



“I Will Turn Their Mourning Into Joy”
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 Description

Can you be deeply faithful and terrified at the same time? Alyssa Edwards, who bridges the gospel and mental health, and explores how Jeremiah and Lamentations show that grief and joy can exist side by side, and shares her own story of being sent home from her mission after emergency surgery in Guatemala.

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References:

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Biographical Information:



Alyssa Edwards was born and raised in Las Vegas. She prides herself on her Las Vegas roots. She left home to attend USU where she earned a degree in communication disorders. She took a leave during her schooling to serve a mission in the Guatemala City East mission. Upon returning back to USU she was invited to try teaching seminary and loved it. Upon being hired she was sent to Lehi High School to begin her career in religious education. While teaching, she completed her Master's in the Science and Psychology of Addictions. She met her now husband at UVU institute and they were married in September of 2024. She currently teaches a curriculum she created at Utah Valley Institute that bridges Christ's gospel and mental health. When she isn't studying, teaching, or preparing her next lesson she can be found enjoying company with her cats, Biscuits and Gravy, spending time with her family/friends, forcing her husband into situations that he would not sign up for, and finding events to bring piñatas to. She loves the Savior and her Heavenly Parents.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:00	Coming up in this episode on followHIM.
Alyssa Edwards:	00:00:03	Had a hard time navigating. I was really faithful and I was a really good missionary. And these are the consequences that I have to experience, allowing multiple truths to exist simultaneously. On the mission, I was so packed with faith. There's no way to not be when I saw the things that I saw and experienced the things that I saw. But then also on that operating table, I was so full of fear.
Hank Smith:	00:00:37	Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith and I am your host. I am here with my turning co-host, John Bytheway. Now, John, you might say, why am I your turning co-host? It's because of this. Jeremiah 31:13. I will turn their mourning into joy. John, you have done that for me many times. I have been listening to you and maybe I haven't been in mourning, but you have created joy. And you've done that for hundreds of thousands of people across the world in old cars everywhere that have cassette players.
John Bytheway:	00:01:11	Cassette players. I think there's 14 still left.
Hank Smith:	00:01:16	Tell me what you're thinking of. We just spent last week in Jeremiah. We're going to do another lesson in Jeremiah. What have you been thinking about all week?
John Bytheway:	00:01:24	I was thinking about that Jeremiah was a contemporary of Lehi and what different calls they had. Lehi, you're going to go to a land of promise. Jeremiah, sorry, you're staying here. He goes through some hard things.
Hank Smith:	00:01:41	Yeah. Alyssa and I have been friends for many, many years. This is her first time on the show, John. She is wonderful. Alyssa, as you've been prepping, what are we going to do today?
Alyssa Edwards:	00:01:52	As I've spent some time studying Jeremiah and those couple chapters in Lamentations, I have a mental health background

and I'm really drawn to the weight and the heaviness and the sadness that Jeremiah's experiencing and the places. Really, this man was in the lowest of lows, the muckiest of mucky. He experienced, you already brought up that word, this turning, dually experiencing really hard and really heavy while recognizing joy. It wasn't one or the other. And that has been really calling my mind and my heart as I've been studying.

- Hank Smith: 00:02:28 Oh, Alyssa, that is wonderful. To find relevancy in antiquity in just 60 seconds, you said this is relevant, at least to me and so many that I know and love. I'm excited to get to it. Now, John, there may be someone out there who does not go to the Utah Valley Institute and they might not know who Alyssa is. Tell us all about her. Where did we find her? What has she been doing her whole life?
- John Bytheway: 00:02:56 Alyssa Edwards was born and raised in Las Vegas. She prides herself on her Las Vegas roots. She left home to attend Utah State University where she earned a degree in communication disorders. She took a leave during her schooling to serve a mission in the Guatemala City East Mission. Upon returning to Utah State, she was invited to try teaching seminary and loved it. Upon being hired, she was sent to Lehi High School to begin her career in religious education. While teaching, she completed her master's degree in the science and psychology of addictions. I didn't know there was such a thing. This is going to be great. She met her now husband at Utah Valley University Institute. They were married in September of 2024. She currently teaches a curriculum she created at Utah Valley Institute that bridges the gospel of Jesus Christ and mental health. When she isn't studying, teaching, or preparing her next lesson, she can be found enjoying company with her cats, Biscuits and Gravy. You enjoy the company of biscuits and gravy, the food... No, the cats.
- Alyssa Edwards: 00:04:01 The cats. But I'm not opposed to the breakfast food either.
- John Bytheway: 00:04:05 Okay. That didn't sound very Guatemala. It sounded more like Georgia. So I wondered. She enjoys spending time with her family, friends, forcing her husband into situations that he would not sign up for and finding events to bring pinatas to. She loves the Savior and her heavenly parents. We are really glad to have you here. Just from your bio, I can tell this is going to be fun.
- Alyssa Edwards: 00:04:29 Buckle up. Yeah. By the time this podcast comes out, my husband will have run his first half marathon, courtesy of me coercing him to do it with me. It's a lot of love to pay to run.

Hank Smith:	00:04:44	Forcing her husband to do things he would not normally do. I love like a half marathon.
Alyssa Edwards:	00:04:49	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	00:04:49	Before we get started, John, we need to thank Marcy Jo for raising such an incredible daughters. Does she listen to the show?
Alyssa Edwards:	00:04:59	She does.
Hank Smith:	00:05:00	She does. Oh, Marcy Jo, thank you for listening and thank you for bringing us our guest here. This is going to be a good day. I'm going to read from the Come, Follow Me manual and then Alyssa, John, and I are ready to learn. I will turn their mourning into joy. When the Lord first called Jeremiah to be a prophet, he told him that his mission would be to root out and to pull down. And in Jerusalem, there was plenty of wickedness to root out and pull down, but this was only part of Jeremiah's mission. He was also called to build and to plant. What could be built or planted in the desolate ruins left by the rebellion of the covenant people? Asked another way, when sin or adversity have left our lives in ruins, how can we rebuild and plant again? The answer lies in the branch of righteousness, the promised Messiah.
	00:05:45	He brings a new covenant, one that requires more than the outward appearance of devotion. His law must be in our inward parts, written in our hearts. That's what it means for the Lord to be our God and for us to be his people. It's a lifelong process and we still make mistakes and have cause to mourn from time to time. But when we do, the Lord promises, "I will turn your mourning into joy." That's great. All right, Alyssa, John and I are ready to be your students.
Alyssa Edwards:	00:06:15	What a treat and what a privilege. Every week when I work through the Come, Follow Me program curriculum, you start at the top and you work your way down. Perhaps it's because I knew I was going to be interacting with you guys on this. Perhaps I read the intro a little more methodically, but as I was reading it, the question posed right in the middle, "What could be built or planted in the desolate ruins left by the rebellion of the covenant people?" That question has almost been haunting me. How many people around us feel like their current situation is desolate currently, despite everything that they're doing to not make it desolate. I can't imagine the call that Jeremiah gets here. It almost seemed like a call where he was set up to only fail and it was like, sorry, rub some dirt on it and keep walking.

	00:07:09	Like it's going to be tough and you know it. I can't imagine the mind games and the thought processes that he had to go through. We are in the middle of Jeremiah in 31, but prior to us getting into some of the hard stuff that he's going to go through in chapters 36 through 39, we see God setting him up. I call it my parents when I'm seeking advice from them. I call it either a mama pep talk or a papa pep talk, depending on who's delivering. But we see that as we begin with chapter 30, 31, where we see this covenant language and this reminder of this everlasting love that God has, no matter what the circumstances. Everlasting love is not a consequence of just when things are good and easy and clean, but everlasting love is an eternal type of love. So let's go look at a few verses, shall we?
Hank Smith:	00:08:09	Yeah, let's jump in. I'm excited.
Alyssa Edwards:	00:08:11	Okay, that was the right answer. Good job. Let's look at verses two, three, and then I just want to start with the top of four. So verse two, let's say the Lord, the people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness, even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. The language here is stunning. The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness. Perhaps a question to meditate on is how are we seeing grace in our wilderness? What are we doing to actively see where God's grace shows up? Verse three, the Lord hath appeared of old unto me saying, yea, I have loved ye, with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. Again, I will build thee and thou shalt be built. This guaranteed promise of this rebuild, which I mean, we've spent almost a year now in the Old Testament and another theme here of continual destruction.
	00:09:17	Destruction of Israel, let's rebuild it. Destruction of Israel, let's rebuild it. I was able to go to Jerusalem a couple summers ago and you see the layers of destruction. What do you guys advise as you're communicating with people that you love, as you're sitting in these circles and these spheres? What can we do to seek or actively see grace in our own wildernesses?
John Bytheway:	00:09:41	Somebody on our podcast said you got to go through the wilderness to get to the promised land. I thought about when we go to Lehi's dreams, sometimes it's easy to forget he spent many hours wandering in darkness first. When he prayed, then the lights came on. There's hope in the wilderness, but when you're in the middle of the wilderness, sometimes that's all you've got is some hope that something better is coming.

Hank Smith:	00:10:06	I am a Hollandite. I speak Holland. I remember him talking about repentance. When I think of these people, a lot of the suffering comes from their choices. In this particular case, Elder Holland was talking about repentance when he said, "The path is not easily begun nor painlessly traveled, but the Savior of the world will walk that journey with you." To me, that is grace in the wilderness. That's what I thought of is yes, you're going to have to walk this road. Yes, it's important, and I will go with you.
Alyssa Edwards:	00:10:41	Both beautiful responses. Good job, guys. 10 out of 10 would recommend. Carry on. I just appreciate this sentiment because like you said, Hank, covenant Israel has experienced consequences because of their actions. I know that's not all of us right now. Some of us are experiencing uncomfortable, desolate consequences because of a fallen world and fallen bodies and a fallen system. But right now, this is a direct correlation with the choices that they're making, but yet we're having Jeremiah receive all of these promises and these guarantees, and again, this new covenant language, if we jump ahead just a little bit, verse 31, still in chapter 31, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." Jumping ahead to what this new covenant will be, 33, "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel.
	00:11:36	After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts and will be their God and they shall be my people." Again, Jeremiah's mission call. I think of the mission call that I got like every other missionary ever where you will be called to serve in the Guatemala City, East Guatemala mission, and this generic call of here you're going to go for an estimated time, you'll speak this language, you'll go to this MTC, best of luck. But I knew going into this foreign place that I was going to be successful. Right now, I don't... I mean, if I was in Jeremiah's place, I wouldn't know if I was going to be successful with the mission call that he has received, but yet God is reminding him, yes, my covenant people have made poor choices, but guess what happens?
	00:12:21	We can be made new, and I will be their God, and they're going to be my people. This guarantee that perhaps not in this moment, and we'll see in later on chapters, where Jeremiah is struggling so aggressively with the people and their actions and is being punished for doing good things, but we have this ultimate guarantee. "These will be my people and I will be their God." And I wonder how that embedded itself in Jeremiah's mind and in Jeremiah's heart to sustain him to do something that would be hard, for him to hold so tightly onto the truths

that God is giving him so he can navigate the spheres that he has to navigate and to continue to show up. Those are my initial thoughts with chapter 31.

- John Bytheway: 00:13:08 I'm just impressed that the Lord is so patient because, boy, do we go through a lot of ups and downs in this Old Testament of ours. He just keeps coming back and saying, oh, we'll try again. I'm going to make a new covenant now with you. It's like, wow. He could've just... I've had it with you people, walked away a long time ago, but he always comes back.
- Hank Smith: 00:13:27 Hmm. I think it was Elder Bednar who said, "To understand the atonement of Jesus Christ, you have to understand his character. I think this chapter can really help with understanding the Savior, who he is. He's a person. He has a personality. He has a character. It seems in this chapter it's, yes, it is going to be hard. But don't worry, I am able to do my work.
- John Bytheway: 00:13:51 2 Nephi 27.
- Hank Smith: 00:13:52 27, yeah. It seems to me that the Lord is saying, yes, because of their choices, this is going to be painful. And Jeremiah, it's going to be painful for you too, but I will. I mean, you can see how many times does he say, I will. I will bring them. I will lead them. I will turn their mourning into joy. I will satiate the soul. There's the, yes, this is tough, but don't worry, this hasn't caught me off guard. I automatically thought of parents. John here is currently working on a book for parents, families of those who have said, I don't want this path. I'm going a different path. I get the same message, John, as I've read, I had a preview, everyone, as I have read John's upcoming book that the Lord is saying, yes, this is going to be painful for them and for you. But this did not catch me off guard.
- Alyssa Edwards: 00:14:45 We've been invited to have confidence in our covenants. There is a level of confidence that comes when we are covenant keeping people. And as you were talking, both of you, John and Hank, the thought of God is incredibly confident in the covenants that he's offered us. Maybe that's a total duh statement, but I've always sit from the perspective of I can have confidence in my covenants because I know it's permitting me to live a higher and holier way. God has offered this 100% guarantee with these promises that we get to make. He's 100% all the time and we're not. He's setting up this covenant language in chapter 31, and then as we look at chapter 32, the first line in the chapter heading, Jeremiah is imprisoned by Zedekiah. We have like beautiful with this everlasting love, this

loving kindness, this new covenant. Jeremiah, we can do this then follow up.

00:15:47 Jeremiah is now imprisoned by Zedekiah. Oh, I mean, we see it in scriptures. We see it with Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail. We see it with prophet upon prophet upon prophet. This is a new pattern where we keep our covenants and everything happens so beautifully. We keep our covenants and then people still make poor choices. But Jeremiah's going into this really ugly place with the knowledge of a God who is aware, a God who is able, a God who is capable, a God who is wanting, a God who is willing, all of these things so that this isn't going to necessarily be a defining moment, but yet an opportunity to live confidently in the covenants that Jeremiah has committed to himself and to God. In chapter 32, looking at some of the thoughts that are coming from this remarkable prophet, verse 17, "Ah Lord God! Behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm and there is nothing too hard for thee." I confess 100% honestly that every time a bad thing happens to me or a hard thing happens to me, this is not what I'm saying.

00:16:52 My prayers usually are like, "Hey, Heavenly Father, let me remind you of every good thing I've ever done in the entirety of my life." We need to course correct, but rather, we're bearing testimony, we're bearing witness. 18, "Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands and recompenses the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them. The Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts is his name. Great in counsel and mighty in work." What a gargantuan testimony for a man that is experiencing some pretty ugly things. In my scriptures here, I marked great in counsel, and again, I think that's a mental health background. You see the word counsel, the Savior, one of his names is Counselor with a capital C. When it comes to mental health and help, I'm not saying don't seek help from professionals that we have here on earth. Absolutely seek help, but we also need to pair that with the Great Counselor. Great in counsel and mighty in work, like this is our God. This is our God. I think there's a really powerful sentiment to that idea.

John Bytheway: 00:18:14 Isaiah 9:6, right? Wonderful, Counselor, capital C, like it's one of his titles.

Hank Smith: 00:18:20 What a beautiful idea. I've had multiple counselors throughout my life. I've been open about that on this show. A good counselor that I've sat with and gone back and forth with and all of a sudden I'm going, Oh, yeah. Oh, oh, that's wonderful. Thank

you for saying that. And then to think, oh, that's the Lord. I can go sit with him like I've sat with a counselor and gone slow and patient and thought, oh. In fact, the counselor I have right now, she reminds me of the Lord. How come I've never put this together? Alyssa, thank you for that.

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| Alyssa Edwards: | 00:18:56 | You are so welcome. It is my turn to share with you guys. You guys have taught me so much since my early pubescent years. It's only fair that I also provide to the table. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:19:08 | Finally she's giving back. And after all this time. |
| Alyssa Edwards: | 00:19:11 | It's about time. It's about time. |
| Hank Smith: | 00:19:14 | I just love that. With your mental health background to say, oh, he's a counselor. |
| Alyssa Edwards: | 00:19:20 | Verse 27, still in chapter 32, such a powerful statement. Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for me? Truly, that statement, like, how is that not empowering? Are we reminding ourselves of this every single day as we approach our God on our knees? Can I share a little experience? Is that appropriate? |
| Hank Smith: | 00:19:46 | Yeah, please do. |
| Alyssa Edwards: | 00:19:49 | Mom and dad, thanks for being so great. I grew up in a really lovely home. My parents are remarkable. One day when I get to be a parent, like, if I could just channel a little bit of Marcy and Jeff, I know I'll be successful and I'm the oldest of four girls. I love my sisters. I'm so grateful I'm in a career where I'm called Sister Edwards. I take that title very seriously. I love being everyone's big sister. It's almost an ego thing now, where I have assumed the role, even though they're not seeking it. I'm like, oh, what? You have two sisters? No, you have three. I'm also your sister. I didn't really have to navigate a lot of big and uncomfortable feelings growing up, not until the summer before my senior year of high school, where I really felt painful sorrow for the first time. |
| | 00:20:43 | My dad was serving in young men's. He took all the young men on, like, a big excursion. That's not why I was sorrowful. I did fight that a lot. I don't know how the young men got to do fun high adventure and the young women, they're like, let's make soap. And then the young men are zip-lining across America, okay, boys. So my dad's taking them on high adventure, and my dad is a high adventure man. He thrives in high adventure. I was |

sitting in the family room with my mom watching some post-work TV show, and my mom got a call from my dad, and I couldn't make out any of the words that he was saying, but I could tell that my dad was pretty weepy on the phone. My mom was like, "Jeff, Jeff, I need you to calm down. I need to be able to understand." He expressed that one of his young men was missing.

00:21:37 This young man that was missing was one of my dear friends. I knew him from first grade on up. I grew up in Las Vegas. These wards that we were in, we were tight. We went to the same elementary school, middle school, high school. We carpooled together. He lived in my same neighborhood, was one of the families with a pool, so we spent a lot of summers together, a friend that I really, really love and appreciate a lot. And so my dad is weeping through the phone that this young man is missing. There was no sign of him. They called search and rescue, and then my dad called my mom. They ended up sending all the young men home, but my dad wasn't going to come home until he knew where this young man had gone. The next day, we reconfigured our plans. I was going to EFY the following week, so we just went up to Utah a little bit earlier.

00:22:26 My mom drove my sisters and I drove behind. We met in St. George so I could give my dad a car, and my dad walked right past my mom, and he came to me and squeezed me, and I could, like, feel the weight of my dad, and my dad is this big, gregarious, vivacious man. The weight was so heavy, and in my ear, he told me that my friend, his name is Corey, Corey had passed away. He had just wandered off the trail not very far, sat underneath a tree, and had passed away even before the night had hit. And I, like, couldn't process it. It was just in, like, my 17-year-old brain where if you're doing what's right, then everything is going to work out. It just felt like a simple $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$ equation. And I couldn't understand why this young man, which Corey is...

00:23:25 This man had no guile. He's just lovely human and knew everything about history and geography. He was a wizard. I just couldn't process, and we drove all the way up to Logan. I was going to EFY at Utah State, and I sat in the back of the car and sobbed for a solid five and a half hours. My mom just did her best to comfort, because, like, she's also having to navigate and process this. But that night, I got a blessing from my grandpa, and my grandpa reminded me to, like, sit with the thought of how big God is. And I wish I could just cradle teenage Alyssa and just remind her, because I was so stuck on, like, this is incorrect. This is incorrect. And that kind of grief is so... It's hard for an

adult to function with, let alone a prefrontal cortex that isn't fully formed.

00:24:20 But this idea, verse 27, "I am the Lord. Is there anything too hard for me?" That felt pretty weighty for a 17-year-old, but that 17-year-old wasn't navigating in an isolated way. I was surrounded by family who loved me. Corey's big sister, Michelle, when I got back to Vegas, she texted me and said, "I'm picking you up for ice cream." His sister, his own family, she reached out to me to make sure that I was okay. I mean, in this moment with Jeremiah, like, Jeremiah doesn't have a friend who can, like, text him in jail. In later chapters, he's going to have a friend show up. Right now, he is isolated. This man has to understand the vastness of God. He has to. I remember in general conference years ago, President Nelson was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve at the time. He had shared something where he got a new set of scriptures and studied all of the names and titles of the Savior from the topical guide.

00:25:30 He had expressed that that study changed him more than any other study that he's ever done. I think I was in college at the time, or maybe right out of college, but hearing this man who speaks so eloquently, this man who's incredibly intelligent, this man who, like, he just opens his mouth and, like, I overcome every time, if that study could change him, what could that study do for me? So I bought the mini set of scriptures, decorated a little box to fit them in, because if we're going to do it, we're going to do it cute. I spent months studying every verse that mentioned the Savior Jesus Christ. And it comes back to what you were saying, Hank. Like if we know the character of our Savior, the only natural consequence is us turning to him more quickly in any circumstance that we're in, not just the easy, not just the hard, but all of it in the space in between.

00:26:28 And I think Jeremiah knew these things. I mean, obviously, I don't know. I don't know Jeremiah personally, but one day I will. But from these verses, I think he knew the Savior in a pretty intimate way to be able to express and testify the things that he did in his circumstances.

John Bytheway: 00:26:46 I loved what you said about thinking of the gospel as an equation. If you do this and this, this is supposed to happen. Yeah, sometimes. And sometimes it doesn't. That's a hard thing to deal with. I think we've talked about it before, Hank. Kind of the law of retribution sounds pretty clear that you do this, you'll do this, you'll do this, you'll do... And then it just reminds me of that vending machine thing. Elder Christofferson, "I do this, I do this, this comes out." Yeah, sometimes. How upset do people

get with the vending machine when it doesn't come out? They kick the side, they try to tilt it over, but boy, when life hits you that way, that can be really jarring as a 17-year-old to go, oh, wait a minute. Oh, man. Thank you for sharing that.

Alyssa Edwards:	00:27:36	Yeah, absolutely.
Hank Smith:	00:27:38	I'm deeply impressed with Jeremiah here. The heading says, "Jeremiah is imprisoned." And then you read the chapter, and he's bearing testimony to God about who God is. I think there's a depth of soul. When the moment tragedy hits, you turn to God, who could have done something about it. Is anything too hard for the Lord? We've seen that now three times here in these chapters. Yet, to the God that could have changed my circumstances, I turn to that being and wonder and awe at his greatness and remember his greatness. I don't know. There's something beautiful about Jeremiah 32 that I want to emulate.
John Bytheway:	00:28:20	Reminds me of Job too, that line of his, "Though he slay me." And you're like, wow.
Hank Smith:	00:28:26	I will trust in him.
John Bytheway:	00:28:27	I've quoted my patriarchal blessing to the Lord before. Look, it says right here -
Alyssa Edwards:	00:28:33	Remember you said...
John Bytheway:	00:28:35	Paragraph 13, I think that's pretty clear.
Hank Smith:	00:28:37	We had a contract.
John Bytheway:	00:28:39	Yeah, we had a deal.
Alyssa Edwards:	00:28:43	I do imagine that all of us could share that some of these darkest of dark and these hardest of hard times perhaps have been some of our sacred moments, which I think is so gracious so that perhaps as we ruminate on the hard, these moments of love and humility and graciousness and grace and whatever other words we can use to describe are also sitting in those dark places. So the uglies and the darks and the hard are not just an isolated experience, but rather something terribly tragic, terribly hard, and I saw God. That's phenomenal, and that's where we are made holy.
John Bytheway:	00:29:34	I read a book years ago called The Price We Paid by Andrew Olsen , and he was talking about the Martin and Willie Handcart

Companies. The title of The Price We Paid, it's a well-known story, a Sunday school class somewhere in Utah in the 1800s was talking about how it was a mistake to come to send the pioneers late in the year, and a man stood up, and President Hinckley used to love to repeat the stories as I recall. But you don't know what you're talking about. I was there. I was with Sister Nelly unthanked." And he said, "We suffered more than you can imagine," or I'm paraphrasing, but he said, "But none of us ever complained. The price we paid was a privilege to pay because we became acquainted with God in our extremities." Does that ring a bell, that story?

Alyssa Edwards: 00:30:24 Yep. It sure does.

John Bytheway: 00:30:26 It's like, I don't ask for hard times, but when you're tender and when I just, you learn more from your hard times, but you don't want to ask for hard times, but you'll, I think we always learn more from them.

Alyssa Edwards: 00:30:44 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:30:45 He became acquainted with God in his toughest times, this Handcart pioneer said.

Alyssa Edwards: 00:30:51 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:30:52 Alyssa, I don't know if you ever met [Chris Belcher](#). Chris was a speaker with John and I for years. We'd see her at different events. She had cancer on her eyes when she was just a newborn and the treatment left her with all sorts of problems. She was able to see in just one eye and one part of that eye for 40 years. And then the doctors told her that her cancer had returned on that eye and they take that eye and it meant she was going to be blind. I remember thinking to myself, "What would it be like to know that you had a week left to see?" And Chris was a florist and she had these wonderful boys and this wonderful husband. She was going to miss seeing them. She said, "I'm very blessed, very blessed. I get to have this treatment that's going to save my life, but I was going to miss seeing them." And what you said reminded me of what she said.

00:31:52 So she wrote a book called Hard Times and Holy Places. Sounds a lot like what you just said, Hard Times and Holy Places. She said, "Don't allow your heart to be hardened by hard times. Make the choice to turn to Christ." That's Jeremiah 32. Then she says this. She says, "There's purpose in your suffering. You and I are being changed, remodeled, stretched, polished for eternal

glory. If we trust in and choose Christ in our difficulties, our hard times will become holy." What you just said queued me up to my friend Chris's statement. She said, "I may have lost my sight, but my vision has never been clearer."

Alyssa Edwards:	00:32:39	Beautiful. What a great example. Truly. Perhaps this allows me a little bit more clarity on Jeremiah's experience, having someone who's a little bit closer. I watched her, I followed her. Perhaps that's what Jeremiah utilizes more is this, I mean, what Chris mentioned as vision. He had the vision. He had the capacity to know because I mean, I think it's natural to like put ourselves in these scripture stories. And I just really think if I'm thrown in prison and then we have chapter 33 where God's like, now let's talk about the gathering of Israel. And in verse 11, Jeremiah is like, the Lord is good. His current situation is not good. It's not. It's not good at all. But I think it's because he paid the price to have this vision. I really like that principle. Thank you.
Hank Smith:	00:33:38	That's beautiful. I'm in prison. Praise the Lord of hosts for the Lord is good.
Alyssa Edwards:	00:33:44	Two thumbs up.
Hank Smith:	00:33:46	That's why you're Jeremiah.
Alyssa Edwards:	00:33:48	And I'm Alyssa.
Hank Smith:	00:33:50	Yeah. There's never going to be a book of Hank in the scriptures.
John Bytheway:	00:33:53	Yeah, you read this and you think, I am so far from that, and please don't test me so that I will know exactly how far I am from that.
Hank Smith:	00:34:02	I don't want to know.
John Bytheway:	00:34:05	Hank, back to Chris Belcher for a minute. She said the most beautiful thing that just before they put her under, knowing that when she woke up again, she would not have her eyesight. What was the last thing she wanted to see?
Hank Smith:	00:34:18	Yeah. If I remember right, she told me that they let her husband, James, come back with her into the OR. They, you know, prepared everything and then her surgeon said, "Chris, we'll, we're ready when you are." And for those of you out there who are like, "Who is this Chris Belcher?" She's maybe the funniest person. And John Bytheway rivals her, but -

John Bytheway:	00:34:45	Her sense of humor was, for what she had been through, it was unreal. So funny.
Hank Smith:	00:34:52	I've seen audiences of thousands laughing and weeping at her gift. She has since passed away. She passed away in 2020, but James comes over and I guess he said something like, "Be good." Okay? Be good. She said, "James, we're going to have to work on your goodbyes." And he smiled and that's when she closed her eyes and said, "Okay, I'm ready." Absolute faith and vision. I like what you said there, Alyssa.
Alyssa Edwards:	00:35:21	Uh, you said it first. You said it first.
Hank Smith:	00:35:24	I said, yeah, Chris -
Alyssa Edwards:	00:35:24	She said it.
Hank Smith:	00:35:25	Chris wrote it first.
Alyssa Edwards:	00:35:25	Chris said it and it just trickled down the pipeline.
Hank Smith:	00:35:29	Yeah.
Alyssa Edwards:	00:35:31	Thank you for bringing her up.
Hank Smith:	00:35:32	Let's keep going. What do you want to do next?
Alyssa Edwards:	00:35:35	I want to go into more of Jeremiah's stories. Let's jump ahead, shall we guys? Let's go to 36. Maybe this is the facetious part of me or the sassy part of me, the part of me where someone tells me not to do something and I'm like, that's so cute. I'm going to try it. But Jeremiah has this scroll written in chapter 36 where he's writing scripture, essentially. The king does not approve a little bit.
Hank Smith:	00:36:04	He's like -
Alyssa Edwards:	00:36:05	So he rips it apart, burns it to pieces, and Jeremiah's like, oh, that is really, really charming. We're going to run that back and I'm going to write it, but I'm going to write it lengthier this time. You thought you got me, but we're not doing that. We're starting to create a little bit of this contentious chasm here where Jeremiah's doing what a prophet does. Sometimes what a prophet does is says things that are uncomfortable and they're uncomfortable because they're things that are calling us out. And us as humans, our nature is we don't actually want to be wrong. People don't wake up every day and they're like,

today's the day I'm going to be wrong. We want to be right. He writes this scripture. The king isn't thrilled. In fact, the king is so anti-thrilled or whatever the opposite of that is, that he's going to throw Jeremiah into this cistern, this dungeon, this muddy place, and this is where Jeremiah is going to reside.

- John Bytheway: 00:37:12 That whole thing reminds me of Samuel the Lamanite. I love that we have a Lamanite sermon. That's just pretty cool by itself. When I'm in Helaman 13, he says, "And now when you talk, you say, If our days had been in the days of our fathers of old, we would not have slain the prophets. We would not have stoned them and cast them out. Behold, ye are worse than they. For as the Lord liveth, if a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, you're angry with him. You cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him. Yea, you will say that he is a false prophet and that he is a sinner and of the devil because he testifieth that your deeds are evil. But behold, if a man shall come among you and shall say, do this, there's no iniquity.
- 00:37:56 Do that, you shall not suffer. Yea, he will say, walk after the pride of your own hearts. Yea, walk after the pride of your eyes and do whatsoever your heart desire. If a man shall come among you and say this, you will receive him and say that he is a prophet, you will lift him up, you will give him of your substance, you'll give unto him your gold, you'll hang pictures of him on your wall, that's not in there, and of your silver and you will clothe him with costly apparel because he speaketh flattering words unto you and he saith unto you that all is well, you will not find fault with him. It sounds like, I don't really like what you prophesied, Jeremiah, so we're going to drop you in a pit of despair here.
- Alyssa Edwards: 00:38:36 Ciao.
- Hank Smith: 00:38:37 We're going to make sure you can no longer prophesy because he doesn't want to hear that Babylon is coming, isn't that right? The king is like -
- Alyssa Edwards: 00:38:46 You're about to be taken over. If I can't see you, I can't hear you.
- Hank Smith: 00:38:50 I got to read to you. Elder Holland, sorry, here's my -
- Alyssa Edwards: 00:38:54 It's coming back.

Hank Smith:	00:38:55	It's my Elder Holland. Yeah. I wonder how often I quote him, John. I'm going to share with you both an Elder Holland quote, but John, you went to the Book of Mormon. I was going to say, we'll call that the John refers to the Book of Mormon play the game because every episode you're like, "You know what that reminds me of?" And I'll say, "Yes, the Book of Mormon?" Elder Holland was talking about people saying, oh, the apostles, the prophet, they're out of touch. He says that, "There are those who say they don't know the issues, that some of their policies and practices are out of date, no longer relevant to our times. I say with all the fervor of my soul that never in my personal or professional life have I ever associated with any group who are so in touch, who know so profoundly the issues facing us, who look so deeply into the old, stay so open to the new and weigh so carefully, thoughtfully and prayerfully everything in between.
	00:39:53	I testify that the grasp this body of men and women have of moral and societal issues exceeds that of any think tank or brain trust of comparable endeavor of which I know anywhere on the earth. I bear personal witness of how thoroughly good they are, of how hard they work and how humbly they live. It is no trivial matter for this church to declare to the world prophecy, seership and revelation, but we do declare it. It is true light shining in a dark world and it shines from these proceedings." He was talking about General Conference. That was 20 years ago, October of 2006. I think Elder Holland would have loved a word with King is it Jehoiakim? I can see why the King doesn't like this. The Lord says, "Tell the King he shall have none to sit upon the throne. His dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat and in the night to the frost." I can see why that he doesn't openly love that.
Alyssa Edwards:	00:40:51	I'm like definitely like a gentle person. Yesterday in one of my classes, one of my students was making a parallel with something and was saying how he wrestled and did cage fighting in high school. What makes a good coach is a coach knows who their team is. He was like, for me, I need my coach yelling in my face to motivate me to do well. And I was like, I would not perform well. I would stop. I need people to like -
Hank Smith:	00:41:22	Stop yelling at me!
Alyssa Edwards:	00:41:22	Approach gently and like cradle me, maybe put me in their pocket and feed me trail mix. Like just let me know I'm doing a good job. Maybe Jeremiah's delivery was a little tough, but these were really tough people. But Jeremiah's intent is, hey, the Babylonians are coming and they're actually really not good. You have an opportunity to not be taken over. You have a

chance to turn around and to protect your people and to protect yourself. And this king is, oh, no thank you. And then throws him in this pit. I do love that the intention behind the pit was for him to be forgotten about. And it probably would be really easy to be forgotten, but this king, had he read Jeremiah's thoughts in prison, perhaps he would have used a more sure technique because Jeremiah isn't afraid of dark places. Jeremiah isn't intimidated by pits because we've heard him bear testimony ample times that he knows how good God is.

00:42:27 And I don't think Jeremiah recognizes that he's about to be rescued by Ebed-Melech, the Ethiopian, which as I was studying this, I did some really good Googling to understand who this Ebed-Melech character is. It's translated to servant of the king, whether that was actually his name or a title or whatnot. But we essentially have what would have been equivalent as a slave rescuing Jeremiah here. Now, obviously, when I study the scriptures, like I study things that are relevant for me, relevant for my life, relevant for my job. And my job right now is this mental health class. As I study the words of our God, that is at the forefront of my brain always. Where am I seeing aspects of mental health here? What am I seeing here that is applicable for my students and for my classroom? And I was really, really drawn to this idea of this pit or this cistern.

00:43:31 It would have been so easy for Jeremiah to feel abandoned and to feel forgotten, crawled in his little muddy bed pile and been like, well, God, I really tried and just settled into the mud. But that's not what Jeremiah does. Something that I've noticed is really relevant over the past few years is what pushed me to study what I studied in my little bio you read. I got my master's degree from Purdue in the science and psychology of addictions. We all had to choose an emphasis and I sought divine help because you could cover anything and any of it would have been relevant. But I was really drawn to the topic of pornography, which there's nothing like telling your parents that you're going to get a master's degree in pornography of all topics. I was having so many conversations with my students where you gain their trust and you become, again, this big sister to them wanting to talk to me after class because they feel like they're in their own cistern.

00:44:41 And I, specifically with the topic of addictions, compulsions, pornography, habits, bad habits, habitual use, whatever, we're not being cast into dungeons or cisterns. We kind of build them ourselves when we allow shame or insecurities or a lack of trust in a God who is great. We build our own dungeons and build our own muddy beds in those spaces. And I think Jeremiah, again,

just the mental health perspective here, Jeremiah wasn't quiet in that dungeon. Jeremiah wasn't quiet a little bit. Jeremiah was still praising God. Jeremiah was still seeking help and help came while Jeremiah was still being diligent in the things that he knew. Despite the circumstances, despite the darkness, despite the mud, despite the king actively wanting him to fail, Jeremiah didn't take any of those as shameful signs of, oh, I should probably just be in a cistern. I don't deserve to live where everyone else is living because of X, Y, and Z. And I think the same thing can apply to addictions or pornography or compulsions or mental health.

00:45:59 We live in this fallen world, and perhaps we're in this cistern because of our own actions, but our actions aren't defining of us. We are children of God. We're children of a great God with everlasting kindness, as Jeremiah testified over and over and over again. The cistern isn't a defining point and that's not where any of us belong. So are we just going to lay down in the mud and call it quits? Or do we have an increased capacity to trust a God who knows who we are, who knows who Jeremiah is, who knows who you are, whatever it is to allow us to get out of this? Again, the way Jeremiah gets out is so unlikely, but is that not just another testament of who our God is? I guarantee Jeremiah wasn't like, please bless an Ethiopian comes today. And then it happens, but rather, can we continually turn to God in whatever our dungeon muddy trial is and have the confidence that God delivers while we are still doing the things that we know we need to do?

John Bytheway: 00:47:15 I'm just reading the exact words. They let down Jeremiah with cords and in the dungeon, there was no water but mire. So Jeremiah sunk in the mire. When you think about a pit, just sounds like it would be dry. This wasn't dry. And it wasn't water, it was mire. You couldn't sit down, you couldn't lie down. It's hard even to talk about. I like the metaphor that Alyssa's making is we can condemn ourselves to a mire.

Alyssa Edwards: 00:47:49 Yeah. And we don't have to. And the idea is Jeremiah, he was put in this pit, but he continued to seek God. Sometimes the pits we're in are because of the consequences of our own choices, but no matter what the pit is, continue to seek God and wait for this guarantee of deliverance. God guarantees deliverance every single time.

Hank Smith: 00:48:11 Alyssa, can we speak to this a little bit longer? I want to tap into your expertise. Sometimes as leaders and parents, we'll think, well, if I can get someone to feel bad enough, they'll stop this behavior, as if like shame was some kind of fuel. In my

experience, shame does not work that way. I think you're actually going to get the opposite of what you're hoping for.

John Bytheway: 00:48:37

I'm too far gone.

Hank Smith: 00:48:38

Right. You're going to send someone into a spiral of shame and somehow pile on all this weight hoping that they'll be able to lift it. In your experience, and I know you can't speak to every single situation, and I know this is a very intimate, very heartbreaking problem for those who are trying to support and love someone who has been absorbed by this plague as Elder Holland called it. So give us your educated, inspired take knowing that you can't speak to every single situation.

Alyssa Edwards: 00:49:11

Yeah. Thank you for that question. It truly is something that I am so incredibly passionate about, making sure we're approaching, like this is already a hard topic. Truly, it's a hard topic and it's hard for kids, it's hard for my students, my young adult students now that have had conversations with me. Some of them cannot even put it into words. They'll type it on their phone and then show me their phone. Clearly, what is Jeremiah's expressing with this mire, this yuck that he's in, this physical revolting experience, they're experiencing this in an emotional way. And the topic of shame, shame can get a quick result, but shame isn't anything that the Savior ever utilized. So if we're looking for a quick result that's going to get us an action that we want today, sure, shame is a way to go about it. But if we want a human to be changed and a human to utilize the ugliest parts of our mortal experience to propel us towards being sanctified through God, shame is not the route to go.

00:50:20

If we're going to change our behavior, I mean, it comes back to what we talked about earlier, about coming to know the character of Jesus Christ, knowing the character of Jesus Christ is going to change us more than a, well, you should feel this way or you ought to do this because of this. I'm not a very organized person and I have an extensive wardrobe and shoe collection and I've had that, like I've always been drawn. The book Fancy Nancy, when I was little, that's all I wanted to be, was Fancy Nancy. My mom, the amount of time she would have to come into my bedroom growing up and she was like, "This is a pig sty." I was like, "No, mom. I live amongst my clothes. I need to see everything that I have." And her being, "Hey, well, if you want to go to Heidi's birthday party, you have to have your room clean." Yeah, that's going to put my butt into gear, but I'm not going to learn how to actually be an organized human.

00:51:14 And I did make it to Heidi's birthday every single time. My room was clean, but a lot of it was probably just like shoved in the closet and underneath the bed. And my mom was like, we'll take it. Whatever we can get. Send her to the birthday party, but we have to like sit with the behavior, find out if this is a symptom of a different behavior that we're experiencing, navigate what's drawing and driving the decisions that we're making. Then always, healing happens from a place of love. I'm really drawn to the interactions that the Savior had with women in the New Testament, the woman who was caught in adultery. We don't even know the name of this woman, but can you imagine if the Savior used a shameful technique to try and teach her? Rather, the Savior completely removed shame. Let me get rid of every single person who is making you feel shame filled right now, then let's have a conversation. Conversations and healing can happen when shame is removed.

John Bytheway: 00:52:14 I think that there's a lot of bishops that would love some help with this. I can tell you that I had experiences, and this is just me talking, where the nudge I felt like I was getting from the Lord was, well, it was pretty clear actually. I want this person in the temple, which is sometimes not what I expected, yet I thought, of course he does. That is a place to go to heal. This person feels really terrible and embarrassed. Is keeping them out the best thing to do? They're here. They're talking about it. I don't know. I've hung onto that because that happened more than once. I want this person in the temple.

Alyssa Edwards: 00:53:09 I was lucky enough as I was finishing up my master's degree, we had to do an internship. I sent out emails to all sorts of counseling facilities in Utah County that had an emphasis on pornography, and not a single one of them reached back to me, which is fair. I feel like that's high risk to have a student come in. And obviously I was an intern, so I'm being led by a director, but that's another chore for a director to take on. A director of a facility has to take on this, like, new kid on the block and make sure she's doing the things that she knows. And it's an intimidating topic. It's incredibly intimidating. But the one person who replied to me, this lovely, lovely, lovely man, was like, "Absolutely. I'll take you. I'll train you." His whole practice was based specifically on pornography.

00:54:06 He was so gracious. He was so incredibly gracious. The work that he did was specifically paired with the gospel. So we had a lot of members of the church who were coming to us. I specifically addressed the adolescent and the young adult clients. Then we had a lot of non-denominational Christians who would attend his practice. And I really loved that workspace

because as I'm talking mainstream therapeutic techniques, which are absolutely necessary, there's the most brilliant minds figuring out how our brain works and how our brain is connected to addictions, pairing those things with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ heals. Gospel of Jesus Christ absolutely heals. I have a very tender testimony of how good the Savior is at what he does. So I think that thought, John, that you shared of, no, of all the places that these people need to be is in the temple.

00:55:18 The places that they need to be is in the pew partaking of the sacrament. The people that they need to be surrounded with are the people who are recognizing that we're all having this incredibly difficult human experience and are still showing up. When I attended Utah State, I wanted to try something new. As a freshman in college, I tried out for the Utah State rugby team.

Hank Smith: 00:55:45 Wow.

Alyssa Edwards: 00:55:48 I know you're probably sitting there being like, I knew it. She is sporty. She is clearly athletic. I did theater in high school. I love a good musical. Let me perform. That's all I want to do. But for whatever reason, I was drawn to the rugby team, and perhaps it was because Forever Strong was a movie we watched every Sunday in our home. Like, I don't know, but I tried out for the rugby team. I went to tryouts in this matching workout outfit. I had my hair in a little bow, and the coach came up to me and he's like, "This is rugby tryouts." And I was like, "I know. I bought cleats, pink accents." And he was like, "Okay." And so I tried out for the rugby team, and I totally made it. I was second string, though. I trained with the rugby team.

00:56:41 We had early morning practices three days a week, and it came time for my first rugby game. The person who I was second string for, she's out, she's playing, she's great, just like this strong chick who could take out anyone. And within the first 15 minutes of the game, she gets in a really bad tackle. She is, like, slowly standing up, and there's stuff coming out of her face that shouldn't be coming out of her face. She broke her cheekbone. Which I didn't even know that could break. I didn't even know. She's taken off of the field, and my coach looks at me and he's like, "Edwards, you're in." And I was like, "I can't. I actually forgot." Yeah. "I'm not going to be able to do this." And he said some choice words, and he gave me a little nudge, and out I went to play.

00:57:29 And rugby is terrifying. It's actually... I mean, lacrosse might be scarier and maybe water polo because it's like rugby but in

water, but it's like terrifying sport where everyone actually wants to take you down always. And there's a ball and you can't even throw the ball forward. It can only go backwards, but you have to be actively moving forward. And I got tackled all of the time, all the time. I'm always in the dirt. That first game, I kept looking at my coach and I was really thirsty. I twist my ankle. Take me out. My coach... Well, he couldn't take me out because there wasn't a third string. I was it. So he had to keep me in this game, in this match. After the game was done, he was like, "Edwards, I'm really proud of you." And I was like, "I know I'm the bravest girl in America." And he was like, "Okay, I'll see you at practice." And I was like, "I don't know." Like I kept showing up and I wasn't great to start with, but my team ended up taking second in nationals that year, which is I'm a college athlete.

Hank Smith: 00:58:34 Yeah. Add that to the bio, John.

John Bytheway: 00:58:37 Yeah.

Alyssa Edwards: 00:58:38 Easily. I'm the worst one on the field. I was the worst one. But my coach didn't give up on me. He never gave up on me. My captains never gave up on me. They would run drills with me of the things that I was not good at. The same thing applies when we're talking addiction, addicted behavior, compulsions, bad behavior. We need to keep showing up and supporting one another. Because I was bad, my coach wasn't like, "Yeah, you can't get on the turf. You're better on the side. You're a really good cheerleader. Hype woman to the extreme." No, my coach kept putting me in places where I was going to get better. I think it's more hurtful than helpful to take away capacities for us to connect with God when we're trying to heal. We need those spaces. Even if we aren't 100%, even if we are insecure, even if we are still learning and navigating, we need those spheres in order to connect.

Hank Smith: 00:59:43 Alyssa, you think a lot like the prophet [Joseph Smith](#). Listen to what he said. "Nothing is so much calculated to lead people to forsake sin." Here's his recipe. You want someone to forsake sin. "Nothing is so much calculated to lead people to forsake sin, as to take them by the hand and watch over them with tenderness. When persons manifest the least kindness and love to me, oh, what power it has over my mind. But the opposite course has a tendency to harrow up harsh feelings and depress the human mind." Alyssa, this is difficult to do. This is difficult for a church leader. This is difficult for, let's say, a spouse to say, "You want me to be kind, right? This person hurt me and you

		want me to be kind to them?" What do you say in those instances?
Alyssa Edwards:	01:00:35	I am the maximum grudge holder. It's one of my greatest and my worst attributes. I hold grudges for everyone around me.
Hank Smith:	01:00:43	Put that on the bio.
Alyssa Edwards:	01:00:47	That is a principle that truly, every single day is an active part of my cognition. Every single day. And it comes back to my relationship with the Savior. I was a poor rugby player for a time, but I showed up and I was still utilized. I don't want to say that I'm a crappy disciple, but sometimes I make really crappy choices for someone who claims to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. And my Savior doesn't hold that above my head, but rather my Savior continues to see my potential. That is something that just sits and marinates truly right at the forefront of my mind of like whoever the human is, whoever the person is, I really think us as children of the divine, our nature is divine. I believe that. In young womens, when we had the values, divine nature was the one that drew my attention the most because that really is. We are made by the divine from divine.
	01:01:59	Sometimes we forget, and with that comes poor choices or a lack of memory of what we are able to become. And it just feels so hypocritical for me to hold that above someone else's head when I forget my divine identity as well. For me, it's a conscious effort that can extend that invitation to all of us who are having this human experience is to be so gentle in the ways that we approach one another because are we not all mortals in this experience? Let's not permit these things to be a defining part of our character. A part of our character, let's be gentle in our own judgments while also not allowing these insecure things to be a defining part of another human's character.
Hank Smith:	01:02:51	Thank you for that. Here's President Kimball , August 1979 Ensign, Jesus the Perfect Leader. This is one of those talks I read every year. Here's one portion of it. He says, "Because Jesus loved his followers, he was able to level with them, to be candid and forthright with them. He reproved Peter at times because he loved him. And Peter, being a great man, was able to grow from this reproof. Peter could do this because he knew that Jesus loved him, and thus Jesus was able to tutor Peter for a very high place or responsibility in the kingdom. Jesus saw sin as wrong, but also was able to see sin as springing from deep and unmet needs on the part of the sinner. This permitted him to condemn the sin without condemning the individual. We can

show forth our love for others even when we are called upon to correct them."

01:03:53 And I want to ask you a follow-up question about boundaries, Alyssa. We need to be able to look deeply enough into the lives of others to see the basic causes for their failures and shortcomings. Of course, I don't know if you guys would wonder if I would quote Elder Jeffrey R. Holland. He said, "When a battered, weary swimmer tries valiantly to get back to shore after having fought strong winds and rough waves, which he should have never challenged in the first place, those of us who might have had better judgment or perhaps just better luck, ought not to row out to his side, beat him with our oars, and shove his head back underwater. That's not what boats were made for, but some of us do that to each other."

John Bytheway: 01:04:38 Yeah, I just want to respond to that. Because Jesus loved Peter, he could level with him. And I feel like that's the responsibility Jeremiah has. He's prophesying out of love. God is telling him what to say out of love and giving them another opportunity. But it also reminds me of Elder Uchtdorf giving that talk about don't judge me because I sin differently than you do, seeing that bumper sticker. The idea that this may not be your problem, but we've all got issues we're dealing with. We can have grace for those that are having a different problem that maybe is not a temptation for us so we don't row out with our boat and smack him. Well, that's not a problem for me. Why is that a problem for you?

Hank Smith: 01:05:23 Yeah. John, if you're ever out swimming, I might just have to do this to illustrate it, right? To have someone video it just to say, here's what we should not do. Yeah, here's what we should not do. Alyssa, let me ask a follow-up question because we do see the mercy of God and the kindness of God, yet at the same time we have Jeremiah calling the kingdom to repentance for their choices. Let's say I'm a spouse of someone who is involved in pornography and they are desperately trying to change. Are you asking me to continually be hurt by this person?

Alyssa Edwards: 01:06:01 Yeah, I think that is a time for some reflection. Are we being a passive participant in our spouse and our friends, in our own, in our family members, like fill in the blank with whoever the person is. Are we being a passive participant and just allowing? And I'm going to say a strong word and it might be hurtful, but sometimes the consequences of certain behaviors are abusive to family members, friends, ourselves, whatever it is. And it's not intentional, it's just a consequence of a behavior. We need to reflect. What are we putting in? Like there are meetings that

the church puts on for spouses, partners, friends, family members, just like the person who's dealing with the behavior can go to a 12-step program. There's also a 12-step program for those who are supporting and assisting. If the behavior is not changing, that might require a stronger action and there is help and there is so much hope and there is so much healing.

01:06:59 But if we have been sitting in a space of repeated behavior, it's not our job to be a martyr in a relationship ever. That's a really hard decision. That's a really hard choice. And I think if we're getting to that place of that choice, we need to be seeking counsel from trusted leaders. We need to be seeking counsel from professionals who know the science, who know the field, who know the support systems and the help, but it's not our job. It's never our job to fix any problem. Us as disciples, we are supporting one another. We're not getting in a boat and then just hitting a swimmer on top of a head with an oar. We are a support system, that's why we were all sent here together. But if a behavior cannot change, it's not our job to fix it. The Savior fixes it. We can seek help. We can leave. We can offer space and time for a person to heal, but that is on the person to seek active revelation, to seek help from professionals, to seek help from leaders.

Hank Smith: 01:08:02 Alyssa, correct me totally if I'm wrong, but sometimes I think that can be the loving thing.

Alyssa Edwards: 01:08:07 It can be. Yes, I agree. Just like anything in our lives, growth happens in the most uncomfortable of situations. Truly, I can't think of a time where I have grown exponentially and it's been comfortable. I remember prior to me going on my mission, you'd hear all these homecomings and people are like, that was the best two years of my life, blah, blah, blah. I went on my mission and I was like, you are all liars.

Hank Smith: 01:08:35 This is hard. Yeah.

Alyssa Edwards: 01:08:36 Literally, if this is the best time of your life, have you ever, like, hung out with my mom? Have you ever been to Disneyland? I can think of so many things. And it was the best growth that had happened for me up to that point. That growth happened in the jungles of Guatemala, in rainwater showers, really awful diseases that are just heinous. Leaving is uncomfortable. It's uncomfortable. Getting space is uncomfortable, but if we're seeking growth, the audacity of us to ever think growth is going to be comfortable when we're trying to mirror and pattern our lives after Jesus Christ, whose life was nothing but uncomfortable, I would say.

Hank Smith:	01:09:18	I love that you're being so sensitive that this is so difficult and so personal.
Alyssa Edwards:	01:09:22	Yes, truly.
John Bytheway:	01:09:24	Backing up what you said, I love the saying that God is more interested in our growth than he is in our comfort, as much as we'd like it to be the other way around, yet the uncomfortable places, that's where we grow.
Hank Smith:	01:09:37	Yeah. And then John, he can send someone to comfort those who stand in need of comfort. People don't change when you, by somehow being convinced that they're worthless.
John Bytheway:	01:09:50	Yeah. What would that accomplish?
Hank Smith:	01:09:52	You're right, Alyssa. It does feel powerful. Shame does feel like, oh, we're doing something here. One of my favorite YouTube personalities, I don't even know what you call them, her name is Emma McAdam. She's a Latter-day Saint with millions of followers on YouTube for her mental health videos. I refer my students to them all the time. I figured out she was a Latter-day Saint because I was watching her one day and she said, when I spent 18 months in Argentina, one thing she just said that stuck with me, she said, compassion is the key to long-term change. It was a simple, profound. Yes, that's true. And even self-compassion, right, Alyssa?
Alyssa Edwards:	01:10:34	Yes. Bringing it back to the language in the earlier chapters of Jeremiah that we looked at today, everlasting kindness is how Jeremiah describes God. Everlasting kindness. It wasn't just moderate, temperate, lukewarm kindness when it's convenient. Everlasting kindness is how our God functions. Why would the expectations be different for us?
John Bytheway:	01:11:02	Hank, you read that awesome statement of Joseph Smith. And I think if you kept going, the nearer we approach our heavenly Father, the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls. Well, what does that tell you? That Heavenly Father looks with compassion on perishing souls. I'm reminded of a book I read years ago, Dr. John Lund, I think it was called The Art of Giving and Receiving Criticism or something, but there was a line in there that he said something like, "Criticism doesn't change people." Like what we're talking about, "People either change themselves or they're changed by the Holy Ghost." And I thought, oh yeah, the agent of change, he says this throughout the scriptures, is the Holy Ghost that changes

people, that changes hearts. Being in places where the Holy Ghost is, is great counsel. That's why I felt like that I felt I want this person in the temple, because that's where the Holy Ghost is. That's where change can happen. I'm a witness that people can change and get better.

Hank Smith: 01:12:10 That's the basis of our church, right? Faith, repentance, change. Alyssa, I'm going to give you a chance here. I know we need to move on, but people need hope. So if there is someone out there listening, let's just say someone's driving their car and listening to the show or out listening on a walk and they're saying, "This is me and I don't know how to get out." I want out... One of my favorite things to do on the show is connect our listeners with brilliant, faithful minds, and we have one right here. So will you forget John and I are here and speak to that?

Alyssa Edwards: 01:12:46 Yeah, I would love to. My first initial thought is reflect on a time where you have seen God show up for you. And perhaps at this moment in time, it's really hard to think of a time where you've been delivered. Maybe we've been sitting in this space for years and years and years, but maybe God showing up for you is the gentle reminder of his love. Maybe it's a friend reaching out to you. Maybe it's turning on your car and your favorite song just happens to be playing. Maybe it's a really stunning sunset. Even the smallest of small of times where there has been evidence of a God who shows up for you. Maybe list a few of those times. We're children of a God who continually shows up. My invitation for you is to seek where God is showing up and begin to develop a trust in a God who shows up, maybe doesn't show up in the ways we want, but a God who shows up in the ways that he knows he needs to show up for us so that we can begin to develop this trust and this courage to do what we need to do because we're also children of a God who speaks.

01:14:05 The heavens are so incredibly open for us on an individual basis, and if we can develop trust in a God who shows up, we can start to develop trust in ourself to be courageous enough to follow the invitations and the promptings and the revelations that this God is giving us because I know, I know, I know, I have felt, I have experienced a God with ample love, even when his plan is so, so hard. Let's look into trust and let's look into love and look into the character of a Savior who saves, a Savior who saves every single one of us any number of times.

Hank Smith: 01:14:50 I knew this was going to be good. I'm even more impressed with you than when I invited you on the show. We have more to cover. What do we want to do?

Alyssa Edwards:	01:14:59	Yeah, we have some meat that I really want to get into. We have spent time in the yuck with Jeremiah, and like we've already all witnessed, he's going to be rescued. Ebed-Melech, the Ethiopian, as he is so lovingly called, comes and rescues Jeremiah from this dungeon, from the cistern, from this prison that he's in. Both of them are preserved while the rest of Jerusalem is taken and falls just as Jeremiah says it was going to. Just looking towards the end of this little section of Jeremiah, we're given chapter 39, looking at verse 15, "Now the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah while he was shut up in the court of the prison saying, Go and speak to Ebed-Melech, the Ethiopian saying, thus saith the Lord of host, the God of Israel behold I will bring my words upon the city for evil and not for good.
	01:15:49	The city shall be accomplished in that day before thee, but I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord, and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid." Just that little note there. Ebed-Melech isn't completely fearless. He is experiencing fear and trust simultaneously. It's not one or the other. You can be trusting in God's plan and still experience fear because of the things that are going on around you. In verse 18, for I will surely deliver thee and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord. Thou hast put thy trust in me and I recognize that you were afraid. That's okay. As much as all of us would love this 100% perfect confidence all of the time, I know I don't exist in that space and church is my job.
	01:16:48	We church six days a week and sometimes seven, depending on what my Saturday consists of. I'm churching every day and still don't have this perfect confidence as I want, but we know Jerusalem is destroyed and Jeremiah stands, but stands with still some really heavy feelings because of what he experienced.
John Bytheway:	01:17:12	Are you saying that Lehi was right?
Alyssa Edwards:	01:17:17	At least once.
John Bytheway:	01:17:18	I hope people when they're reading this are saying, hey, King Zedekiah, isn't that guy mentioned in the first few verses of the Book of Mormon? Yeah, this is the guy we're talking about. Lehi got to take off. It wasn't easy for him either, but this is Jeremiah who stayed. I've always wondered, and I hope someday we can find out if they knew each other or knew about each other. If Lehi knew Jeremiah, that'd be fun.
Alyssa Edwards:	01:17:43	I sure hope so.

Hank Smith:	01:17:44	Daniel and Nephi. If that's not true, it should be. It should be that they were at each other's birthday parties. Alyssa, I love this and I understand the phrase fear and faith cannot exist in the same space at the same time. I think I understand that, that it's important to really trust in your faith. I also think two things can be true at the same time. I'm very faithful and I'm very scared. I think it can be true because I've experienced it, right?
Alyssa Edwards:	01:18:14	Well, and I like how you said it, Hank. Trust in your faith, trust in your God, trust in the Savior. I know that things are going to be okay. Years back, post-mission, I was home and I was... My mom, the audacity of this woman, she wanted me to get my stuff out of her house, like, go away. Mom, what do you want from me? I know. Mom, you revolve around me. You don't, mom, you don't. So I'm going through my stuff with my mom, my mission, my mission bin. I hadn't touched the journals from my mission since I wrote in them on my mission. I had some hard feelings to work through post-mission, and I was finally at a place that I was like, felt okay. So I'm going through my journal and I open it up. Of course, the first page that I open up to is this tender little testimony from 19-year-old Hermana Edwards.
	01:19:10	I had a couple surgeries on my mission, and the first one that I had, I wrote my experience reading that tender little testimony of, "This is the trial of my faith." She thought she peaked with trials. She genuinely thought, "This is the hardest thing that's ever going to happen to me." I was, "Everything is going to be fine. I'm going to set fire to Guatemala," as they say in Spanish when you're making things work and move. Instantly, tears started welling up in my eyes and my arms, "We can stop. We can pause." Because from this perspective, that little faithful sister, she was going to end up in that same hospital with the same surgeons. And then ultimately, after that second surgery, I was sent home from my mission. My surgeons told me I was going to die, and I said, "Okay, drama queens. That sounds pretty miracle-less," but I had a hard time navigating.
	01:20:04	I was really faithful, and I was a really good missionary, and these are the consequences that I have to experience, allowing multiple truths to exist simultaneously. On the mission, I was so packed with faith. There's no way to not be when I saw the things that I saw and experienced the things that I saw. But then also on that operating table, I was so full of fear. I never had an operation. I had my wisdom teeth removed, but my mom was there when I woke up. That wasn't the case now. I'm in Guatemala. Everyone's speaking Spanish. I know church Spanish, not hospital Spanish. My anesthesiologist, he went to school for two years to be an anesthesiologist there, and then

he asked me how much I weighed, something, something, not pounds, and I was... I don't know, and I can't tell you how much the worms inside my stomach weigh.

- 01:21:01 We're living a new life here. I have no idea. And he was like, okay, I could probably guess. And I was... You're about to guess and put anesthetics in my body. The amount of fear. And so this moment, like, truly, an immense amount of faith, an immense amount of fear existing, but it wasn't faith in the two-year anesthesiologist. It was faith in a plan that is infinitely times bigger than me, while also holding a healthy amount of space for fear as I'm on this tiny little operating table. It's like hoping for the best, and then I get to wake up and talk to my mom the next day.
- John Bytheway: 01:21:36 I'm just reminded of the man in the New Testament. I believe, help thou mine unbelief. I love the honesty of that guy to say, oh, I'm really trying to believe, but I've got some unbelief. Can you help that part? That's a lot of us a lot of the time.
- Hank Smith: 01:21:52 Alyssa, I know I've already said this, but you are wonderful. You're brilliant, you're faithful, and you're fun. What do we want to do next?
- Alyssa Edwards: 01:22:02 I think it's time that we get a little bit heavier and go to Lamentations, shall we?
- Hank Smith: 01:22:07 Okay.
- Alyssa Edwards: 01:22:08 So he just watched the destruction of Jerusalem, and he has some big feelings about it. I mean, chapter one, the heading, Jeremiah laments the miserable condition of Jerusalem. Jerusalem herself complains of her deep sorrow, immaculate poetic writing here. Verse two, "She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. Among all her lovers, she hath none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her. They are become her enemies." That imagery, and perhaps you guys aren't weepy emotional men, and maybe you are. You don't have to confess anything right here right now. But I know what it's like to fall asleep at night with, like, a tear-soaked pillow, and you wake up the next morning and your eyes are all puffy, your throat's a little scratchy, and your nose a little stuffy, and you still have whatever is hard going on.
- 01:23:09 He just paints a beautiful picture, and Jerusalem is here because Jerusalem, the people of Jerusalem, the covenant people, didn't want to repent. This is a consequence of their own actions, and

now they have some pretty big feelings about it. As much as I really want to be a mercy-heavy individual, I'm afraid justice rules a lot of my thoughts. If I was Jeremiah, I'd be like, sorry, Jerusalem, this is the bed you wanted. This weighs on Jeremiah, even though these people chose to live this way, he loved them, clearly. Clearly, he loved them as they were, and perhaps had a deep love because he knew what they could become with a partnership with God. Skipping ahead a handful of verses, verse 16, "For these things I weep, mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me.

01:24:08 My children are desolate because the enemy prevailed." Verse 17, "Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her. The Lord hath commanded concerning Jacob that his adversary should be around about him. Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them." But then 18, "the Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against his commandment. Here I pray you all people behold my sorrow. My virgins and my young men are gone into captivity. I called for my lovers, but they deceived me. My priest and mine elders gave up the ghost of the sea while they sought their meat to relieve their soul. 20 Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress." So poetic, but so bitter and so painful. And the imagery here, again, consequences of their choices, here we are. But I do think all of us can relate to this bitter sorrow, whether it was the consequences of our own choices or the consequences of other people or just the fact that this is a fallen world.

01:25:19 It's so tender and this continually seeking for comfort, but no comfort can be had. That breaks my heart. I shared earlier about some of my mission woes, my mission president had to call it. I had an interview with him. I had to post my second surgery, 24 hours to pack up and leave this country that I loved so much. My exit interview with my mission president was really brief and short. Of course, the electricity went out, so it's in the dark. And my mission president, he got a little emotional and he said, "This is my hardest goodbye." And I said, "Well, I don't have to leave. Like my suitcase is right there. I got to go back." Like it was the two of us weeping together. I got on the airplane and was completely, completely distraught, couldn't stop crying. A flight attendant came up and she was, "Come with me." There was a whole empty row in the back.

01:26:17 She like got me all comfortable and I just cried in the window and I had a layover and I think I was in Texas. This cute grandma was on an escalator in front of me. She looked back at me, "You're a missionary." And I was like, "Oh, well, I was, not

anymore." She let me call my mom on her phone. I got to Las Vegas. Of course, it's the day my sister graduates from high school. So cute she can have attention. Not anymore. Yeah. I'm coming home, sissy. Share the spotlight. It was, just intimate, just my family. An aunt and uncle were there and my grandma, and I didn't want anyone to even know I existed. I just wanted to be forgotten. That is what I needed, was my mom's embrace. And my mom is sobbing. I haven't stopped crying since my surgery.

01:27:05 My mom was, "We're going to get you better." Then off we went to go eat In-N-Out, which did not sit well in my Guatemala stomach. Then we went to the Strip for a high school graduation. I needed my mom, that, just this confidence that I was safe, even though everything felt so up in the air, that's the embrace that I needed, was my mom telling me I'm going to be okay. We just have this repeat of thoughts here where Zion's arms are outstretched and there's no one there. Zion wants to be comforted, but sorry, nothing is going to happen. Just this continual emptiness, and it just puts a pit in my soul for what these... again, the consequences of their actions, but nonetheless, like how devastating we all can probably relate in some essence.

Hank Smith: 01:27:58 It just hurt my heart to imagine you, but you had an angelic flight attendant, which is great.

Alyssa Edwards: 01:28:04 Oh, angel.

John Bytheway: 01:28:06 You know, if I ever meet those King James translators, I want to take them to In-N-Out or something since you just mentioned that. I used to think when I was a kid, "Oh, you just take this word and this word and this language as this and this language." But they had to do meaning and they had to do feeling, and it's beautiful. King James English is beautiful. As you're reading that, I thought, wow.

Alyssa Edwards: 01:28:31 It's stunning. It is stunning.

Hank Smith: 01:28:33 I don't know if either of you see this, but I hear Jesus mourning over Jerusalem. It's almost like he read Lamentations and tapped into it. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, he that stoneth the prophets." It feels like he was channeling some Lamentations. I don't know if that'd be a bestseller, right? You write a book called Sadness. Although John wrote a book called How to Be Totally Miserable, and it did pretty well.

John Bytheway:	01:28:59	It was pretty much tongue inserted in cheek, tongue in cheek.
Hank Smith:	01:29:03	Right. Can I ask you something, Alyssa? As a mental health researcher, sadness can come and go in life. I frequently told my students, look, three days of sadness is not depression, that's called life. But there are times, especially for young people, more and more prevalent are this sadness that just never ends, this emptiness. I've heard students say, "It's not sadness so much, Brother Smith, as it's nothing. I feel nothing. I feel hollow." I know I put you into a really difficult lesson here, but the title of the lesson is Turning Mourning into Joy, so how have you seen that play out for people? It's not entirely a spiritual problem, yet sometimes we think, oh, it's a character flaw. Oh, have more faith. Go to the temple more. I have not seen that.
John Bytheway:	01:29:53	It might be biology.
Hank Smith:	01:29:54	There might be a lot more to it than that. So can you speak to that for a second?
Alyssa Edwards:	01:29:58	I would love to. Multiple thoughts. John, you just said it. It might be biology. It might be a chemical imbalance that we need to seek help for. But also, it might be a time and place thing. I mean, I recognize it in myself when I start to feel a little bit more numb and a little bit more nothing inside of me, which I'm a pretty high emotion person. I see a butterfly and get teary-eyed because I love butterflies. When I start to respond that way, it's a time for me to check in on myself and see how I'm utilizing my life. How much social media am I consuming? How much media in general am I consuming? I have a personal mantra, and I teach my students this in my mental health curriculum, is creation versus consumption. Us as children of God, we were created by the best creator.
	01:30:53	We were created with the intention to create. It's like innate part of us. I feel like if we're not creating, we're almost depriving this divine part of ourself from doing what it was created to do. And we sometimes replace creation with consumption because it's so easy. It's so easy to open up Instagram and scroll. Sometimes it provides really great entertainment. There's this video of an ewok that I really, really love. So there are good things, but we weren't made to consume at the rapid rates at which we have been permitted to consume. And so I do ask my students, "What have you been creating?" And when we create, it doesn't even have to be anything good. We don't have to be good at things to enjoy it. Checking on yourself, checking on your brain. What are you doing to take care of your brain?

	01:31:44	What are you doing to take care of yourself? If we're still in these ruts, be mindful of what you're experiencing. I have my students track their emotions because sometimes we are in these ruts where we feel like we're feeling nothingness, but then we'll have these highlight moments of, "I got to spend some good time with my friends and that felt really great." So it's a reminder to us that we're not just stuck in these caverns, but rather good things are happening while we still are navigating these other feelings. Multifaceted, check in on yourself, what are your actions? Because these consequences are normal for it. Then if we're still doing things that did bring us joy and trying new things and we're still feeling weird, let's seek extra mental health because it might just be our biology. And a lot of mental illnesses will hit in the early 20s. Your young adult students, my young adult students, this is when things are happening in their brains and this is a normal time for shifts to be going on.
Hank Smith:	01:32:46	Two episodes come to mind, John. One, Steven Sharp Nelson, just a few weeks ago. Do you remember what he said about creation? He said, "The mind feeds off creation that is not going to be graded, posted or sold."
John Bytheway:	01:32:59	Right.
Hank Smith:	01:33:00	It's creation for creation's sake. And I'd never thought of that, but that's not going to be graded, posted or sold because we're so worried about what grade am I going to get on this or how many likes is this going to get? Then back Ether, we just studied the book of Ether, one of our lessons was with Dr. Doug Benson. He talked about emotions are not facts. Sometimes we think if I'm feeling something, it must be true that my life is sad when no, emotions are not facts. If anybody would like to, both of those episodes can add on to what Alyssa said. I'm grateful. Alyssa, you speak with so much compassion. I think that's why your students are drawn to you.
Alyssa Edwards:	01:33:41	I have a lot of love. A lot of love. Side note, I wanted to go into law when I started my undergraduate studies. Dallin H. Oaks, I was speaking with him and he grabbed my hand and he said, "Some hearts aren't meant for that." And I got very upset because who is this man to tell me I'm not built for law school and to be the secretary of state? Thank you very much. I didn't go into law. Plot twist. We're here.
Hank Smith:	01:34:14	Alyssa, it seems cyclical to me because if I'm not feeling so good, I usually don't want to go create. I want to consume.

Alyssa Edwards:	01:34:20	Yeah. Because it's easy. It's easy. And there's still a dopamine hit, so our brain's like, "Okay, I think I might be satisfied." But it's not. Our brains weren't built for this. They weren't built for this. It takes a little extra effort, but with a little extra effort. That's where the growth happens.
Hank Smith:	01:34:39	When I teach the temptations of Jesus in the New Testament, I'll frequently give my students a, what we call, flesh versus spirit challenge. Turn these rocks into bread. Do what your body wants, not your spirit. We'll come up with our own. I'm going to go without this thing that I love for a week that it's so tempting to me. And they always say, Brother Smith, go without Coke Zero for a week. I'm like, "I've done that. I can do it. I can stop anytime." But frequently I've heard from students who say, "I'm going to take a week off of social media. I'll just take a week off." Many of them never go back. I've heard so many say, "I feel so much better. I didn't think I would. I thought it would be hard and it was hard at first, but, I just..." And they leave it. Not that it's bad. I'm on Instagram. I love sharing the gospel, but you're right. Their brain says, "Oh, thank you. I needed a break from that."
Alyssa Edwards:	01:35:32	Let's go back to Lamentations. I have some verses that I really liked in chapter three. We just have Jeremiah lamenting starting with verse 18. "And I said, my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord, remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood, this profound grief in the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance. My soul hath them still in remembrance. I still remember these things and is humbled, settling in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." This connection of hope to what he's saying is profound grief, some of the hardest of hearts. 22, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul. Therefore, will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him to the soul that seeketh him.
	01:36:39	It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence because he hath borne it upon him." Skipping just a couple verses ahead, "For the Lord hath not cast off forever, but though he caused grief, yet will he have compassion," the most poetic writing while navigating some heavy thoughts but still continually connecting hope. Hope in tribulation, hope in trial, redemption, that 23, The Lord's compassions are new every morning. There isn't a cap on God's mercy on God's grace on God's compassion.

It is endless. And that's a pretty powerful sentiment for us to begin to comprehend.

- John Bytheway: 01:37:35 Yeah. When we started today in the opening paragraph that Hank read, it was opposites. To root out and to pull down. Then he was called to build and to plant. Here in the middle of this lamentation now, he's going back to, as you said, addressing hope. Clearly has not given up on God and is telling us all about his goodness right here. And like you said, it's poetic. It's even messianic. He gaveth his cheek to him that smiteth him. That... Didn't Isaiah say that in verse 30?
- Alyssa Edwards: 01:38:12 Yeah. We get a sample of Jeremiah's experiences with God, but again, to get to this place where he can bear testimony like this in the space of trial and affliction is pretty baffling. Perhaps it is because I'm an emotional person and I weep a lot. All of his connections with crying really got to me. Verse 48, "Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water. Mine eye trickleth down and ceases not without any intermission till the Lord look down and behold from heaven." This man knows grief. I think of the verse of scripture, the Savior was acquainted with grief. Jeremiah was acquainted with grief. We are acquainted with grief. What does grief teach us about God and our connection with God?
- John Bytheway: 01:39:12 If the Savior was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, there's someone who knows what we are experiencing. Jerusalem just got destroyed. Jeremiah's apparently safe and he's able to write all this. Does it tell us where he was in order to keep writing?
- Alyssa Edwards: 01:39:35 That's a good question. Hank has the answer.
- John Bytheway: 01:39:37 I'm looking for it.
- Hank Smith: 01:39:39 The king of Babylon leaves him alone. He actually offers him a gift and Jeremiah's, no, thanks. Fortunately for Jeremiah, he had powerful friends who protected him. They allowed Jeremiah to remain, even providing for him to be treated well. The Babylonians are like, should have listened to you guy.
- John Bytheway: 01:39:57 And therefore, we offer you a prize.
- Hank Smith: 01:39:59 Yeah. And he's like, I don't want... Get that corn out of my face.
- Alyssa Edwards: 01:40:04 All right. Working for seminaries and institutes, we get to help support all of the FSYs that happen through the summer. I love that part of my job a lot. I look forward to it. I really enjoy it. So

this summer, I directed our session advice twice, both at BYU. I sessioned the first week and the last week. So the first week I was advising, made some friends with my leadership team, found out I was going to be working with one of them. The very last week he was going to be one of my coordinators, and I was thrilled. I love this man. Brandon is remarkable, remarkable. Sunday, I get all amped to go. I do my devotional with my counselors. It went well. I had a pretty massive group. There was like 125. We had almost a thousand youth.

Hank Smith: 01:40:58

Oh, wow. That's a big session of FSJ.

Alyssa Edwards: 01:41:01

Yeah. There was a bat infestation at another campus, so they had to bus 200 of their youth to my session and mine was the one that could expand. It was a thick session. I was so thrilled and so grateful, and I was working with a bunch of friends that night after everything was done. I went to my hotel. Long story short, ended up in the ER late Sunday night. My husband, I, again, truly one of the most gentle humans, it takes a lot for me to be like, "Oh yeah, I think I need to go to a doctor." This man is so scared. He shows up to the ER. He was at home. I was at a hotel, and he's brought me three sweatshirts because he just wanted to make sure he got the most comfortable one to satisfy my needs. Three different sweatshirts to pick from, and he's just panicky.

01:41:50

And I was like, "My guy, I got an IV now. We got pain meds. We're totally fine." But while in the ER, they're running tests, find an infection, we're addressing the infection, but wanted to make sure there was nothing else. They had plans to do a CT scan. It's about three in the morning. The ER doctor comes in and he was a little bit fussy, and I wanted to remind him he chose this job. He could have taught seminary. You chose this path.

Hank Smith: 01:42:20

Not my fault.

Alyssa Edwards: 01:42:22

Yeah. Agency. He hit the light really fast and was pretty mean, I felt, but I'm also very sensitive. He was... Well, we were supposed to do a CT scan, but somebody forgot to tell us that she's pregnant. I immediately looked at my husband and I was like, "I didn't know you were pregnant, babe. This is crazy." And my husband stands up and was, "Excuse me?" The doctor looked at us like we were dumb, and I was like, "Hey, we actually just did a pregnancy test four days ago and it was negative. This is the first time we're hearing this, and you said it in a really mean way." He was like, "Well, we can't do a CT scan now." And I was like, "Okay, thank you." So ordered different

tests, whatever. I find out that I was pregnant at 3:00 AM in Utah Valley Hospital early Monday morning when I have to be at FSJ five hours later.

01:43:17 So I'm processing this. We finally get discharged from the hospital at 5:00. We both go to the hotel, take a little nap. My husband wakes up, goes to work. I wake up, roll up to FSJ with a prayer in my heart, wanting a miracle. Like, we just got some pretty big news, and so processing all of that, and the day goes well. Welcome thousands of youth to the Marriott Center at BYU, and there's good energy, and my counselors are some of the best young adults that I've ever met, and my leadership team is so great, and everything is going well. We do all the FHE games, we survive it all. I go back to my hotel late that night. Wow, what a low, low, high, high day. What a rush. Well, the next morning, Tuesday morning at BYU, you go to the MTC, and the youth get to experience the MTC.

01:44:10 It's so amazing. It's so amazing. Yes, the MTC president and wife, they speak. They do a panel with missionaries that are currently in the MTC. It's a really cool experience. But as Tuesday morning started, I started to have a miscarriage. I'm at the MTC, thousands of youth, which I knew for 24 hours. It was really early on in the pregnancy. I am sitting on the stand. The MTC president is speaking, and my heart was just breaking. Nobody in the room knows. I'm completely surrounded, completely surrounded by really great humans, and nobody knows how absolutely alone I was feeling. These verses here, looking at a verse we didn't look at, like chapter three, verse 11, "He had turned aside my ways and pulled me in pieces. He hath made me desolate." We started Jeremiah with this idea of desolate places, but now this feeling of, I'm not in a desolate place. I am desolate. I am empty. Nothing can happen here. Nothing is going to prosper.

01:45:31 And, like, obviously, big picture, I know everything is going to be fine. Big plan, everything's going to be fine. In that moment, my physical body is grieving, my heart is grieving. My husband just had to go to his job, and he's processing what our little family just went through. I really feel desolate. That's the word that sat in my chest, because that's exactly what I was feeling. My sister, Carly, the one I mentioned earlier, she's a doctor, and instantly I'm, like, on the phone with her. She is so gentle and so good. Her advice, as she's saying, sorry, sorry. I'm, like, so sorry. I wish I could be there. But Alyssa, just in case it's not a miscarriage, you need to stay in a good head space. Stay in a good head space.

Hank Smith:	01:46:25	You want - you want what?
Alyssa Edwards:	01:46:28	Okay, let me start telling myself my favorite jokes. It is so divine. The location that I was at, I'm walking out of the MTC, and these youth that... I mean, you guys know, you know how EFY works. These youth that I met the day before, yelling at them, welcome at the Marriott Center, like, "Sister Edwards," and coming and giving me a little hug, "We love you so much." They don't know me. They have no idea. And they are only offering love, only offering love. Then my leadership team, they have no idea what's going on. These young adults, who they decided in between semesters of school, they were going to work a church job and hang out with teenagers all summer, which is not always an easy job. They have no idea what I'm experiencing, and yet I walk into a room, Sister Edwards, we're going to go get lunch. Do you want to come with us, Sister Edwards? Hey, I'm running to Swig. Do you need a drink?
	01:47:29	Filling me with as much love and support in their bodies as possible. Then I come back to these verses, 22. It is the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. Consumption here in these verses is destruction. My consumption was bitter sadness and heaviness and sorrow. I felt like my body was betraying me. That was my consumption, but I wasn't consumed because his compassions fail not. And I look at how my earthly parents work, the way my mom wanted to be with me in that instant, but it couldn't happen that way, my mom would move heaven and earth to get to her kids. I imagine this is perhaps a little projection, but if this is how my earthly parents work, they're patterned after that of my heavenly parents.
	01:48:29	And if my earthly parents want to move everything and anything to get to their kids, I can only imagine what perfect heavenly parents feel when we feel like we are in desolate places. Their compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness. This overarching faith and knowledge and trust in a God who is incredibly aware of these really intense, sorrowful places that we sit in. Their compassions might not show up like a manifestation of God, but perhaps their compassions show up in 950, 14 to 18 year olds that just want to tell me they love me. Maybe their compassions show up in someone bringing you, Hank, a Coke Zero. Maybe their compassions show up in a mom who's, "Let me get you a treat today," or a husband who comes to the hospital with three sweatshirts because he knows you're cold, but wants to make sure he gets the right sweatshirt.

	01:49:39	Maybe God's compassions are a lot bigger than what our coming back to this idea of our sight can see, but our vision can definitely recognize these compassions where we can experience the magnitude of God's compassion while also carrying the heaviness of our mortal experience. They can and they do coexist all of the time, and Jeremiah bears testimony of that over and over and over again.
Hank Smith:	01:50:14	Alyssa, I'm going to say it again. I said it earlier, you think like the prophet Joseph Smith . He says, "The things of God," which is what you've been teaching us, "are of deep import and time and experience and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, oh man," we'll add woman. "If that will lead a soul unto salvation," which is what you're doing, Alyssa, "If that will lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens. Your mind must go into this beautiful heaven and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, the broad expanse of eternity." Then he finishes, "You must commune with God." I don't know why, but in our high of highs where we're doing all the right things and our loved ones are around us, I felt communed with God and then in the darkest, most difficult times, you feel like there I've communed with God. And they're both true, like you said, they're both true at the same time.
John Bytheway:	01:51:24	Thank you for sharing that, Alyssa. That kind of thing, I know by experience can bring a depth of sorrow that you may not have been acquainted with before. That backs you up against the wall of faith, doesn't it? But I love that you are so surrounded by loved ones, and I hope the people that I know that have experienced this also know they're surrounded by loved ones. I should have brought them three sweatshirts, but they were surrounded.
Alyssa Edwards:	01:51:53	Minimum, minimum.
John Bytheway:	01:51:55	Minimum.
Hank Smith:	01:51:56	We all need to take a lesson from Alyssa's husband, all husbands everywhere. Alyssa, you have walked us through some very difficult chapters and topics in such an uplifting way. You have a gift. Before we let you go, let me ask you, you've been through hard things, you've studied and researched difficult things, yet here you are, you are optimistic, you are full of light. Can you speak to that as our listeners say, I don't want to experience dark and hard things. I don't even want to talk about some of those things you talked about. They're scary topics. They're difficult topics. They bring up difficult feelings.

How have you managed that? How has the Lord helped you?
How have you kept your faith?

- Alyssa Edwards: 01:52:40 There's a talk that... you know like the mission homes you live in, there's just a bunch of old Ensigns and Liahonas and whatnot. As I was looking through one one day, I found a talk called Sunday Will Come by [Elder Wirthlin](#). I think this helped shift some of my perspective to allow me to be able to sit in these hard, ambiguous, gray, whatever spaces and still recognize goodness. He says, "Speaking of the crucifixion of the Savior, on that Friday, the apostles were devastated. Jesus, their Savior, the man who had walked on water and raised the dead was himself at the mercy of wicked men. They watched helplessly as he was overcome by his enemies. On that Friday, the Savior of mankind was humiliated and bruised, abused, and reviled. It was a Friday filled with devastating consuming sorrow that gnawed at the souls of those who loved and honored the son of God.
- 01:53:37 I think that of all the days since the beginning of this world's history, that Friday was the darkest, but the doom of that day did not endure. The despair did not linger because on Sunday, the resurrected Lord burst the bonds of death. He ascended from the grave and appeared gloriously triumphant as the Savior of all mankind. Skipping ahead ever so slightly, each of us will have our own Fridays. Those days when the universe itself seems shattered and the shards of our whole world lie littered about us in pieces, we all will experience those broken times when it seems we can never be put together again. We will all have our Fridays. But I testify to you in the name of the one who conquered death, Sunday will come. In the darkness of our sorrow, Sunday will come." This talk fueled something inside of me where the hard happens and my hard is not even the hardest of hards ever, but Jesus made it possible for Sunday to always come.
- 01:54:45 Darkness will end. The sun will always rise. It will always rise. Goodness is present even in the hard. God is so good. God's goodness is so vast. And the fact that all of us, that good things are still happening in a world that can be cruel and can be dark, even my worst days, goodness existed. Even my worst days, my mom would call me, tell me a whatever story about whatever human. Even on my worst days, I have a perfect cat named Gravy. Get out. My life is so good. Even on our worst days, Sunday's still going to come. Sunday's still going to come, and it's God's goodness that continually supports me in seeing God's goodness. If we can continually trust in the magnitude and the vastness, we're going to see how good our God actually can be,

even with these mortal eyes, and hopefully these mortal eyes will permit some of that greater vision that I think we're all seeking.

Hank Smith: 01:55:59 Jeremiah himself would be loving this lesson. "I will," the Lord says. Not I might, not I hope to. I will turn your mourning into joy. I will comfort you. I will make you rejoice from your sorrow. Alyssa, thank you so much for your time today, your preparation, your attitude, your stories. John and I have had a perfect day with you.

John Bytheway: 01:56:24 Thanks for your testimony.

Alyssa Edwards: 01:56:25 Thanks, you guys. Thank you. What a treat.

Hank Smith: 01:56:28 Please come onto YouTube, come onto the comments or come onto our website, followhim.co, and let Alyssa know how wonderful she is. We love sending those messages to our guests. With that, we want to thank Sister Alyssa Edwards for being with us today. We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen, and every episode we remember our founder, Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We've got the Book of Ezekiel coming up on followHIM. As a thank you to our wonderful listeners, we'd love to gift you the digital version of our book, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. It offers short, meaningful insights drawn from our past Old Testament episodes. Visit followhim.co, that's followhim.co, to download your free copy today, and you'll also find the link to purchase the print edition. Thank you for being part of our followHIM family.

01:57:22 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



- 00:03 Hank Smith This is followHIM Favorites. John and I share a single story to go with each week's Come, Follow Me lesson. John, we are in the end of Jeremiah and the book he wrote, Lamentations. It's kind of sad. He wrote a book called Depression.
- 00:16 John Bytheway Yeah.
- 00:17 Hank Smith What story do you have?
- 00:19 John Bytheway Well, in Lamentations chapter three, he says, "Remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not." It's this bad, but it's good because his mercies don't fail. And it reminded me of a little parable that Max Lucado gave about an old man, lived in a tiny village. He was poor, but he had this most amazing, beautiful horse, this white horse. People offered him money for it. He's like, "No, this is not just a horse to me. How could I ever sell it? It's my most prized possession." And then one morning he found the horse was not in a stable. The neighbors all said, "You fool. We told you someone would steal your horse and now the horse is gone and you've been cursed with this misfortune." And he said, "Wait, don't speak too quickly."
- 01:17 John Bytheway Say only that the horse is not in the stable. That's all we know. The rest is judgment on your part. We don't know whether it's a blessing or a curse. We cannot say." The whole village laughed. They knew, no, that's a curse. And after 15 days, the horse returned and he hadn't been stolen. He'd run away into the forest and he brought a dozen wild horses back with him. So they said, "Oh, old man, you are right. We were wrong. We thought it was a curse, but it was a blessing. Please forgive us." And he said, "No, no, no. Don't go too far. Say only that the horse is back. We don't know if it's a blessing or a curse yet. Life is so vast. You judge all of life with one word. All we have is a fragment. Nobody knows." "Well, maybe the old man's right," they said.
- 02:01 John Bytheway Then they said to one another, "No, he's wrong." They knew it was a blessing. The 12 wild horses had returned with one horse. The old man had a son and the son went to break the wild horses and he fell from one of the horses and broke both legs. Then they all said, "Okay, now we know this is a curse. Now you are poorer than ever

because not only you had these horses, but now your son's broken both of his legs." And he said, "Once again, you're obsessed with judging. Don't go so far. We don't know." A few weeks later, this country engaged in a war with the neighboring country and all the young men of the village were required to join the army, except for this man's son because he had broken both of his legs. "Okay, you were right, old man. God knows you were right.

- 02:50 John Bytheway This proves it. Your son's accident is a blessing." He said, "It's impossible to speak with you. You always draw conclusions. No one knows. Say only this. Your sons had to go to war and mine did not. No one knows if it's a blessing or a curse. No one is wise enough to know. Only God knows." The old man was right. We only have a fragment. Life's mishaps and horrors are only a page out of a grand book. We must be slow about drawing conclusions, reserve judgment on life storms until we know the whole story. That's Max Lucado's, it's called The Woodcutter's Wisdom and Other Favorite Stories, and it's on his website. It's online. I love the idea of you don't know. Even with Jeremiah, he's like, "Things are so bad, but I haven't forgotten. God is so merciful." We've seen that over and over in the Old Testament.
- 03:37 John Bytheway Things are bad, but God is a restorer. He's a repairer. He's going to bring back Israel.
- 03:44 Hank Smith I really like that. The hang on, we don't know if this is good or bad. Let's not judge. John, you're the one who told me that lottery winners often say, "This is the worst thing that ever happened to me."
- 03:55 John Bytheway Yeah. One guy said, "I won a million dollars and I spend every day now with lawyers in lawsuits. Everybody's trying to get it. It's the worst thing that's ever happened to me." Somebody's out there going, "I wish it would happen to me." And you're like, "Not so fast."
- 04:09 Hank Smith Yeah, not so fast. Can you imagine someone says, "I won the lottery," and you say, "Whoa, whoa." We'll see. We'll see if this is a blessing or a curse.
- 04:18 John Bytheway Hank, you shared with me the story of Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf and the lung problem he had when he was a little boy, but he didn't even know it. This heavy bicycle that he had to peddle around and it probably cured his lungs, he found out when he became a pilot.
- 04:33 Hank Smith But he had no idea, no idea that that bicycle that he hated was saving his life.
- 04:37 John Bytheway Was a blessing. Yeah.
- 04:39 Hank Smith If you imagine him saying, "I hate this thing," and now old man appears. No, no.
- 04:43 John Bytheway No, no, not so fast, my friend.
- 04:44 Hank Smith Yeah. You don't know if this is a blessing or a curse. Well, hey, we hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can

get it wherever you get your podcast. We're with Sister Alyssa Edwards this week. She has a mental health expertise. She's going to talk about Jeremiah and Lamentations and sadness and difficulty and pain. So you're going to want to join us over there and then come back here next week. We'll do another followHIM Favorites.