I needed to learn that my worth was not earned. It wasn't proven. It wasn't built. He could give it to me." Okay. So then the big day comes. He actually gives the exact day. October 25th, 2023. He's presenting a paper at an academic conference in Texas. In the room, sat a young Latter-Day Saint scholar. John, you know her. Dr. Janae Nelson. We've had her on our show.

03:28

She's a BYU professor. He said, "I did not know her, but during my presentation..." Listen to this, John. Do miracles cease? "During this presentation, I was distracted because there was a bright light over her." He says, it was real. It wasn't just a, like, a metaphorical light. He said, "It was real. It was disorienting. I'm a trained theologian. Proof and reason. Those are the tools that I use." He's like this should not be happening. He later talked to Dr. Nelson, asking her about the light, and she, you know, she has no idea what he's talking about. There was no light over me. He's like, "No, there was a light over you." Well, over the next little while, he has a couple of conversations with Janae, who we've talked to, and also Elder Kim Clark, who has been a general authority. He's been a commissioner, I think, of church education, president of BYU Idaho, right?

04:22

He said, "In these conversations, these were not debates." Now, listen to what he says. He says, "I had to give place as Alma says, for a seed to be planted." It was emails and texts. He met BYU students and BYU faculty in this whole thing. "In June of 2024, I received my first copy of the Book of Mormon." Now, John, you're going to love this. I know you love the Book of Mormon.

		He says, "Reading the Book of Mormon did not overwhelm me. It enlarged me." What do you think?
John Bytheway:	04:51	Great word.
Hank Smith:	04:52	It didn't overwhelm me. I wasn't blown away. I was just, I was filled. He said, "It enlarged me. It swelled within me and began to be delicious " Then he says, "In July," so the month later, "I attended my first sacrament meeting. There was no bread. The microphone failed. It was disorganized. And I felt very embarrassed for the young men. By every rational metric, it was kind of a disaster. But then we sang, I will walk with Jesus." He said, "The Holy Ghost entered the room and took my guard down." Don't you love that, the language he's using? Now there's voices competing inside of him. He said the voices were loud. Voices like, "If you get baptized, what happens to your job?" "All your training." The voice said, "Listen, serious theologians don't do this kind of thing. You'll lose your people. You already know Jesus. Why make this change?" A persistent voice. "Don't do it. Later. Not yet. Just wait."
	05:49	Then he visits Palmyra, New York. Probably not a good idea if you're trying to resist the Spirit. He said, "The light that began that day when I was in that conference," what we talked about earlier, he said "it completed or found an answer in the sacred grove." On January 1st, 2025, he said, "I gave up alcohol. My father was an alcoholic and I knew where that road ended." He said, "Now, giving up alcohol was not about me being superior. It was entering the conditions for spiritual perception."
John Bytheway:	06:21	Beautiful.
Hank Smith:	06:22	He's like, "I had to become more spiritually sensitive, and alcohol was not helping that." So then the light followed that act of faith. Then the day comes, John, October 26th, 2025. So not even a year ago, "I was baptized and confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints." Now, John, listen to this. "I did not find a different Jesus."
John Bytheway:	06:48	Thank you.
Hank Smith:	06:49	That's often what's said about us, John. We believe in a different Jesus. He says "it is not a different Jesus. It is a deeper participation with the same Jesus. Not a replacement, a restoration."
John Bytheway:	07:02	This is a theologian.

Hank Smith:	07:04	A trained theologian. He finishes with this. "I testify that Heavenly Father lives. He has a face. He is a father. The father I was hungry for all my life. I testify that Jesus Christ is His beloved Son who suffered not only for my sins, but for my sadness. And that His love precedes our worth. I testify that the Holy Ghost is the comforter who dwells in us. I testify that the Book of Mormon is true, and that Joseph Smith saw what he said he saw. I testify that Christ does not stop healing ever."
John Bytheway:	07:40	So beautiful. I'm so excited for our listeners to hear his story and to hear his commentary on the Psalms. They're just so good.
Hank Smith:	07:48	Yeah. So if you loved this story, you're going to love hearing from the man himself. Dr. John White, he joins us for the book of Psalms. It was actually part of his master's thesis was in the book of Psalms. And he also then tells us a little bit more about his experiences in joining the church and also the effects of it, John. Like his job is on the line. His friendships are tested. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcast. We'd love for you to hear from Dr. White. Then come back here next week. We'll do another followHIM Favorites.