

"Comfort Ye My People"

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

What if God, who holds oceans in His hand, is more concerned with your fear than your failures? Dr. S. Michael Wilcox joins Hank and John to explore Isaiah 40-49, weaving personal loss, a vivid vision of divine judgment, and the promise that God never grows discouraged with those who are honestly trying.

Timecodes:

- 00:00 Beginning of Episode - Dr. S. Michael Wilcox
- 2:31 Shut the left brain, turn on the right
- 6:52 Liken the words of Isaiah
- 9:02 Introducing Dr. S. Michael Wilcox
- 11:25 "Comfort ye, my people"
- 13:58 "A voice crying in the wilderness"

- 17:05 “Behold your God”
- 19:11 Michael wasn’t a great runner
- 22:04 Who hath measured the waters
- 25:15 It’s the invitation to intimacy
- 28:33 When God feels far away
- 32:29 Kind, not just powerful
- 33:38 I have a B+ personality
- 38:15 Holding your hand through it
- 41:41 He won’t break what’s already bruised
- 45:21 Justice, not condemnation
- 48:03 Trusting the one leading you
- 50:02 The Waiting Room
- 53:13 I’ll go in with you
- 57:13 I won’t remember your sins
- 59:39 Someone pleading on your behalf
- 1:00:04 A judgment meant to be pleasant
- 1:04:01 The greatest discovery of life
- 1:07:10 God loves me
- 1:10:26 A blessing poured on your children
- 1:13:01 You will not be forgotten
- 1:16:40 The god you carry vs. the God who carries you
- 1:20:15 Babylon falls, Zion rises
- 1:25:15 Babylon’s false confidence
- 1:29:31 Make room, you’re going to need it
- 1:33:42 Peace that never stops moving
- 1:38:29 Send THIS to your teen
- 1: 40:03 Fed in the highest places
- 1:43:03 A love that won’t forget you
- 1:45:21 Look at how many are coming
- 1:49:18 Carried by others
- 1:55:00 It’s not a race, we’re going gently
- 1:57:35 End of Episode - Dr. S. Michael Wilcox

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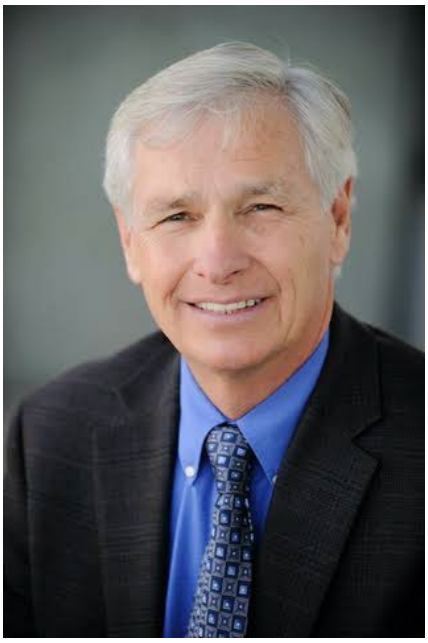
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Biographical Information:



S. Michael Wilcox received his PhD from the University of Colorado and taught for many years at the LDS Institute of Religion adjacent to the University of Utah. He has spoken to packed crowds at BYU Education Week and has hosted tours to the Holy Land, to China, to Church history sites, and beyond. He has served in a variety of callings, including as bishop and counselor in a stake presidency. He has written many articles and books, including *House of Glory, Sunset, 10 Great Souls I Want to Meet in Heaven, Twice Blessed*, and *Finding Hope*. He and his late wife, Laurie, are the parents of five children.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:00	Coming up in this episode on followHIM.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	00:00:04	I'm looking at the man in the last chair, and the man in the last chair is terrified. He's wringing his hands, he's weeping. They'd go along and finally, and I keep watching that man in the last chair. Finally, the door opens again and the angel points to the man in the last chair and he says...
Hank Smith:	00:00:29	Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with my hoar haired co-host, John Bytheway. John, have you ever received that adjective, hoar-haired co-host?
John Bytheway:	00:00:45	It's here in Isaiah. I think perhaps for our English listeners, you should spell hoar.
Hank Smith:	00:00:51	Yes. H-O-A-R, hoar-haired co-host. What it means is old age, John. This is Isaiah 46. The Lord says, "He will bless you into your old age, or your hoar hairs will I carry, your white hairs."
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	00:01:08	And my hairs are whiter than either one of yours, so.
Hank Smith:	00:01:13	We do have a hoar-haired guest here today. Mike Wilcox is back on followHIM, what a blessing. Thank you for being here, Mike.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	00:01:20	Yeah. I like to call it temple hair. When it gets white, it's temple hair.
Hank Smith:	00:01:26	Temple hair. That's nice. I really like that. I think we'll have a lot of people use that from now on. John, we are in our third week of Isaiah. Tell me what you're thinking about. You wrote a book on Isaiah called Isaiah for Airheads. You should maybe rewrite one, Isaiah for Hoarheads.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	00:01:43	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	00:01:46	Tell me what you're thinking about with Isaiah.

John Bytheway:	00:01:48	As you just said, this is our third portion of Isaiah. It sounds to me like the tone changes here. The very first word as the lesson points out, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people," which is the first words you hear in Handel's Messiah as well, which I love. It just reminds me of God's mission to bring to pass our immortality and eternal life. He can do this. He loves us, he cares about us, and he is able to do his work. That's what I see when these chapters begin.
Hank Smith:	00:02:18	That's beautiful. Yeah, there is a reason, John, that the Lord emphasized Isaiah. There's a power there that I think is untapped for quite a few people. Mike, what do you want to do today? What are we going to look at?
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	00:02:31	Well, we'll go through those chapters. They're really beautiful. John said it perfectly. The tone shifts. In fact, the tone shifts so dramatically in some people's minds they feel there were two Isaiahs. I don't subscribe to that. People do change. Maybe it's a younger and an older, you don't know what experiences, but there's definitely a tone shift. I like to maybe begin with just a few keys to help people work with Isaiah, and then we'll just go right into the text and see why comfort ye sets the tone of the whole last half of Isaiah. I always say to people, "Pretty much shut your left brain down when you read the prophets, all the prophets of Israel. Shut the left brain down and turn your right brain on." It is poetic. The language is poetic, especially Isaiah. He's the greatest poet of the Hebrew language in that sense.
	00:03:25	Turn your right brain on. It is figurative more than literal. There is no single fulfillment to these things. One word that I think is really helpful with Isaiah is to just stick in your mind the word contemporary. We sometimes start to read Isaiah, and this is true of all the prophets truly, but especially Isaiah, and try and pin him down. This is the fulfillment of this prophecy. He's talking about Joseph Smith or Jesus or something here. And you can have a single emphasis if you want, but he is contemporary. There's a wonderful statement by William Barclay, who was a member of the Church of Scotland, commentator on particularly the New Testament in the Scottish church. He says, "The word of God has a perturbing way of disregarding dates." And that's a really good way of saying it. Don't feel there's a single particular fulfillment to something in Isaiah.
	00:04:36	He's addressing multiple audiences. He's addressing his own time, he's addressing our time, he's addressing the time of Jesus, he's addressing multiple people. He's addressing Nephi's people and the Latter-day Saints and people all over the world. He is contemporary. Don't read him as though he's talking to

them. You read him as though he's talking to us and today I want to read him as though he's talking to me individually. Nephi really gives us permission to do that before he quotes Isaiah in 1 Nephi and before he quotes Isaiah in 2 Nephi, he tells us what to look for and why he quotes him. 1 Nephi 19:23, he said, "I did read many things unto them which were written in the books of Moses, but that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord the Redeemer. I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah." There's three great themes in Isaiah.

00:05:40 Almost every chapter's going to focus on one of them. The first part is warnings concerning the values and the practices and worldliness. It's full of it. Be careful of these things. That's a theme. The second is the life, the mission, the character of the Savior and His Father. And the third great theme is the destiny and calling of Israel. We'll look at those last two, but particularly we'll look at that second one because chapters 40 through certainly 46 really focus on that as does 50 and 53. I mean, it really, really focuses on that second one. It's to persuade us to believe. And then he gives the phrase we use all the time with all scripture, but Nephi specifically uses it with Isaiah, "I did liken all scriptures unto us that it might be for our profit or learning." If I'm going to liken the chapters we'll look at to me, to my age, but personally to me, what should I expect to feel when I do that?

00:06:52 He says, "Hear the words of the prophet. You who are a remnant of the house of Israel, a branch who have been broken off. Hear the words of the prophet which were written unto all the house of Israel and liken them unto yourselves personally that you may have hope." When we're done today, if we haven't had an increased hope and comfort, then we haven't understood Isaiah because I read him to feel comfort and I read him to feel hope. That's the beginning of 1 Nephi's quoting of Isaiah and he quotes two of the chapters we'll look at, 48 and 49. Then you go to chapter 11 in 2 Nephi and he introduces, I'm going to quote Isaiah again and he's going to give me another word. He's going to tell us why that he's doing it. Verse eight, just before he starts quoting, he says, "I write some of the words of Isaiah." Actually, quite a few.

00:07:57 He probably should have wrote, I write many. "That whoso of my people" or anybody in any age of the world "shall see these words may lift up their hearts and rejoice for all men." Now these are the words and he gives permission again, "You may liken them unto you and to all men." I can read these. They are contemporary. I'm going to read Isaiah 40 through 49 and all of

Isaiah as though Isaiah were speaking directly to me. Now I can read him and look for predictions. I can read him and look for fulfillments, but that would be the secondary thing. Read them and liken them to yourself. If you do that, you'll believe in Christ more and in the Father. You'll have hope, you'll rejoice, and you'll be comforted.

Hank Smith: 00:09:02 Mike, this is just going to be a wonderful day. Before we go any further, John, let's introduce Mike. Maybe someone's just started listening to the podcast this year. They need to know who Mike is.

John Bytheway: 00:09:14 When I teach after the Isaiah chapters in the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 25 through 33, you gave me this wonderful perspective that centers on the whole Book of Mormon. Everybody's going to apostatize 2 Nephi 25,26,27. And then here comes the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 27. Here's the world that comes into 2 Nephi 28. Here's how the world will react. 2 Nephi 29. Here's what we need to do. I love your ability to see big picture on that. So I just have to thank you for that before I introduce you, because that DVD you made, I use that every year. We've had you on the program before, and if our listeners haven't heard you, they'll be excited. Brother S. Michael Wilcox received his PhD from the University of Colorado. He taught at the Salt Lake Institute of Religion adjacent to the University of Utah for many, many years.

00:10:06 He's spoken at Education Week and does a lot of traveling to the Holy Land and church history sites. He has many, many books. I have many of them. Here's my Way Back to Heaven copy that I'm reading your bio from, although it's like 11 years old. He and his late wife, Laurie, are the parents of five children. Well, thank you for being with us again. This'll be another beautiful episode already. Comfort, hope, rejoice. I'm writing it down.

Hank Smith: 00:10:35 Mike, I often quote you to my Book of Mormon students, "Those who don't think the Book of Mormon is great writing don't know what great writing is."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:10:42 I would amen that.

John Bytheway: 00:10:44 I have a cassette tape of CES Symposium years ago. You did a thing, I think it was called Lessons from Peter, all about Peter that was so good. I've listened to that many times and it helped me when I try to teach the gospels about Peter and some of these lessons from him. So thank you again for your influence over the years.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	00:11:07	You're welcome. You're kind.
Hank Smith:	00:11:10	John has used the word DVD and cassette. If you don't know what those are, you'll probably need to ask your grandma.
John Bytheway:	00:11:17	This is why because of these, these hoar hairs, these gray hairs, that's right.
Hank Smith:	00:11:21	Yeah, temple hair.
John Bytheway:	00:11:23	My temple hair.
Hank Smith:	00:11:25	Let me read from the Come, Follow Me manual. The lesson this week is called Comfort Ye My People. It's Isaiah 40 through 49. It starts this way. Comfort is the first word of Isaiah chapter 40, just as John said. It marks the beginning of a different tone, a different emphasis in the prophet's message. Isaiah's earlier writings warned Israel and Judah about destruction and captivity that would come because of their sins. But these later prophecies were meant to comfort the Jewish people over 150 years in the future after Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and the people were taken captive by Babylon. These prophecies, however, reach even further into the future than to the defeated, disheartened Israelites. They speak to us who also sometimes feel defeated, disheartened, and even lost. Isaiah's message to his people and to us is simple. Fear not. All is not lost.
	00:12:19	The Lord has not forgotten you and he has power over situations that seem out of your control. Isn't the Lord who created the heavens more powerful than Babylon, than sin, than whatever is holding you captive? Return unto me, he pleads, for I have redeemed thee. He can heal, restore, strengthen, forgive and comfort, whatever is needed for you in your case to be redeemed. That's beautiful. Well written. All right, Mike, with that, are we ready to jump into these chapters?
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	00:12:49	Yeah, let's do it. Three times in those first few sentences, verse one and two, three times use the word comfort. Now, part of what's so powerful about these chapters is that it's God's own voice most of the time or a lot of it. It's not Isaiah telling you about it, it's God speaking to you personally. We get his voice and we know him through his voice. And in chapter 40 in particular, you get this image of infinite power, I'll go through some of those verses here, linked with or granting deepest intimacy, this powerful God who invites us to be on very deep,

intimate terms with him. If we will come, after those first invitations, comfort ye, comfort ye, speak comfortably, we get the verses, I'm going to go to verse three now, that we usually associate with John the Baptist, but remember, we want to make it contemporary.

00:13:58 I'm going to liken this to me. I can speak about it as though it's John the Baptist, the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." One of the ideas about a voice crying in the wilderness, you can be a prophet's voice, but in the wilderness, nobody listens because there's nobody there. So there's a certain sadness to that beginning. It's also John's voice in the wilderness, but you and I are going to listen to the voice in chapter 40, 41, 42. It is God's voice that I am going to listen to crying in the wilderness of apostasy, in the wilderness of life. Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, every mountain and hill shall be made low, the crooked shall be made straight, the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.

00:15:01 I certainly can attribute that to the coming of Christ, but if it's my own life, if I look down a road, I have a road in front of me and Christ is at the very end of the road. If you just visualize that, what does he have that he wants to bring me? Well he has comfort and hope and rejoicing. That's what he wants to bring. He wants to comfort me. Now I want him to come as fast as I can have him come to me, but what's in the way of him bringing his comfort into my life? Well, there may be a valley that's going to slow him down. He's got to go down in the valley and up the other side. There may be a mountain. The road may have some bends and turns in it. There may be some rough places, some washboard. I have to look at my life and examine.

00:15:53 I think Isaiah's inviting me to examine my life and to say, Michael, what mountains, what valleys, what rough places, what crooked things do you have in your life that is preventing him from coming to you immediately and bringing the comfort that you want? Am I erecting barriers so that I don't see his glory, so I can't get the comfort? That's one of the ways I would read those if I'm going to apply them and liken them to myself. Then let me skip down to verse nine now. He says, "O Jerusalem, that bringeth good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength, lift it up. Be not afraid. Say unto the cities of Judah," I love this verse, "Behold your God!" Look at your God. Isaiah, we're going to see God as though Isaiah is saying, Look at your

God. There he is on the cross comforting a thief next to him, promising him he'll be with him in paradise that very day.

00:17:08 There's your God at the foot of the tree and talking to Zacchaeus, this marginalized little person that everybody despises and telling him to make haste because he's going to spend the day with him. There's your God, sitting with little children telling us that heaven is like them. There's your God weeping with Mary and Martha at the tomb of Lazarus, even though he knows he's going to raise him from the dead and that that weeping will turn to joy. He weeps with him anyway. There's your God healing the leper who says to him, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And Jesus says, "I will. Be thou clean." And don't all of us every day go to Christ and say, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He says, "I will. Be thou clean." So behold him, this whole purpose of the scripture, certainly Isaiah, certainly the gospels, the Book of Mormon, is to behold him, to behold Christ.

00:18:07 And when you behold Christ, you behold the Father because the purpose of Jesus' coming was for us to know what His Father was like. Lift up, tell people, tell people what this God is like. Behold Him. Look, invite the world. That's what our missionaries do. That's what you and I are doing here today. We're inviting people to behold their God. The very first image is a beautiful image. I'm going to jump to verse 11. Jesus as the shepherd, the good shepherd is in the Old Testament. The Old Testament gives us that. David gives us that. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom and shall gently lead those that are with young." That's a marvelous image. Maybe I can personalize a little bit and some of the other things we'll look at. When I was young, I hated running.

00:19:11 We had to do in gym what was called the 440 and the 880. That'll age me. That gives me the hoar hairs. I think they're called the 400 and the 800 meters now, but it was certain laps around the track. I was not a very good runner. And I would line up and the coach would shoot it off and I would say to myself as I started running, "Stay with the leaders. Stay with the leaders. Stay with the leaders. I'll pace myself." And after we hit the first turn, I've already lost the leaders. Then you shift your goal downwards. So I say, "Okay, stay with the pack. Stay with the pack. Stay with the pack." And by that time I'm on the back stretch, I've lost the pack. I'm fading. Just downward. So now it's don't be last, just don't be last, just don't be last.

00:20:01 As I'm rounding the final turn, I'm last. And I always wanted to just run home. Now I shift myself downward to just get across the finish line, just get across the finish line. Just get across the finish line. No, I say that because Paul in the New Testament compares life to a race, and I love Paul, but I hate that image. Life is a race. And I'll watch people jogging on the street and I'll say, "They're running and they don't have to. Why would anybody do that?" Life is a race for me is a scary thing. What is of great comfort to me is to hear the Savior say to me, what word do you think in verse 11 really reaches out to me? It's the word gently. He says, "Mike, it's not a race to perfection. We're not trying to run to the celestial kingdom. It's gently we're going to go."

00:20:57 There's a section 78 in the Doctrine and Covenants where the spirit of Isaiah in how God will lead us along and help us. Section 78:17, he says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye are little children. You have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and prepared for you, and you cannot bear all things now. Nevertheless, be of good cheer." This is pure spirit of Isaiah. Be of good cheer. I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours. The blessings thereof are yours. The riches are yours. I'm going to get you there. I'll lead you along. You can't handle everything now. I know you want to be a better person. I know things can be difficult and challenging. I know you make mistakes, but we'll get there and we'll go gently. Now he shifts then, and that's intimate. That's why I say deepest intimacy is invited.

00:22:09 Now we're going to look at who's inviting me into his arms to be carried and to be led gently. I will lead you along, but I'm going to lead you along gently into my kingdom, back to my father. Now he has these beautiful images of the infinite power of the God who's going to help you and I. Verse 12, he says, "Who hath..." He's asking rhetorical questions. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?" Can you visualize that image? God is holding the ocean, the Pacific Ocean, I just came from the Pacific, in the hollow of his hand. I can hold the ocean in my hand. Meted out heaven with a span, meted is to measure. The span was the distance between the tip of the little finger and the thumb. I can measure all heaven right there. That's all heaven is right there. And comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure and a measure is, you know, couple, a few gallons, two, three gallons.

00:23:17 And weighed, I love this image, weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance. Can you see him holding a little hand balance or a little one. And there he puts Mount Everest and

the Alps and I hold the ocean here. I measure the heavens here. I weigh the mountains in scales. This is great poetic power. "With whom took he counsel, who instructed him and taught him in the path of judgment?" Nobody needed to teach him. Now you and I, if we're talking about Jesus here, the Father taught him. I'm going to jump again just in the interest of time. Verse 16, Lebanon is not sufficient to burn. Lebanon was known for its cedar trees. You could burn all the forests of Lebanon and all the beasts put on the altar. That's not sufficient to honor this God. You can't sacrifice enough to him.

00:24:14 Verse 18 is a question he's going to ask again and again and again in these chapters. "To whom then will you liken God? What likeness will you compare him unto?" In those days, and Isaiah's going to do this here, I don't think we'll spend any real time on it. They're building, they're creating idols. And he's saying, You compare me to some idol? Nobody's like me. Now, in first reading, I might think that we're going to be invited to do that all the time because remember he's saying, "Behold your God," look at him. You're not going to see anybody like him. I might think that there's nobody like him because he holds the ocean in his palm and measures the heavens and weighs the mountains in scales, but that's not what Isaiah means. There's no God like him because he'll gently lead you because we're going to see all the things he will do.

00:25:15 It isn't his power that makes him unlike any other God. It's the invitation to intimacy. It's the help. It's the empowerment he's going to end this chapter with that makes him like no other God. No God, nothing you can worship is this gentle who will carry you, who will lead you along like a child. Now he comes. Let's go to verse 21. Have you not known? Have you not heard? Have there not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? Please know something about this God of infinite power and deepest intimacy, this gentle God. And then we have this beautiful image of that power. It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain and spread them out as a tent to dwell in.

00:26:21 It's usually best to read him aloud because your ear sometimes knows things your eyes don't know. There's a beautiful mosaic in Ravenna in Italy in an early, early Christian church. It's in San Vitale in Ravenna in the apse. It shows Jesus beardless as a young youth, which is often the way they portray Jesus in early Christian art, young. And he's sitting on the earth. He's sitting on the circle of the earth. You can visualize a horizon. You can see

across the desert of the ocean a horizon and there's God sitting on the line of the horizon. I sometimes see his back. He's sitting there with his legs hanging over into space. I can also view that as above, sitteth upon can also be he sits above. Now he's on the earth looking down. Anyway, it's this beautiful image of God sitting on the earth and the heavens are his tent.

00:27:29 Verse 25, "To whom then will you liken me or shall I be equal?" Again, the question, nobody's like me. But again, it's not because of his power. Isaiah's setting us up like a good poet. Verse 26, "Lift up your eyes on high. Behold, who hath created these things?" Now I'm looking at the stars "that bringeth out their host by number. He calleth them all by names." We have to give them numbers, you know, such and such a number and the constellation of Scorpio. But he knows them all by name, by the greatness of his might, He is strong in power, not one faileth. He holds all the stars in their orbits. He holds the ocean in his palm. He measures the heavens in his span. He sits on the earth. He weighs the mountains. No God is like him, but that's not why Isaiah thinks he's inestimable. Verse 27, this is a really important verse. Why sayest thou? And I'm going to put your own name in there sometimes in our life. Why sayest thou, O Michael, and speakest O Michael, my way is hid from the Lord. My judgment is passed over from my God. God doesn't know where I am. He's not looking at me.

00:29:02 I'm hidden. Why are these things happening to me? I'm not getting justice and goodness in my life. Sometimes people say that, "Where is this God?" Then he helps to answer those who might feel that way and don't have hope and don't rejoice and don't have the comfort. Maybe I need to examine and say, do I have some mountains and hills and valleys and crooked places in my way that he's not coming this God of infinite power but deepest intimacy. Hast thou not known, 28 says, hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, this God I've just described you holding the ocean away in the mountains, faints not, neither is weary. There is no searching of his understanding. I'm not going to understand all the things he does and why. Now faint and weary saying God never faints and he's never weary, but I faint and I get weary.

00:30:09 Isaiah says, "This God gives power to the faint and to them that have no might, he increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, even young people and the young men shall utterly fall, us hoarhair people, you know. Even the youth might get weary and faint. In their effort, in the journey of life that I am taking to perfection to improve my character, to be a better person, to be more Christlike. I get tired, I get weary. You know,

be not weary in well doing we are told. I get weary in well doing sometimes. Sometimes I feel maybe God, my way is hidden. He's not looking at me. Isaiah is saying, they that wait upon the Lord. And wait can have a number of different meanings here. It probably means you're anticipating, you're waiting for him. It may seem that I'm hid from him, but I'm going to wait for him.

00:31:17 He knows his timing. And he'll renew their strength. And then we get three things, fly, run, walk. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. He'll help you fly. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. Well, we know those verses very, very well. I will help you walk the straight and narrow path. I will help you run the race of life, Mike, that you hate running races. I will help you fly when you are faint and weary. That is why there is no God like him, not because he's weighing mountains. He really sets the tone in Isaiah 40. Behold your God, look at your God. Nothing's like him. Nothing's like him, not because he's powerful. Nothing's like him because of the attributes of kindness and mercy and gentleness and love that Isaiah's going to show. Isaiah loved this God. You and I hopefully love this God.

00:32:30 And when we say to the world, we're going to lift up our voice and talk about him. We're going to say to people, Behold, look at him. We want our children, our grandchildren, our students, our neighbors to feel what Isaiah felt. He loved this God. And he knew this God loved him, a God of infinite power who invites, grants us deepest intimacy.

John Bytheway: 00:32:58 Anytime we can say, wait just a second. When someone says the God of the Old Testament is vengeful or unkind or even just detached, he's so powerful that he doesn't care about us. Here we've got actually he is super powerful and yet he is right there and he knows things by their names. And so I love what you've done here because I'm sad when I hear people say that. Oh, the God of the Old Testament is, I guess you can find examples of that. Look what Isaiah is teaching us here about a God of mercy who cares.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:33:38 Yeah. So now if I go to chapter 41, he starts giving a lot of these fear not. Now, sometimes I like to ask students or myself, "What are you afraid of? What do you fear?" There's all kinds of phobias out there. I'm not afraid of heights, I'm not afraid of spiders, whatever. But I'll tell you what my greatest fear is. And I would think most Latter-day Saints understand it. I'm afraid of failure. That's my greatest fear. I'm afraid I'm not going to make it. I'm afraid that I will, I sometimes call it, I have a B+ personality. I always wanted the A. I worked hard in school to

get the A and the teacher gives the test back B+. Sometimes it was less than B+, but I always wanted the A, the essay I'd write. And because they know I was trying so hard, sometimes a teacher would put on my paper, great effort.

00:34:45 This is supposed to make me feel good. Doesn't make me feel good. Great effort, B+. Now, my fear is that I'm going to stand at the judgment and God is going to say to me, "Mike, great effort. B+." And I have a lovely kingdom for B+ people. And I'm going to say, yeah, but Lord, but I wanted, I wanted the A. I was striving for the A. And I know and you tried really hard. But you'll be happy in the B+. Okay? Does that explain a little bit how sometimes I think we feel? Here I am racing to be a perfect person, racing to be a good person, racing to be good enough. Obedience is not perfection. Obedience is trying. George McDonald tells us, another Scot. What comfort does God say? God's speaking now, not Isaiah. Verse 10. He says, Mike, fear thou not, whatever I'm afraid of.

00:35:50 I'm afraid sometimes. We talked about this before but Laurie won't want me. I'll get up there in the hereafter. I won't be good enough for her because she's all I want. She is celestial glory for me. What if she doesn't want me? And I can hear God say, Fear not, Mike. I am with thee. Be not dismayed even at your own failure, let alone what the world's throwing at you. I am thy God. I weigh mountains. I hold seas in my palm. You think I can't help you? We'll go gently. I'll lead you along. We'll get there. I'll strengthen you. I know you get weary and you faint sometimes. I'll help you. I'll uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. We skip down. He takes that idea again as we're trying to run the straight and narrow path. Verse 13, "I, the Lord, thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, fear not." I will help thee with whatever it is you want his help from. Fear not thou worm. Now that sounds almost derisive, but if you look at the footnote, it means meek and humble, our use of the word. So we might say fear not meek and humble. I will help thee saith Lord and thy redeemer, the holy one of Israel.

John Bytheway: 00:37:21 I just hope everybody reads verse 10. I hope a melody comes to mind of how firm a foundation, because I think when I hear the tabernacle choir singing, I will never no never, no never forsake thee. And I'm going, look at the hymns that have come out of these beautiful words. We talked about Handel's Messiah already. Like four times in Isaiah 40, I'm seeing things from Handel's Messiah, but there's one of our hymns right there. And I also wanted to ask you scholars about, my wife and I were watching a show the other day and saw a couple getting

married in a church and he asked them to hold each other by their right hand. And I just thought that was really interesting. In a wedding ceremony, does that have a covenant type? I mean, obviously there's a temple type symbol there as well, but look at verse 13. Thy God will hold thy right hand.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:38:16 You know, there's a real famous story of T.S. Elliot who wrote a poem called The Wasteland, which has got a lot of different readings. And somebody asked him about a meaning of one of the verses in this poem and said, "Is that what you meant?" And he said, "Yes, that is what I meant." Another student raised his hand and said, "Well, I always read it this way. I though that's what you meant." And Elliot said, "Yes, that is also what I meant." Then a third student said, "Well, I always read it this way." And he said, "Yes, that is also what I meant." So when you say verse 13, "Is that a covenant relationship holding the right hand? Which we do in a marriage ceremony in the temple. God is speaking here. Is that what you mean, Lord? A covenant relationship? He would say, "Yes, that is what I meant." That's what you would say. And I would raise my hand and I would say, "Lord, that's not the way I read it. I always read that I'm afraid and I'm walking a path and I just want to feel somebody next to me that you're just going to take my hand like I used to take the my wife's hand or my child's hand and walk with him." And he would say.

John Bytheway: 00:39:28 Yeah, that's what I mean. Exactly what I meant.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:39:30 Yes, that is what I meant. Okay. Yeah, that's what he would say. That's the magic of Isaiah. Now he does desert images, water in 17 and 18, when the poor and the needy seek water and there is none and their tongue faileth for thirst. I, the Lord will hear them. I, the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water. If you asked, well, what does water symbolize? Maybe somebody's going to say, well, water is life. I'm fine with that. He gives us the living water. Water is love. Water is the Spirit. Water is truth. Take your pick. I will give you those. Then he's got the guy making his idols. There's a little sarcasm in Isaiah.

00:40:32 Now you can worship this God I've been telling you about, or you can make your own idol. What do you want? He's going to do that quite a bit. If you want to turn to your own gods, they can't say anything. So now let's jump to 42, beautiful words that we usually associate with Jesus. Behold my servant whom I uphold mine elect and whom my soul delighteth. I have put my spirit. I like to read this, that it is the Father now's voice

describing the Son. Now you can read it in different ways. What works for you is what you want. Behold my servant whom I uphold mine elect and whom my soul delighteth, I have put my spirit upon him. He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. And then he describes again the gentleness of Christ and the Father. He shall not cry nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

00:41:41 He won't rail at you. You know, religious people sometimes like to rail. We're warned against that in the Doctrine and Covenants. There's nothing quite as tempting and satisfying as being right when somebody's wrong and you get to tell them. That's just human nature. But that's not this God. He doesn't do that. He doesn't like to bawl you out. He won't cry. He's not going to raise his voice in the street. He's not a railing God. A bruised reed shall he not break. You know, words can really break people's souls. A bruised reed, reed is a hollow plant and you pinch it, it's bruised and it can't hold up. It's fragile. Sometimes we're bruised reeds, we're fragile, life has pinched us. Life has hurt us, crushed our resilience, that circle that holds our lives together. A bruised reed shall he not break. And the smoking flax, this is a wick.

00:42:48 It's the images of a candle. For us a candle for them it would be a lamp, 10 virgins lamps. And there's a little piece of flax which is the wick. It's just smoking. There's just hardly any heat in it left. Shall he not quench. It'd just take a little puff of air to quench that. He's gentler than a puff of air. He won't break a bruised reed. He shall not fail nor be discouraged. Oh, I love that word. I'll tell you why in a sec. Till he have set judgment in the earth and the isles shall wait for his law, the tiniest spot of land. I just got back from a trip to the isles, Tonga and Samoa and Tahiti and I don't know what the smallest piece of land is, but whatever it is, it's an island. He's saying, "I'm aware of the smallest person on the smallest piece of land, and I'm not going to be discouraged until there is judgment and goodness everywhere on this earth." Sometimes I say to God, "Don't be discouraged with me, Father. I'm trying."

00:43:59 I sometimes feel he's discouraged with me. I said, "I'm trying. I'm trying." You know, that little song we sing with primary, try, try. I'm trying to be like try, try, try. And I try, try, try and I just think, ah he must be discouraged. I've passed my 490th time, you know, and seven times 70. I've passed it. And he says, "Mike, I don't get discouraged. Discouragement isn't part of my character. I know you get discouraged. I don't get discouraged. I'm not discouraged with you. We'll go gently. It's not a race. I'll lead you along. I'll hold your hand. When you're faint and you're

weary, I'll help you fly and run and walk. I don't get discouraged. And if I'm not going to be discouraged till the whole earth is filled with goodness, do you think I'm going to get discouraged with my son or daughter who is trying as best they can to be as fine a person and as Christlike a person as they can? That gives me comfort and hope and cause to rejoice, which is what Nephi is saying I ought to be getting out of Isaiah when I read it, right?

John Bytheway: 00:45:21 Almost every time we hear the word judgment, sometimes people take it negatively. In Isaiah, I always change judgment to a righteous judgment. I will bring forth righteous judgment to the Gentiles because in the context, this is all good. Verse four, He'll not fail to be discouraged till he have set righteous judgment. Or sometimes I'll tell my student, if you see judgment, change it to justice. And God's justice, it's a righteous judgment and it makes the tone sound a little bit better when I see that's a righteous judgment.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:45:54 I think that's exactly the way to read it, particularly if you're applying it in a broad way to the whole earth. Like I say, you were invited. I'm doing the personal. I'm doing Nephis liken it to you. We can liken it in broader ways, but that's certainly true. Judgment is, in this sense, justice. And we don't see a lot of justice in the world now. So that's why sometimes people might feel I'm hid from God. The Assyrians are taking in 10 tribes captive. Babylon's growing. Isaiah's day is a tough day to be alive. We go to verse six and then we'll jump to another verse in 42 and then keep going. "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness and will hold thine hand." There's that image again. "I'll hold your hand. I will keep thee and give thee for a covenant of the people for a light to the Gentiles."

00:46:51 You're going to be an example. You're going to show the world the God you love. Open the eye, blind eyes, bring out the prisoners from the prison, them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." Now, if I take the idea of blindness and darkness, I'm going to jump again just because we can't do everything to verse 16. He's going to continue that idea. "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not. I will lead them in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them." See how that verse matches with the earlier ones? "I will make darkness light before them and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them and not forsake them." Now, the nice thing about 16 is imagine yourself blind or in a dark place where there is no light. I can't see. And I am supposed to walk a path I have never walked before, but I'm blind.

	00:48:03	How can I walk a path I've never walked before? The Savior is saying, and the Father is saying, I'm going to take your hand and I'm going to lead you. I know you're blind. I know it's dark and it's crooked, but I'm going to lead you now. Before I put my hand in the hand of somebody, I'm blind, who's going to lead me on a spot I've never been. We've all seen people with the white canes on campus. Nobody's leading them. I don't know how they do it. They just know where they're going somehow. It's just amazing. But if it's me, what would I want to know about someone who's going to take me on a path that I've never been on and I'm blind? I would want to know, number one, I can trust that person that they would, once they started, they would not what?
Hank Smith:	00:48:52	Walk away.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	00:48:54	They would not say, "Oh, Mike, I'm discouraged with you. I'm bored. Gosh, I'm so tired. I'm..." You're on your own now. How panicking that would be to feel I've been abandoned on a path I've never been and I'm blind. So the Lord says, I will take your hand. I will lead you. I will not forsake you. You don't have to worry. I don't get discouraged. We go gently. I'll strengthen you. Don't be afraid. I'm going to get you there. The kingdom is yours. I talk about judgment there. I'm always afraid of the judgment. And every now and then, God shows me things in my mind. That's the only way to interpret. I call them ponderings. You're pondering something and he just takes, says, let me take over your thoughts, Mike, and I'm going to teach you through pictures. One day I'm nervous because I'm a C-minus person or whatever, and I'm not going to make the judgment, but he's got a nice kingdom for me, but not the one I want.
	00:50:02	And the image that he put into my mind of the judgment was a waiting room. I'm in a waiting room, like in a doctor's office. And, you know, they have all the chairs there and people are sitting there and there's chairs all along the walls. There's a door on the other side of the wall. And I know that the judgment, God the Father is on the other side of that wall. I walked into the room and I looked. There's a whole bunch of men sitting in the chairs. And as I look closely, every man was me. There were 20 Michael Wilcox's sitting in those chairs. And the door opened and the angelic receptionist pointed to the man in the first chair and said, "Will Michael Wilcox, the husband of Laura Chipman, please come forth and render an account of his stewardship?" And that first Mike Wilcox got up and walked in the room and they closed the door and he was in there for quite a while.

00:50:58 Never came out. I didn't know whether that was a good sign or a bad sign. And then the door opened again and the angelic receptionist pointed to the man in the second chair and said, "Would Mike Wilcox the father of Kirsten Wilcox please come forward now and render an account of his stewardship." And that one went forth and was in a long time. And the next chair is the father of Megan, and then the father of Ben, and then the father of Cade, and then the father of McKay, not Mike the father, but the father of each individual child. Now, I got a sense at this point that if I could get through those first six chairs, I might be in somewhat good shape. Those were the first ones he wanted to be. Then he came in, would Mike Wilcox, the son, come forth, all the family relations.

00:51:52 And then we started to go Mike Wilcox, the teacher and various callings. And now all during this time, I won't go through all the details a lot of that, but I'm looking at the man in the last chair. And the man in the last chair is terrified. He's wringing his hands, he's weeping. They'd go along and finally, and I keep watching that man in the last chair. Finally, the door opens again and the angel points to the man in the last chair and he says, "Would Michael Wilcox the man please come forward and render an account of his character?" Now I know that man really, really well. I know all his imperfections. Sometimes I pray and I say, "Father in heaven, have mercy on the man in the last chair." That man got up and started towards the door. And as I started towards the door, I felt somebody else come into the room and lock his arm with my arm and pull me close to him.

00:53:13 And I looked up and there was the Savior. And he looked down at me, you know, we always look up at Jesus. Nobody's ever taller than him. And he smiled and he said, "Michael, don't be afraid to go in to see my father. I will go with you and I will plead with you because you loved me and because you tried all your life to be as good as you could be. Don't be afraid to go to my father." In just the next chapter, we're going to get to the double pleading of Christ or of God. Jesus came to show us the Father. Why should I fear the Father? I don't fear the Father. We're going to see that duplicate pleading. If we just jump for a second, then I'll come back to something in 43. But if I come to verse 21 in 43, it's comforting.

00:54:15 It causes rejoicing. It gives hope. It persuades me to believe in Christ. He says in 21, "This people have I formed for myself. They shall show forth my praise." Again, that invitation to all of us, tell people to look at the God, invite people, look at the God I worship. I'm going to tell you about my Father and my Savior and my God. If your God is a harsh, judgmental God, that's not

my God. Let me show you my God. There's such deep poignancy in these. I read this, this is Jesus speaking. "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob." I can put my name in there if I want. "Thou hast been weary of me, O Israel." Oh, I just got so tired. I don't want to go to church today. So hard keeping all the commandments. "Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings.

00:55:13 Neither hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices." Then he's reflective. He says, "I have not caused thee to serve with an offering nor weary thee with incense." I didn't ask a great deal of you. I asked you to talk to me once or twice a day. I've asked you to go to the temple if occasionally, depending on how close it is. Can you spend a couple hours on Sunday with me, maybe 15 minutes in the scriptures once a day? I've not asked hard things of you. I've not wearied you. "My burden is light," he says, remember? "And thou hast brought me no sweet cane with money, no incense or spices, anointing oil. Neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices." Here's God pleading and saying, I've not asked a lot of you, and the little I've asked of you, you've not been doing.

00:56:14 And we see those words serve and wearied, we're going to flip those around. Serve and wearied in verse 23 is God saying, I haven't asked you to serve or wearied you, but 24, thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I want a sacrifice an offering from me. What do we sometimes bring to Christ? Sometimes we bring him our follies, our mistakes, our sins, and those we offer him. Well, he tells us that we should do that, doesn't he? I even I am he, so he says, I will take those sins. I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake and will not remember thy sins. I don't want to remember, you know, that we've talked about it before. I won't go through it. There is forgetting in the forgiveness. We have to always remember there's forgetting in the forgiveness.

00:57:14 I bring in my sins and my mistakes and he says, I will take them, but I won't remember them for my own sake. Why do I want to remember all your follies and mistakes and sins, Mike? I don't want to remember those things. I won't remember them. Now, again, the play on words that Isaiah usually does so much. I'm not going to remember your sins, so will you put me in remembrance? Let us plead together. Declare thou that thou mayest be justified.

John Bytheway: 00:57:49 That idea of all the Michael Wilcox's waiting in a room, to be honest, that is a little fearful. What am I going to say? Then

when someone comes to your side, you know where that took me? It's become one of my favorite of all verses in the standard works, and I know that President Christofferson highlighted it recently in section 45 of the Doctrine of Covenants, right at the beginning, this is verse three, Listen to him, who is the advocate with the Father. And here you are, someone came to your side to take you into the other room who is pleading, there's that word that you used, pleading your cause before him, saying, Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased. He's not talking about the person being judged, he's talking about what he did.

00:58:47 Behold the blood of thy son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified. And then just listen to the tenderness here. Wherefore, Father, spare these, my brethren that believe on my name, my sisters that believe on my name. And notice, he didn't say that we're perfect or that we're A-plus, but those that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:59:17 That is the spirit of Isaiah 43. That is the exact spirit. It's the duplication. Put me in remembrance. Let us plead together. Joseph in that section is giving voice to what the words of the pleading are. Let's plead together.

John Bytheway: 00:59:39 The script. Yeah, it's amazing. A lot different than some fearful ways I've envisioned what the final judgment might be like in the past. When I see this, I see I have an attorney for the defense, an advocate who's going to come to my side and say, I'm going with you in here. In fact, I'll do the talking.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 01:00:04 That's why maybe the Book of Mormon, Moroni at the very end calls it the pleasing bar of God. It's the pleasing bar of God. Not a horrible experience, but a pleasing because I don't remember your sins. I'll remember every good thing you did. Remember Jesus said, you can't give a cup of cold water to a child but my father doesn't know, records it and locks it in forever. We worship the God of little things. He's aware of little things, little children, little lambs, little sparrows, little lilies of the field, little islands. He's, little acts of goodness. So if we jump then from that view back to the first part of 43, these are also words in that song, how firm a foundation. Every verse is coming out of Isaiah. So we don't sing these verses. They're five and six. We do the first four and they're in the hymn book. We don't sing them all. They are in that hymn, chapter 43, "Thus saith the Lord that created thee O Jacob, and he that formed thee O Israel. Fear not."

01:01:23 He keeps telling us that I hope they get that they're not supposed to be afraid. Certainly not afraid of me. Don't be afraid of the judgment, for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thine, I know your name, thou art mine. And when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee. Through the rivers, our trials, they shall not overflow thee. Now, you'll go through them. They'll be rivers. And when thou walkest through the fire, thou shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel. I'll be with you. And whatever you fear, I'm going to go with you. Now, I ask all these things that he's saying in Isaiah all the way through to the end. And we say, Lord, why? What am I so important in the grand scheme of the cosmos that a being who holds the oceans in his hand and weighs the mountains in scales allows the intimacy of walking with him, who takes my right hand and walks with me. Who am I that you would do that for? Why? And he answers in verse.

01:02:52 I can hardly read verse four of 43. He answers that question why he says, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable and I have loved thee." You've tried. You're precious to me. I love you. I remember having a Shakespeare class with Arthur Henry King. That was a great experience. He was a British educator and he joined the church and then he went to BYU because he said, "I felt I had to fly my flag." I had the honor of having an English literature class with him, a small class. And he would bring each of the students to his house to have dinner with he and his wife. That doesn't happen very often, does it? I was engaged to Laurie and I brought her and he could see I was really in love with her. He asked me the question, "Mike, do you know what the greatest discovery of life is?" I was sure I was going to get it wrong.

01:04:01 This brilliant man, what do I know? I'm 22 and fairly stupid anyway. What's the greatest discovery of life? I said, "I don't know, Dr. King. I don't know." And he smiled and he looked at Laurie next to me and he said, "It's the knowledge that the woman you love loves you." He said, "That will change you." Now, I believe that's true, but I think Isaiah might say, could I just put an addendum on that idea? Maybe the greatest discovery of life is that the God I love, the God who is precious in my sight loves me and feels that I am precious in his sight. That will change you. There's a moment in Maya Angelou's life. I really like her. I know I've quoted her before. I've got a little book by her called Wouldn't Take Nothing From My Journey Now.

01:05:18 Had a hard life. Said I wouldn't trade my life for anything. If you get through life and you haven't had any hardships, Karen Blixen in Out of Africa talks about a woman who said, I wouldn't want to change anything in my life. You know, I would live it all over again because she had such a good life. And Karen Blixen says, you didn't have a life if you don't have some sorrow and some suffering in it. You haven't had a life and you need to do it over again. Maya Angelou had a really difficult life. We learn a lot from challenge, sorrows. She also tells this wonderful little story about Jesus and the millennium. And everybody's happy and everything's great and everything is wonderful. And Jesus says to Peter, Peter, would you take a walk with me? Peter says, Well, certainly I will. Now this is the millennium, time of peace and joy and gladness.

01:06:12 And Peter says, Where would you want to walk? And Jesus says, I would like to walk from the Pretoria to the top of Calvary again. Now that's the story. It just ends right there. And you just take what you want out of that story, that even the most difficult moment of his life, he would understand the importance and the value and the things that he learned from it. Maya Angelou had a very difficult life. She says, In my 20s in San Francisco, I became a sophisticate and an acting agnostic. It wasn't that I had stopped believing in God, it's just that God didn't seem to be around the neighborhoods I frequented. It's a good way of explaining it. It's kind of going back to chapter 40. I'm hid from God. He's not seeing me. He's not aware of me. That's just what she's saying.

01:07:09 He's just not in my neighborhood, that's all. He's not where I live. And then a voice teacher introduced me to Lessons in Truth published by the Unity School of Christianity. One day the teacher, he's a voice teacher, Frederick Wilkerson asked me to read to him. I was 24, very erudite, very worldly. He asked that I read from Lessons in Truth a section which end with these words. God loves me. I read the piece and closed the book. And the teacher said, read it again. I pointedly opened the book and I sarcastically read, God loves me. And I've heard Maya Angelou tell this story in person. I've heard her, I'm reading it here, but it's just she relates it. And she says, it's not in this account, that she read it trying to put the emphasis on different words. God, because he's a voice teacher, God loves me. Read it again, Maya. God loves me. Read it again, Maya. After about the seventh repetition, I began to sense there might be truth in the statement and that there was a possibility that God really did love me.

01:08:34 Me, Maya Angelou. So she read, God loves me. I suddenly began to cry at the grandness of it all. I knew that if God loved me, that I could do wonderful things. I could try great things. I could learn anything, achieve anything for what could stand against me with God since one person, any person with God constitutes the majority. The knowledge humbles me, melts my bones, and it liberates me. I am a big bird winging over high mountains down into serene valleys. I am ripples of waves on silver seas. I'm a spring leaf trembling in anticipation. There's just something beautiful in this moment in Isaiah when that deepest intimacy coupled with infinite power. I asked Lord, why, why, why, what am I to thee? And he says, You are precious in my sight and I have loved thee. And I'll hold your hand and I'll walk with you and I'll blot your sins out.

01:09:57 I'll take them. We'll go gently. It's not a race. I'm going to get you there. I'll plead for you. I'll pour water on you. I'll, now, is there any God like that? Isaiah would say, Do you know any God like that? I'm showing you my God. This is why I love Him, Isaiah saying. You and I are saying this is why we love Him. I go to chapter 44. As a parent, I get comfort. I have fears for my children and grandchildren, don't you? So I come back at chapter 44 verse two. Again, he says, thus saith the Lord that made thee and formed thee, fear not, O Jacob, my servant and thou Jesurun another word for his people whom I have chosen. I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my spirit upon thy seed. Oh, I love those words.

01:11:02 I say, please, Lord, do that. Pour out your spirit upon my children and my blessing upon thine offspring they shall spring up as among the grass as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob. And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord and surname himself by the name of Israel. My children will be glad to take upon them the name of Christ, the name of their God and will respond to the Spirit, the watering that he gives them.

01:11:49 Once again, he says in verse six, I am the first, I am the last, beside me there is no God. There is no God like this God. No God. Verse eight, so fear ye not. Put your fears aside. Neither be afraid. Have not I told thee from the time and declared it? Ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God. I know not any. You're my witnesses. Go out into the world and tell people what I'm like. And then you have that sarcastic little, You want to worship the gods of the world instead? And he talks about them making, going out, cutting

down a tree to make a God and I got leftover God. I got some wood leftover. What do I do with my leftover God? Well, I'm a little cold. I'm going to light a fire and warm myself with it and I'm going to cook my bread on it. But I'll still make my God. He's very sarcastic because he's really trying to help us understand there isn't anybody like this.

01:13:00 Verse 21, "Remember these, O Jacob, for thou art my servant, I have formed thee thou art my servant O Israel. Thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions and as a cloud thy sins return unto me for I have redeemed thee." Nobody out in the world ever needs to fear no matter what they've done of going back to their Father in heaven and Christ and saying, "Will you accept me? Can I come back?" Nobody ever needs to fear that. Not Isaiah's God. Now if you've got a God out there that you fear that you can go to, that's not Isaiah's God, that's not Jesus' God, that's not Nephi's God. That's not the God of the Old Testament. That's not Jesus' father. Jesus, his Father, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I blot out your transgression.

01:14:06 I don't blot out your name. Return to me. I've redeemed thee and sing, sing O heavens, for the Lord hath done it, shout you lower parts of the earth. Break forth into singing you mountains. Ye forest and every tree therein for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob and glorified himself in Israel. Thus saith the Lord thy redeemer and he that formed thee from them. I am the Lord that maketh all things. I stretch forth the heavens. I can do these things. I'm telling you I can do these things. Chapter 45, always that invitation, verse five again, just kind of pull out a verse or two for you to, to get the flow of Isaiah here. I am the Lord. There is none else. There is no God beside me. I probably beat that theme to death.

01:15:01 I girded thee, that's a nice image, though thou hast not known me. I've done things you don't even, you're not even aware of. Girded thee probably means to strengthen you in this case. You know, I armed you, I armed you, I prepared you, I girded you. We usually use that for war or work. I girded you up, I prepared you even though you didn't know. I am the Lord, there is none else. And he just keeps all through chapter 45. There is nobody like me. There is no God. I do this, I do that. There is no God like me. Verse 21, there is no God beside me, a just God and a savior God. There is none beside me. Look unto me and be saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else.

01:15:57 I have sworn by myself the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return. That unto me every knee

shall bow and every tongue shall swear. Eventually when we all know this God, under whatever name you might worship him now, we will bow the knee and confess to him. Then he compares it to the God. All through Isaiah can say, look, you can worship the god you made or you can worship the God who made you. Now what's the smart person going to do then? You want to worship the gods you make?

01:16:38 Look at this magnificent thing that I've got right here. This is the great object lesson Isaiah is saying. He made this. Is there anything I can make with the most magnificent computer that even begins to match the human body? Maybe AI is getting up there, but the world, the universe, all the animals and the things on it. So I can worship the one who made that or I can worship what I make. In chapter 46, I can worship the god I have to carry or I can worship the God who will carry me. He gives two God's names in 46. Bell boweth down, Bel and Nebo stoopeth. They are idols. They're bowing down and they're stooping. People usually bow down to them and stoop to them. Their idols were upon the beast and upon the cattle, your carriages were heavy load and they are a burden to thee the weary beast.

01:17:37 You got to put your God in the temple. Well, you got to carry him there. So you got to load your oxen, put your God in the carriage. He's sarcastic. How do you like his sarcasm? Haul him to the temple, the poor oxen. They stoop, they bow down together. They could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity. So now the image is, okay, you've been worshiping these false gods, but the Assyrians have come. They've taken you captive and they've loaded your false God in a cart to haul off because they're made of gold and covered with silver. Does that make sense, the image he's dealing with here? Hearken unto me O house of Jacob and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are born by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb. When did God start carrying you and I?

01:18:28 Well, a little child needs to be carried. The baby is born, we carry the child. We're spiritual children. He says, I will carry you. Later on, he's going to get a beautiful image of our missionaries. We could say if I apply that, we're going out and carrying, bringing people to him in their arms. It's a beautiful image for anybody who's serving on a mission or trying to help youth or anyone. Then the one we talked about earlier, even to your old age, I am he, even to hoar hairs will I carry you. You know, we speak of hoar frost, that's white. White hairs will I carry you. I will deliver you. Then the question again, to whom will you liken me and make me equal and compare me that we may be like?

		No God's going to carry. I'm going to carry you all through life. I will carry you. I've made you, you're my child. I'll teach you to walk. There's no God like me.
John Bytheway:	01:19:33	I like that. The way you summarize that, will you worship the God that you have to carry or the one that will carry you? I like the way you characterize that.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	01:19:43	We all have our own gods, don't we? President Kimball gave a talk, the false gods we worship where he talked about cars and houses and electronics and where we all have things that whatever God we may choose, whatever is more important to us, I guess, than God himself becomes our God.
Hank Smith:	01:20:05	I think of my phone. Carry that phone everywhere I go.
John Bytheway:	01:20:10	First thing you look at in the morning, last thing you look at. Yeah.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	01:20:14	Verse nine, I am God. There is none else. I am God. There is none like me. Now he's going to shift a little bit. I can never teach this part of Isaiah. I get full of hope and rejoicing and comfort no matter what's happening. Now it's going to shift a little bit to the theme of, so far, this part, these last six, seven chapters have focused on God, on the Father, on the Son, on His relationship with us. Behold Him, look at Him, on Isaiah, look, I'm going to tell you about there's no God like the God I worship and I'll tell you why. So He's trying to tell us. Now He's going to shift the theme to the destiny of the house of Israel, to those who believe in Him, the gathering of Israel, to their work, to Zion. You can view it this way. It's down Babylon, up Zion.
	01:21:18	Because in Isaiah's day, the Babylonian captivity is coming. The Assyrians have already, in his day, they're going to take him. Hezekiah's time. He's a friend of Hezekiah. The north tribes will be gone. This is the timeframe that Isaiah is working in. And Israel is on the descent and the kingdoms of the world are on the rise. Babylon eventually will take Jerusalem captive, destroy the temple. It's up Babylon, down Zion. Isaiah's going to flip that around and say it's going to be up Zion and down Babylon. He begins that down Babylon in chapter 47. This is going to continue all the way into chapter 54 of Isaiah. 47 probably belongs more with the chapters that follow than the chapters that preceded, except that somebody else is going to claim there is nobody else. There's no one like me. So look at it's on the same page in my scriptures, verse 9, 46.

	01:22:32	You could just draw a line from verse 9, 46 straight down to verse eight, chapter 47. What words do you see in verse eight, chapter 47? You're going to see the same claim in verse nine. I am none else beside me. Only who's speaking here. This is Babylon personified as a woman. I am and none else besides me. Worship me. Don't go with all that effeminate religious stuff. I'm the real thing. The world, this is making money because Babylon and Isaiah and a lot of the other places in the Old Testament is the great merchant city that Revelation describes in chapter 18, the power of wealth, of money, political power, military power. Babylon represents all of this. What are you doing with all that effeminate, womanly, childish, traditional religious stuff? There's nobody like me. I'm the real world here.
Hank Smith:	01:23:51	Everything's for sale. I remember that Mike from the book of Revelation. Everything's for sale. Even the souls of men.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	01:23:58	Even the souls. And that's chapter 18, the beast, the harlot, and the merchant city all given the name Babylon. Here in 47, he says, Come down. Now he's talking now to Babylon. Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon. Sit on the ground. There is no throne. You're not ruling anymore. This is, we're going to down Babylon up Zion because there are places in Isaiah where it's up Babylon down Zion. Come down, sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon. There is no throne. I'm going to dethrone you. Verse three. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered. Verse five, sit thou silent. Get thee into darkness, oh daughter of the Chaldeans, those were the citizens of Babylon. For thou shalt no more be called the lady of kingdoms. I'm the most beautiful. Everybody wants me. Thou hath said, I shall be a lady forever so that thou didst not lay these things to heart.
	01:25:14	Neither didst remember the latter end of it, how it's all going to end up. Therefore, hear now this, thou that are given to pleasures, that dwelleth carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am none else beside me. I shall not sit as a widow. Neither shall I know the loss of children. But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children and widowhood. They shall come upon the end their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries and for the great abundance of thy enchantments. And in Revelation 18, which is drawing out of Isaiah here, the sorceries and the enchantments, the bewitching power of wealth, the bewitching power of power and what the desire of fame and wealth does to those who search for it. Thou hast trusted in thy wickedness, thou said none seeth me.

	01:26:17	Thy wisdom and thy knowledge that perverted thee and thou said in thine heart, I am and none else beside me. 47 is really important because it sets up pretty much everything that's going to come hereafter. I don't want to steal somebody else's thunder next week, but just so you can see how 47 is setting up the rest of it. It's certainly going to set up what we can talk about in some depth. 49, this idea that I will never be a widow. I'll not know the loss of children because Israel, Zion is the widow and the loss of children. Look for a second of chapter 52. We're just going to pop over to 52. This is the up Zion. So down Babylon in 47, remember, come sit in the dust. Look at how they mirror verse one and two of chapter 52. "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem.
	01:27:29	The beautiful garments are righteousness. For henceforth, there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust. Rise and sit down. Sit down where? We have a hymn. Sit down on the throne. 47, Babylon, you come down. 52, Zion, you arise. 47, Babylon, you sit in the dust. 52, Zion, you shake yourself from the dust. 47, there is no throne to sit on. 52, sit down. It's implied. He doesn't say, but it's implied. Sit down on the throne. You're going to see that back and forth in other chapters. Chapter 54, again, I don't want to steal people's thunder. We want to get to 49 here and finish this for you. Chapter 54:1-2, Israel is a widow. We're going to see that and the loss of children. Babylon has said, I'll never be a widow. I'm going to be a lady forever.
	01:28:51	I'll rule this world forever. I'll always have followers, my children, those who believe in my things. Chapter 54, "Sing, O barren." This is Israel. Israel, righteous. Sing, thou that didst not bear. Break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child. For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. You are going to have so many children in the future. You're going to have so many children that you're going to need to remodel your house.
Hank Smith:	01:29:28	Yeah. Spare not.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	01:29:30	Verse two, enlarge the place of thy tent.
John Bytheway:	01:29:33	Got to get a bigger tent.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	01:29:35	Stretch the curtain. Spare not. Lengthen the cords. Strengthen the stakes. That's where we get our word the stakes of Zion from. We're going to put all the children in the tent now. 47, the message to Babylon to come down. We're going to see all the

opposites. You are no longer going to be ruling. Now, if I am wanting to bet on a winner, if I knew who was going to win a certain game in the World Cup, I knew it. I knew the outcome who's going to win this whole thing. Don't you want to be on the side of the winners? 47, Babylon is falling. Worldliness is not going to dominate. Righteousness is, goodness is. So if you're wise, what city should you be leaving?

Hank Smith: 01:30:29 Get out of Babylon.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 01:30:31 Get out of Babylon.

John Bytheway: 01:30:32 We bid them farewell. We're going to the mountains of Ephraim.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 01:30:36 And that's chapter 48. He says, verse 14, "The Lord will do his pleasure on Babylon." Verse 16, I'm kind of going quicker. Come near to me, hear this. Listen, people, I want you to know how this is all going to end. I have not spoken in secret from the beginning. I've told you from the very beginning, Lucifer will be crushed for heaven's sake. Why go with his plan? 17, I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments. Then had thy peace been as a river and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. Always flowing, always breaking constantly. What advice do I give you now? Verse 20, you said it. Go ye forth of Babylon. Flee from the Chaldeans. Don't go looking back over your head like the children of Israel did always looking back at Egypt.

01:31:42 Ah, the good old days of worldliness. I miss all those violent sex laden movies. All those old days of war and dissension and criticism and critique, the everybody insulting one another. You know, I'm, I miss those old worldly days of animosity and anger and when Babylon, when the world, and the ways of the world dominated, the days of contention and go out of Babylon and go with a voice of singing. Declare ye, tell this, utter it, even to the end of the earth, tell everybody how this is all going to end. How's it all going to end? Verse 22. There is no peace, saith the Lord unto the wicked. If they think they're going to have peace, they think by trying to live a law other than the way I have tried, do it Jesus's way. Kindness, gentleness, meekness, empathy, forgiveness, justice, wisdom, truth, beauty.

John Bytheway: 01:32:53 I particularly like leadeth thee by the way. I just had to stop and mark that. Do you know what I mean? Every time. When I came across here in 1 Nephi 20, peace as a river and righteousness as the waves of the sea, how many of you ever put on white noise?

And what is white noise? It's like water. It's like a river. Also, the constancy of, if you've been by the ocean, of the waves coming in. I love that he would use that metaphor, peace like a river and righteousness that is constant like the waves of the sea.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 01:33:38 I think of chapter 49 when I walk BYU campus sometimes all those kids heading over to the Marriott Center for a devotional. You see them coming. When I was at the University of Utah at the Institute and I'd watch the kids crossing the street to come over the institute, all the missionaries and I was just in Papeete and Tahiti. We went to see the temple and they had a youth conference and here comes these beautiful Polynesian young people to do a session and some baptisms in the temple. Wherever I see young people, Latter-day Saints, you get to teach them, I get to teach them. I tend to think of young people, but it doesn't need to be young people. That's how I'm likening it. So he says in chapter 49, "The Lord hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name, and he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword.

01:34:44 In the shadow of his hand, hath he hid me and made me a polished shaft, in the quiver hath he hid me." The Lord is saying, "I have spoken about you." Like I say, if I'm talking to a group of young people, God is saying to them, I have called you from before you were born. I have been speaking about you from your mother's womb. I've given you, what's the sharp sword in the mouth that he gives? I've put my word, my truth. My word is quick and powerful, sharper than a two edged sword. I love the image in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me. Haven't you ever seen a mother hold a baby and it's maybe out in the sun and she cups her hand like this to keep the sun from shining? I've protected you. I've put you in the shadow of my hand.

01:35:37 I've hid you. I've polished you and kept you in my quiver. For what purpose have I called you and protected you and given you my word? Verse three, "So I can say unto you, thou art my servant and I will be glorified in you." You are going to do something for me and I've saved you for it and I've put truth in your mouth and I've called you. What are you going to do? And we go to five and six and nine. This is what you're going to do for me. Verse five, "You're going to bring Jacob again to the Lord." Number one, what is the assignment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Any Christian church for that matter, bring God's children what? Bring them back to him. Bring Jacob, gather them. Verse six, he says that three times in three different ways. "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be

my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel."

01:36:49 That's all the same thing. What I want you to do is gather my people. Bring Jacob again, raise up the tribes, restore the preserved those who are left of them. Gather them because they are going to help you in this assignment that I'm giving you. Sometimes it is a light thing is formed as a question. Is it a light thing to do that, that I have assigned you and prepared you to gather my people? No, that's a heavy responsibility, but the Lord is saying, I'm going to give a greater responsibility. I'm going to put more on you, you that have my sword in your mouth and that have been hid in my shadow and polished in my quiver. I think of the MTC and all those beautiful missionaries I see there when I read these verses. "I want you to also be a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." That's the Abrahamic covenant being repeated right there.

01:37:58 I have prepared you and called you and hid you and polished you and shadowed you so you could bring my people back. Raise them up again and be a light to the whole world. You are my witnesses, he says many times in Isaiah, you have to testify to the world what kind of a God I am. You have to show them who I am so they will love me.

Hank Smith: 01:38:26 I really love this. I hope all the parents listening go back five minutes and send this to your young adult child, your teenager. Mark this. They know how to do it. Give them the time on the YouTube video and they can find it. Wouldn't you love it, John, if every YSA or even every youth in the church heard what Mike just said?

John Bytheway: 01:38:49 And it's getting better in 49. I mean.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 01:38:53 It keeps increasing.

John Bytheway: 01:38:55 So keep listening.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 01:38:56 Now he says in verse nine that thou mayest say to the prisoners, what message are you going to give to the world? The prisoners, what prisoners? Prisoners of ignorance, of sin, of worldliness, of whatever we're captive to. Say to the prisoners, "Go forth." You're opening the doors of the prison. Go forth. And then he says to them that are in darkness, what am I supposed to do to those in darkness? Show yourselves. You have the light. You're the city on the hill from the sermon on the

mount. Show yourselves and the prisoners and those who are in darkness to whom you show yourselves and open the gates so they can come out. They will feed in the ways and now there's like sheep here following a shepherd. They shall feed in the ways and their pastures, I love this, shall be in all high places. Those who come out of the world, come out of the prison, come out of the darkness, they're going to feed in the highest pastures. What pasture am I feeding in now? So much of the world feeds in the swamp. They feed in the muck.

John Bytheway: 01:40:22 A swamp.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 01:40:23 He's saying, if you come, I'll feed you in the highest, the best literature, the highest music, the noblest art, the things that edify and lift you, you don't need to feed in the muck in the swamp. The world will have you feed there. Babylon will have you feed there. But if you'll follow me, I'll feed you in high places and they shall not hunger nor thirst. Those high places will satisfy you. All the beautiful, good, true things in the world. Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them even by the springs of water shall he guide them. I will make all my mountains a way and my highway shall be exalted. You'll walk the high ways and they're going to come from every direction. People from every country, the islands of the Pacific and China and Russia and Germany, Europe, South America, Mexico, Canada, Alabama, New York, Oregon, all over the world.

01:41:43 They're all coming to feed in the high places because you whom God hid in his hand and gave his truth to has called you and you're going to respond. You are going to bring his people back. You will be a light. You will invite them. You'll bring them out of the prison. You'll show yourselves. They'll come verse 12 from the north and the west from all directions. Now Isaiah is filled with a vision of Israel fulfilling its potential that he didn't see in his own day, but he knows they will eventually. He says, "Sing O heavens, and be joyful, O earth, and break forth into singing O mountains for the Lord." We come back to the word he started with. "But the Lord will have comforted his people and will have mercy upon his afflicted." Now, at this point, Isaiah is saying, do you sense, do you feel the glory and the rejoicing of my message to you?

01:42:59 But it is so good to be true that Israel can't believe. We can't believe it almost. There is a God this good and that there is a destiny for those who believe in him this good. Just hard to believe. Now, verse 14, Isaiah is saying, doesn't it just make you want to sing that you've received this kind of comfort? And

Israel has the widowed, no children, scattered, 10 tribes gone, even us individually, he can hardly believe it. Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me. God forsook me, he forgot me. We love these verses. We quote these all the time. They're beautiful ones. Can a woman forget her nursing child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Is it possible for a mother to forget her own infant? Yes. He says, They may forget, it is possible. We have, every now and then, hear stories in the news about mothers who abuse their own children.

01:44:10 He says, it's possible. Not likely, but it's possible the strongest love on earth, a mother's love for a child. She may forget that child. Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, but it is not possible for me, your God, that Isaiah's just described to ever forget you. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. Thy walls are continually before me. Now, for Christians, verse 16 has a very specific, deep meaning to be engraven upon the palms of the hands. Can be a reference to the prints of the nails. I can't forget you. Look. And he shows us his hands. But it also for, in the context of Isaiah's time is, your name is always before my face, just like my hands. I've written you right here and the walls, your house, your city, this is probably the walls of Jerusalem.

01:45:17 I'm always looking at you. Your name is always before me. You know, Jesus takes that same idea beautifully in the New Testament when he speaks of little children and he says, "Their angels do always behold the face of my father." For every child on earth, there's in a sense, and we're talking in poetic terms, obviously, there's an angel in heaven reminding God about the condition of that child and God is cognizant of that child. He's cognizant of the sparrows, remember? I can't forget you. Now he says, let me show you something. Now we're at the MTC. We are at BYU or at Institute or we're at that youth conference in Papeete. We're looking at these beautiful young people. Or we're at general conference. We can make them hoar-haired people also, white-haired people. Lift up thine eyes, "he's speaking to mother Israel. "Lift up thine eyes roundabout and behold, all these gather themselves together and come to thee, as I live saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament and bind them on thee as a bride doeth." Look at all these beautiful young souls.

01:46:46 Look at them. They're as beautiful as a bride dressed for her wedding. And the land 19, even now that was once the land of destruction, shall be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants. We're going to have a lot. Remember, this is the same image of making a bigger tent. Verse 20, let's skip to 20. The children

which thou shalt have after thou hast lost the other, the children of Latter-day Israel, a future Israel, after the lost 10 tribes after the Babylonian captivity, the children in the future. We liken it to our beautiful young people today. Shall say in thine ears, the place is too straight, too narrow for me. Give place to me that I may dwell. We need to split the ward. We need to split the stake. We need to split the mission there. We're growing the tents. We need more stakes. The chords need to be lengthened.

01:47:49 And then 21 is just as beautiful a verse as you'll find. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, who have begotten me these seen I have lost my children and I'm desolate a captive and removing to and fro. And who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone. These, where have they been? Well, we know where they have. He told us that in verse two. They've been in the shadow of God's hand in his quiver being polished for the labor that he is bestowing on them to go forth into the world with his sword in their mouth and say to the world as Isaiah did back in chapter 40, Behold your God, look at your God. Behold His work. Look at the God of infinite power granting deepest intimacy. Look at the saving God. Where were all these? I have two grandsons on missions now, you know, who in a sense or what we all do it doesn't have to be a missionary.

01:49:13 We're all doing these. Beautiful children. Verse 22, he says, "I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles and set up my standard to the people. And they shall bring thy sons in their arms and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders, and kings shall be thy nursing fathers and their queens thy nursing mothers." I can read this in a lot of different ways. I am reading it at this particular time, thinking of my grandsons, right, out there.

John Bytheway: 01:49:48 And Hank's son in Washington DC.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 01:49:52 And they're setting up the standard, the flag you rally around. In a sense, spiritually speaking, you pick up those people and you carry them. You can see the image, the little boys in their arms, the little girls up on their shoulders. Spiritually, that's what you do. You carry people and you bring them to God and you help them to see God. And he calls them kings and they're queens. What kings? Well, what does Melchizedek mean? Melchizedek means king of righteousness. Those kings. And who are their queens? These kings and these queens carry them. Now again, I say you can read these in multiple different ways. Now, still somewhat incredulous. Israel, Mother Israel, the bride who feels she's lost her husband who was God at one time and they

		were in a covenant bridegroom bride relationship. She just can't believe this vision of Isaiah can be so true.
	01:51:08	Then verse 24, Isaiah asks, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty or the lawful captive delivered?" You're going to go and take the lamb right out of the lion's mouth. You're going to bring right out of Babylon the captive souls. You're going to march right into hell and bring the sinner out. Thus saith the Lord, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away and the pray of the terrible shall be delivered. For I will contend with him that contended with thee and I will save thy children. In a sense, if you want to even apply this to the Savior himself, is he going to take from the mighty and the lawful captive? Is he going to deliver them? Yes. I'll march right into death. I'll march right into hell and I will bring them out. It is a section of Isaiah and this continues. It's going to continue in this same vein as you go through all the way really to the very end of Isaiah. Hope, rejoicing, comfort.
John Bytheway:	01:52:18	Yeah, I've got the JST of Isaiah 49:25 adds, "For the mighty God shall deliver his covenant people." Strongly spoken.
Hank Smith:	01:52:33	It's no wonder Nephi loves this as he's experiencing this, the scattering.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	01:52:38	He would understand being in his timeframe, not only is Isaiah somewhat contemporary, but 10 tribes are gone.
Hank Smith:	01:52:47	He's watching this all play out.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	01:52:49	Babylon's coming. You can see Nephi again saying, "Lord, is Isaiah really true? Can this really be true? Is this really true, this future?" Nephi believes it deeply and so do we. Goodness and truth and mercy are going to triumph, hopefully in our own personal lives, eventually on the earth. They'll triumph. Let's choose that side.
Hank Smith:	01:53:18	Revelation 18:4, the Lord speaking to his saints in Babylon, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, that you receive not of her plagues. Israel, Israel, God is calling you from lands of woe." Also, chapter 49, verse nine, you might think of what President Nelson would say about on both sides of the veil. You're saying to the prisoners, Go forth. To them that are in darkness, show yourselves. You don't have to stay in this spirit prison. Come out.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	01:53:51	Yeah, you could say, Isaiah, is that what you meant? And he would say, yes. Sometimes that word beyond the veil and the spirit prison, certainly in some cases, we'll be trying to convince people to believe in Christ, but I think most of the conversations in that are going to be the conversations we've kinda seen earlier trying to say to people who might think I screwed up my life. There's no hope for me. And for people to say, no, let me show you the God. He is infinite in mercy. He is love right through. No matter who you are, where you are, what you've done. Don't fear. Don't be afraid. Come out. Even you in the spirit prison. Go forth. A lot of the mission, what we call missionary work in the spirit world is not trying to convince people to believe, but trying to convince them that they can be part of the miracle of God's mercy and who he is.
	01:54:56	When I need comfort, when I feel the race wearying me, I just need a little comfort, a little rejoicing. And there's a lot of places I go to, but often I'll go to Isaiah and I can just hear him say, Mike, it's not a race. We're going gently. Okay, I'll hold your hand. I'm with you. We're going to plead together with the Father. I'm going to get you there. I'll strengthen you. I'm not discouraged with your mistakes. Calm that man in the last chair down, would you? Don't be afraid. That's Isaiah's great message. This is a powerful God. This, no question, this is a powerful God. He's a God of intimacy and deepness.
Hank Smith:	01:55:42	I feel like we fulfilled a little prophecy. 2 Nephi 25:8, "Wherefore they," the words of Isaiah, "are of worth unto the children of men." And how many of us out there, oh, I, this is. I can't do this. He says, "Unto you, I speak particularly and confine the words unto mine own people for I know that they shall be of great worth unto them in the last days. For in that day," And I think this is one of those days, "shall they understand them." Mike, you've helped us understand them.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	01:56:16	Oh, well, thank you very much. Thanks for letting me come.
John Bytheway:	01:56:19	When they write great are the words of Isaiah on the chalkboard or on the dry erase board, don't say, "Oh, great, the words of Isaiah." No, say, "Great are the words of Isaiah," right?
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	01:56:31	Oh, great, the words of Isaiah.
Hank Smith:	01:56:36	With that, we want to thank Dr. Michael Wilcox for being with us today. He is a friend and we adore him. We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. And every episode, we remember our founder, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We

have another Isaiah lesson coming up 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.



Hank Smith:	00:03	Welcome to followHIM Favorites. John and I share a single story to go with each week's Come, Follow Me lesson. John, we are in Isaiah 40 through 49, and you have a story.
John Bytheway:	00:14	I do. I'm kind of looking at Isaiah 41 verse 10, "Fear not for I am with thee, be not dismayed." We can hear how firm a foundation in that scripture. This article appeared in FSY Magazine by Elder Michael A. Dunn. He was training to go run, and this happened. He said, "This was a classic training run. I was trying to build up my strength and endurance for a marathon two months away. Runners increase strength by doing repeated short distance runs, and this short distance run was 15 miles."
Hank Smith:	00:48	Oh, of course, as one does.
John Bytheway:	00:51	He says, "This builds endurance, which in turn toughens resilience. Little did I know. I would soon need every drop of resilience and power I had because I would be in for the race of my life. Looking back, I should have seen the signs. The Lord tells us he will show us things to come through the power of the Holy Ghost." And he quoted Elder Gary E. Stevenson who said, "The Holy Ghost can help you by warning you in advance of physical and spiritual dangers." That he did. He said, "Just a few minutes into my run, I glanced down and spotted something." Hank, this is when I'm done. "My heart jumped when I saw the unmistakable outline of a bear track in the dirt in front of me. It was a clear warning. Foolishly, I rationalized that a bear had indeed passed this way, but by now, I would be safe. No need to worry.
	01:40	And so I ran. Less than an hour later, I had crested a small rise, ran down a hill into a heavily wooded clearing. As I rounded a bend at the bottom of the hill, I heard a crashing sound so intense, so severe that it made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. I stopped instantly and slowly glanced to my left, then I froze in terror. The sound which I quickly identified as breaking

branches was coming at a high speed. Then I saw a sight I will never forget, a full-grown grizzly bear charging directly toward me. The horrific attack that followed should have taken my life. This was obviously a very agitated bear, which I had surprised as I dropped into that clearing at a dead run. Yet that moment when I thought death was certain, what followed was the sincerest prayer of my life."

Hank Smith: 02:34 Oh, wow.

John Bytheway: 02:34 Can you imagine? "The intervening mercies of heaven then descended. Inexplicably, the bear stopped his relentless attack and ran off into the woods. That was good news. The bad news was I had 16 severe wounds from the bear's teeth and claws and was alone in a forest covered in blood and 11 miles from the nearest park road with no help in sight." Suddenly Isaiah 41:10 comes to mind. "I suddenly found myself at a major decision point. If you haven't had such a moment, be assured you will. Adversity is part of Heavenly Father's plan. Fortunately, getting attacked by a bear isn't, at least for most of us."

Hank Smith: 03:18 Yeah, I was going to say.

John Bytheway: 03:20 "As these crises crossroads in your life, you have a decision to make. You can give up, lie down, and die, or you can somehow rally all your courage and strength and fight on trusting that if you will do your part, the Lord will do his."

Hank Smith: 03:35 Wow.

John Bytheway: 03:35 "This is exactly what happened to me." I love this. "Instead of giving up, I decided to get up. I was determined to live, which meant I needed to find help, stumbling my way down the trail for more than a mile." I mean, he's wounded, he says he got blood all over him. "I finally crossed paths with the only other people in the forest that day for miles. That miraculous meeting eventually led to a back country helicopter rescue, three life-saving surgeries, and a clear understanding of the blessing of being determined to hold on thy way. This experience has increased my power, determination and faith. It also strengthened and prepared me to handle other challenges of life. I'm certain that as you," and I love how he did this, "as you bear all things," that's good, huh? "Believe all things, hope all things and endure all things, you will build the resilience and strength you need to face challenges.

	04:31	You will see the Lord's hand making you equal to whatever comes your way, even if it is in the very jaws of hell." Wow. There it is. "Fear not, I am with you. Be not dismayed. For I am thy God, I will strengthen thee. I will help thee. I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." And Hank, you know what I love about this? He saw the sign and he decided to go forward. Did the Lord say, okay, nevermind.
Hank Smith:	04:57	Can't help you.
John Bytheway:	04:58	No. He was still with him. And when he said that prayer, I bet one of Elder Dunn's questions in the next life will be, why did the bear just turn and leave?
Hank Smith:	05:09	Right.
John Bytheway:	05:10	Divine intervention.
Hank Smith:	05:11	Yeah. Did King David come?
John Bytheway:	05:13	King David showed up. I got a sling.
Hank Smith:	05:16	I've done this before, you know.
John Bytheway:	05:18	Done this before.
Hank Smith:	05:19	Wow. I loved his phrase. I'm not going to give up. I'm going to get up.
John Bytheway:	05:23	I'm going to get up. Oh, so good.
Hank Smith:	05:25	Powerful stuff. Oh, thanks, John. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcast. We're with Dr. S. Michael Wilcox this week, and if you've ever been taught by Michael Wilcox, you know it's going to be a profound moving experience, which it is for us and it can be for you. Then come back here next week. We'll do another followHIM favorites.