



EPISODE 41

GUEST: DR. EZRA Gwilliam



“He Hath Borne Our Grievs, and Carried Our Sorrows”

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

If you feel farther from the Lord today than you did yesterday, guess who moved? Dr. Ezra Gwilliam explores Isaiah 50-57, from the suffering servant who was “attacked” by the sins of humankind to the Lord’s tender promise to gather every outcast.

Timecodes:

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- 6:05 An unexpected deliverer
- 7:31 Can a mother forget her child?
- 10:57 Guess who moved?
- 15:13 Setting my face like a flint
- 17:54 Facing your accusers in heaven
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- 1:28:02 The last place you'd want to go
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- 1:40:23 Shoulder to shoulder in the Boise Temple
- 1:45:24 Worn out but not hopeless
- 1:48:22 Does education weaken faith?
- 1:50:30 Give me more Jesus
- 1:56:58 End of Episode - Ezra Gwilliam

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Doctor Ezra Gwilliam grew up in the small logging community of Vanderhoof, British Columbia, Canada. He served as a full-time missionary in the California Roseville Mission. He earned a Bachelor's degree from BYU-Idaho, a Master's Degree in Literacy and a Doctoral degree in Education from Boise State University. Prior to coming to BYU-Idaho Religion Department in 2018, Ezra taught Seminary and Institute in the Boise Area for 10 years. He married Lindsey Ward in 2005 and together they have five

children. Brother Gwilliam loves the Holy Land , trail running, sports and watching his kids do the things they love to do. Nobody has more blessings than he does!

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Hank Smith:	00:00:00	Coming up in this episode on followHIM.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:00:03	I was in the Boise Temple. I am a sturdy fella. I always appreciate having a seat next to me that's vacant in the temple. In walks this man, and he comes and sits shoulder to shoulder with me. He is right here.
Hank Smith:	00:00:26	Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with my inclined eared co-host, John Bytheway. John, I read Isaiah 55:3 and it talks about inclining your ears. And I was like, "I think John has inclined ears."
John Bytheway:	00:00:45	Oh, I like that. I was thinking you were going to say I was waxing old as a garment, so I will take the inclined ear thing.
Hank Smith:	00:00:55	There is wax in ears, John. So you might be onto something here. "Incline your ear," the Lord says, "And come unto me. Hear, and your soul shall live." Well, that's what we're going to do today. We're going to hear, and we're going to hear from a new guest on followHIM, Dr. Ezra Gwilliam. Dr. Gwilliam, if it's okay that we call you Ezra, welcome to followHIM.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:01:17	Thank you. Thank you.
Hank Smith:	00:01:19	We are excited to have you. Many of your Rexburg companions up there, they give you high regard, high recommendations.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:01:28	Well, they're always kind. We work in the best place in the world.
Hank Smith:	00:01:32	You are beloved in Rexburg. John, you wrote a book on Isaiah, Isaiah for Airheads. You've taught the Book of Mormon, so you've taught Isaiah. We've now had three Come, Follow Me lessons on Isaiah, which we did some four years ago as well. You are well-versed in Isaiah. Is there really anything new you are learning?

John Bytheway:	00:01:52	Every recording session of followHIM, I'm like, "I thought I knew this. I didn't know this. I didn't know this." Which is awesome. It's humbling, but it's wonderful.
Hank Smith:	00:02:01	Coming from you, John, now I know you're not going to say, "Oh, wow, I'm well-versed in this." But someone who's written a book, recorded the show many, many times, taught many, many times, I think it's good to hear, "Hey, I'm still learning."
John Bytheway:	00:02:13	Oh, yeah. Absolutely. And it could be that there's a new insight into a verse that you've never heard before. That's why scripture study, it never gets old.
Hank Smith:	00:02:24	Yeah. Isaiah is inexhaustible. We'll never get to the bottom of it, at least until we hear it from him himself. I would like to go to an Isaiah class that's taught by Isaiah.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:02:34	Nephi's the TA.
Hank Smith:	00:02:35	Nephi's the TA. I love it. Ezra, as you've been looking at these chapters, Isaiah 50 through 57, I believe. What are we going to do today? What are you hoping for?
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:02:46	The beauty of these chapters is the Savior. He is all over. We'll see some patterns. We'll see some one-liner gems, some of the most beautiful chapters in all of scripture. I don't know how you beat Isaiah 53. I think some continuation of those ideas exist in 54 and 55 that sometimes we miss. It's absolutely beautiful. What an opportunity to rejoice in Christ, to talk of Christ, to preach of Christ. So I hope today, as we see what Isaiah is saying, the real goal is that we are really seeing the Savior. I love these words.
Hank Smith:	00:03:27	That's exciting. I love your passion and your feeling. I can feel how much you love these chapters. Even before we hit record, I said, "John, I know you love Isaiah 53. I love Isaiah 54." And Ezra said, "I love Isaiah 55." Honestly, when you take the three of us and put us into these chapters, we're kids in a candy store. Now, John, Ezra does come highly recommended from his companions in Rexburg, but there might be a couple of listeners who've never heard of Ezra Gwilliam. Tell us what we know.
John Bytheway:	00:03:58	Yes. Dr. Ezra Guillian grew up in the small logging community of Vanderhoof, British Columbia, Canada. Served a full-time mission in the California Roseville Mission and earned a bachelor's degree from BYU Idaho, a master's degree in literacy and a doctoral degree in education from Boise State University.

Prior to coming to the BYU Idaho Religion Department in 2018, Ezra taught seminary and institute in the Boise area for 10 years. He married Lindsey Ward in 2005. Together they have five children. He loves the Holy Land. He loves trail running, sports and watching his kids do the things they love to do. He also added on his bio, Hank, he said, "Ez is a totally normal fella who's trying to raise a family, lose some weight, pay off a mortgage, and loves Jesus."

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:04:49	That was the short one.
Hank Smith:	00:04:51	I like that. That fits. That fits a lot of us. I love it. That's so great.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:04:56	That really is true. I'm not an Isaiah scholar. I try to read a lot. There's people who are probably more technical and stuff like that, but I just love teaching Isaiah.
Hank Smith:	00:05:08	Yeah. We love you and we're excited to have you, specifically you for these chapters today. Now, those of you who are not American football fans out there, let me take a brief pause here. Ezra, when were you at Boise State?
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:05:22	2013. I was there in the glory days.
Hank Smith:	00:05:24	John, you know who my favorite teams are, but honestly, there is no better football game I have ever watched a single game than the 2007 Fiesta Bowl. I don't know if you've watched this game. Phenomenal game, like a Hollywood made.
John Bytheway:	00:05:41	Right up to the end.
Hank Smith:	00:05:42	Even the marriage proposal.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:05:44	Statue of Liberty, Ian Johnson.
John Bytheway:	00:05:47	Yeah, that was crazy.
Hank Smith:	00:05:49	Those of you who don't love American football, thank you for letting us take that little side note. And John, I believe we've had a guest right from Boise. We probably ought to tell her hi.
John Bytheway:	00:05:58	We had Shalise Adams. She was the audiologist and it was an amazing episode.
Hank Smith:	00:06:05	Book of Moroni. Hi, Shalise. She's probably going to smile at that. All right, Ezra, let me read from the Come, Follow Me manual and let's get underway. The lesson this week, he hath

borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. "Throughout his ministry, Isaiah spoke of a mighty deliverer. These prophecies would have been especially precious to the Israelites centuries later when they were in captivity in Babylon. Someone who could tear down the walls of Babylon would be a mighty conqueror indeed. That isn't the kind of Messiah that Isaiah described in chapters 52 and 53. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from him. We did esteem him stricken, submitted to God and afflicted. By sending such an unexpected deliverer, God taught us about true deliverance. To save us from oppression and affliction, God sent one who himself was oppressed and afflicted.

00:07:00 Where some expected a lion, he sent a lamb. Surely God's ways are not our ways. Jesus Christ frees us not by just opening the prison, but by taking our place there. He relieves us from our chains of grief and sorrow by bearing them himself. He does not save us from a distance. He suffers with us in acts of everlasting kindness that shall not depart from thee." Wow, that is beautiful. All right, Ezra, we are ready to learn from you.

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 00:07:31 Well, these verses are absolutely incredible and to get to testify of the Savior through Isaiah chapter 50 through 57 is just an honor and a privilege. I think we need to start in chapter 49. I think 49 and 50 go together. You'll recall in chapter 49, it's this court scene where Israel's on trial, they throw out this argument. They say, wait a second. You said you would always be with us, Lord. You said you would always be with us and you're not. The Lord in Isaiah 49:14 says, "The Lord hath forsaken me and my Lord hath forgotten me." And then you remember the verses, "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion," right? The Lord is saying, there's no conceivable way that I could ever, ever forget you. The reason of course why is because "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands and thy walls are continually before me." The Savior is saying, you can't accuse me of forgetting you. Well, if we go to chapter 50 now, that same idea is actually carried forward.

00:08:35 In Isaiah chapter 50 verse one, it's a similar question where the Lord says, "Thus saith the Lord, where is the bill of your mother's divorcement whom I have put away?" In other words, you say I left you. You're saying that I'm no longer a part of you. Well, show me the divorce papers. Every divorce has papers. Show me the papers. What do you think? Can Israel show the Lord the papers? There's no papers. The next question is in verse one, "Which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold

you?" Well, that's a really fascinating question because the Lord, if he had creditors. I have two questions. Who would be his creditors? In other words, who is the Lord in debt to? And secondly, how much money would he be in debt? Right? So the answer is nobody and nothing. I haven't divorced you.

00:09:27 I haven't sold you. In fact, who would I sell you to? I have everything. I own everything. I don't need money. These questions, can a woman forget her sucking child? Would I sell you? I can't sell you. I don't owe anybody any money. Where's the bill of the divorcement? There's no divorce papers. Then he says in the middle of the verse, "Behold, for your iniquities, you have sold yourselves and for your transgressions is your mother put away." In other words, I haven't left you. You've left me. Then the questions keep coming from the Lord saying, Why would you leave? Like when I came, you didn't answer. When I came, there was no man. When I called, there was none to answer. Is my hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem or have I no power to deliver? Those are good questions. You say I left you, but where would I go?

00:10:26 Who would I sell you to? Can I not save you? Has my arm shortened? Have I lost the power? So the Lord is simply saying right off the bat, I am who I have always been, and I have never forgotten you. I will always carry you. Harkening back to Isaiah chapter 46, where he says, "I've carried you from the womb and even to hoar hairs, I have carried you." He's never stopped carrying, not ever, not once.

Hank Smith: 00:10:55 I've been here the whole time.

John Bytheway: 00:10:57 I heard someone say once, If you feel further away today from God than you were yesterday, guess who moved?

Hank Smith: 00:11:06 Yeah. This must be one of the reasons Nephi gets frustrated with his brothers. They ask him that big question in 1 Nephi 15. He says, "Have you inquired of the Lord?" They said, "No. The Lord maketh no such thing known unto us." And he seems frustrated. "How is it that you do not keep the commandments of the Lord?" right? The Lord will make anything known to you. You can go ask him. No, no. He doesn't want to talk to me. And I think all these questions say, When was it that I broke up with you? When was it that I distanced myself from you? That has never happened.

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 00:11:40 I love the whole verse. It's Isaiah 46:4, "Even to your old age, I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made and I will bear. Even I will carry and will deliver you." We sometimes

like that footprints in the sand poem where they're walking along the beach and there's two set of footprints and there's only one set of footprints and the man says, I noticed that when there's only one set of footprints, that was when life was the hardest. And the Lord says, Well, that's when I carried you. Well, Isaiah actually doesn't agree with the poem, and I think Isaiah does it better, that Isaiah says, Look, there's only been one set of footprints in the sand, and they've never been yours. I've carried you from the womb to your old age. They've never been yours. I've never left you alone.

00:12:30 Show me the papers. Show me the invoice from the creditor. Can a woman forget her sucking child? Of course not. I will never forget you. I think that's just a powerful intro to these chapters where we understand that the Lord has the power and the willingness to carry us, to never forget us. We've established that it's because of our sins, because of our transgressions that we've moved, as John said so perfectly, we've moved away from him.

Hank Smith: 00:13:00 The only thing keeping me from the Lord is my agency, which he, for some reason, refuses to take away.

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 00:13:07 He gives us the reason why, again, just like in Isaiah chapter 49, he says, No, I can't forget you because I've graven thee upon the palms of my hands. This time it's not hands. It's verse six, Isaiah 56, "I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting." You can see the parallel what Isaiah's doing in 49 and 50, asking the questions and then a reference to his atoning sacrifice. This is the reason why I can't forget you. It is the nail prints in the hands, but it's also his back. It's also his face. It's the shame that he bore, the brunt of our sins. Was it [Elder Holland](#) who said, I hope it's never ever over for me. And I hope it's never, ever over for me too. I hope I never forget it. I'm not worried about him forgetting. It's me. I'm worried about forgetting him. I take the sacrament each Sunday saying I'm willing. I really am willing to remember, and he really is willing to remember me.

John Bytheway: 00:14:18 I was thinking about something that [Elder Uchtdorf](#) said once about if we think of Jesus as the light of the world, it was such an interesting observation. I think he was up at 30,000 feet or something and saw what they call the terminator. It's when you see the earth as a sphere, there's this line where the light separates the dark. It's fairly visible, I guess, to airline pilots way up there, this actual line. And he said, "It occurred to me that night is nothing more than a shadow," which seems obvious,

but oh, what a great insight. Night is nothing more than a shadow. And then he said, "The light has always been there. You are just not in a place to receive it." It's kind of the same idea of you went into the shadow. The light has always been there for you.

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| Hank Smith: | 00:15:05 | Well, you have an apostle, a moon on the other side that's reflecting the light of the sun saying, "You can't see him, but I can." |
| John Bytheway: | 00:15:12 | I love it. |
| Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: | 00:15:13 | Verse seven is a bit of a transition, but verse seven can be taken two different ways. In one camp is this is Christological, meaning we can read verse seven as if it's Christ. Sometimes in the words of Elder Maxwell, "I'm eccentric because I'm Christ-centric or Christocentric." Eccentric because I'm Christocentric. So you can read this from the perspective of the Lord. He say, The Lord God will help me. I won't be confounded. Therefore, have I set my face like a flint. I'm not going to be ashamed or I shall not be ashamed. On one camp, this is the huge commitment that the Savior has for us. I won't be ashamed. I'm going to go through with this and I'm going to have help. But on the other side is many people, and I really love this reading, that there's this transition point where it's now Israel who is talking. |
| | 00:16:08 | I don't know if you've ever had this moment where you're sitting in Sacrament meeting, maybe it's an FSJ or an EFJ when you were a kid or a really good Sunday school lesson and you're feeling the Spirit, you're thinking about the atonement of Christ, it just settles on you. And then you have this motivation to never ever sin again in your life. That's what I think is happening in verse seven. You've forgotten us. I've never forgotten you, and I have the power to redeem you. And then verse seven, "For the Lord God will help me." He'll help Ezra. He'll help Hank. He'll help John. The Lord God will help me. Therefore, shall I not be confounded. Therefore, I have set my face like a flint. A flint here would be rock. You guys have had beautiful experiences. Our listeners, anyone listening has had an experience where you have, I am setting my face like a flint. I am rock solid. I am turning to Christ and I am never going to turn back. |
| | 00:17:02 | I think I've had many episodes of that throughout my life where I've been more motivated to more holiness give me, to be kinder, to be a better husband, a better father, to be a better disciple. I've made these commitments. A mission does this, hopefully going to the temple does this where we make those covenants, but I've set my face like a flint and then I know that I |

shall not be ashamed. Well, why would you be ashamed? What would you be ashamed of? Well, if I have now set my face like a flint, what would you be ashamed of? The times that I hadn't, the times that I didn't, the past. To me, what comes next? This is one of the most beautiful scriptures on the atonement.

00:17:54 This is one of the most stunning. I just can't say it strongly enough how much I love these verses. I really do feel that way. Maybe before we jump into verse nine, I want you to pretend you're up in heaven, okay? That's easy for you two because you're going to go there really easily, really quickly. Okay, you're in heaven and you're walking down some heavenly corridor. You turn the corner and boom. There's somebody who knew exactly who you were on earth. There's somebody there who knows exactly who Hank Smith is, who John Bytheway is, who Ezra Gwilliam is. Could it be that there's people in heaven who know some of your sins? Well, we're all married, so hopefully, right?

Hank Smith: 00:18:35 Wife's going to be there.

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 00:18:37 Yeah, exactly. That's who comes to my mind because she's seen me sin and fail more times than anybody else.

Hank Smith: 00:18:35 Absolutely.

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 00:18:37 She still loves me and I love her. Is it possible that a bishop could know some of your sins? Could it be an old friend? Or maybe it goes something like you're sitting in heaven and you meet this guy and you're like, "Hi, what's your name?" And, I'm Ezra. What's your name? Corianton. Cool name. When are you from? 74 BC. Corianton, who's your dad? Wait, I know this guy. Wait, wait, I know you. Wait, I know what you did. I read it. I know what you did. Are there people in heaven who are going to know some of the things that we did in our life? The answer to that is, yeah, probably. Then, okay, you have the scene, right? Is it possible? Yes. I don't know how that all works, by the way, but here it is. Let's read verse seven again. We're in heaven.

00:19:29 There's somebody who knows your sins, your mom or your dad, whoever it is. "The Lord God will help me. Therefore, shall I not be confounded. Therefore, I have set my face like a flint and I know that I shall not be ashamed." Why? Because verse eight, "He is near that justifieth me." Hang on, John, we're walking down heaven, a corridor in heaven, and you see me. I know Ezra. He's a sinner, because we all are. And if you say something like, wait, John, I know Ezra. He's a sinner. How did he get here?

And then Jesus steps behind the corner or steps around the corner and he stands beside me. Are either of you going to say anything like that? No.

- Hank Smith: 00:20:30 I love it.
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 00:20:30 Why not? Because if it doesn't work for me, who doesn't it work for? He is near that justifieth me. Who will contend with me? Do you want to fight? Do you want to argue about this? Who will contend with me? Let's stand together. Who's my adversary? Let him come near to me. I think of John chapter nine where the woman is taken in adultery and the Lord stoops down and he writes in the sand and he asks, "Where are thine accusers?" And the response is, "No man, Lord." I think she can say that because woman, where are thine accusers? No, man, Lord. Because he is near that justifieth me. You can't accuse me when he's there, and he is there in heaven. He's the Son. That's the whole point. If he's there, we are not going to walk around heaven going, oh, I know what you did, and I know what you did. Therefore, brothers, sisters, everybody, we don't need to be ashamed. He justifies us. That's a really, really beautiful scene.
- John Bytheway: 00:21:39 I'm thinking of some of the titles for Satan. In verse eight, it says, "Who is mine adversary?" Well, that's one of our titles for Satan, is adversary. And speaking of Satan, in the book of Revelation, it says that means accuser of the brethren, and so where are those thine accusers? Well, that's what Satan does. He's an adversary and he accuses. Jesus is an advocate. So I love putting those two side by side, adversary versus advocate, you know? Who are you going to believe?
- Hank Smith: 00:22:10 Yeah. And whose side are you on, John, when you're finding fault with others?
- John Bytheway: 00:22:15 You're doing his work. You're being an accuser.
- Hank Smith: 00:22:17 That's exactly right. Ezra, just to give you another witness, I'm going to read from what I think is one of the greatest general conference talks ever given, at least in my lifetime, Beauty for Ashes: The Healing Path of Forgiveness by [Sister Kristin Yee](#). John, do you remember this one? She talks about how the atonement of Jesus Christ both affects us and our relationship. This is some of her talk. She said, "With permission of my father, I share that I grew up in a home where I didn't always feel safe because of emotional and verbal mistreatment. In my youth and young adult years, I resented my father and had anger in my heart from that hurt." Both you, Ezra, John, all of us have been

hurt and we have hurt others. She says, "Over the years, and in my efforts to find peace and healing on the path to forgiveness, I came to realize in a profound way," this was something that just hit me and etched on my soul when she said this. "The same son of God who atoned for my sins is the same redeemer who will also save those who have deeply hurt me. I could not truly believe the first truth without believing the second." John, do you remember that?

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| John Bytheway: | 00:23:33 | Oh, yeah. Her willingness just to tell us that opened everybody's heart to really listen. |
| Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: | 00:23:40 | The willingness of her father who gave permission for the story, what humility and repentance and kindness, just amazing. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:23:49 | Yeah, so if someone like that can be in heaven with someone who hurt them and said, "You belong here," and then you've got the Lord on the other side of you saying, "You belong here," who are we to say, "No, I'm a second class citizen," right? There are no second class citizens. |
| Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: | 00:24:03 | I'm grateful for the Savior, and I'm grateful for the goodness of other people who undoubtedly could say those things to me, the mercy that we extend to each other. The doctrinal word for this, and the Savior uses the word justifieth, but justification is being pardoned, right? It's declared guiltless. I really like 3 Nephi 27:16. It says, "And it shall come to pass that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled, and if he endureth to the end, behold him will I hold guiltless." It's not innocent or guilty. It's not guilty or innocent. I can't be innocent because I've made mistakes. But through the atonement of Christ, it's not that I'm not guilty because I still did the thing, it's that I can become guiltless. The atonement of Christ, Elder Bednar just talked about it in conference. A court scene doesn't always do the atonement justice. This is one of them where I think that's true. It's not guilty versus innocent or guilty versus not guilty. It's guilty versus guiltless. While sanctification removes the stain, justification is the pardon that we receive being made guiltless. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:25:16 | Ezra, I love verses seven through nine. You've showed us that switch. For a long time, I'll admit, and John, this is just me thinking I thought I knew this. I thought, okay, this must be Isaiah speaking. And in a way, you said it is, but it's all of Israel. So it's almost like here's the Savior's statement and let's have Israel's statement in response. It's all of us saying, "I believe." It's a Israel bearing testimony. I would say, "That's beautiful." |

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:25:45	I think they've just had this moment, like we have had so many times in our life, it's this moment of realization that Jesus Christ is exactly who he said he is. And if he's always been there and I've moved because of my sins, wow, I need to move back. I need to turn my face and I need to set my face like a flint. I love those moments that come in my life. I should probably have them more. I love those moments of discipleship where I just want to turn to him and never ever look back again.
Hank Smith:	00:26:18	I've heard multiple apostles say, if you will allow the Lord, your love for the Lord and his love for you to sink into your heart, you will have confidence. And I can see that here.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:26:37	Yes.
Hank Smith:	00:26:29	Once you realize who he is, how he sees you, and you can say, "I am confident, not in myself, but in him."
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:26:37	Yeah, look in verse 10. We have a series of questions where it's, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of a servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light?" Well, to some degree, that's all of us at different times. I've never been perfectly obedient. Elder Maxwell called it direction before velocity. You can hear Elder Maxwell just say that. You can hear his voice. We're turning now to the Lord, but Hank, just like you said, is we need to trust him. Well, look at the next phrase. Let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God. Because sometimes it's actually easier to say, well, I get that it works for Hank Smith and it works for John Bytheway, and it works for President Oaks, and my stake president and my bishop, they're all amazing.
	00:27:26	But the point here is it works for all of us. It works for every single person. We have to trust the Lord that he is willing to do this. We need to take him for his word, and we need to take the prophets at their words when they say there is no other name given nor any other means whereby salvation can come, right? Mosiah chapter three. I really love the question in Numbers chapter 14, where it's, "How long will it be, ere they will believe me?" How long is it going to take? We are really good at saying, I know the Lord does this for other people. I know the Lord will forgive someone else's sins. But notice Isaiah says, You trust in the name of the Lord. There is no other name given under heaven. You trust in him. It's working for you and it will work for you. In my last sacrament meeting, we had a little extra time and a member of our stake presidency got up, just like we've been talking about with trusting the Lord, that his salvation and his mercy and grace can really, really work for us. He said how

		he's been doing interviews that people struggle with the last temple recommend question. Hank, do you know it?
Hank Smith:	00:28:42	I do. Do you consider yourself worthy to enter the Lord's house and participate in temple ordinances?
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:28:48	Yeah. I don't know about you, me, when that question's asked, it does cause me to pause and think just a little bit. And it's not that I lack faith in the Savior, it's I know who I am. He read from section 108 in the Doctrine and Covenants, revelation to Lyman Sherman. I am in verse two. "Therefore, let your soul be at rest concerning your spiritual standing." Isn't that beautiful? I don't know where that verse has been in the last 43 years of my life, but I don't think it's been there. So if we take all of what we've been talking about so far in Isaiah chapter 50, You've forgotten us. No, I haven't. I bear the marks of the atonement. I bear the marks of you in my hands and on my back. You trust me when I say I haven't left and that I can redeem you. We need to trust him that it actually does work for us. We can walk around heaven and not be ashamed because he justifies us. Let your soul be at rest concerning your spiritual standing. Trust the Lord.
Hank Smith:	00:30:03	Ezra doesn't it say, "And resist no more, my voice." It's almost like, stop resisting this redemption.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:30:10	Yeah. If we carry on in verse three, "Arise up and be more careful henceforth in observing your vows." It's baked in that you're not perfect. It's baked in these verses that Lyman Sherman has made mistakes. Otherwise, he doesn't need to actually be more careful. I think I'm a lot like Lyman Sherman where I'm drinking the cup of redemption from the Savior just like everybody else. Lyman, you need to trust that this works. Be more careful from here for, keep trying, but this actually really does work. Trust me. And then this beautiful at the bottom of Isaiah 50 verse 10, Stay upon his God. Trust and stay on him. Don't leave.
Hank Smith:	00:30:55	John, where is it in the Book of Mormon where the Lord actually gets pretty frustrated that people won't let him be merciful?
John Bytheway:	00:31:02	It's when Alma and Amulek are trying to tell the Zoramites that God will have a Son. It's Alma 33 verse 16. Let me start in 15. "It is not written that Zenos alone spake of these things, but Zenock also spake of these things." So we're quoting Zenock. "For behold, he said, thou art angry, O Lord with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies, which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son." Thanks for bringing

that up, Hank, because sometimes I've gone right past it because I, oh, because of thy Son. He's just showing that God will have a son to the Zoramites who didn't believe that. But don't miss the message. They will not understand thy mercies. What's the difference between will not and cannot?

- Hank Smith: 00:31:51 Yeah, one is I'm deliberately choosing.
- John Bytheway: 00:31:54 I choose not to understand - no, he can't be that merciful. I don't believe it. They will not understand thy mercies. And so how do you make the Lord angry? You refuse to accept his mercies perhaps. I mean, that's one way to read that.
- Hank Smith: 00:32:11 Let me throw one more at you that I love. This is Lehi to Jacob. He says, "I know that thou art redeemed." That's pretty strong for the prophet to say, "I know that thou art redeemed because of the righteousness of thy redeemer." He doesn't say anything about, well, Jacob, because you're killing it. He says, "Because of the righteousness of thy redeemer." So Ezra, I think you're onto something here that we probably need to talk about more. Sometimes we deliberately resist the mercy of God, and I'm not sure why. Maybe it's we want to be humble. Is that what it is? We want to say, "Well, you know, I'm not that great." But it's not about you.
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 00:32:56 Hank, I think what you've been saying here, considering the absolute beauty of the atonement and understanding who the Savior is, verse 11 is kind of a wake up call. "Behold all ye that kindle a fire that compass yourselves about with sparks. Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks that you have kindled, this shall ye have of my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." What you were saying with Jacob, how could you ever say, well, it's because I'm so good. It's because I'm so good. Our listeners don't hear that. Anyone listening, you didn't hear the prayer that John said before we started where he said something like, if we can point all of the glory and goodness to the Savior to build the kingdom, we are never ever trying to compass ourselves with our own cute little sparks. Look at me, look at my great lesson or my thought here. It's about the Savior. It's like me on the 4th of July with my little sparkler. Look at me how cool I am. I'm shining because of my little sparkler when Jesus is literally the son. He is it. I can't read Isaiah chapter 50 without being more grateful and more thankful.
- Hank Smith: 00:34:20 Sometimes I get frustrated with these chapter breaks because that verse 11 says, All right, well go down and lie in your own sorrow if you want to live by your own sparks. You're like, well, that's how it ends. But that chapter break doesn't have to be

		there. If you don't want to live in your own tiny little sparks of light, what'd you call them Ezra? My cute little sparks.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:34:40	Yeah, yeah.
Hank Smith:	00:34:40	Hearken unto me, ye that follow after righteousness. Ye that seek the Lord. Let's come back to the covenant. Let's go back to Abraham and Sarah. Let's find out who you really are.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:34:51	Yeah, and in these verses, thanks for leading us to that great one. We have three hearkens in chapter 51. The way I like to look at this is the first one is hearken to your past, look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah that bear you. Look to your past. And then the next one in verse four, "Hearken unto me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation, for a law shall proceed from me and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people." In other words, Hearken to what I'm going to do in the future. The first one is, hearken to the past Abraham. Hearken to the future. It's going to proceed from my mouth. I will make my judgment future. Then our third one, it's not probably very good English, but it's hearken to your present. Let's look carefully at verse seven.
	00:35:46	"Hearken unto me," present tense, "ye that know righteousness." Look to the past, look to the future, and look at your present. What is he telling me right now in the present? For people that presently ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law, fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings. So chapter 50, I'm going to set my face like flint, right? I'm going to really turn to the Lord because I'm understanding who he is. Well, if I'm doing that, number one, look to the past and the covenant. Second, look to the future of what's going to come. Third, right now, you need to know that this turning may bring about the reproach of men, but don't you listen to them. Sometimes the reproach of men could be our very own selves where we say, it just doesn't work. No, trust the Lord. Stay on him. You know. You know, and don't listen to them.
John Bytheway:	00:36:57	You talked about Elder Maxwell, it's direction, not velocity. I'd like to add too, it's not distance, it's direction. When I think of the prodigal son, and as soon as he turned, his father ran. He was still a great way off, but as soon as he turned and changed direction, the father ran, fell on his neck and kissed him and said, I'll walk back with you. I'll walk back this way with you. Which is a really cool metaphor.

Hank Smith:	00:37:27	Let me give you another Book of Mormon witness. I think we have to repeat this same message it seems like a thousand times before someone will say, "Okay, so I can be confident that I'm redeemed." Yes. That's not being full of myself. No. It's being confident in your redeemer. You're expressing confidence in your redeemer. This is Alma 22:14. Since man and woman, mankind had fallen, he or she could not merit anything of himself. And that's a pretty high percentage word. It, I think it means you can do nothing, but the sufferings and the death of Christ atone for their sins through faith and repentance and so forth. The idea is there's very little you can do. It's the two principles of the gospel. Trust me and when you don't trust me, repent and trust me, right? Those are the, that's rule number one. Trust me. Rule number two when you don't trust me, trust me.
John Bytheway:	00:38:26	Yeah. If you want to have a fun study, take every occurrence of the word merits. In the Book of Mormon, there's six and every one of them is a different author. I think Nephi says, Rely only. Moroni says, Rely wholly upon the merits of Christ. And here we have, You can't merit anything of yourself. That's a fun study to go through and to realize, like you said, Hank, Christ is our redeemer. We're not our own redeemer. The thing I love too about what you're teaching us is he's talking about all these ways that you could turn away, but if you turn back to him, he's always there. He's still there. He doesn't leave.
Hank Smith:	00:39:06	John, I have the list here. Moroni six. Rely alone upon the merits of Christ. Alone, right, upon the merits of Christ. 2 Nephi 31, Relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save. Helaman 14, You may have a remission of your sins through his merits. 2 Nephi 2, these are all different authors. "No flesh can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits and mercy and grace of the Holy Messiah." Alma 24, "Taken away guilt from our hearts through the merits of his son." The one I read, Alma 22, "Since man had fallen, he could not merit anything of himself." There's a consistent message, and it's been there since 1830.
John Bytheway:	00:39:53	We come from a, well, I do anyway, you guys, maybe you're younger, but if you have this many merit badges, you get to sit in the eagle's nest. Otherwise, you got to stay out there.
Hank Smith:	00:40:06	With the chicks, that's where I wanted to be.
John Bytheway:	00:40:07	With all the chicks, that's right. That's where I wanted to be anyway. That idea of meriting our salvation, it's fun to go through the Book of Mormon and go, wait a minute, we can't

merit anything. This is Christ's redeeming work. Thank heavens because we can't do it on our own. He's not asking us to do it on our own. He's asking us to rely on him or to stay upon him like that last word in verse 10. I like stay, in Isaiah usually means rely. That's who we rely on.

- Hank Smith: 00:40:37 Let me ask you guys a follow-up question. When I teach this principle in class, you can almost see the question coming into their minds, which is, "Well, then why do anything anyway? Why be obedient?" That's a wonderful question because then we're getting into our motives. Here's my one answer, and then Ezra and John, you both give yours. I would say, "I'm obedient, not because I'm going to save myself, but because I love him. I want to do what he has asked me to do, and I trust him that, hey, this path, this covenant path, this is the path of happiness, but I'm not doing this to somehow earn a spot or qualify." I guess, John, you would say I'm becoming something.
- John Bytheway: 00:41:16 Yeah. Our works are not a formula for our salvation as much as they're a fruit of our salvation. We've come to Christ and now we want to become like him, and he invited us to, and he's going to help us to. It's not that the measure of how hard we're trying is what's going to get us there. No, it's the, do we rely on him and he's going to help us in becoming like him.
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 00:41:42 Hank, you asked, "Why do anything then?" President Meredith out of BYU Idaho devotional said something that they went immediately to my class and I said, "Did you guys catch this?" But this is what he said, and I think it answers your question so well. [President Meredith](#) says, "Obedience is not about earning God's love, it's about responding to it. Obedience is not about earning God's love, it's about responding to it." I think that's what John 14 is teaching, "If you love me, keep my commandments." It's about responding to this amazing love that so fully he proffers me.
- Hank Smith: 00:42:26 I think that President Meredith's quote there, I fall right in line with that. I say, I do not live the gospel so that I will go to the celestial kingdom. I live the gospel so that I can become the person who will choose the celestial kingdom when it's offered to me. So the Lord is going to open wide the celestial kingdom to us. It's, will you choose it? The gospel is what creates the type of person who will choose that celestial kingdom. Now, there could be some listening that might say, "This isn't what I was taught when I was a kid." As a church, we are a true and living church. We are growing and learning. So yeah, we did have a big emphasis on works because works matter. Who wants to be in a covenant relationship that there's no

responsibility? Everybody, yeah, we're in a covenant relationship, but yeah, go do what you want. Can you imagine a marriage like that where it's like, well, no responsibility whatsoever. Of course, covenants have works involved.

- 00:43:25 And then the church for a while, I'm sure at times has said, look, mercy, grace is what matters. Now we're coming, I think, along as a true and living church to a place where we're saying, well, how do they work together? Ezra, I love what you taught here, and I love that verse in section 108. I'd never seen that. Stop resisting. Stop resisting my mercy.
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 00:43:50 Yeah. That's beautiful. It's like Isaiah's a prophet and he wants us to come to the Savior.
- Hank Smith: 00:43:55 Yeah. Ezra, we've had you for a while now, and we're a whole, what, one chapter in. So we better keep going. What do you want to do next?
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 00:44:04 In chapter 51, and then 52, we get three awake, awake statements. Kinda reminds us of Nephi probably in the Book of Mormon. And the first one is the invitation for the Lord to awake, just like he had in ancient times. John, I know you're an expert on this. It talks about Rahab who wounded the dragon, but it's not Rahab who lives in Jericho, right?
- John Bytheway: 00:44:30 Isaiah speaks in the place of covenant Israel and asks the Lord to awake and put on strength. The Rahab is a poetic synonym for Egypt. Psalm 87:4, in a more general way, according to the Book of Mormon Reference Companion, Rahab may be interpreted as representation of Satan. In any case, the point of the imagery is that the Lord has power over all the elements and all of his enemies.
- Hank Smith: 00:44:55 Very good. Okay, so that helps with Rahab. It says, "And wounded the dragon." What am I seeing there? What's the dragon?
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 00:45:02 In Isaiah chapter 27, the dragon is just supposed to represent Satan, but it's chaos. It's wickedness. But Isaiah chapter 27 is actually really interesting. It says, "In that day, the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish Leviathan, the piercing serpent, even Leviathan, that crooked serpent, and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." So there's the dragon again. Interestingly, he's going to do this three times, right? We were going to, with the strong sword, punish Leviathan, the piercing servant, the crooked servant, and slay the dragon of

the sea. Well, what are three times that the Lord is going to beat Lucifer in a contest? Premortal life, Gethsemane and the cross, and the Second Coming. So with those three mentions, some scholars believe that it's a reference to the premortal, mortal, and postmortal victory of Jesus over all the forces of chaos, which is Satan. So hopefully, maybe that helps, Hank.

- Hank Smith: 00:46:08 Yeah, that does. And when you said sea by Egypt, I thought, oh, maybe Red Sea. You cut down Egypt and wounded the Red Sea, right? You cut it right in half. Okay.
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 00:46:19 Yeah. So the first awake is an invitation for the Lord to awake. He's going to respond in verse 12, "I am he that comforteth you, who art thou, that thou should be afraid of man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass?" In other words, it's this repeat thing again, I am who I have always said I am. I've never gone anywhere. We don't really need to invite the Lord to awake, do we? When you pray, you never said, "Dear Heavenly Father, please wake up." It's Ezra calling. So it turns in the second awake in verse 17 where it says, "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem." Where the Lord spins it on its head, he flips the coin. He said, "You stand up, Jerusalem." And then chapter 52, verse one, "Awake, awake, put on they strength, O Zion.
- 00:47:11 Zion, you wake up. You people who have the gospel covenant, you put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city. And it continues on where we can be redeemed without money. Isaiah chapter 52, verse three, "Be redeemed without money." Remember he asked in chapter 50, "Who am I in debt to? Who are my creditors?" Nobody. I don't need money. Come and be redeemed without money. It's not about that. And then, of course, we have verse seven, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings that publisheth peace. Verse nine, break forth into joy and sing together. Why? Because the Lord hath comforted his people. He hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm. We'll talk about that more in a second. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm. In the eyes of all the nations shall the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.
- 00:48:15 Isaiah is beginning to show us a pattern, and that's Isaiah speaking messianically about Christ's atonement, then something about the gathering. Then it's going to go to the atonement again. Then he's going to talk about gathering again. It's really, really beautiful. Chapter 50 was all about the atonement. And then chapter 51 and 52, wake up, put on your garments, wake up, stand up, gathering. How beautiful are the

feet of those who publish peace. Verse 12, we're going to sprinkle many nations with the gospel. So in other words, Zion, you wake up. You've got to get going. Why and how does this all take place? Chapter 53, the most beautiful chapter that I think we have in all of scripture that's quoted in Mosiah 14. When it's repeated, I think that means it's really important.

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| Hank Smith: | 00:49:07 | Ezra, make sure I understand this. Isaiah is coming to these two kingdoms, basically, the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah saying, It's over. You've had your opportunity to repent. The Lord is going to scatter you. You're going to think he's forgotten you, but He has not forgotten you. And one day, He will gather you. Then you go back and forth between this loving Messiah who is going to atone for his people and he'll gather, this loving Messiah who's going to atone for his people and he'll gather. I can see why Nephi would be a little bit addicted to this message, because he's living the scattering. He's really grasping onto this promise of Isaiah. |
| Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: | 00:49:52 | Yeah. He invites himself to the party by quoting Isaiah chapter 29. Hank, you said that so beautifully. Thank you. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:50:00 | Interestingly, this is the verse that King Noah and the wicked priests try to stump Abinadi with. What meaneth this verse? How beautiful upon the mountains, and maybe it's because, Hey, Abinadi, you're kind of a gloomy Gus here, what you're prophesying here. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:50:21 | Aren't you supposed to be saying good stuff? |
| John Bytheway: | 00:50:24 | Yeah, good tidings of good and peace and publish salvation. Notice the very next chapter is what Mosiah 14 is, is what Abinadi quotes. And Abinadi, it's kind of fun for me to hear the incredulous, Are you priests and pretend to teach this people? You ask of me what these things mean? What are you teaching these people? The law of Moses. Well, why don't you keep it? And then he goes on and he quotes a lot of the 10 commandments. Then he says, okay, keep the law because you're supposed to, but salvation comes in Christ, and quotes Isaiah 53. They're trying to stump him with this first Abinadi is like, have you read the next chapter? |
| Hank Smith: | 00:51:08 | I wonder if Abinadi didn't even need his scriptures brought to him. Have you read ahead? No. I'll quote it to you. |

John Bytheway:	00:51:15	It always makes me wonder, that's a great question, Hank. Did he have scriptures when it says he unfolded the scriptures to them? Were they -
Hank Smith:	00:51:22	Were they just
John Bytheway:	00:51:23	paper? Was it unfolding mean explaining it? Did he have it memorized? I wouldn't be surprised if Abinadi had it memorized. Right to the next chapter Abinadi is, how did you guys miss redemption cometh in the Messiah?
Hank Smith:	00:51:36	Ezra, if I'm at home and I'm reading Isaiah, I'm looking for this message of you'll be gathered one day. Jehovah has not forgotten you. In fact, he is going to do more than just not forget you. He is coming to atone for your sins.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:51:50	Mm-hmm. Perfectly said. The peak is coming and it's in Isaiah chapter 53, so shall we jump in there?
Hank Smith:	00:51:56	Yeah, let's do it.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:51:57	Verse one, who hath believed our report? In other words, he's prefacing the next chapter with this question. It's not who hath believed our report so much as it is, Mom, can you believe I got an A on my report card? Or who hath believed the story on the news? It's, who is going to believe that this is the way salvation comes? Because he's about to talk about this servant who's bruised and broken and pierced. Is this really the way it's going to come? The question is, who's going to believe that salvation comes in this manner, this bruised and broken servant? In fact, Hank, you read it at the start. Do you want to read it again? Do you have it there from the Come, Follow Me manual?
Hank Smith:	00:52:46	It says, "By sending such an unexpected deliverer," the Isaiah 53, what we're about to do, "God taught us about true deliverance. To save us from oppression and affliction, God sent one who himself was oppressed and afflicted. Some expected a lion, he sent a lamb. Jesus Christ frees us not by just opening the prison, but by taking our place there. He relieves us from our chains of grief and sorrow by bearing them himself."
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	00:53:15	Perfect. Who actually believes it could come like this? The next question is to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Now, if you had paper scriptures, you could just draw a line directly across from that word revealed. Remember chapter 52, verse 10, "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm." Now it's, "To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed." There's a difference here

between making bare his holy arm versus having his arm revealed. In other words, at the second coming, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is the Christ. That, to me, is making bare his holy arm. I'm Canadian, so it's taking off the gloves in hockey. You want to fight? I'm making bare. Instead of revealing his arm, I can choose to have his arm made bare to me or have it be revealed to me. You get to make the choice.

00:54:18 The whole point, who is going to believe that salvation comes like this? Let's reveal it. The big reveal. Let's open the curtain. We're going to reveal it to you now through the Holy Ghost, through the words of Isaiah, here's the big reveal. He's going to grow up before him as a tender plant, as a root out of dry ground. He hath no form or comeliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. What a reveal. He's despised and rejected of man, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. We hid as it were our faces from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not. Who is going to believe that salvation looks like this? We want a king. We want someone who's going to come and overthrow everything, but instead it's this tender plant, a root out of dry ground who hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

00:55:21 It's him. It's the Savior. Verse five, wounded or maybe a better word here would be pierced, thinking of the crucifixion and the translation, he was pierced for our transgressions. He was bruised. Perhaps a better word would be crushed. He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes, we are healed. It's just stunningly beautiful. Who believes that salvation could come like this? Then we reach verse six. Now, in verse six in the King James, it's kind of a bit of a difficult verse. It says, if I can read one more verse, it says, "All we like sheep have gone astray." Okay, that makes sense. We talked about that earlier. Before I had set my face like a flint, I probably needed to do that. Before Nephi's heart was softened, it would have been harder. We've been like sheep, we've gone astray.

00:56:16 We have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. In the NET translation of the Bible, if I can just squish these together here, it says, "All of us have wandered off like sheep. Each of us has strayed off on his own path." Now, listen carefully to this. "But the Lord has caused the sin of all of us to attack him." What's happening here is the Lord is electing this to happen, but it's not just laid on him the iniquity of us all, the NET Bible, "The Lord has caused the sin of all of us to attack him." Now, I'm indebted to my friend and

your friend, Scott Woodward, for the following visual. You've seen a movie where someone is running away from a pack of wolves. Are you with me? They're running from a pack of wolves, they're running, running, running, then they hit the edge of a cliff.

00:57:18 And they're at the edge of the cliff and the camera looks down and you see the cliff and then they turn around and there's the pack of wolves and they're snarling and growling and getting ready to attack, right? Then out of the middle of nowhere, somebody comes up and says, "Hey, wolves, over here. Get me instead. Come get me." And the wolves kind of go, and off they go. And they chase the other guy. I'm running away from my sins. They're catching up. They're getting really close, and I'm reaching the edge where I'm looking down, and this is going to go one way or another. And then out of the middle of nowhere steps Jesus again and says, Hey, over here. And can you picture your sins, those wolves? Can you picture those sins turning and attacking him instead of you? That's the NET version, but the Lord has caused the sin of all of us to attack him. [Elder Holland](#) said, "Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God suffered, died, and rose from death, in order that he could, like lightning in a summer storm, out of the middle of nowhere, grasp us as we fall," call my sins, call the wolves, and cause my sins to attack him. All I can say is that I really love him for that.

Hank Smith: 00:58:53 It's a great visual. I can see why Isaiah would say, you're not going to believe what I'm about to teach. That's an interesting way to start. Can you imagine sitting at General Conference and President Oaks says, What I'm about to teach, you're not going to believe. Ezra, is this basically the opposite of everything they thought? The Messiah's going to come, he's going to be amazing and attractive, and we're all going to go to him? No, he's like, actually, he's going to come and he's a little tender plant and not attractive, and we're all going to avoid him.

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 00:59:28 In fact, he's going to spend 11 verses, right, the first 11 verses doing that very thing, he's oppressed and afflicted. All of these words to describe him, he's spending 11 verses showing that the servant is losing everything. He loses his dignity, his reputation, his freedom, and ultimately his life. Then verse 12 begins with, Therefore, therefore, will I divide him a portion with the great. And he shall divide the spoil with the strong. If you win the war, you get to decide what to do with the spoils. If you win the fight, you get to decide what you do with that. Isaiah spent 11 verses saying we're going to, he's going to lose everything. In verse 12, he's clearly the winner because he has the spoils. Remember, he's going to fight against the dragon,

the Leviathan, and he's going to win. He has the spoils. In Luke 22, Luke uses an interesting visual here or an interesting word.

01:00:31 He says that Jesus is in an agony. We wouldn't put the word an in front of agony. It's a singular. He's in an agony. I'm not great with Greek and Hebrew and stuff, but the Greek there is he was in an agony, a contest. He was in a fight. Here in Isaiah 53, he clearly won the fight. He is in an agony. He's in a contest. He's in this fight. The vicious attack of Satan's hoards is how Elder Scott describes it. President Packer is going to describe it saying that he faced the awesome power of the evil one. This contest, this agony, this fight, Jesus wins. Now the question is, because he won, what does he do with the spoils? He shares them. The rest of the verse, because he hath poured out his soul unto death. Because he did this, he's numbered with the transgressors and he beared the sin of many, made intercession for the transgressors.

01:01:41 It's because he poured out his soul unto death that makes him the victor. The victor decides what he gets to do with the spoils. What does he decide? Because he won everything. He's going to share that victory with you and me. That victory over sin and death, he shares it with you and me. He doesn't keep it all to himself and say, look how amazing I am because I won the fight. He shares it with us and it's especially beautiful that he is willing to do that for me, all of us. Isaiah chapter 53 is just beautiful.

Hank Smith: 01:02:20 That verse in the contemporary English version, I really like this version for someone like me who reading comprehension, not as great as everyone else's, contemporary English version gives me a simpler version of the same verses here. "The Lord will reward him with honor and power for sacrificing his life. Others thought he was a sinner, but he suffered for our sins and asked God to forgive us."

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:02:46 Speaking of other versions, when I teach Isaiah on campus, I always have my students, their assignment to prepare is I have a little text box and it says, "Today I am an expert on ..." They just have to come up with one thing from the chapter we're studying that they're an expert on. And it's super fun to read those because I get 50 insights every single time I read. A good resource for that is Bible Hub or the Blue Letter Bible where it's going to show different translations side by side. John, I think I saw it earlier, but you have Shon Hopkin and Ann Madsen's book that does the Dead Sea Scrolls, the King James. I think they use the NET that I just quoted from, the NIV and the Book of Mormon. It's just fun to look at these different translations. The church has just recently really encouraged us to do that. And

Isaiah of all books, maybe Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, other versions really, really help.

- Hank Smith: 01:03:48 Yeah. Ezra, John, let's talk about something here. When Jesus does come to the Israelites to this remnant that remains, they don't accept him. It seems that maybe Isaiah was saying, You're not going to believe this. I know you believe in a Messiah, but this is him and you're not. It's so hard to believe that this is how you get redemption. It's, John, what do we say? It's like turn left to go right. I love how you started out there because maybe 53:1 is him saying, I know this goes against everything you think a Messiah should be. Am I getting that right?
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:04:27 Well, when he does come again in the Mount of Olive splits, what does he do to show them, to tell them who he is? Shows him his hands. I think it's the same thing from 50 to 53. It's all of that.
- Hank Smith: 01:04:40 Yeah. If you read the opening, that 1 Nephi, that vision he has, it seems that Nephi and Lehi, they're all learning too. Like, oh, it's not the type of Messiah we thought we were going to get. We're all so used to get this kind of Messiah. Like in our minds, oh, this is exactly who the Messiah's supposed to be.
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:05:00 Especially a Messiah. I've heard it said that sometimes when the Greeks were hearing the gospel, they would think, "Your God died?"
- John Bytheway: 01:05:09 It's foolishness to the Greeks.
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:05:13 What kind of God would allow the sins of mortals to attack him? Who would believe that? It's the God we've been talking about the whole time who allowed his hands to be pierced, his side to be pierced, his back to be smitten, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.
- Hank Smith: 01:05:35 Ezra, it's hard to find the right word. The kind of the whiplash of what Isaiah's teaching. Yeah, you're like, "Wait, no." What if I said to you like, "They're going to win the NBA championship by not winning a game." You're like, Yeah. That doesn't make sense.
- John Bytheway: 01:05:56 People characterize a lot of the Isaiah chapters as a suffering servant. Just as the introduction said, "They were expecting a lion, God the Father sent a lamb." I was reading the other day the history of the Christmas song, [Joy to the World](#). Well, it turns out it wasn't written as a Christmas song. It was written as

a Second Coming song. Joy to the world, the Lord is come. Let Earth receive her king. And instead, we had a baby in a manger in obscure circumstances. And I was also thinking about verses three and four. He was despised. We esteemed him not. He hath borne our griefs, carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. To esteem something is to estimate its worth. We human beings are really, really bad at estimating or at esteeming people. We really got it wrong here. We're even hiding our faces from the best friend we've ever had, and he's despised and rejected. When we read Isaiah 53 together, it sounds so obvious that this is Jesus. With his stripes, we are healed. He has carried our sorrows.

Hank Smith: 01:07:16 He made his death with the wicked.

John Bytheway: 01:07:18 Yeah, and his grave with the rich. You've got Joseph of Arimathea, you've got three on crosses on Calvary, and how do other people read this? Don't they think this is talking about Jesus? The opening paragraph of the introduction is good too. The Messiah of popular expectation. When Peter drew out his sword and here we go, was he still expecting the political Messiah? And Jesus is like, yeah, we got tougher enemies like death and sin. I picked up a book called Biblical Literacy. It's by a rabbi, Rabbi Joseph Telushkin. And this is what he said, "Traditional Jewish theology has generally understood Isaiah chapter 53 as referring to the Jewish people's sufferings while trying to maintain their faith and make the idea of one God known to the world." We read it and think, "Wow, this is so clear. This is everything that happened to Jesus." But other people don't see it this way. That's why I love that our Book of Mormon comes out and Abinadi says, "No, this is the Messiah."

Hank Smith: 01:08:24 That's great, John. We want to show respect for those who see this differently. Jewish readers are going to read this differently. Ezra has done an incredible job here of helping me at least start to grasp the theological whiplash that Isaiah with, "You're not going to believe this." Who is going to believe this? Who's going to actually take this revelation? Listen to Revelation chapter five. Doesn't John speak to this? He's upset because how is it possible that someone could be the redeemer of the plan of salvation? This is Revelation 5:4. Someone says to him, Behold the lion, he's going to do it. And he turns and he says, "I saw a lamb, a slain lamb." That's that whiplash. John, you know Luke 24, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, they were like, We thought it was him. We thought for sure he was the guy. He's obviously not because he died. And Jesus says, oh, man, are we still talking about this? Has anybody read Isaiah 53? Ezra, I'm really grateful for you today. This one hits me. Oh, this isn't

obvious. That's why Isaiah started the way he did. This is a revelation that you're going to have to accept.

- John Bytheway: 01:09:43 In hindsight, we're looking back and going, How could you have missed that? For them, who hath believed our report? Isaiah uses past tense in describing, He was wounded for our transgression, bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace or NIV is like the chastisement that brought us peace was upon him, and with his stripes, we are healed. That's all past tense. Maybe Isaiah can use past tense. He's reporting it because he saw it.
- Hank Smith: 01:10:14 And you notice Abinadi does that too, John? Abinadi follows that same pattern.
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:10:19 Yeah. A lamb as it had been slain. This is premortal life and it's looking forward to.
- Hank Smith: 01:10:25 Yeah. Ezra, thank you for this. I see Isaiah 53 differently. I've loved it before, but I've never seen Isaiah starting with, all right, you're not going to believe this. It's going to go against everything you ever thought, but I've seen it.
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:10:38 This is the way it comes. Yeah. Can we do one more? That just has some tough language. It's verse 10. It says, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him." I used to read that, especially when I was young. I thought, Wait, this is kind of gruesome. It's a lot to handle, and it's not that we delight in the suffering, but he's delighting in the salvation of his children made possible by his atonement. In that atonement, in that grief, if you continue on in the verse, When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, notice these next words, "He shall see his seed." And any Book of Mormon readers should have Mosiah chapter 15 pop into our heads, "Behold, I say unto you that when his soul has been made an offering for our sin, he shall see his seed." Do you remember what [President Nelson](#) said?
- 01:11:34 "In order for him to endure the most excruciating experience ever endured on earth, our Savior focused on joy." And now notice it's not just the joy. It's not just this happy. What is this joy? And what was the joy that was set before him? Surely it included the joy of cleansing, healing, and strengthening us. The joy of pain for the sins of all who would repent. The joy, it pleased the Lord to bruise him. The joy President Nelson is speaking about. It's us. It's us. Guys, it's us, I don't know how else to say it. It's us. The joy that was set before him, he shall see his seed. He sees us. Those who would accept this offering, that's what President Nelson is hearkening on. We are his joy. It

pleased the Lord to bruise him. Through his righteousness, the righteous servant shall justify many and bear their iniquities.

- John Bytheway: 01:12:37 The fact that Jesus chose this willingly was a willing sacrifice in section 19. I, God, have suffered these things for all that they might not suffer. There's the motive. I would prefer suffering myself, which is just full of love, isn't it?
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:12:56 And his choice, he laid on him the iniquity of us all. He brought himself to this encounter for you and for me.
- John Bytheway: 01:13:04 And the pronouns are tough sometimes. The Lord, is this the Father, the Son? Is it, one school of thought that I've heard is that Jehovah may be speaking of himself in his different roles. The Lord Jehovah offered himself the mortal Jesus. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
- Hank Smith: 01:13:28 John, I would say you're right on with that because look what Abinadi does in the next chapter. He says, Oh, he's both. He is both the Father and the Son, which it can be a confusing chapter, Mosiah 15. In fact, this may be the first time I've read this in 53 going, oh, yeah, that question would come up. The thought of the Lord gives me strength. But during this atoning sacrifice, it was the thought of us that gave him strength.
- John Bytheway: 01:13:53 So at Education Week this year, I showed a picture of a rock and asked, "What do you think that's worth? I mean, it's a rock." Turned out it was a meteorite from Mars. I don't know how they know that, but somehow they knew it maybe a return address on it or something. It sold for \$450,000. Then there was a woman, this story was in the paper, you probably saw it, a woman who bought a Roman bust at [Goodwill](#) for \$34.95, and it turned out it was an ancient Roman sculpture, and she bought it at Goodwill for 35 bucks. We can be really bad at estimating value of things, can't we? That's why I like that Isaiah would say, "We did esteem him as not," because we're bad at it. We're bad at esteeming ourselves.
- 01:14:48 Going back to who shall see his seed, in April of 2004, [Elder M. Russell Ballard](#) said, "The irony of the atonement is that it is infinite and eternal yet it is applied individually one person at a time," which you got to go, "Wait, slow down." This is what [Elder Merrill J. Bateman](#) said about a year and a half later, October 2005 General Conference. He said, "For many years, I thought of the Savior's experience in the garden and on the cross as places where a large mass of sin was heaped upon him. Through the words of Alma, Abinadi, Isaiah, and other prophets, however, my view has changed. Instead of an impersonal mass

of sin, there was a long line of people as Jesus felt our infirmities, bore our griefs, carried our sorrows, and was bruised for our iniquities. The atonement was an intimate personal experience in which Jesus came to know how to help each of us." This idea, maybe there's more to this, of seeing his seed for someone who is cut off out of the land of the living and who shall declare his generation.

01:15:56 Well, we are his generation, as you said. That really makes me put on the brakes and think of what might have happened there. When Abinadi reads Isaiah 53, that's Mosiah 14, then he gets more insight in Mosiah 15. This is verse 12 of Mosiah 15. "These are they whose sins he has borne. These are they for whom he has died to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed?" Thank you, Abinadi.

Hank Smith: 01:16:28 John, Elder Bateman really impacted my life there. It just opened my mind to a lot of possibilities of what we might mean by infinite and eternal. He said, "Look through the scriptures. He does everything one by one, especially in 3 Nephi. It's one at a time thing. So why would we think this atoning sacrifice wouldn't be a one by one thing? Let me give you both something that I've done in my class to help. It's just so hard to grasp infinite and eternal. Those are words that were just like, I don't really know what you mean. Here's one thing that I did once. I hope it was the Holy Ghost. I pointed out to a couple in my class that were engaged. I'll call them Natalie and Sam. And here they are engaged and I would say, Natalie, does Sam love you? Yes. Sam, do you love Natalie?

01:17:14 Yes. I said, Okay. Natalie, what if for some way I could offer Sam the opportunity to really help you? And in order to do this, I have a series of doors for him to go through. He's going to go in that door and he is going to experience every pain you have ever experienced. It's going to take him a while in there, and you know what he's about to go into. I said, Sam, would you do it? Yeah, I would. Natalie would say, no. No, no, no. I know what's. I've felt that. You do not want to go in there. Well, I do, because I will know you better. I will understand you better. And you could see that Natalie's face going, I can't let you do that. Then I'd say, Okay, now in the next door is every sickness, every sickness you are ever going to experience.

01:18:12 And he's going to go in there, and it's going to take him a while in there, but he's going to come out different. He's going to see you differently. We do the same thing where Natalie's like, no, no, you do not want to go through. I'd say, Sam, do you? Would you want to? Yes, I would want to. Why? Because I'll know her

better. And all of a sudden, in the room, there was this feeling of, oh, I'm starting to grasp at least in a small way what infinite and eternal might mean.

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| Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: | 01:18:37 | When you're talking about this idea of one by one, I've never noticed anything until you started talking, John. Maybe this is just for me in revelation, but do you mind if I share it? John, you've been talking about going one by one. Have you ever noticed that in Isaiah chapter 53, it's all plural? It's our transgressions, our iniquities, our peace. We are healed, all of us. But do you remember where we started today in chapter 49? I will not forget thee. I will not forget you individually. It's singular. I have compassion on the son of her womb. Yea, they may forget yet, I will not forget thee. It's singular right there. It's all individual that he will not forget us, but the totality of the experience in chapter 53 is plural. |
| John Bytheway: | 01:19:34 | You're right. I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. Didn't say I have engraven all of you, but I have engraven thee speaking to us one by one. I love it. Yeah. |
| Hank Smith: | 01:19:45 | Thank you for this, Ezra. You've taken a chapter I loved. I love it even more, and you've really expanded my mind here. I'm really touched by that. We could spend more time in it, but we better keep going. So 54, 55, what are we going to do next? |
| Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: | 01:20:00 | We'll do chapter 54, and on this one, I just want to throw it to you guys. If it's about the gathering, what's your favorite gathering verse in chapter 54? |
| John Bytheway: | 01:20:09 | That's hard, because I love seven. I love the imagery, "Stretch forth the curtains of thy inhabitations, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes." Because when Moroni is giving his very last words in the Book of Mormon, he gives us some Isaiah 52 and some Isaiah 54. He quotes everybody and he's like, let me just give a shout out to Isaiah right here. |
| Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: | 01:20:36 | P.S. I never even picked up on this gathering and atonement. I never even, until I was teaching it one day and went, huh, why does he keep talking about atonement and gathering, atone - why does he keep doing this? |
| John Bytheway: | 01:20:50 | Here is Moroni 10:31. The book ends in verse 34. This is verse 31, "Awake." That sounds like Isaiah. You showed us some awakes, didn't you? "Arise from the dust." That sounds like Lehi, "O Jerusalem, put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion, strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever." I |

like verse seven, but I kind of like verse two, enlarge the place of thy tent. Let them stretch forth the curtains of thy inhabitations, spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.

- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:21:27 Hank, you got a favorite?
- Hank Smith: 01:21:28 This is not fair, Ezra. This is my favorite chapter of all of scripture.
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:21:35 And I gave you one verse.
- Hank Smith: 01:21:36 You gave me, Isaiah 54. I taught it at Education Week this last summer, and I went verse by verse. I love this chapter.
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:21:47 Maybe I'll host a podcast sometime and I'll invite you on it.
- Hank Smith: 01:21:50 Please, please do. Isaiah 54 is the chapter Jesus chose to give to the Nephites. Then he said a commandment to read Isaiah. So I'm thinking, well, he just quoted maybe his favorite one too. I'm not sure. Here we have a chapter about a woman who's been kicked out of her house. I picture her just homeless. Maybe it's Isaiah coming up to her and saying, you've got a really good life. And she's going, What? You're going to have a lot of children. No, I'm barren. And he says, oh, no. Your husband is calling for you. The one that you hurt, he wants you back. That's verse five. Thine maker, thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, the redeemer, the holy one of Israel, the God of the whole earth, shall he be called. He wants you back. Every verse in here is amazing and they build on each other. It's a beautiful story.
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:22:48 Wow, that is beautiful. What an image, huh?
- Hank Smith: 01:22:51 I go through it with my students. I'm like, this woman. And he's like, hey, you. Can't have kids. Why are you not singing? She's like, what?
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:23:01 Is it Jeremiah? He says, the problem is you're going to run out of room. There's not going to be land enough to gather.
- Hank Smith: 01:23:07 He's like, "You better get a bigger tent." I can quote Jaws there. We're going to need a bigger tent. Right.
- John Bytheway: 01:23:11 Thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left. The Israelites suddenly you're going to find out you had a lot more children of Israel than you even imagined.

Hank Smith:	01:23:21	We're not here to talk about the past. Fear not, you shall not be ashamed. You're going to forget the shame of thy youth, the reproach of your widowhood. I'm not here to talk about your past. I'm here to talk about your future. I love it.
John Bytheway:	01:23:35	When I was on my mission, somebody asked my companion, "Well, is Joseph Smith ever in the Bible?" He opened right up to Isaiah 54 and he read verse 16, "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, that bringeth forth an instrument for his work. I have created the waster to destroy." And I was like, "I don't think that's what it means." Okay, so then imagine when I was listening to Elder Gerald N. Lund who said this, "Speaking through Isaiah in a passage that was later quoted by the Savior to the Nephites, the Lord said, Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work." Elder Lund, "Joseph was surely the smith who forged the instrument by which the Lord's people continue to prepare individually and collectively for the Savior's return. And that instrument is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That's in your January '97 Ensign. Joseph is the Smith.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	01:24:43	Chapter 55, I think, is going to be about the atonement of Christ again. This isn't as overt as the other ones that we've talked about. It's not hidden, it's just a little more difficult to pull out. Verse one is going to start with this invitation to come follow him, to come unto him, come buy, eat, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Come to me. Because verse two, the temptation or what's happening is the question, wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread and labor for that which satisfieth not. He's going to continue on and then he's going to give some interesting language in verse three. Incline your ear, so listen closely, "Come unto me, hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you." An individual covenant. And then the proof of the strength of this covenant with you, he's going to give us an example of another covenant, "Even the sure mercies of David." In 2 Samuel chapter seven, David is given this covenant that it's through his seed that the Messiah is going to come.
	01:25:52	This idea is going to be carried forward in Isaiah chapter 22 where Eliakim is a symbol of the Savior and it talks about that there's going to be a nail in a sure place. Ezra chapter nine, verse eight says, "A nail in a holy place." Just as sure as David or Eliakim and just as sure as the Savior on the cross, this individual covenant, this covenant that he makes with me in temples, in baptism, he wants us to know that this is a sure covenant, that we really can come to him, even though it might not be our

inclination to do so. That's why we get verse six, where he says, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near." Now, this transition here is sometimes even covenant makers, like all of us, aren't always covenant keepers. Like all of us.

01:26:58 I've never perfectly kept all of my covenants. Even though he's willing to make an individual covenant with me, I think of my endowment, I think of baptism, I think of temple sealings, even though he's willing to make a covenant with me, the invitation is that I still need to seek the Lord. I need to look for him. Then this really, really fascinating verse in verse seven, why? "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." Remember, we're setting our face like flint. We're turning to the Lord. He's going to justify us. But again, the temptation is not to trust him. For some reason, we have a hard time with that. So the invitation in verse seven is to do two things.

01:28:02 First, to forsake his ways. It's easy to see why a sinner needs to change his ways. The second thing is the unrighteous man, his thoughts. Well, why does an unrighteous person need to change his thoughts? Well, because if I don't think the dumb thing, I'm not going to do the dumb thing. If I asked you to think about how you feel when your sin, or if I, when I do this with my students, I ask them, and we just fill the board, how do people feel when they sin? Students come up with the best words. They say, oh, I feel despair, despondent. I feel ugly, broken. They use words like alone, separated.

Hank Smith: 01:28:49 Oh, Ezra, I mean, I've heard students say, "I think the Lord thinks I'm disgusting." I'm like, what? Yeah. It's heartbreaking the way they view themselves.

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:28:59 Sometimes Nephi even says, "I feel wretched." First invitation, change the way you do things. Secondly, change the way you think. How do you think when you sin? I feel wretched. I feel gross. Pause on that, and then I have them do one more thing. I said, okay. We just talk about John chapter nine and the woman taking in adultery again. I just invite the students. I say, okay, we're in Rexburg. You've just messed up. For those of you who don't know Rexburg, there's campus, and then it's surrounded by a whole bunch of apartments, and then there's the temple next to campus. So I say, if you were the woman taken in adultery, or if you've just done something that you wish you didn't do, where would be the last place in Rexburg you would

want to be taken to? Their answer is always the same, the temple.

01:29:53 And then I say, hey, class, I know this sounds goofy. But just pretend you've just done that thing, you wish you wouldn't have. Your ministers show up for the first time in the semester, they haul you out of your apartment and they take you up to the temple. And I know it sounds weird, but what if Jesus is at the front door of the temple? And they go, oh. Then I ask them for forgiveness and I say, I'm sorry I really set you up for this, but did you just say the last place on earth you want to be as a sinner is at the feet of Jesus? Change the way you think as a sinner. Forsake your ways. Let's read verse seven again. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts." If you've sinned and you think you are gross and ugly and dirty and broken, you change the way you think. Why? Because my thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are my ways your ways saith the Lord.

01:30:34 In other words, I think about you and your sins differently than you think about you and your sins. You change the way you think. Remember, remember Matthew 25, the servant who got one talent, what did he say about the Lord? I knew you were a hard man, Lord. Really? Do you know him? That's what I would ask. Do you know him? Because I feel like I know him and I would never call him a hard man. Merciful and grace and kindness, that's how I would describe him. As sinners, we need to change the way we think. He does not think of us like that. We should never, ever misjudge Jesus. Change the way you think about him. Where we started today, you have to trust in his atonement. You have to trust him that what he really, really says, he really, really means when he says, I will remember them no more. He really means it.

Hank Smith: 01:32:04 I hope everybody listening will take a timestamp. If you don't know what that is, ask someone younger than you. Send your young adult, your 14 to 24-year-old, go back three minutes and send them just this clip. Send them what Ezra just taught about let the unrighteous man forsake his thoughts. That is completely different. And that is beautiful. Please send it to your young adult, your teenager. Show it to them in family Come, Follow Me night. Whatever you do, make sure that gets in front of them because that to me. Ezra, thank you.

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:32:46 I'm sure somebody taught it to me somewhere down the road, but I know that I've been in a place before where I just feel like Nephi, oh wretched man that I am. I just wish I was better. Sometimes it's just when I'm stressed or I'm tired. I wish I was

just a better dad in a moment that I wasn't a better dad or a better husband in a moment that I wasn't a better husband. And you just feel so bad.

- Hank Smith: 01:33:10 Just to back you up, Ezra, back in my favorite chapter, Isaiah 54, although you just changed Isaiah 55 for me, look how he sees her. This woman has hurt him. Look how he sees her in Isaiah 54:11, O thou afflicted, tossed with the tempest and not comforted. He doesn't say, look at you sinner, you evil, terrible person. He says, oh, you poor soul. Look what your sins have done to you. Look at the way they've made you feel. Ezra, thank you.
- Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:33:44 It says, Isaiah chapter 42, verse three, A bruised reed shall he not break and the smoking flax shall he not quench. If my pen is broken, what do I do with my pen? And that's what the bruised reed, they would use it to write with. If you're bruised, if you're broken, he's not going to throw you away. He's not going to quench. The smoking flax would be a candle that's burnt down and it's giving off that dark smoke. He's not going to throw the broken pen or the burnt out candle away. And sometimes we feel broken and we feel burnt out, but you change the way you think about you and you change the way you think about Jesus. I'd like to read verse seven and then maybe tell a quick story here. In verse seven, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return to the Lord."
- 01:34:38 This is so beautiful. What is the Lord going to do? He will have mercy. Not might, not perhaps. He will have mercy upon him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon. Maybe we can look at one more image in chapter 55 that wraps it all up. It's verse 13. Instead of a thorn, shall come up the fir tree. And instead of the briar, shall come up the myrtle tree. You don't have to understand a whole bunch of stuff in Isaiah's symbols to know that a fir tree is better than a thorn and a myrtle tree sounds better than a briar. We don't need to be arborists or anything like that. It shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. Remember, Jesus is this tender plant, a root out of dry ground, a thorn.
- 01:35:39 Through him, we are going to have not just this replacement but a full restoration, a fir tree, a big beautiful tree in the place of what used to be a thorn. I think the fall of Adam and Eve goes with this, with thorns and briars, we're going to replace what's bad with what's beautiful. Christ can do that for every single one of us. You and I need to change the way we think about ourselves as sinners. We also need to rethink the way that we

feel about the Savior. He wants us to come to him and be at his feet. That's the point I think of Isaiah chapter 55.

Hank Smith: 01:36:22 Wow. That is beautiful.

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:36:26 So Isaiah 56 is about what then?

Hank Smith: 01:36:30 I'm guessing the gathering.

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:36:33 Okay. Yeah. Isaiah 56 is about gathering people who don't feel like they fit in or feel like they belong. From what we've just talked about in 55, sometimes that really feels like a sinner. Feels like I've done too much. In the words of Elder Holland, I've done too wrong for too long and I can't come back. Isaiah's going to use different images. So we're in Isaiah chapter 56 verse three. "Neither let the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the Lord speak saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people and neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree." I think we see 55 in there as well where he's saying, change the way you think. You can't just, don't say that I'm separated from the Lord because you feel like an outcast because you don't fit in as a eunuch or you don't fit in as an immigrant or a stranger.

01:37:25 You can think of a new convert, you can think of a missionary who has come home early, who just feels like, am I really part of this covenant? Am I really part of this gathering? Do I really have a place? The most important thing in 56, if someone could highlight something would be verse four, "For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbath and choose the things that please me" and here's this phrase, "and take hold of my covenant." You may not feel worthy, you may not feel like you fit in, but you take hold of my covenant. And if you do that, verse five, "To them, I will give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting covenant that shall not be cut off." It continues on with other temple themes. Verse six, at the very bottom of verse six, do you see it? "Take hold of my covenant. To them I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful." I think that's really fascinating words. I'm going to make them joyful. Have you ever told your kids, I'm going to make you happy. You have to be happy.

Hank Smith: 01:38:40 So help me smile and be happy. Do you know how much money we paid to be here?

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	01:38:44	Right? But this is. Where's my agency? I'm going to make you joyful. In the house of prayer, their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people and the Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, yet will I gather others to him besides those who are gathered unto him. I'm going to gather and then I'm going to gather some more. And then I'm going to gather those who feel like outcasts and feel like they don't even belong. And I'm going to make you happy and you will have a name and a place in my temple and in my church and in my kingdom. I had two experiences with this. I served as a time as a bishop and there was a brother who has same sex attraction. He came weeping and said, Bishop, I just want a family. I want to be, I want to have what you have. I just, I want all of this and I can't have it. I wish I could change. I've wanted to change. I can't change it. I was able to open up chapter 56 and said, you feel like a stranger and you feel like an outcast.
	01:39:36	Brother, I'm sorry, but you take hold of the covenant and don't you dare let go. And to anyone who out there is hurting, you take hold of that covenant. Everybody can be gathered. I went to an addiction recovery meeting with a friend. He asked if I would go with him. I went to the addiction recovery meeting with my friend and I usually remember people and names really well. It was a nice meeting and everyone went around in a circle and said their first name and what they were struggling with. And it was just a good experience. It was a testimony, spiritual experience. We drove home and had a nice time. I was in the Boise temple. I am a sturdy fella. I always appreciate having a seat next to me that's vacant in the temple. If the session's not full, we don't need to sit right on top of each other. You know what I'm saying?
Hank Smith:	01:40:22	Give us a little space.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	01:40:23	Yeah. I'm sitting in the chapel. It's quite empty and in walks this man and he comes and sits shoulder to shoulder with me. He is right here. Oh, this is close. And when he walked in, oh, I know him. I'm scanning my brain and thinking and thinking and thinking, I know this guy, I know this guy and I cannot come up with it. He's a dad of one of my students. Were we in the same ward? And I just can't come up with it. So we go into the session, we do the temple session and it totally ruined the entire session for me. I have never gotten anything less from a temple session because I was absolutely fixated on this. But the Lord was about to teach me a lesson. And so I think it was him who was making me fixated on this man.

- 01:41:15 I could not let it go. Finally, the session ends, go into the celestial room and in the Boise temple, like most temples, there's a door that enters from the ordinance room. There's a door that enters into the celestial room. Well, I went into the celestial room rather frustrated just a little bit and I picked the seat across the room and I sat down and I thought, well, that was a waste of time. I'm sitting in the celestial room and I'm not praying or anything. My eyes are open and I'm still fixated on this man. The door opens and I see his face through the crack in the door. I see his face. All of those feelings came back and I thought, who is this guy? And I am just getting almost angry in the celestial room. He opens the door more, his foot crosses the threshold of the door, and as soon as his foot hits the celestial room, bang, I know exactly who he is.
- 01:42:19 He was the brother who sat to my right in the addiction recovery meeting months before that. Here he is. He answered the same questions. He's wearing the same clothes. The Lord taught me such a powerful lesson about people who sin like me and like him and outcasts who can be gathered in. There isn't anybody who can't be gathered in. Everybody can be gathered. The Lord taught me a powerful lesson that day that he has the ability to gather everyone. That brother answered the same questions I answered. The Lord withheld that memory from me until I saw him face-to-face in the celestial room, who he really is and who I'm trying to be. In that moment, we're not different. We're the same. We're both outcasts who are gathered in at that moment.
- Hank Smith: 01:43:18 How beautiful. Wow, what an experience. John, you know this, but I don't know if we talk about this enough that we frequently say, hey, there was a [BYU devotional](#). Well, there's actually BYU Idaho devotionals that are readily available. I found one. I want to read you just a portion of it. The speaker here says, "Perhaps you have felt soul-reaching, life-stretching moments that has brought you to the edge of your faith and capacity. In desperation, have you ever asked God, where are you? It's a good question. Where is he? Would you like to know the answer? He is exactly where he said he would be. Where are you, God? We may ask. And I think we could get the response, where I told you I would be. I am at my house in the temple. Wherever you find me, you'll find me there. I testify that we can find him in our homes, in classrooms, in nature, but for today's conversation, we can find him and his power in the temple.
- 01:44:22 In Luke chapter two, when Mary and Joseph are searching for Jesus, where do they find him? And it came to pass that after three days, they found him in the temple. Where should you go

to find God? His house, the house of the Lord. He is there. That is why his [prophet](#) said, here is my promise to you. Every sincere seeker of Jesus Christ will find him in the temple." It's a great BYU speech. It's called The Temple and the Plan. John, do you know who the speaker is?

John Bytheway:	01:44:51	I think it was a super handsome, brilliant guy named Ezra.
Hank Smith:	01:44:56	Yep. Dr. Ezra Gwilliam. Fantastic. And that was really recent, Ezra.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	01:45:03	It was in June, yeah. Yeah.
Hank Smith:	01:45:05	What a treat for the students there to hear from you.
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	01:45:08	I'm always grateful for the opportunity to testify of Christ.
Hank Smith:	01:45:12	We'll have the great Lisa Spice link that in our show notes. If you go over to followhim.co , we'll put the link right there to Ezra's BYU Idaho devotional. Let's keep going, Ezra. How do we want to close this out?
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	01:45:24	We don't have time maybe to do everything in chapter 57, but I think maybe a verse or two really will wrap this up. Let's go Isaiah 57, verse 10. "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way, yet saidst thou not, there is no hope. Thou hast found the life of thine hand, therefore thou wast not grieved." If there's Christ, there's always hope. He's going to go on and share some images about that, but conversely, and this isn't doing chapter 57 justice, verse 10, There is always hope with Christ. Verse 21, There is no peace saith my God to the wicked. For those who won't repent, who won't take this Isaiah chapter 53 and 55, this beautiful Savior who loves us, who wants us to come back to buy milk and honey without price, this whole invitation, all the way from everything that we've been doing today, is he is where we find hope, and if we don't turn to him, there is no peace.
	01:46:38	I testify that he is the author of hope and he's the author of peace, and if we turn to him, we can have those things. I don't know anything better in this world than hope and peace to be with everybody on the earth. I came home from Israel a few weeks ago. I pray and I hope for peace, and that has to come through Jesus. There is no hope and there is no peace for the wicked.

John Bytheway:	01:47:07	Hank, you were right. You read this and you think you know it, and you see a whole bunch of things you didn't see before. What a blessing. Thanks, Ezra.
Hank Smith:	01:47:15	Yeah. It is both discouraging and inspiring at the same time.
John Bytheway:	01:47:19	And humbling, yeah. Yeah.
Hank Smith:	01:47:20	If you think, oh, I got this, and then you're like, how is it possible that I've quoted that verse for so long and never seen that angle, that beautiful message in it? Ezra, before we let you go, I think our audience would be interested in your years as a religious educator teaching the gospel, seminaries and now at BYU Idaho. There's a bit of a myth out there that some people believe that somehow if you study the gospel, the history of the church, you'll lose your faith in it. Yet, that is completely opposite from everything I've ever experienced. Oh, you don't want to read too much, you don't want to know too much or else you might lose your faith. Well, here's a man that's well-educated, well-read, and as much as a believer as you'll find, and your friends, Ezra, say the same thing about you. They adore you and your faith and your goodness and the way you teach. Could you speak to that for a moment, those who think, "Is this true?"
Dr. Ezra Gwilliam:	01:48:22	It is a good question. I actually have studied that some in my graduate studies. What researchers have found is that actually the higher our education in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the more education you have actually promotes higher religiosity, going to church, paying tithing, things like that. The statistics totally bear that out. I would say, and maybe through the lens of Isaiah today, if I am studying, looking for my Savior, if I'm looking to be converted to him, there's books that are written. I don't care about every Hebrew translation or every Greek translation. I'm clearly not that guy, but I'm converted because I know what it feels like.
	01:49:20	And some people are going to say, "Well, you had a feeling when you were a teenager, you can't really base your entire life off of a feeling," to which I would say, "Are you married? Do you have kids?" You can base your life off of a feeling, and that feeling comes from God and it's the Holy Ghost. Anything you read or hear, I don't know how a 20-second TikTok video can deconstruct 20 years of faith in some, but what I know is conversion happens by studying his word, living the gospel, repenting of our sins. I really love Elder Maxwell , who once said, "If Adam was to separate his past experiences with God, with the commandment to sacrifice," Elder Maxwell says, "Adam

would have been dishonest. We need to be intellectually honest with ourselves and own up," that's Elder Maxwell's next phrase. We have to own up to our experiences, and I have experienced Jesus. I've experienced his spirit, I've experienced forgiveness, I've experienced his love, and I have found that in places like Isaiah. I found it in the teachings of the prophet Joseph Smith.

01:50:30 I found it in anywhere from Gordon B. Hinckley to Joseph B. Wirthlin, to Sheri Dew, to Julie B. Beck, to Elaine Dalton, to Nephi and Moroni in the Book of Mormon, to the Doctrine and Covenants that we've read. If somebody wants to give me more gospel and wants to give me more Jesus, I want it, and I have a lifetime to go to get closer and learn more. I know he lives, and I've experienced him and his goodness and his mercy, and I would not be the same person without him.

Hank Smith: 01:51:05 Now, you sound like Joseph Smith himself. I knew it. I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it. Neither dared I do it. I hope it's never ever over for me. With that, we want to thank Dr. Ezra Gwilliam for spending his time with us. Ezra, thank you.

Dr. Ezra Gwilliam: 01:51:25 Thank you. It's been a joy.

Hank Smith: 01:51:27 What a joy to have you, to introduce you to the followHIM audience. We love it. We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. And every episode we remember our founder, he would have said, yeah baby, after this one, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We've got one more Isaiah lesson 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.

followHIM Favorites



Hank Smith:

00:03

Welcome to followHIM Favorites. This is where John and I share a single story to go with each week's lesson. John, we are in our fourth lesson of Isaiah, and I have a story for you. I was reading Isaiah 55. The Lord says, my ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts. The heavens, they're higher than the earth, so are my ways than your ways. I mean, that's like, do you see the distance between the stars and the earth? It's kind of like my brain and your brain. You're going to have to trust me. I see things you can't see. Oftentimes, terrible things happen or what seemingly terrible things happen, and we think, oh no, all is lost. Well, something happened way back in the 1800s, John. It has to do with the Salt Lake Temple, which has had construction going on for the last five years.

00:46

Kind of fits. It's 1857. Now, you know the days of 47, that's when the pioneers come into the Salt Lake Valley. It's July 24th, 1857, 10 years to the day. They're having an anniversary celebration. When news comes, imagine this, John, on that day that the United States Army, a third of the United States Army is coming to Utah to take care of these Mormons. That's what they call them, right? These Mormons at the time. That's a long ways for the army to go, to stop the Mormons, whatever they're doing out there, it must be awful. Incidentally, John, this is one of the reasons that the Civil War goes on so long. It's because when the Civil War starts, a third of the United States Army is out in Utah taking care of people who aren't doing anything wrong. Brigham Young, they had been building the temple, the Salt Lake Temple.

01:39

It's 10 years into this process, and he says, we need to cover everything we've built. Here comes this army. So they cover the temple foundation. They completely cover it, which had to be heartbreaking. You've dug it all out, you've got all of this rock in there ready to go, and you're going to cover it up, and it's going to take a huge amount of work to uncover it one day. Maybe you never even will. You don't know if you're ever going to be able to uncover all this work that you've done. I'm getting this from a devotional by President Kevin Worthen when he was

president of BYU. This is from his 2020 devotional. And he was my boss at one point. I don't think he has any idea who I am. He's a great man, President Worthen. And this is where I get this story from.

02:20 When the army arrived the following year, Temple Square looked like a freshly plowed field. There was no visible evidence of the temple's construction. So the army ended up not harming the property. They marched through where they were in Salt Lake and went out down 30 miles south near Utah Lake. Even during the years that when the army was sitting in Utah, the architect's office was busy planning the shape of all these stones they would need for the temple. Then the American Civil War starts in 1861 and the army heads back out east. When they're gone, the Latter-day Saints uncovered the foundation. Here's something interesting, John. When they examined the newly uncovered foundation, they became aware that it was defective. They noticed large cracks and concluded that what they had been doing, which was the small stones held together with mortar, could not carry the massive weight of the temple.

03:18 So on January 1st of 1862, Brigham Young said, we have to remove the entire foundation and replace it with one entirely made of granite and the footings would need to be 16 feet thick. Brigham Young says, "I want to see the temple built in a manner that it will endure through the millennium." I bet he'd be pretty happy with what we're about to unveil. Now, here's what President Worthen says. Now, I'm certain that Johnston's army was not a welcome site in 1857. John, I'm sure that the saints were scared. I'm sure they thought this is a disaster. All this work. Especially what had happened to them earlier when they were in the United States thought, oh, this is awful. When this danger is gone, they find out that it actually became a blessing to them because perhaps they would have never known about the cracks in the foundation if their work had not been interrupted. Stopped. John, when the Lord says, "My ways are not your ways," perhaps he's saying, you're going to have to trust me. What looks awful now may end up being a blessing later.

John Bytheway: 04:24 Hank, that reminds me of that recurring skit they used to have on a show called Hee Haw. "Oh, that's bad. No, that's good." And they just go back and forth and something that you think is bad is good. And my uncle died. Oh, Roy, I'm sorry. Oh, that's bad. No, that's good. Well, why? Because he left me \$50,000. Oh, that's good. No, that's bad. Well, why? Because the government took half of it. Oh, that's bad. No, that's good. Oh, why? Because I had just enough to buy an airplane I wanted.

Oh, that's good. No, that's bad. I was doing a loop-de-loop and I fell out. Oh, that's bad. No, that's good. Because there was a haystack down below. Oh, that's good. No, that's bad. Because there was an upside down pitchfork in the haystack pointed at me, oh, that's bad. No, that's good. Why? Because I missed the pitchfork. Oh, that's good. No, that's bad because I missed the haystack too.

Hank Smith: 05:13

And they just go back and forth.

John Bytheway: 05:14

They just go back and forth forever. And that's a perfect example. What a blessing they discovered that foundation was cracked so they could do it right.

Hank Smith: 05:26

Yep. So if you're going through something really difficult right now, and it is really difficult, like there's no way around it, it's a difficult thing. Just maybe, maybe stay with the Lord and you'll find out that he had a bigger plan in mind, bigger plan in mind. I remember, John, when you had your kitchen pretty much burn your house to the ground, you said, "I had to go live with my in-laws." That's bad. Well, we hope you'll join us on our full podcast of followHIM. We are with Dr. Ezra Gwilliam this week. He is from BYU, Idaho, and he gives us some impressive insights in these chapters, things I had never seen before. So join us over there and then come back here next week. We'll do another followHIM Favorites.

John Bytheway: 06:12

Love my in-laws.