

"There is No Other God That Can Deliver"

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

Could the Book of Daniel hold the key to a healthier body and a stronger spirit? Dr. Ben Bikman, a BYU metabolic scientist, explores moral agency, the Word of Wisdom, fasting, and why science and faith are both ways of seeking truth.

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Biographical Information:



Raised in Stirling, Alberta, Benjamin Bikman left his small pioneer-founded town to serve in the Russia Samara mission. After an eventful two years (including serving in the mission office for one full year), he followed the family tradition set by his parents and continued by him and his 12 siblings to attend BYU. While at at BYU, Ben met Cheryl Richins (Orem, UT). He was a bit dismayed when she decided to serve a mission, but he was equally delighted when she was assigned to serve in the very mission he’d just come home from. While Ben was studying at the BYU Jerusalem Center (where he translated for the Russian-speaking

members of the branch each sabbath), he and Cheryl began writing letters to each other. When she returned, what Ben lacked in hair, he made up for in charm, and they were married a few months later. They are the parents of three children (Samara, Elizabeth, Asher). Samara is currently serving a mission in the Taipei Taiwan mission.

Academics moved the young family around. Ben earned his Ph.D. in Bioenergetics from East Carolina University (where Samara was born). Following this, he worked as a postdoctoral fellow with the Duke-National University of Singapore in cardiometabolic disorders (where Lizzie was born). This experience, in addition to providing a rich scientific environment, fostered a family love for travel, as well as an appreciation for the global nature of the church. Ben was hired as a professor at BYU (where Asher was born) in the Department of Cell Biology and Physiology. His professional focus as a scientist is to better understand chronic modern-day diseases, with a special emphasis on the origins and consequences of metabolic disorders, including obesity and type 2 diabetes. Along with students working in his lab, he frequently publishes his research in peer-reviewed journals and presents at international science meetings. To share his research with others, he authored the book Why We Get Sick, which details the role of metabolic health in chronic disease.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:00	Coming up in this episode on followHIM.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:00:04	What are you trying to understand the truth of? If it is a truth in this physical realm of health and disease and nature and physics, science will help you answer that. But there's more to us than just this mortal realm. Science cannot hope to answer that. Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? These are questions, knowledge that a scientist can only wonder and scratch their head at, but that's where we can get knowledge from God.
Hank Smith:	00:00:34	Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I am your host. I'm here with my co-host, John Bytheway, who has a fair and fat in flesh countenance. John, I was reading in the book of Daniel, it said fair and fat in flesh countenance. It was about Daniel and his friends. And I thought, my friend John Bytheway, has a fair and fat in the flesh countenance.
John Bytheway:	00:01:08	You can call me your fair, fat, flesh friend from now on.
Hank Smith:	00:01:12	Now, John, I really think it's a compliment and I think we have the right guide to tell us that today. We are privileged to have Dr. Ben Bikman with us. Ben, welcome to followHIM. This is your first time.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:01:22	Yes, my pleasure. In fact, there is particularly good timing here when you have an obesity scientist on to talk about someone being fatter in flesh. I'm thrilled to be here.
Hank Smith:	00:01:31	Yes, I am so excited. Ben, you and I have been talking about this for quite a few months. The day is finally here. John, it's our one lesson in the book of Daniel. So what are you thinking going in?
John Bytheway:	00:01:42	We all think about the lion's den and Daniel and his friends, but what I'm excited about is to actually address why they

fed them certain things. Fat was a compliment. It was prosperity. It was in certain times in parts of the world. Maybe that's why you meant that as a compliment.

Hank Smith: 00:02:01 That was, yeah. I think it's right there in the scriptures. It's a good thing. Ben, what do you want to do today? What are we looking forward to?

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:02:09 It's fun for me to be here because of the obvious connection with an obesity scientist in Daniel 1, but everyone rest assured there is a lot of meat on the bone here. I wanted to go through this in a way with Elder L. Tom Perry's blessing. He had outlined four distinct lessons that he actually once had his grandson come up to the pulpit and he said, "In the book of Daniel, we learn about caring for the body, developing your mind and being strong to resist temptation and then trust in the Lord." I wanted to use that as justification to put together some themes that I think we'll walk through. As we go through the book of Daniel, it won't be sequentially through the chapters, but rather just some big central themes that will allow us to kind of hop through the book of Daniel.

Hank Smith: 00:02:58 Awesome. Ben, I love that you're here. I love your expertise and I love your faith. I've seen it online. I follow you on X. You not only give wonderful information in your field, but you also will testify. I love it. I'm excited you're here. Now, John, there might be people who don't know who Dr. Ben Bikman is. Why don't we give him a nice, beautiful fat in the flesh introduction?

John Bytheway: 00:03:24 I'll do it. Ben was raised in Sterling, Alberta, Canada. He left his small pioneer founded town to serve in the Russia Samara mission. And after two years, he followed the family tradition set by his parents and his siblings and came to attend BYU. When he was here, he met Cheryl Richins from Orem. He was a bit dismayed when she decided to serve a mission, but guess where she went, Hank? She went to the Russia Samara Mission.

Hank Smith: 00:03:54 Wow.

John Bytheway: 00:03:55 He was delighted when she was assigned to the same mission. While he was studying at the BYU Jerusalem Center, he actually translated for Russian speaking members of the branch every Sabbath. He and Cheryl began writing letters to each other when she returned. What Ben lacked in hair he made up for in charm. These are his words. They

		were married a few months later. Parents of three children, their oldest daughter's name is Samara after the mission. Isn't that cool? I didn't name any of my kids Philippines, and I don't think you named any of your kids Fresno. I did not.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:04:29	It's a good name for a God.
John Bytheway:	00:04:30	Yeah. Samara, Elizabeth and Asher. Samara is serving in the Taibei, Taiwan mission right now. Academics moved his family around. He has a PhD in bioenergetics from East Carolina University where Samara was born. Bioenergetics from ECU. Following this, he worked as a postdoctoral fellow with the Duke National University of Singapore in cardiometabolic disorders, like most of our guests. And that's where Lizzie was born. Ben was hired as a professor at BYU where Asher was born in the Department of Cell Biology and Physiology. His professional focus as a scientist is to better understand chronic modern day diseases with a special emphasis on the origins and consequences of metabolic disorders including obesity and type two diabetes. He authored the book, Why We Get Sick, which details the role of metabolic health in chronic disease. Yeah, not a lot of us have peer-reviewed journals coming to us in the mail.
John Bytheway:	00:05:36	If you go to benbikman.com, you can see a lot of his research and I'm going to spell it, B-E-N-B-I-K-M-A-N.com.
Hank Smith:	00:05:45	John, getting to know Ben over the last year or so, he really truly wants to help. You can feel it. Let's start with the Come, Follow Me manual. Ben, John and I are excited to learn. The book of Daniel, the lesson is there is no other God that can deliver. Most likely, no one will threaten to throw you into a fiery furnace or a den of lions because of your faith in Jesus Christ, but none of us get through this life without a trial of faith. We all can benefit from the examples of people like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who were taken captive as young men by the mighty Babylon Empire. Surrounded by an unfamiliar culture with different values, they face great temptations to abandon their beliefs in righteous traditions, yet they remain true to their covenants. How did they do it? By doing those small and simple things God asks of all of us, praying, fasting, choosing good friends, trusting in him and being a light to others.
Hank Smith:	00:06:43	Like Joseph in Egypt and Esther in Persia, Daniel and his friends in Babylon kept their faith in God and God worked

		miracles that still inspire believers to this day. Awesome. This day is going to be good. All right, Ben, how do you want to go about this?
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:07:00	I wanted to, as I mentioned, go through this as themes, but before I articulate the themes, I just wanted to share my delight in being able to share this other part of me as much as I'm a scientist, and that's where people who may be tuning in may know me as a scientist or some people, but what matters so much more to me is my life as a religionist. I don't have a lot of opportunities to talk about that part of myself. People don't invite me on other podcasts to talk about my faith. It's always about my science. Now I get to address it from a direction that matters a little more to me. As I've studied in preparation for this discussion, I had put together these themes. We see a theme of moral agency that's touched on in the introduction that you read, Hank, where we see these incredible examples of faith regardless of the circumstances.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:07:55	We also have a theme of stewardship of the body and how we treat it, how we may defile it on occasion. We also see the role of fasting in revelation. Of course, I am a metabolic scientist, so those previous two themes, the stewardship of the body and fasting, I'm going to share some of my scientific insight. I also think another theme is we have two ways of knowing. The book of Daniel gives us some beautiful examples of knowledge coming from our study of the world and also knowledge coming from heaven, from inspiration. We also have a theme of the Lord using good people to progress his work. And then a theme that might be a little, not sinister, but a little more negative or darker, just the idea of when worshiping God can be considered a crime. There's a little bit we could learn there.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:08:46	And then lastly, it's some of the bigger part of what we see in the book of Daniel, especially one through seven, the prophetic visions of the last days and then God's sovereignty, his ruling over kings and kingdoms.
Hank Smith:	00:08:59	This is fantastic. Out of the three of us, I think I have the tendency to eat things and drink things that I ought not. Those of you listening who are like, "Hank, I'm feeling that too." Stay with us. Ben's not going to fill us with all sorts of guilt and shame. He's going to inspire us.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:09:15	In fact, I really appreciate what you just said, which is as much as I speak about health and metabolic health and

		body fat, I genuinely pray that I can do it in a way that does not come across as judgmental. Not that it's inappropriate for someone's conscience to be a little pricked. We should all have that from time to time regardless of what we're talking about. But yeah, as much as I'm going to go through some topics about health, I genuinely pray that I'm able to discuss this in a way that doesn't leave someone feeling judged, but just helps them feel edified that they learn more and maybe they feel empowered with a little better information than they have at the moment with regards to their health.
John Bytheway:	00:09:53	Man, I just love what you said. Knowledge is power. Let's just talk about what we know. You can see us. We can't see you. Just stay here and listen.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:10:01	Let's start with the first one. I put it first because I thought if I only had a very limited amount of time here or someone only has a limited amount of time to listen, this is the one that I would want. Just like Elder Perry wanted his grandson to have a few key themes, this would be the theme that I would want someone to be able to get, which is this idea of moral agency and choosing God no matter the cost, no matter the consequence. What I hope I'm going to be able to do during this discussion is get all the names. By that I mean we pay Daniel the respect of giving him his given name and calling him by his Hebrew name. And unfortunately, poor Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, we never give them their names. And so I'm not going to call them Shadrach, Meshak, Abednego.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:10:48	Just out of an odd misplaced sense of respect here, I thought these guys would probably want their given Hebrew names. I'm going to call them Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah as we go through this. With these four wonderful young men, at least at the beginning young men, we see some of the clearest examples of moral agency, this commitment to God regardless of the circumstances and regardless of the outcomes that they can't control. And you look at them and think they are a perfect example of this. They have been stripped of every choice as captives, even their names being changed. Even in fact, look at Daniel where King Nebuchadnezzar says in Daniel 4:8, calls him Daniel, and then he says, who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my God. His name was, you had Daniel, which includes the name El, the Hebrew word for God, "God is my judge." He had his name taken where it doesn't have the name of his God in there anymore.

Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:11:50	His name was replaced with the name of the Babylonian God, Bel or Baal. Even they had their names taken from them, so they were captives. Because of that, we get to see a beautiful example of moral agency.
John Bytheway:	00:12:02	Ben, I'm glad you mentioned this. Most people might go, "Oh, really?" Daniel seems to keep his name throughout, and we call it the book of Daniel. When I ask who are Daniel's friends? "Oh, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego." And it's kind of fun to say. They don't say Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, but as you said, they love to put the name of God in their names. When you hear the El suffix, listen to it in these names, Gabriel, Gabriel, Samuel, Daniel, we just talked about, Ezekiel, even Israel, Bethel, Emmanuel, Nathaniel, Michael, Ishmael, all of those are something about God. When you look at the names that have a yah sound in it, and you've probably heard this before, like Isaiah, for example, here's Nehemiah, comfort of the Lord, Zedekiah, the Lord is righteousness, Obadiah, servant of the Lord, Jeremiah, exalted of the Lord. Zechariah, the Lord has remembered.
John Bytheway:	00:13:05	Hezekiah, the Lord gives strengths. Isaiah, the Lord is salvation. Even the phrase hallelujah is song, praise the Lord. Daniel, like you said, a judge is God. Hananiah means grace, mercy, gift of the Lord. Mishael means as God is, and Azariah means helped by God. What's interesting is by taking them out of their land, then changing their name, I like to call it ancient identity theft. Belteshazzar means Bel will protect, like you said. Shadrach means inspired of Eku, who's a servant of the moon God. Meshach means belonging to Aku. Abednego means servant of Nego or who is a servant of Ishtar. I just think, wow, look what they did. They took them out of their land and then they took God out of their name. Back then, everybody heard the name of God in their names, and we don't hear it today in our names as much.
John Bytheway:	00:14:05	However, we take the sacrament and we take the name. We witness that we're willing to take upon us the name of Christ. Satan's trying to do the same thing, separate us from God. That's so interesting that they changed their names, took God out of their name and put a false God in its place.
Hank Smith:	00:14:23	Listen, Belteshazzar and the Lion's Den does not -
John Bytheway:	00:14:27	Just doesn't work.

Hank Smith:	00:14:28	have the same ring. How do you give up Rach, Shaq, and Benny?
John Bytheway:	00:14:34	They're nicknames there.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:14:36	I really like that insight, John. Thank you. It's something that I've been maybe sensitive to because of my own Jewish ancestry. My Bikman family is all Jewish, and my faithful Jewish grandpa married a pioneer stock member of the church and loved what he saw that he didn't mind that my grandma, my Baba, we called her, that she raised the kids in the church. And it wasn't until my dad was serving his mission in Sweden that he got the telegram that our dear Jewish grandpa had converted to the gospel. So I'm mindful of the fact that all of my brothers and I, my family is a little complicated, we're a bit of a mix, but my blood brothers and I are all Old Testament Bible names, Samuel, Jeremy, Jonathan, Joel, Benjamin. So I've loved that. And my son Asher, it was the closest I could get to letting, my wife would let me name a child after Neal Ash Maxwell, but I needed to have it be Hebrew.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:15:32	I was thinking that these guys have lost their own Hebrew name, as John articulated. There's some beautiful religious connotations and they were replaced with these pagan false gods names. That's why I wanted to make sure over the course of the discussion that let's give them their names back. Let's empower them.
Hank Smith:	00:15:51	President Nelson said, "You have three key identifiers. Number one, you are a child of God." If I can get you to forget that, if I can take that out of your name and say, oh no, that's not true. Now you are unanchored. I might be able to take you places you would not go.
John Bytheway:	00:16:13	Part of a subtle identity theft that has been going on for millennia.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:16:18	Yep. Well said. This all I think helps us appreciate these young men at the time, again, at first at least they were not young for long, but we can appreciate their example even more just to see what has actually been taken away from them. With this first theme being focused on moral agency, I wanted to just let everyone know why I'm using those terms, and that's based on a talk from Elder Christofferson. Elder Christofferson at the time, President Christofferson, a talk that he gave at BYU called Moral Agency about 20 years ago. I'll paraphrase a bit of it. He says, "In years past, we

generally use the term free agency. That is not incorrect, but more recently we have taken note that free agency does not appear as an expression in the scriptures.” Then he goes on to say, "Moral agency is the better term.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:17:04 When we use the term moral agency, we are appropriately emphasizing the accountability that is an essential part of the divine gift of agency." Elder Bednar in his 2025 talk, They Are Their Own Judges, also helps us understand the proper use and the purpose of agency, which is to love one another and to choose God. And he says, "If these two purposes align precisely with the first and second great commandments, consider that we are commanded, not merely admonished or counseled, but commanded to use our agency to love one another and choose God." Here we see beautiful examples which we can read as we get into the book of Daniel itself. Let's get started by reading a little bit of it. I thought we could start in Daniel 1 to see the first good examples of these young men choosing God, this beautiful use of moral agency.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:17:56 Would one of you guys be willing to read verse five and then skip to verse eight in Daniel 1?

Hank Smith: 00:18:02 I'll take that. Daniel 1:5. "And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat and of wine which he drank, so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof, they might stand before the king." Down to verse eight. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat nor with the wine which he drank. Therefore, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself."

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:18:29 Now, as the story goes, they get a little pushback because the prince of the eunuchs, he's worried about what might happen to him if he shows Daniel and his brothers that they're not as healthy. But Daniel says to him, it's just the very first line, the very first phrase in verse 12, he says, "Prove thy servants." I'm going to revisit the health part of this in a little bit, but I don't think that's necessary for this theme one, that he is pushing back. There could be consequences even on him, not to mention the people that are responsible for them in their captivity, but even from the very get-go, we see a beautiful example of them choosing not to defile their kashrut or this mosaic law of what's healthy or not even what's healthy, but what's appropriate to eat. They chose God and his commandments to the Israelites at the time.

Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:19:19	In theme two, when we get into the more of the health part of this, we say that they're keeping kosher or they're following the kashrut law, this dietary law, but also there's a little bit of this idolatry in here too, which we'll revisit. Maybe the most famous is what we read in Daniel chapter three with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. We'll recall at this point in the story that King Nebuchadnezzar has erected this enormous golden image, maybe in fact ironically inspired by Daniel's interpreting his dream, which we will come to in a different theme, but he has this enormous golden image. He has summoned all the high officials of the empire, the princes, the governors, the captains, et cetera, even the sheriffs, that they all need to come and worship when they hear this music. And it's just funny, anyone who's been studying the book of Daniel, I bet we all chuckle when we see the list of instruments repeated again and again, it's the cornet, the flute, the harp, the sackbut, the saltry.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:20:21	To me, sackbut sounds like bagpipes, but it was not bagpipes. When they hear the music, they need to fall down and worship the golden image. If they fail to do so, that means death in the famous fiery furnace. So the music plays, but Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, we read in verse 12. John, do you want to read verse 12 then? This is in Daniel chapter three because we see what happens to them.
John Bytheway:	00:20:49	Daniel 3:12, "There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O King, have not regarded thee. They serve not thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou has set up."
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:21:08	This is them getting tattled on or reported. King Nebuchadnezzar is angry. In verse 15, he almost mocks them. He says, "Who is the God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" Which we're going to revisit this later, this weird amnesia that King Nebuchadnezzar has where he's this weird character where he has moments of profound declarations of faith, then it's like he forgets. Here, I think he forgot because in chapter two, he had just been praising Daniel and his God. Could you read verses 17 and 18 as well? And this gets us to the heart of this example of moral agency.
John Bytheway:	00:21:44	Daniel 3:17, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King. But if not, be it known unto

		thee oh king that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou has set up."
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:22:05	Beautiful. Right there people, they've probably heard this before, this sort of three word sermon. Let me just share what Elder Maxwell mentioned about this in 1985 in his talk Willing to Submit. He said, "We've been given three special words, but if not by three submissive young men who entered their fiery furnace knowing our God is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace," and quoting what John just read, "But if not, be it known unto thee O king that we will not serve thy gods." That three word sermon, but if not, it was in fact so impactful that Elder Simmons, people can also read an entire talk titled But if not in April 2004, he said that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew they could always rely on him because they knew his plan and they knew that he does not change. They knew as we know that mortality is not an accident of nature.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:22:59	It is a brief segment of the great plan of our loving father in heaven to make it possible for us, his sons and daughters to achieve the same blessings he enjoys if we are willing. Here we have the most famous perhaps, although we'll get to the second or the third example of this with Daniel again in the lion's den, but here we have Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah who are this beautiful example of moral agency where they know what the consequence is, at least as it has been decreed, yet they still choose, regardless of what their circumstances were, they exercised their agency to continue to put God first.
John Bytheway:	00:23:38	Hank, I know you've talked about this. You've given a talk called I Love My Friends. I think you heard it in several dozen testimony meetings.
Hank Smith:	00:23:47	How many times have we heard, "I love my family, but I love my friends." I did that talk. I'm sure you can find it on YouTube. It'll be as worth as much as you pay for it. Maybe your kids are having a hard time sleeping. But I noticed the we will not, the God that we serve. It seems to me that these friends had made a decision beforehand, what are we going to do? It's not, I don't do that. Do you do that? I don't do that. But let me ask my friend Azariah, do you worship other gods? It just seems to me that there was a discussion beforehand, "Hey, what are we going to do when this thing happens?" And I think good friends can do that. I think youth can say to their friends long before there's a moment, "Hey, what are we going to do when we get offered

		whatever, fill in the blank, alcohol or drugs or what are we going to do?" In that way, wouldn't that be nice, John and Ben, if a teenager is at some sort of party and they're offered alcohol and their friend comes over and says, oh, I'm so sorry, we don't drink. We don't do that.
Hank Smith:	00:24:50	I'm impressed by that. So thanks for bringing it up, John.
John Bytheway:	00:24:53	Ben talked about moral agency. We will, we choose. It's not we can't do that rather than saying, "I can't do this. I can't do this." And that's what our young people hear from their friends, "Man, you guys, you can't do anything." Well, actually, no, we can do, but we choose not to. We will not.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:25:12	I think about these young people who may be struggling with such temptations. Their version of it would be something like, "I am being asked to compromise my standards, but I know it's wrong, and my friends will still be my friends. I'll still have the social status that I want, but if not, I'm prepared to sacrifice my social status in this circle because I know I'm doing what God wants me to do." Every one of these instances and so many more that I hope people are able to think about on their own, they can see the but if not in their own specific situation. And I want to get into some other examples as a part of this theme as well that I think can help solidify that idea. But Daniel, as much as Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had their but if not, Daniel had his own version of but if not in chapter six, where there, people may recall.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:26:04	Now, we've gone through a lot of time now. This is under the King Darius. We'll revisit some of the nuance of what happens here where King Darius is almost tricked into condemning Daniel for his worship of God. Hank, could you read in Daniel chapter six verses 10 and 11, and then maybe just skip right down to 20.
Hank Smith:	00:26:25	You got it. I'm going to read from, it's a contemporary English version. Verse 10, "Daniel heard about the law, but when he returned home, he went upstairs and prayed in front of the window that faced Jerusalem in the same way he had always done. He knelt down in prayer three times a day giving thanks to God. The men who had spoken to the king watched Daniel and saw him praying to his God for help. They went back to the king and said, Didn't you make a law that forbids anyone to pray to any God or human except you for the next 30 days? Doesn't the law say that everyone who disobeys it will be thrown into a pit of lions? "Yes, that's

		the law I made," the king agreed. And just like all the written laws of the Medes and Persians, it cannot be changed.
Hank Smith:	00:27:09	Okay, then we're going down to 16. “So Darius ordered Daniel to be brought out and thrown into a pit of lions, but he said to Daniel, You have been faithful to your God and I pray that he will rescue you." Down to verse 20, 19 and 20, "At daybreak, the king got up and ran to the pit. He was anxious and shouted, Daniel, you were faithful and you served God. Was he able to save you from the lions?" Daniel answered, "Your majesty, I hope you live forever. My God knew that I was innocent and he sent an angel to keep the lions from eating me. Your majesty, I have never done anything to hurt you.”
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:27:52	Wow. Well, that was his own but if not moment. Daniel, he knew, okay, I'm going to continue to pray to God. There will be a consequence to this. I hope that I'll be spared, but if not, I'm going to do it anyway where there are consequences that are going to be outside of our control. We need to be prepared for those consequences because there are the consequences we know will be within our control, which is the blessings that come from obedience to God, and those blessings will not always be surviving the lion's den necessarily. I wanted to share a quote from Elder Uchtdorf in October 2015. It was a talk, be not afraid, only believe. He said, "It would've been easier for Daniel to simply go along with the ways of Babylon. He would've been popular. He would've fit in. His path might've been much less complicated.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:28:42	That is, of course, until the day when the king demanded an interpretation of his dream." Now, that's hearkening back to Daniel 2, but we could say some version of this with King Darius. Here it goes on, Daniel then, he would've found that he, like the rest of Babylon's wise men, had lost his connection to the true source of light and wisdom. Daniel passed this test. Of course, we're still being tested. With the lion's den, he could have just decided, okay, well, I guess I'm not praying anymore, or tried to hide it more. He didn't. He passed this test, and gratefully, thankfully, his but if not, didn't come to pass. He didn't have to see that outcome there. He was blessed.
Hank Smith:	00:29:21	Ben, I really appreciate you pointing out those three words, but if not, sometimes for me, I say but if not, but I don't know if I mean it. I say, "I really want this, but if not, it'll be okay. But you really are going to come through because..."

So how do you get to the point where you mean that, where you say like Abinadi?

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:29:46 Hank, you're reading my mind here because I think it's appropriate for us to point out the not so happy versions of but if not. All of us can think about these in our own lives. In the Book of Mormon, we see but two stark examples of this. One is Abinadi. It's interesting to look at Abinadi's experience because we see a but if not that works out at first, then it doesn't. When Mosiah 13, they try to lay their hands on him. They want to take him, they want to kill him. Abinadi says, "Touch me not, for God shall smite you if you lay your hands on me." And then they don't. He is able to survive because he says, I'm not done. I've not told you what God has told me to tell you. This isn't going to work out for you or the way you want it to. Right there is a moment of but if not that works out.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:30:36 It is a happy, at least temporary ending. But then just fast-forward a few verses in Mosiah 17, we read in 20, these words are sealed with his death. We have this other example of course of but if not being maybe a sad ending is one way to say it, but a good example of people whose faith was strong despite the consequences. John, I know you're the savant here with the Book of Mormon. Could you just summarize what we have here with Alma 14 with Alma and Amulek? There's a but statement there even where Alma says at the end, "But behold, our work is not finished." But John, could you just summarize that?

Hank Smith: 00:31:17 Ben, you called on the right guy.

John Bytheway: 00:31:20 There was a man who used to work for the church's audiovisual department who put together, he wanted to put together an audio version of the Book of Mormon where every different character was read by a different voice. It's a free app. You can get it, push the headphones, it'll be read to you. And that's a really great voices for Isaiah and Jesus. I got to be Amulek. That was really meaningful for me. And it was hard to read because of exactly what you are talking about. To summarize the story, Alma goes to Ammonihah and they spit on him and they cast him out. He's inspired to go to the home of Amulek. He says, you have a crust of bread for a servant of the Lord. Amulek is like, yeah, I know who you are. I was going to visit a near kin and an angel visited me and said, go home.

John Bytheway:	00:32:10	You're going to feed a prophet of the Lord tonight. And my name is Amulek. Alma stayed there for a while. And then the Lord told him, Go back to Ammonihah. And they did. And this horrible event happens. There's believers, and it sounds like it's the men of the believers. They're cast out. And then they brought out the women and the children of the believers and put them in a bonfire and made Alma and Amulek watch. And they also burned up the records. Amulek says, How can we witness this awful scene? Let us stretch forth our hands and exercise the power of God which is in us and save them from the flame. So he knows God is able. This is when Alma says, "The spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth my hand. For behold, the Lord receiveth them up unto himself in glory."
John Bytheway:	00:32:58	And then Amalek says, "Perhaps they will burn us also." Alma says, "Be it according to the will of the Lord, but behold, our work is not yet finished. Therefore, they burn us not." Here's we tried to bring the gospel and look what's happening. But what did Alma say? The Lord receiveth them up unto himself in glory. I love that you brought up Abinadi. Azariah, Hananiah, Mishael, saved from the flames, but Abinadi wasn't, but he knew where he was going. God received my soul.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:33:32	I think that's the but if not that we could almost add into any of these. This is what I'm going to do, but if not, God will receive my soul. I hope that as people have listened to this, they've thought of their own moments. The Bikman family, we had our own moment. I'll never forget as an eight-year-old boy, my dad coming home from a hospital visit with my mom and having us all kneel, all nine of us little reddish haired, freckled kids kneel to pray for our mom who'd just been diagnosed with cancer. She didn't survive. She struggled for three years. Of the few memories I have of my saintly mom, it's her, I'm getting sicker and sicker. I think about how much praying and fasting our whole little town did for Susie Bikman. And there was a but if not that didn't work out the way we...
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:34:25	Our version of it, it didn't work out the way we'd hoped. I think my mom would have said, God, please save me. I have nine kids to raise, but if not, receive my spirit and please let me pull my kids while my dad would be pushing us all towards her and towards heaven. In fact, some of my older brothers who were, I guess, colorful characters when they were in their teenage years roaming Southern Alberta, they've told me that that moment was a galvanizing

moment for them that they said, "Well, I don't know if this eternal family idea is true, but if there's any chance that it is, I'd better walk this covenant path." One in particular when it happened, he said, "All right, well, I'm going to go on a mission. I don't know if it's true, but I'm going to do it." They're all still faithful members of the church to this day.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:35:15 May that continue. There's a lot that goes into such things, but all of that actually reminded me of a talk by President Oaks, his Healing the Sick talk in 2010 where he said that he listened to a talk that his brother gave at the funeral of a teenage girl. What he said impressed me because what President Oaks said, referring to his brother, he said, "He spoke these words which first astonished me and then edified me." And the words were what he said was, "I know it was the will of the Lord that she die. She had good medical care. She was given priesthood blessings. Her name was on the prayer roll in the temple. She was the subject of hundreds of prayers for her restoration to health. And I know that there's enough faith in this family that she would've been healed unless it was the will of the Lord to take her home at the time." I think about, again, my family.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:36:07 I hope that people listening may have their own examples of this. I struggled though. When I was an 11-year-old boy, I was never angry at God, but I wasn't happy about it, of course. Who would've been happy about it? I wasn't angry, but I couldn't believe that it would've been his will for her to die. I thought that can't be his will. It's just life happens. Mortality happens and sometimes things just happen. This talk by President Oaks has forced me to revisit that, that our circumstances are exactly what was described here with this young woman, that we were fasting, we were praying, yet the outcome wasn't what we'd hoped for. But there's a but if not that is continuing to play out that I believe there is a happy ending to this. May that happy ending of course be a reunion of all the reddish-haired freckled Bikmans with their dear mom.

Hank Smith: 00:37:01 Thank you, Ben. Wow.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:37:04 I wonder whether President Oaks would share his own version of but if not with his dad. It's touching to see even President Oaks just recently in his talk talking about the death of his dad and how touching that is. I look at this great-grandpa, maybe he's two greats by now, and how it's still so touching for him. I sometimes think, will I ever be

		able to talk about this and not get a little choked up? And I look at him and think, no, probably not.
Hank Smith:	00:37:29	That's exactly what I was going to mention. Here he is in his 90s. Speaking of that moment when he found out his father had passed away, he remembers where he ran, what his grandfather said.
John Bytheway:	00:37:43	Ben, you remind me, we just got done with the book of Job recently and Job was amazing. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. I'm no Job. I don't know how these people do it, these inspiring examples we've got. To be able to say thy will be done is incredibly courageous.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:38:01	What I hope people can appreciate is the importance of this commitment, this use of moral agency. I actually wanted to share a quote from a talk that has impacted me probably more than any other single message. In October 1996 where Elder Maxwell or Neil A. Maxwell gave a talk called According to the Desire of Our Hearts, this talk left such an impression on me that I actually ripped it out of the Ensign at the time, and I still have it to this day folded in my scriptures. So as much as I was blessed by it, I shudder at the idea that I deprived any subsequent missionaries from being equally blessed because that talk was no longer found in that copy of the Ensign in that little apartment. I was the mission secretary when we had a mission president die and then we had two elders get kidnapped and held for ransom.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:38:54	I remember when we got that ransom letter, it was just us four office elders. So we didn't have a mission president. He had died. They had moved a CES couple into the mission home just so that there were some grownups in the room. That's when that happened. Yeah, I was a mission secretary at the time.
John Bytheway:	00:39:11	That's that movie, the Saratov approach, that movie?
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:39:16	Yeah, that's right. Elders Probst and Tuttle. It was a sobering time, but that's part of why I was in the office for one year is that there was a lot of excitement. We just kept the ship afloat. But all this to say, I developed a deep affection for Elder Maxwell. And in that talk in October 96, he says, "Of course our genes, circumstances and environments matter very much and they shape us significantly, yet there remains an inner zone in which we are sovereign unless we abdicate. In this zone lies the essence of our individuality and our personal accountability." That is not only a beautiful way to

wrap up that theme of moral agency, but I'm also going to use that as a segue as we transition into theme two, which is a stewardship of the body. As we move on to theme two, this is a big one.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:40:10 I'm going to exercise some restraint because this is where as a metabolic scientist, I have a lot I could talk about, the stewardship of the bodies. I'll share some of my insight and people will know that I'm exercising tremendous restraint by not having this be the next several hours of me just preaching the metabolic gospel here. But with regards to a stewardship of the body, I just want to start by sharing some sentiments by Elder Bednar, a talk that he gave in 2000 actually at Ricks at the time, BYU Idaho. He said, "Interestingly, I've heard many people both outside and inside the church declare it's my body and I can do to it what I want. The correct doctrinal response to such a statement is quite simple. No, your body is not your own. It is on loan from God." That helps us frame this theme of a stewardship for the body as we look at how Daniel is an example of this.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:41:06 And that brings us actually back to Daniel 1, where we see these familiar verses where earlier we had read Daniel 1:5, the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat and of the wine which he drank. But in verse eight, Hank, actually, I think you might have it right there. Could you read verse eight?

Hank Smith: 00:41:25 This is back in chapter one, correct?

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:41:29 Yeah, we're going all the way back to one.

Hank Smith: 00:41:30 I'm going to read Daniel 1:8 this time in the NIV, New International Version. "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way."

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:41:46 That word defile is what matters most here. In this theme, I want to revisit our version of what my Jewish cousins would refer to as kashrut or this dietary law, but there's more to it here, which is again this law of idolatry that if you look at the Institute manual actually, it gives us some pretty clear insight here where we can conclude that Daniel choosing not to eat the king's meat or drink the king's wine is not about Daniel not being a meat eater. We shouldn't look at this and say, "Well, he is kind of pseudo-vegetarian." In fact, this was just because any food that has the potential or has

been offered to an idol, whether it is wine or meat, violates this law of idolatry. Within that still may be a principle of kashrut or what we call kosher, and kosher just means that you're being proper.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:42:42 So Daniel is keeping kosher and his brothers by not eating this. But also when it comes to wine, even if it hadn't been offered to an idol, which again, the Institute manual suggests it probably was, it needs to be prepared in a very specific way by very specific people with meat. He could be declining the king's meat again because it's been offered or has the potential to be offered to an idol, which breaks that law of idolatry, but it may also be that it's not been slaughtered or processed in the proper way according to these kashrut laws. When we talk about being kosher, we should see our own version of it in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, what we call the word of wisdom. But it's important that people not read into this the wrong way, that this is Daniel and his brothers avoiding breaking their version of the word of wisdom, breaking the laws of idolatry or the laws of diet in the way in which meat and wine is prepared.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:43:46 There's a very strict process for both, but it's important that we understand the reason why they aren't doing it. It's not that they don't like wine, it's not that they don't like meat because later on, in fact, we do see an example of Daniel. We see proof that he does in fact eat meat, but they don't want to defile themselves. This is a funny moment for me to bring up the example of some of my Jewish cousins that we were fairly close with growing up in Alberta. They're Jews. They're not Orthodox, but they keep kosher for the most part. My Jewish cousin would say, "Well, yeah, we keep kosher except for Chinese food. We have to eat bacon when we're camping." That was his version of the word of wisdom for them. But I think it's important that we appreciate how I think we can understand the word of wisdom a little differently.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:44:34 Dare I say a little better. It's us not defiling ourselves, our spirits or our bodies, but what's common across, whether it's my Jewish cousins or whether it's the LDS side of the Bikman family, it's that in both instances, God has asked his covenant people to be peculiar. Just like I may look at my Jewish cousins and say, "Well, why aren't you eating pork?" They would say, "Well, why aren't you drinking coffee?" In both instances, we're peculiar, but I will say I have had more gospel related conversations come up in my life because I

don't drink coffee than any other stimulus. Nothing has generated more church-related conversations than me adhering to the word of wisdom with something as simple as not drinking coffee. But that's what I think we see with Daniel and his brothers. They are following this peculiar law that there's nothing wrong health-wise with that meat.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:45:31 There was nothing wrong health-wise with that wine, but it's how it would've been prepared. Is it breaking God's laws at that time? And they were, according to what we know.

Hank Smith: 00:45:43 This happened to me, John, Ben, just the other day. I was in Mombasa, Kenya. It was a big group of Latter-day Saints, and one of the hotel workers came up to me, very kind. He said, "Is there something wrong with the coffee?" And I said, "I wouldn't know." And he said, "I've noticed that no one in your group is drinking the coffee. Is there something wrong with it?" I said, "Oh, no, no, not at all. It's a religious thing." He said, "What religion is that?" We talked for a minute, and he ended up wanting a copy of the Book of Mormon in Swahili, peculiarity.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:46:18 It is peculiar.

Hank Smith: 00:46:20 That's got to be part of why the Lord wants us to do it. I want you to stand out.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:46:23 It sets us apart. I've thought so much about that as our little darling daughter was set apart as a missionary. I felt almost that she's not mine right now. She's set apart. She's in someone else's hands. It was hard for me. I miss her so much. We think this sets us apart from the world in a way that, yeah, it's a little uncomfortable. Yeah, it's a little quirky. It's weird. It's peculiar. And peculiarity breeds curiosity. There's an opportunity there.

Hank Smith: 00:46:53 I'm glad you said that, Ben, because we often miss that. Well, how come this part of the word of wisdom, how come you live this part, but not this part? I think we forget that yes, there is health benefits, but they're also a big part of it is I want Israel to be different in certain ways. They're going to be different.

John Bytheway: 00:47:10 It's a really good way to be set apart, to be peculiar, to be different. Whether or not there is a huge health benefit, I don't know. But what I know is, and what the saints in the 1840s and 1850s, they didn't have all the science that we do

now, but what they knew is it set them apart. You're going to be different.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:47:32 Just like it made Daniel and his brothers peculiar, it does the same with us in our day.

Hank Smith: 00:47:37 I want to throw in something here for my friend, Brother Anthony Sweat. By the way, no one should be that talented and that good looking. It is unfair. Listen, if you're out there, Anthony, it's just too hard. We compare ourselves. This is from his Instagram, "A word about the word of wisdom," he says. "A key to ask in order to understand any Doctrine & Covenants revelation is this. What was the context that caused the revelatory question?" The issue on Joseph Smith's mind in the winter of 1833 was not, "How can I make people more healthy, but instead, how can I make people more holy?" The word of wisdom came for the elders in the school of the prophets where they were seeking to become sanctified to see the face of God. That's Doctrine Covenants 88:68. When we make the word of wisdom only about health benefits, we can get confused.

Hank Smith: 00:48:27 When hundreds of scientific studies show certain health benefits of moderate tea, coffee, or alcohol consumption, if the word of wisdom were only about health, it would say something like, Thou shalt refrain from refined sugars or thou shalt plank. Surely, the Lord offers health blessings for living the word of wisdom, but its purposes are to prepare for endowment, to be in the presence of God, to reveal his hidden mysteries. Its purpose is to create conditions that bring that about, self-restraint, discipline, clarity of mind. Its purpose is to help mark you as modern Israel as Doctrine and Covenants 89:21 suggests. Tea, coffee, tobacco, alcohol are ubiquitous in any society. When you refrain from those things, it sets you apart as a peculiar person. If someone says, "Why don't you drink tea or coffee?" Don't say, "Because it's a sin or it's unhealthy." Say something like, "Because we believe God has told us to refrain from some common consumptions, and in doing so, it shows dedication to God and developed self-control for which we believe he will bless us." Never forget the context that brought the word of wisdom.

Hank Smith: 00:49:36 It's not just a health code, it's a holiness code. The word of wisdom was and is a tool for revelation, a means to help discipline and sanctify and create an environment for endowment then and now.

Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:49:50	That quote is a wonderful way for us to transition still in this theme of respect for your body, whereas the first part of it was don't defile it. Now I think it would be, if you guys will allow me and Hank, I think I'll take that as a blessing with that quote you just read. This is a nice opportunity for us to talk about D&C 89. But before I do so, let me just make one last comment about Daniel and his body. I do think it's important for us to appreciate that by keeping his body undefiled, he opened himself up to greater revelation, that that undefiled state of his body leads to a more revelatory life. I don't think it's a coincidence. I don't think we see in Daniel both coincidentally a good example of not defiling yourself and one who is extraordinarily receptive to the spirit.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:50:39	No, those two things are going to come together. With D&C 89 in mind, this is a good opportunity for us to talk about meat and D&C 89. Now, I want to approach this topic very, very carefully because I know there are people who feel very strongly about D&C 89. I take the topic very seriously, not only just as a scientist who studies health and metabolic health in particular, but also just because of some very difficult situations that have been thrown my way where I, for example, almost lost my job here at BYU because of my research. There was a group on campus who considered my work on ketones and carbohydrates to be, which I'll get into in a little bit and people will understand a little more. They deemed it so, I guess, offensive or problematic that I was pre-tenure or BYU's version of it at the time, and I had to defend my job.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:51:42	I was accused of being a bad scientist and not following church doctrine. I took that second one actually a little harder than the first one even. I thought, well, my temple recommend I think is pretty valid, but regardless, this has made me think very carefully about D&C 89. What is it and what isn't it? Hank, I think in part of what you read there, I think we can see what it is not, which is D&C 89 is not a diet. There was this wonderful quote by Elder Cook in 2003, his talk called Looking Beyond the Mark. He says, "Another sign of spiritual immaturity and sometimes apostasy," those are some strong words, "is when one focuses on certain gospel principles or pursues gospel hobbies with excess zeal. Almost any virtue taken to excess can become a vice." And he goes on to say, "An example might be when one advocates additions to the word of wisdom that are not authorized by the brethren and proselytes others to adopt these interpretations.

Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:52:44	If we turn a health law or any other principle into a form of religious fanaticism," he concludes, "We are looking beyond the mark." President Packer in April 96 gave a talk about the word of wisdom. It was called the Word of Wisdom: The Principle and the Promises. It's a wonderful talk. Anyone who's curious about this topic, I hope they'll read it. He just emphasizes the word principle, that that's how it's stated in D&C 89:3, given for a principle with promise. He says that word principle in the revelation is a very important one. A principle is an enduring truth, a law, a rule you can adopt to guide you in making decisions. He says they're not spelled out in more detail and that leaves you to find your way. He says jokingly, "There are many habit-forming addictive things that one can drink or chew or inhale or inject which injure both body and spirit, which are not mentioned in the revelation." And this comes back to my point that a direct reading of the word of wisdom, the word of wisdom as it is applied where it matters, which is in, say for example, a temple recommend question where part of what I've had to deal with as a metabolic scientist and then reconcile and learn about on my own is people literally interpreting D&C 89 verse 12, where that word sparingly has given me...
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:54:06	There's no adverb in all of scripture that has plagued a scientist more than that word has plagued me, where I have gotten emails and phone calls from members of the church. And I've always addressed this very respectfully, but it's gotten to the point of exasperation where President Benson gave us the clearest understanding of just that one single word where he said in his talk, Principle with a Promise in April 1983, he says that the Lord is counseling us to avoid the indiscriminate killing of animals. "Woe be unto man that sheddeth blood or wasteth flesh and hath no need." I think that could be applied to any sentiment when it comes to what we consume because it's a fact of life that everything living is sustained by something that died. Whether that death was a plant or an animal, when we pray over our food, I think a part of that prayer should be acknowledging that we are living because of something having died, whether it's a plant or whether it's an animal.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	00:55:15	For some people, because the animal is more obviously alive than the plant is, they find that somewhat difficult to reconcile. But I think it's sad that this should be an opportunity for us to see, I hope this isn't irreverent to say, but almost a health physical version of the atonement that where we can acknowledge that my life exists because of the sustenance I receive from this thing that died. Use that

as an example or a lesson, a metaphor of the atonement where we see Christ's death, his atonement, he suffered, he died for me, and it gives me new life.

John Bytheway: 00:55:56 Beautiful. I never thought of it that way. Thank you.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:55:59 It's important that people appreciate that if someone reads into D&C 89 as an anti-meat scripture or an anti-meat diet, they need to balance that with D&C 49 where the Lord is very clear to the prophet Joseph. In D&C 49 verse 18, he says, "And whoso forbiddeth to abstain from meats that man should not eat the same is not ordained of God." Now, I want to say that carefully and make sure that I'm being clear where I'm not saying that... I don't think the Lord is condemning someone who chooses not to eat meat. Where I think the revelation is clear is that if there's a member of the church who has decided not to eat meat, they've perceived their own higher law of the word of wisdom, then I think that's fine for them to embrace and live. But here I think the Lord is quite clear where he says, "If you start to command others or to proselyte this idea, then you've gone a little too far." I'll put it more softly than the Lord did to the prophet Joseph, lest it seem like I'm condemning.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 00:57:07 What I'm trying to convey is there is no such thing as the word of wisdom diet. Reading D&C 89, if you try to find a diet, it will not work. Even if someone has celiac disease and they can't eat wheat, well, you're in trouble because in verse 17 it says wheat for man and they will say, "Well, I eat oats." Well, you can't. Oats are for the horse. Well, then I'll eat corn. Well, can't, corn's for the ox. Now again, I'm being a little cheeky, but not to be irreverent from the very beginning of the word of wisdom being a part of the temple recommend questions, it was only ever understood to be the short list of habit-forming substances.

Hank Smith: 00:57:48 Ben, I'm so grateful you're bringing up context. John, that's one of the benefits of having the guests that we do is so often they bring context to understanding scripture. I wanted to throw one thing out at anybody who's interested. An article written by my friend, Andrew H. Hedges out of BYU, this is a BYU studies article called A Forbearance of Restraint: American Wildlife and the Word of Wisdom. The dates that he's covering in his article are 1560 to 1833, When the Revelation is Given. He gives a history of the United States and their use of meat and the reasons for hunting and how people in Joseph Smith's day and before saw and treated wildlife. This is just part of his conclusion

here. He says, "Much of Joseph Smith's February 1833 revelation known as the word of wisdom echoed the popular culture of the time." He talks about alcohol, tobacco, hot drinks, meat.

Hank Smith: 00:58:47 These were similar to some of the ideas being promoted in the temperance movement. However," Andy writes, "In stark contrast to the popular culture stands the revelation's instruction regarding wild animals. The sentiment in these instructions was very different from that which prevailed at the time and that had become entrenched over the previous 200 years. The revelation's doctrine on the use of wildlife was very similar to the other things Smith taught that challenged centuries, old assumptions, ideas, and practices. Though the instruction regarding wildlife may have attracted less attention than other teachings, these ideas on wild animals were just as foreign to current thinking as his teachings on a host of other topics such as the nature of God, heaven, hell, premortality, priesthood authority, ordinances, and marriage. Smith's revelation regarding wildlife constituted for that time an entirely new way of thinking about humans' relationships with other creatures. Again, article from Andy Hedges, Forbearance on Restraint: American Wildlife and the Word of Wisdom.

Hank Smith: 00:59:52 That article from Andy, we'll have the great Lisa Spice put that in our show notes. You just go to followhim.co. You'll have all our show notes from the episode, hearing you Ben Elder Causee, Bishop Causee at the time. Our heavenly Father allows us to use earthly resources according to our own free will, yet our agency should not be interpreted as license to use or consume the riches of this world without wisdom or constraint. It is a sacred responsibility entrusted to us by God and an integral component of our discipleship. Thanks, Ben. It's a shout out to context. It's so crucial.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:00:30 Yep. To help everyone remember, the context here being Daniel, his decisions to not defile himself by breaking God's commandments at the time, and then me sort of using that as an opportunity to provide a view of the word of wisdom that I think is helpful for current members of the church. Before we finish up this thought about meat, I just wanted to touch on or point a finger to how entrenched these views are, where as I was preparing some of these thoughts, I found an article that had been published in The Ensign a number of years ago. I don't want to give specifics because I don't want it to sound like I'm condemning too much of it. It was actually a sad experience for me to see some of these

statements that were made that push a view of the word of wisdom, that it's very anti-meat and that it's essentially kind of a pseudo-vegetarian lifestyle.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:01:24 Where in this article it mentioned that meat is limited in nutrient value, which is just shockingly wrong. As deeply entrenched as some of these thoughts are, indeed to the point that there are Ensign, maybe at least one article a number of years ago, over a decade ago, that it's just sharing information that as a scientist I can't not respond to where meat, ruminant meat especially is among the most nutrient dense food on the planet. You think of things like vitamin B12 or heme iron or zinc or activated bioavailable forms of different vitamins like vitamin K or vitamin D. Ruminant meat or in fact any animal, almost all animal products, but especially ruminant meat contains literally every essential amino acid, essential because the human body needs it. It contains every essential fat, these omega-3 fats that are so important to our health, you don't get those from plant sources.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:02:25 They have to come from animal sources. A final thought here then is a quote by Elder Bednar, where when we want to understand the word of wisdom and even understand why Daniel was so diligent about not defiling his body, Elder Bednar in January 2000, another talk at BYU Idaho, it was entitled Ye Are the Temple of God. He's quoting a lot from President Packer. He said, "Our physical body is the instrument of our spirit. In that marvelous revelation, the word of wisdom, we are told how to keep our bodies free from impurities, which might dull, even destroy those delicate physical senses which have to do with spiritual communication." Then he goes on to say, "The word of wisdom is a key to individual revelation. If we abuse our body with habit-forming substances or misuse prescription drugs, we draw curtains which close off the light of spiritual communication." And that to me teaches us what I believe the word of wisdom is really about, and that is addiction.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:03:28 And President Nelson has some wonderful comments on this. He's taught if you yield to anything that can addict and thus defy the word of wisdom, your spirit surrenders to the body. The flesh then enslaves the spirit. This is contrary to the purpose of your mortal existence. He says in another talk in the late '90s, "As children of God, we should not let anything enter the body that might defile it", back to this central principle with Daniel and his brothers, "to allow sensors of sight, touch, or hearing to supply the brain with

unclean memories is a sacrilege." And then a final President Nelson quote, thanks for humoring me, was his Think Celestial talk in October 23 where he says, "Any addiction, be it gaming, gambling, debt, drugs, alcohol, anger, pornography, sex, or even food offends God. Why? Because your obsession becomes your God. You look to it rather than to him for solace."

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:04:26 If you struggle with an addiction, then he says, seek the help you need. Do not let an obsession rob you of your freedom or your moral agency, we could say, to follow God's fabulous plan. If someone's wondering about a higher law, when I hear that temple recommend question, do you understand and obey the word of wisdom? What I apply to myself is Ben, what are you addicted to and what are you doing to control those addictions? I don't think about the amount of meat I'm eating or whether I'm eating fruits and vegetables in season. No, none of that. It may have to do with how much media I'm consuming, how much am I on my phone, how much am I drinking Diet Dr. Pepper? That's what I think about when I answer that question. But we should, in answering the question, think of it as that minimal law, that lower law of these habit-forming substances.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:05:17 So I wouldn't want for someone who drinks a lot of Diet Coke to say, "Oh, well, I guess I'm not temple worthy." I don't mean to suggest that, but that's what I think about when I think about the word of wisdom in its purest sense. What are you addicted to and what are you doing to control those addictions?

John Bytheway: 01:05:33 I remember one of my professors, Joseph Fielding McConkie said, "If you're high on drugs, you're low on agency." I think he was trying to say, this isn't as much about health or not totally about health, it's about agency. Back when they didn't know all the science that you're talking about, it was about agency then as well. It was about being set apart.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:05:55 Just so that everyone understands the scientific view, there is evidence to suggest that food addiction is a real thing, that in 2009, some scientists developed what's called the Yale Food Addiction Scale, which was designed to map addictive eating. This same group a few years later found that among all the types of foods a person could eat, the most addictive were the ones that were the most processed, refined carbohydrates, what's called the high glycemic index carbohydrates. If it's a carbohydrate-heavy food and it comes in a bag or a box with a barcode, then it's one to be

careful with. Hank, earlier we joked about you having some pints of ice cream in your freezer. I have learned over time, I am an addict, but my darling wife, Cheryl, is a moderator. I can come home on a Saturday night with two pints of ice cream, one for Cheryl and one for Ben.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:06:55 I cannot stop eating that ice cream until I get all the way to the bottom, but Cheryl has this almost alien-like ability to pop the top, eat a few dainty bites, put the lid back on and put it back in the freezer. And I look at her with such wonder because I can't do that. Allow me to quote a Catholic saint. St. Augustine said it very well. He said, "Abstinence is easier than perfect moderation." When it comes to certain foods, I've learned that I'm an addict, that if it's cereal, something as benign as a bowl of cereal, something as benign as a pint of ice cream, I don't have the ability to stop, that it's easier for me to not start than it is to have perfect moderation. When I'm pointing the finger and condemning certain foods, and I will more in just a moment, when we talk about the...

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:07:48 Come back to Daniel chapter one and talk about why he was fatter in flesh, I don't want people to think that I'm saying we can never eat them, but I do think it's in some people's best interest to acknowledge that they actually have an addiction. It may be better for them to not even start indulging in any given moment and be honest about their addiction and more realistic about it than it is for them to expect themselves to be able to stop when they just feel a little content that they might not stop until they can't physically put another bite in their body.

Hank Smith: 01:08:19 Ben, I can hear our listeners, they're calling to me, "Hank, represent us."

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:08:26 Well, but I'm represented here too, Hank. I want to make sure people know that as much as I know these ideas, I want people to appreciate the difference between knowledge and application. In fact, one of the classes I teach at BYU, I would do what I call the Morianton Project where we'll recall in Ether chapter 10 verse 11, Morianton did justice unto the people, but not unto himself. And that scripture blasted into my brain one time when I was getting my PhD, I would have to ride my bike to campus on the opposite side of the hospital where I actually did most of my research because the hospital sidewalk was filled with nurses and doctors who were out smoking. And I was so struck by that. They would go in to visit with the patient and say, "All right, patient, you have heart disease and you have an early stage lung cancer,

		you need to stop smoking while the stench of cigarettes is on their very clinical attire that they wear into the visit." So I've thought about what has pricked my conscience and helped motivate me is that if I'm going to get up in front of an audience and talk about health and obesity and diabetes, do I understand these principles?
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:09:38	I do. Do I live them? I sure as heck better because I don't want to be guilty like Morianton was where he knew it was right and he taught it, but he didn't do it. I want people to appreciate the difference between knowledge. It's one thing to know these things, but it is entirely separate to actually do them. Again, I approach this topic with a tremendous amount of empathy, knowing that there is a real thing called a food addiction. As much as I'm starting to point the finger at one particular type of food, I wouldn't want people to feel condemned that I know it's difficult because it's an addiction or at least a deep-seated habit that can be very hard to break.
Hank Smith:	01:10:18	John and I do not have your expertise, but it seems that if I'm selling these things and I know I can make them more addictive and I can make more money, that sounds a little bit like, what did the Lord say? Conspiring men.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:10:31	Oh, I was just going to say the same thing. In D&C 89, we're warned, and I think that comes back to this idea of addiction, that there are people in the world who will benefit from our addictions. Don't let them benefit from you, this idea of some things are better that you just abstain from.
Hank Smith:	01:10:49	Yeah. Ben, if I'm driving in my car or I'm sitting listening, I'm going, "Oh man, I did not want to have this pressure put on me today." One, don't go into shame.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:10:58	Oh, yes.
Hank Smith:	01:11:00	And two, take one positive step. President Hinckley, try a little harder, be a little better. Ben, could you give me a one positive step? I'm a guy that you said I am a... I'm not a moderator. What was the other one?
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:11:13	Addict. That's the only other option.

Hank Smith:	01:11:15	I am not a moderator. My wife, absolutely. I don't know how someone can have a bag of candy in their office and it just sits there. I'm an addict. I had to say it out loud, John.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:11:26	Yeah. My name's Hank Smith. I'm an addict.
Hank Smith:	01:11:30	I'm with you. I almost see a carton of ice cream as a task. I've got to be the hero of this story. What's a positive step? Give me something to choose from that I can say, "I can do that. I can take that step."
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:11:41	I'd like to actually answer that back in the context of Daniel, because I think he gives us an insight into a way of eating that helps us be at least a little leaner. This is Daniel 1, back to chapter one, where we read him choosing not to defile himself, does not eat the king's meat. What he did was eat pulse over this period. Now you guys, you may have more of a religious education view of what pulse is. When I looked into it, it seems like it can be anything that is plant or even made with plants. I saw some description where it was even things baked with grains and seeds. Whatever it is, it's funny for me to talk about this, but Hank, you opened with this. In verse 15, chapter one, what we see is that Daniel has conducted a 10-day experiment with him and his brothers by choosing not to defile himself by eating the king's meat and eating more of this plant-based diet, presumably, that's on the limited amount we have.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:12:39	At the end of this 10-day experiment, they were fairer, which I think we could say is they looked good. They looked better. I think the Hebrew word was tov or good, but it says in every translation I could find, it uses the word fatter in some form. I think it's fair to say that they had more body fat, which is essential. Let me say this upfront. As an obesity fat cell scientist, humans are designed to have a lot of body fat. We need it. We are the only land-based mammal born fat. Take that as an interesting fact, everybody. We are born obese. We're the only land-based mammal born obese. Even a relatively lean human, in fact, a very lean human of, let's say, 15% body fat, that makes him or her, that's very low for a woman, but that makes him essentially among still the fattest animals on the planet, that humans are just designed to have more fat than other animals.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:13:38	I'll revisit that in a moment when we talk about fasting, but I think this was probably looked at as a good thing, but it doesn't change the fact that every interpretation, when you look at the Greek or Hebrew words, it does use the word fat.

What was it about their 10-day diet? This is where I can come back to the problem with carbohydrates, and Hank, answer your question that this is such a big topic for me, and so I am exercising maximal restraint, but it lends itself to asking the question, what is it that makes a human body gain or lose fat? The traditional view has always been it's just calories. It's energy, energy in, energy out, eat less, exercise more. But there's another component to understanding the physiology of fat cells, which is hormones, namely very specifically the humble hormone, insulin. Insulin is absolutely essential for a human body storing and retaining fat.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:14:37 Let me just share an analogy to help people understand why the calorie alone view doesn't work. Let's imagine John Bytheway is inviting everyone over to his home for a beautiful dinner. It's a buffet. He has the best chefs coming over, preparing some of the most delicious food. John's invitation says, "Come hungry because you're going to want to try it." Everyone listening, think about this for a moment. Before we go to John's house, what would you do to ensure you came to his home as hungry as possible? I bet you'd do two things. You would eat a little less in the days before the event and you would exercise a little more. It would work perfectly. You would be very, very hungry, but appreciate the problem because the caloric view of human obesity and body fat is eat less, exercise more. We just said that's the perfect formula to come to John's house as hungry as possible, but it's also the perfect formula for losing weight.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:15:37 Well, because it's not the perfect formula for losing weight. The more we continue to tell people that it's purely just a matter of thermodynamics and calories, then the more it will continue to lead them into this cycle of eat less, exercise more, and I'm losing some weight, but then hunger comes back and hunger always wins. It's because the weight loss strategy has to account for insulin and it's refined carbohydrates, these refined starches and sugars that will spike insulin the most because a lot of that carbohydrate turns into glucose or blood sugar, then insulin has to spike. Insulin will, yes, it will help lower the blood sugar, but when insulin goes up, the moment insulin goes up, it starts defending fat cells. It starts defending the fat cell and not letting the fat cell break down its fat. Hank, this all is my long-winded way of coming back to your question, what is it that a person could do?

Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:16:31	Presuming the person is wanting to just be healthier metabolically, which is my frame of reference here, then you need to change the way you eat. Don't count your calories, but focus on what those calories will do to the hormone insulin. Part of the problem of our modern view, at least in North America of the word of wisdom, oddly enough, has put many members of the church in a worse position where we have become so good at avoiding these specific habit-forming substances that a research article published by BYU found that members of the LDS church within the state of Utah are 15% more likely to have higher body fat levels than non-LDS residents in the state of Utah. That's of course a worrying thing that we believe the body is so important. They actually posited this idea that it's a substitution effect. This phenomenon is likely born from what I just mentioned, that we've become very good at avoiding these habit-forming substances, but we've replaced them with other things that make us feel good.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:17:36	Now, I don't want to equate the two. A man who is drinking too much alcohol, he's a danger to himself and his family and those around him. No one who overeats ice cream is a danger to those around them. They're not going to come home ice cream drunk and be a nuisance in the family or in the home. So I don't want to equate them, but I do think it's a quirk of our culture that we've become so good at avoiding these things, these particular vices, that we've actually ended up putting ourself in a position to embrace other vices. It's so ingrained in the culture that we actually will pray over these vices and ask Heavenly Father and bless us with health when what we're praying over is a plate of brownies and ice cream.
Hank Smith:	01:18:18	I have to tell you both a story. I just remembered this. I was with a youth leader. It was years ago, and if he hears this, he'll probably text me, really yummy dessert we were having and I just couldn't stop, like we talked about earlier, bit of an addict. All right, I'm an addict. And there was plenty of it. They're like, "Take some home. We have extra." And I noticed that my friend was not. He had had one, and I said, "Did you not like it?" And he said, "I loved it." I'm like, "Well, there's 4,000 more. Let's go get more." And he said, "No, I'm just going to have one." I said, "Now you make me feel bad. Why are you only having one?" And this is what he said, and he wasn't trying to make me feel ashamed. He really wasn't. We're friends.

Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:19:00	No, it was you just wanting a partner in crime. That's human nature.
Hank Smith:	01:19:03	This is what he said. He said, "I have found, how can I tell young men to avoid immorality and pornography, which are an appetite, if I cannot control the appetites that plague me?" He said, "I want to go over there, but I'm not going to because I want to be able to teach with a little more power." And of course I was like, "Meh," and I went and ate some more, but I have never forgotten it. I want to be able to teach appetites and passions should be kept within the bounds-
John Bytheway:	01:19:35	Bridle your passions.
Hank Smith:	01:19:36	-the Lord has set. Bridle your passions.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:19:38	Hank, that sentiment though, what you just shared is beautiful, in fact, as a segue for transitioning to fasting, because I think in the book of Daniel, we see the power of fasting from a spiritual perspective because Daniel, as we read through this, in fact, King Darius is an example of this as well, where the first actual instance of fasting we read with him, which I'll get to in just a moment. But just to segue a little more smoothly from what you had just said, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin in a talk entitled The Law of the Fast, he said, "Fasting and prayer can help develop within us courage and confidence. They can strengthen our character and build self-restraint and discipline. Each time we fast, we gain a little more control over our worldly appetites and passions." And then Elder Carl B. Pratt in 2004 said, "Fasting can help us overcome personal flaws and sins.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:20:33	It can help us become more humble, less prideful, less selfish, and more concerned about the needs of others. Fasting combined with prayer brings increased spiritual power. As much as we often look at a fast as just a way to lose a little weight or to give a generous fast offering, I think these sentiments are so powerful where if there is a young man or not so young person struggling with immorality, as much as they are struggling with that one thing, I would almost say, well, what is something that you don't struggle with as much that you could still exercise some restraint in? Maybe the one young person struggling with morality, maybe I almost hate to say this, lest it lead to some sort of disordered eating, please take it in the spirit with which it's intended. "I wonder whether structured, healthy fasts would be a way for that person to develop greater restraint.

Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:21:33	So what I'm saying is I think that where someone can develop greater restraint in one realm, be it physical or spiritual or mental, if I can carve out a separate one there, it lends itself to greater restraint in a different category. Could someone be using intelligent structured fasts as a way of developing discipline and have that help them with their pornography addiction? I think it could. Or their Instagram addiction. In the quotes I just read from Elder Wirthlin and Elder Pratt I do think there is a power that goes beyond just the physical when it comes to fasting.
Hank Smith:	01:22:11	Yeah, I remember Stephen Covey once said, "A day that begins with a victory is on its way to many more."
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:22:17	Oh, that's good.
John Bytheway:	01:22:18	Make a commitment, keep it.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:22:20	The first instance of fasting we read in the book of Daniel is in fact King Darius. It's when Daniel's been thrown into the lion's den, which we read earlier, Daniel's distinct version of Mishael, Hananiah and Azariah being thrown into the furnace. The king is the first instance of fasting where it says in Daniel 6:18, "The king went to his palace and passed the night fasting. Neither were instruments of music brought before him and his sleep went from him." Not only is this an example of fasting, an instance of a man who's very sincere and focused on a particular outcome and maybe seeking the blessings of God in this debasing of himself in this self-denial. There's also another lesson to learn in that phrase about neither were instruments of music brought before him where I think sometimes a fast, we think of it as purely food. There can be other instances of fasting, and maybe King Darius found that he liked music, that it was indulgent for him to listen to beautiful music every night, and he just felt this isn't appropriate for me to indulge in right now.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:23:28	I need to be supplicating the Lord and this indulgence is distracting. I was just impressed by this idea of when it comes to a fast being as a way to come closer to the Lord, as a way to exercise some self-restraint and all of the blessings that come from that, then it doesn't necessarily need to be food. Now, we have a very clear instruction for fasting to serve a specific purpose in the church, which is to enable us to pay a generous fast offering. I don't want to overlook that part of it, but where someone is wanting to find a way to incorporate this principle of fasting, it doesn't need to be

		just food, I would submit that maybe it's no phone time, maybe it's you're still eating and drinking, but you're not letting yourself have a particular diet soda for a specific period of time.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:24:17	There are different ways to work on self-restraint and the blessings that come from different types of fasting than just fasting from food.
Hank Smith:	01:24:26	Look at the Savior's temptation. The first temptation, at least in the book of Matthew, is if you're the Son of God, turn these rocks into bread and you can do it, but the Savior has self-discipline. I frequently remind my students and myself that to be a disciple of Christ is to be disciplined like Christ, and we can practice that. Fasting gives us a chance to practice self-discipline, and it is hard. I can hear stomachs growling across our listeners going, "Oh." But it's almost like exercising sometimes where you think, "I don't want to do this," and then you do and you think, "I'm glad I did."
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:25:07	I would need to mention Daniel's instances where in Daniel chapter three, we see Daniel fasting and then going to the Lord with prayer and supplications, and he says, "With fasting." So this just highlights an example that Daniel shows us of using fast and prayer as a way to come closer to God. And then in Daniel chapter 10, we see another version of this distinct type of fast where he doesn't call it a fast in Daniel chapter 10, but it's a three-week period of time where he says, "I ate no pleasant bread. Neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth." And then he says, "Till three whole weeks were fulfilled." But it worked. The angel came to him on the first day as we read in verse 12. This is an example, I think, of a fast, which isn't just not eating anything, but it's selective.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:25:59	Maybe it's these things that he enjoys the most. It's this method or this means of restraining his own passions perhaps. Bridle your passions, John, as you said. Maybe it's this particular meat that he liked where he says, "I didn't eat any flesh or meat. I didn't have any wine." And in fact, he says he didn't anoint himself. Maybe he didn't do as beautiful locks of hair, and I have no sympathy for that, of course. Maybe he just wasn't indulging in any of these sort of comforting things over the course of this fast. So we see another example of him coming to the Lord, seeking the companionship and the blessings of the Holy Ghost, perhaps, doing so with this form of restraint. Let me speak once again as a metabolic scientist where fasting represents

a very interesting metabolic state in the body, and it's all dictated by, once again, that humble hormone, that petite peptide insulin coming down.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:26:57 And when insulin comes down, the body shifts its fuel use. So human metabolism is a hybrid engine that at any moment, the body in general is using one of two fuels. It's using blood sugar or glucose or it's burning fat. It's some mix of that, but one's going up while the other's going down. It's the hormone insulin that actually determines which fuel is being used. If insulin is up, the body's in sugar burning mode. If insulin is down, as happens with a fast, then the body goes into fat burning mode. There's an interesting physiological phenomenon that I would be sad to not share that happens when insulin has been lowered for a period of about 12 to 16 hours. A person enters this phase, they don't have any blood sugar coming in, but the liver's making blood glucose to keep the body blood glucose levels totally normal.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:27:53 As the insulin's coming down, the body starts to transition to fat burning. That represents a particular situation for the brain because our brains don't burn fat for fuel. The brains use fat for structure. The brain itself is actually a very fat heavy organ, but it doesn't burn fat for fuel. The brain has its own hybrid where it burns either glucose or it burns this oft overlooked fuel called ketones. Ketones are another fuel that the brain uses, and in fact, the brain happily uses ketones for fuel. If someone had their blood sugar at a particular level, even if their ketones were at half the level of their blood sugar, the brain is already using two-thirds of all of its energy from the ketones. I sometimes wonder when people talk about the clarity that they receive during a fast, their ability to think, I believe that there is the benefit of restraint in the companionship of the Holy Ghost. As a physiologist, I can't help but wonder, might some of that enhanced cognition in that improved thinking be a result of the brain getting ketones?

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:29:05 In fact, there's some case studies with serious Alzheimer's disease and you give them ketones in a clinical setting, you're drinking these ketones, their cognition will improve in real time, that you can have them perform some cognitive tests and they will perform very badly on them, like drawing the face of a clock and it will just be chaos. Then you put them into this state of elevated ketones and a few hours later, well, they can draw the face of a clock. You can see this real-time improvement in cognition. I know I feel

		sharper when I know I need to perform, like you guys in my own venues, this weekend I'll be off to Brazil to give a talk in front of thousands of people about metabolic health. I perform better if I go into that somewhat fasted state. Part of the benefit could be, yes, the companionship of the Holy Ghost as I'm praying, and I do.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:29:58	I take these opportunities very seriously, I want to do well in articulating what I think needs to be shared. At the same time, I think the ketones themselves are enhancing my cognition. The evidence certainly supports that. I wanted to make sure that as a metabolic scientist, I included that nuance of human metabolism.
Hank Smith:	01:30:17	The Lord is a metabolic scientist. Is that what you're saying?
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:30:21	I think so. Yeah, there's no question. Fasting is therapeutic for the body. It really is healthy across a number of ways. Now, again, it needs to be used judiciously. I don't want people to take this and turn it into an eating disorder, but that's what our body fat is for. Our body fat is energy waiting to be used, but the more we keep eating foods that spike our insulin, the more the body fat just sits there never being used. In fact, a good analogy is like imagine a big fuel semi-truck rumbling down the road. And within that big semi-truck, there's the one small fuel tank under the cabin of the truck, but then there's this enormous tank of fuel being hauled down the road, yet the truck engine can never use that big tank. It needs to stop and fill up that small tank every several hours, ironically, while hauling around a big tank of fuel.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:31:16	If we can just give our body a break and let our insulin come down, now all of a sudden we're tapping into a fuel tank that even a lean adult has hundreds of thousands of calories stored on their body just waiting to be used. And if we're a not so lean adult, it can go well into the millions of calories and we just never give our bodies a chance to use it because the more we're spiking our insulin, the more we're forcing the engine to rely on that small tank. We never get to tap into the big tank.
Hank Smith:	01:31:47	I love this, John. Did you know that it was said once that Brigham Young could give a talk on theology and then in the next session, give a talk on how to plant corn. I like this kind of gospel knowledge. I like studying the theology of Daniel, and then I love getting practical day-to-day, this is why we do this type of information. This is inspiring to me.

Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:32:11	Oh, Hank, you mentioning President Brigham Young is once again a perfect segue where the next point I want to get into, the theme is different ways of knowing and how knowledge can come through the study of science, but it can come through the pursuit of the divine. And Brigham Young said, "If you can find a truth in heaven, [earth] or hell, it belongs to our doctrine. We believe it. It is ours. We claim it." It might have even been referring to metabolic truth as well.
John Bytheway:	01:32:38	A couple of questions. First of all, if you could mention somebody that just doesn't know, what are the main carbohydrates we partake of? Secondly, what if somebody has a little bit of weight around their middle that they can't seem to get rid of, a little spare tire, asking for a friend?
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:33:00	The first part of the question, carbohydrates are anything from plants. Now that of course includes an enormous variety of stuff because if you eat the plant itself, there's going to be very little negative metabolic consequence to it. Or even if you're minimally preparing it, you're boiling it. Boiled potato is a very different thing than a potato chip where now it's been desiccated, it's fried. Similarly, of course, broccoli, which has essentially no metabolic impact, is very, very different from the sleeve of Oreos, John, that you only ate two of those darn cookies because you have such self-mastery, and that was what the serving size dictated. But an Oreo would fall primarily into the realm of carbohydrate because it's a lot of wheat or these refined grains. But wheat itself, I don't mean to condemn wheat. It's how it's been processed. And that's why I use that little maxim.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:33:59	If it's a carbohydrate and it comes from a bag or a box with a barcode, then be careful. Where that's going to be things like cookies and cereal and chips, even bread, that is going to really spike your insulin and that's going to turn off your fat burning.
Hank Smith:	01:34:16	Wow. This is so fun.
John Bytheway:	01:34:19	Interesting.
Hank Smith:	01:34:20	Yeah.

John Bytheway:	01:34:21	I've never heard that articulated. We need fat. We're born with a certain amount of fat. Animals are not. I never knew that. That's really interesting.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:34:28	In fact, John did, is this what Isaiah meant when he said, "My soul delights in fatness?" I think so.
John Bytheway:	01:34:34	So did Jacob in the Book of Mormon.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:34:36	Yeah, I think that's what they meant, that don't fear fat. In fact, Hank, you'd earlier asked me for the simplest one thing to take away to improve metabolic health that was control carbs. Well, one of my other principles is don't fear fat because fat is natural. We need to eat it. Humans need a certain level of body fat. John, all of this was my long-winded way of coming to your question about what if someone's got a little more fat on their tummy? Everyone needs to be realistic and healthy and not try to push their body fat too low, that we need a certain level of body fat just for health. That's actually the difference between a fast and starvation. I hope I don't regret sharing this. The longest documented case of a true fast of a man not eating or drinking any calories was 382 days.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:35:28	He's a Scotsman. This is a published clinical study. His name was Angus Barbieri. This is a true clinical case study. It was published in 1965. This man, he was 456 pounds, in fact, and under strict clinical supervision to make sure that he was getting the minerals and the vitamins he needed and staying well hydrated. So he was very strictly monitored. He did not eat or drink a single calorie for 382 days. So why did he not starve to death? But it's basically the human body's ability to make ketones, and you can only make ketones if you have fat to burn. And so he had so much fat to burn that he was fasting. But the moment you run out of fat to burn, the brain no longer has ketones, and now it has to start stripping proteins from... Now it's starvation. Lest we curse our body fat and its ability to make ketones as we burn that fat actually is what defends the rest of the body.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:36:28	It allows the muscle to stay as muscle. It allows the liver and the kidneys to not start getting stripped apart. It's the fine line. Ketones represent the line between what's a fast and what's starvation.
Hank Smith:	01:36:42	Ben, something I find fascinating in our discussion here and of health is how body image, what our culture has done to the human body to objectify it, because that's what comes

to my mind is, oh yeah, I don't look like that, whatever guy on the movies or TV, that's not what you're talking about at all. You're talking about health. That comes to our mind and that brings shame and a comment on that, anything?

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:37:11 Oh yes. Oh, absolutely. I'm so glad you brought that up. In fact, I would say that point is particularly important for women because women bear the metabolic burden of reproduction. A woman is by design meant to have more fat than her male counterpart, especially in a premenopausal woman, reproductive capability. Fat is so essential to reproduction that if she starts to get too lean, what would be even normal leanness in a young man, certainly her fat is so essential to reproduction that she will stop ovulating, that the body deems that as such a metabolic insult that it turns off reproduction. Weirdly, we've entered a period of time where there's these two extremes with body and body image where we have the pervasive, persistent view of judging themselves that a person has too much fat based on what they see from someone on Instagram who's very likely very unhealthy and probably has disordered eating and is depressed all the time, but they put on a smile for that one minute clip that they're going to make, especially for young women.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:38:23 Please know those changes in your body when a young woman goes through puberty, by design, her body will gain some fat mass. But Hank, I've mentioned that there's two extremes. What also worries me is this view that people don't want to be the best version of themselves and think it's bad to have any restraint or self-denial where it's this, what they commonly call a body positivity view. I think it's very important that people not yoke their physical health to their relationship with Christ, their value, but I think it's also important for people to not accept this unhealthy version of themselves. We should look at our habits and say, "What are my habits that are making me unhealthy and how can I turn that around?" So we see the opposite ends here where excessive judgment of any speck of body fat, anything you can pinch or jiggle, "Oh my, you should be ashamed." Then on the other hand, what we see lately is this acceptance of what is obviously very unhealthy states.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:39:28 We want to be in the middle. You had mentioned that quote by President Brigham Young, and I had shared this pithy quote of him of, "You can find a truth in heaven, earth, or hell. If you can find it, it belongs to our doctrine." So that lets us look at the book of Daniel as an example of these

two sources of knowledge, the learning of men and the learning of God or the wisdom of God where we see these intellectual and spiritual origins. Now earlier I'd suggested that Daniel's acts to not defile his body put him in a position to perhaps be more receptive to the spirit. Similarly, we could ask whether Daniel's education helped him articulate what the spirit taught him. Having an educated mind can help us, if not receive inspiration, perhaps it can help us make sense of it or articulate it when we want to share some of this with others.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:40:25 And we see the first example of this in Daniel 1 where in verse 17, we see that in these four children, so Daniel and Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, God gave them knowledge and skill and all learning and wisdom. John, can you read verse 20 in chapter one?

John Bytheway: 01:40:42 Absolutely. Daniel 1:20. "And in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of them, he found them 10 times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in his realm."

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:40:56 So I think that it's funny that they attempted to quantify that. How do you quantify 10 times? Maybe they were somehow counting how successful Daniel and his brother were at getting things right. But regardless, I think what we see here is the amplification that can come with normal intellectual academic training when combined with divine guidance and divine help. If I can call them these scientists of their age, these magicians and astrologers, because they wouldn't have used the word scientist. Even in ancient Greece, a philosopher was the scientist, which is why I have a doctorate of philosophy in all things of bioenergetics. It hearkens back to what a philosopher used to mean. Maybe these magicians and astrologers were the scientists of the day. Hank, can you go to Daniel two and read verses 27 and 28? Because we see another instance of how putting ourselves in a position to be receptive to the spirit can help us with knowledge.

Hank Smith: 01:41:56 All right. Daniel 2:27-28, back in the KJV here. Daniel answered in the presence of the king and said, the secret which the king has demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers show unto the king, but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream and the visions of thy head upon thy bed are these."

Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:42:20	We see an example that all of the study, all of these academically-minded individuals, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, that wasn't enough. This is a perfect example of showing us that there will be instances in our lives where no amount of reading or academic training is going to bring us to an answer, that it needs to be knowledge or truth that comes from God. This idea of truth resonates because I will never forget an experience I had during my PhD. I was at ECU. I was so blessed to be mentored by a scientist named Linus Dome. He was a faithful religious man, a good faithful Christian man. I had come to him one day with my head hanging low and I said, "Linus, these experiments, they didn't fail, but they show a negative result. There was a null result here. The hypothesis is not supported.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:43:18	I was so discouraged because I've been working on these experiments for so long, wanting to contribute meaningful data to my dissertation and just get done." He said, "Ben, don't be discouraged. Scientists are seekers of truth." That's what he said. Scientists are seekers of truth. And that view has stuck with me when I've considered my role as a scientist and my role as a religionist, if you will. People like to pretend that there's some irreconcilable differences. I've been asked, "How can you be religious? How can you believe in God?" It is so puzzling to me that I think we show manifestations of faith. My students are in the lab right now conducting experiments. Don't tell me we don't have faith when we conduct these experiments. Every scientist does. We have faith that we're going to see an outcome, that when we do one thing to these cells or these humans, we're going to see this particular product.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:44:16	That is faith. Henry Eyring, perhaps the most famous LDS scientist, he was a chemist. He said, "Is there any conflict between science and religion? There is no conflict in the mind of God, but often there is conflict in the minds of men." He also said, "For me, there has been no serious difficulty in reconciling the principles of true science with the principles of true religion, for both are concerned with the eternal verities of the universe." So to me, it's a matter of what are you trying to understand the truth of? If it is a truth in this physical realm of health and disease and nature and physics, science will help you answer that. But there's more to us than just this mortal realm. Science cannot hope to answer that. Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? These are questions, knowledge that a scientist

		can only wonder and scratch their head at, but that's where we can get knowledge from God.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:45:13	It's not irreconcilable. Both are built on faith. Both are built on seeking the proper source of knowledge. God has given us reason. Even still, I would say not that science doesn't have truth that comes from God, it's just that we can understand it through the reason and intellect that God has given us. It's still a truth that ultimately comes from him. It's just that intellect and reason alone won't be enough to give us divine knowledge like that what Daniel needed as he interpreted the king's dreams.
John Bytheway:	01:45:43	I love what you read in verse 28 there. "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets." It reminded me of quickly one of my favorite verses in section 101, "That day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things." And then he gives us this list, hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth by which it was created and made and the purpose and the end thereof. It's quite a list when we try to make sense of it. He says, I'm going to tell you things that nobody knows.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:46:13	The millennium will be an explosion of scientific discovery among many, many things. Elder Andersen said in 2009 at a BYU Idaho talk, he said, "The wisdom of the world, while in many cases very valuable, is most valuable when it humbly bows to the wisdom of God." That is something I have enjoyed so much at BYU. Whenever we have a lab meeting and meeting with the students to discuss projects that we're doing or upcoming projects, part of our prayer as we open every lab meeting is that we can have this divine guidance, that we can be guided in a way to ask the questions and find answers to these questions because that's what science is. It's a process of answering questions. And even more importantly, proceeding that is are you asking the right question? It's fair for us to call on God and to look to heaven for that kind of guidance.
Hank Smith:	01:47:02	It seems unreachable, a story like this, yet we all know that we've had glimpses of revelation where we knew something that could not be known. John, you've told me stories of promptings and it ended up being right. It ended up being something that the Lord wanted you to do. In the scriptures we go, that's unbelievable. But if you look at your own experiences, you'll see little seeds of this.

Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:47:29	Another theme we see in the book of Daniel is the Lord using good people to progress his work. This actually is the example of Cyrus where we, weirdly enough, have to go back in time in Come, Follow Me to the discussion of Ezra, where in Ezra chapter one, we see how the Lord commanded Cyrus King of Persia to go back to Jerusalem. Just so everyone knows, as much as we were reading Ezra months ago now or weeks ago, it'll be months from this point. Daniel is a contemporary through this where when we read about Cyrus, King of Persia in Ezra, this is in fact the Cyrus that's coming at the end of Daniel's life where he has lived through this entire captivity, the taking of Jerusalem by Babylon, then the taking of the people, Daniel and his brothers. Now under King Cyrus, we see the Lord...
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:48:28	In fact, in Daniel chapter 10 verse 11 is where we read about with Daniel. In the third year of Cyrus, King of Persia, a thing was revealed unto Daniel, and it was this thing that the time that Jeremiah had prophesied of the Jews coming back to Jerusalem, and now with King Cyrus's blessing and help rebuilding the temple that that time had come. To me, I saw a beautiful example in the book of Daniel of what President Benson said in the BYU talk in 1973. He said, "God, the father of us all, uses the men of the earth, especially good men, to accomplish his purposes. It has been true in the past. It is true today. It will be true in the future." We certainly see evidence that Daniel was loved and respected by Cyrus and every king preceding him. The Lord can use good people to get things done.
John Bytheway:	01:49:23	We don't have a monopoly on goodness. There's so many good folks out there, thankfully.
Hank Smith:	01:49:29	I love it. Ben, this has been fantastic. Is there anything else you want our audience to see before we let you go?
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:49:38	I would want them to know that there are such beautiful lessons that we can learn from the book of Daniel. A few other things that I would want people to pay attention to as they go through their reading on their own. One would be instances where worshiping God was punishable and it became in fact a crime in these instances. We see that with Daniel and his brothers. Another topic, and these last two are big ones that people will definitely be able to get in their own study, which is the prophetic visions of the last days, the visions that Daniel had of Adam, the ancient of days, and Christ and this wrapping up of the world entering the millennium. And there's some beautiful quotes by the

prophet Joseph and Joseph Fielding Smith that people will be led to. Lastly, it's God's sovereignty over kings and kingdoms that Elder Christofferson said it, "The church is that prophesied latter-day kingdom, not created by man, but set up by the God of heaven and rolling forth as a stone cut out of the mountain without hands to fill the earth." I believe people are going to be able to appreciate and understand those themes without the insight of a metabolic scientist to walk them through it.

Hank Smith: 01:50:53 We've been richly, richly blessed today. Now, Ben, I want to ask you just a question before we let you go, and that is there is a myth out there that's perpetuated by critics that if you have an education, you're not a believer. It's only the uneducated, it's only the gullible who believe, believe in a God in heaven and believe in a prophet in our day. Yet, Ben, you're a pretty well-educated guy. You are traveling the world to speak in your expertise. What would you say to someone who has been taught that?

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:51:31 There has to be one source of all truth. I believe it's God, that a lot of where I get comments from non-believers is this idea of reconciling my faith. As I mentioned, every person acts in faith. Everything you do, you act with faith of a particular outcome or a condition that you want to be achieved from that specific thing. As a scientist, you conduct an experiment with the faith that you're going to get the outcome that you hypothesize. As a man of faith, there are things that my reason and my intellect, which I still believe come from God, cannot help me with. My scientific knowledge cannot give me peace of being reunited with my mom and my family, Cheryl and I, living with our children and having the opportunity for more children and the blessings of Abraham. It wouldn't be heaven to me if I couldn't have grandbabies and so on.

Dr. Ben Bikman: 01:52:28 Where people see an irreconcilable divide between religion and science, I see actually a little bit of naivete and maybe even a little bit of ignorance that they're not seeing the role of faith in their own lives and the opportunity to explain the unexplainable to the scientist. How did a cell even become a cell? These are questions that someone will say, "Well, it was just random chance." To me, that's impossible. It is easier for me to believe that our world was created by divine guidance than it was to believe it was an accident. I think it takes more faith, more irrational belief to believe that this is all random.

Hank Smith:	01:53:13	I heard someone say once, "I don't have the faith to be an atheist." It's too irrational for me. Dr. Ben Bikman, thanks for spending your time with us today. John, we have been well fed. Can I say that that way? We have been well fed. Oh, I love it. I love it. Thank you, Ben, for being with us.
Dr. Ben Bikman:	01:53:32	My pleasure. Thanks, guys.
Hank Smith:	01:53:33	We want to thank Dr. Benjamin Bikman for being with us today. What a treat. 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 are not quite done with the Old Testament on followHIM. As a thank you to our wonderful listeners, we'd love to gift you the digital version of our book, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. It offers short, meaningful insights drawn from our past Old Testament episodes. Visit followhim.co, that's followhim.co, to download your free copy today, and you'll also find the link to purchase the print edition. Thank you for being part of our followHIM family. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew, David Perry, Lisa Spice, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, Heather Barlow, Amelia Kabwika, Sydney Smith, and Annabelle Sorensen.



Hank Smith:	00:00:03	This is Follow Him Favorites where John and I share a single story to go with each week's Come Follow Me lesson. We are in the book of Daniel this week, and there are three friends who stick close together. So I wanted to tell you that story and then I'll tell you the story that goes with it. This is Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but their actual names are Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. These are three friends who are faithful to God. In fact, they speak as if they are one. This is Daniel chapter three, verses 17 and 18. This is Rack, Shack, and Benny. They're supposed to worship this giant statue, but they're not going to do it. And they speak as a group. Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. He will deliver us. But if not, even if we die, be it known unto thee, O king, we will not serve thy gods.
Hank Smith:	00:00:54	I like it. I like that it's a we thing. We stick together. And I think that can be a great thing for youth. We don't drink. We don't go to parties like that. We don't look at pictures like that. I have a story of six missionaries who stuck together. In order to understand this story, you got to go way back before they go on their mission to England. There's a young man by the name of Alma Sonne. Alma Sonne. His close friend is Fred Dahle. Well, when Alma was headed out to go on a mission, he turned to his friend Fred, who wasn't planning on going on a mission, I don't think was active in the church and said, Fred, you need to go on this mission too. I guess back when you could do that. Fred, you're coming with me on my mission.
John Bytheway:	00:01:42	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	00:01:43	And it's like, what? I'm not even active in the church. Well, you're going on a mission. And shockingly, Fred went on a mission. So they both go to England and they serve for a number of years. Then they get to go home. John, right? Do you remember that day when you got to go home from the

		Philippines and you left the Philippines? Well, there's Alma and four other missionaries that they're all going to go home together, but Fred's supposed to be there, but there's no Fred. Now, John, this is the important part of the story. This is the critical part of the story. These six missionaries have tickets on a ship that's going to cross the Atlantic Ocean and it's brand new. It's not just a nice ship, they say. It is the Titanic, the ship of dreams, the wonder ship, the millionaire special, 11 stories high, three football fields long.
Hank Smith:	00:02:38	Alma had booked the tickets for all the missionaries to sail home on this brand new ship, but Fred was not going to make it. He sent a telegram ahead that said he was delayed and he wouldn't arrive on time to sail on the Titanic. And he told his five missionary friends, "Go on without me. Go on without me." But Alma turns to the other four missionaries and says, "No, we will wait for him. We will go on a later ship." And of course, they're all disappointed. They could have gone on this brand new ship. But Alma says, "I know you're disappointed, but we can't leave Fred. We have to stick together. We can't expect Fred to get all the way across the ocean on his own." So the six missionaries, a few days later, all get on the Mauretania and say goodbye to the Liverpool saints as the ship pulled away from the dock.
Hank Smith:	00:03:32	And then four days later, a member of the crew pulled Alma aside. Did you hear about the Titanic? No. What about it? She sank two days ago on April 15th, hit an iceberg on a cold moonless night. The passengers, only 705 survivors. More than 1500 of the passengers and crew were lost, the majority of which, John, were men. More than 1500 people lost. Alma's head was spinning. He shared the news with the other elders and they sat in stunned silence. "That would've been us," one of the elders said. Alma turns to Fred and says, "You saved my life. You saved all of our lives." Fred says, "That may be so, but by getting me on this mission, Alma, you saved mine." Is that not a great story, John? Is that not a great story? That's what happens when friends stick together in righteousness.
John Bytheway:	00:04:36	Stick together. I love it.
Hank Smith:	00:04:37	The God whom we serve will deliver us. Even if he doesn't, we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image thou hast set up.
John Bytheway:	00:04:47	You saved our lives. No, you saved mine. We save each other. There's strength in numbers that way. Yeah, I love it.

Hank Smith:	00:04:53	We take good care of each other.
John Bytheway:	00:04:55	Hank, I've heard you give a talk called I Love My Friends. I think it was spoken at a testimony meeting.
Hank Smith:	00:05:02	Yeah. Where they say, I love my family, but I love my friends.
John Bytheway:	00:05:06	Love my friends. Oh boy. But yeah, those friends, when they're good friends, oh, what a blessing. What a blessing. Most of us don't get in trouble by, I think I'll go to the mall by myself and jump in the fountain. But with your friends, what a great idea. But in the same way, friends doing good things together, so grateful for that.
Hank Smith:	00:05:25	I told that story in that talk. I'm sure you can find it on YouTube or something. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called Follow Him. You can get it wherever you get your podcast. We're with Dr. Ben Bikman this week and he is amazing. He is a metabolic scientist. So not only does he tell the stories of faithfulness, he works in his research on metabolism. It's actually quite fascinating, really fun to hear. Fascinating. Yeah. We're going to get into the Word of Wisdom actually over there a little bit. Then come back here next week. We'll do another Follow Him favorites.