

"I Will Love Them Freely"

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

Are you focused on your sin or the Savior? Dr. Gary Little joins Hank and John to explore God's covenant love in the story of Hosea and Gomer, why those who repent can survive the last days as prophesied by Joel, and how the Spirit is being poured out on the rising generation.

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- 00:00 Welcome and meet Gary Little
- 04:50 Gary's background and The Divine Gift podcast
- 08:58 Hosea's background and the command to marry Gomer
- 12:45 Gomer's children and what their names mean
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- 01:49:24 The valley of decision
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- 01:56:28 The Lord dwells with us
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Biographical Information:



Dr. Gary Little is a religious educator who has taught at the Utah Valley Institute of Religion and Brigham Young University. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in marriage, family, and human development and a PhD in leadership and religious studies. He has served for many years as a seminary and institute teacher and an EFY speaker.

Born in the South and raised in the swamps of North Carolina, Gary grew up helping with his family's greenhouse business, playing sports, and driving a tractor. He served a full-time mission in the Utah Ogden Mission. He enjoys laughing, meeting people, and spending time outdoors.

Gary's favorite people are his wife, Elizabeth, and their eight children—their "little Littles." One of his favorite activities is taking family road trips in their 15-passenger van, Flo.

Gary cohosts *The Divine Gift Podcast* with Ryan Bennett. Based on the book *The Divine Gift of Forgiveness,* the podcast explores the grace and healing power of Jesus Christ through gospel teaching and personal stories.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:00	Coming up in this episode on followHIM.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:00:03	Perhaps the problem isn't that I'm making mistakes. The problem is that I'm thinking about making mistakes that are focused. Am I sin focused in my repentance or am I Savior focused? Am I focusing on my mistakes or am I focusing on who's healing me?
Hank Smith:	00:00:23	Hello my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I am your host. I am here with my goodly pleasant co-host. John Bytheway. John, that's kind of a redundant compliment, isn't it? My goodly pleasant co-host.
John Bytheway:	00:00:39	Goodly pleasant. I'll take it.
Hank Smith:	00:00:41	That's from Joel chapter three verse five. The Lord's not very happy because other nations have taken his goodly pleasant things. He says he's going to pay them back. I would be very frustrated if someone took my very goodly pleasant co-host away from me. I would go hunt you down. Now, John, at least I didn't choose, this is from Hosea, a silly dove without heart. Hosea 7:11.
John Bytheway:	00:01:05	A silly dove without... I left my atrium in San Francisco. I mean, how does a dove without a heart fly or do anything?
Hank Smith:	00:01:14	I looked it up in a different version. It says, "You're a senseless bird fluttering back and forth." Scriptures are fun. Don't let anyone ever tell you scriptures aren't fun. One of the people, John, who can make scriptures really fun is my friend, Gary Little. Gary, welcome to followHIM. It's your first time here. I've known you though since the 1900s. Gary, thank you for being here.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:01:37	Hey, I love you both. I'm really excited to be with you. Thanks for inviting me.

Hank Smith:	00:01:41	John, I can't tell you how excited I am to share Gary Little with our listeners. He warms my heart. Honestly, Gary, we have been friends a long time. EFY, the 1900s, I think I even stole that joke from you, but you're near and dear to my heart. I'll try not to gush too much. John, we are in Hosea and Joel today. What are you thinking?
John Bytheway:	00:02:01	I wonder if any of our listeners are going, "Here we go again. Israel, you're always messing up, but I will take you back. I still love you." Is there ever a time when prophets say, "You guys are doing so great." It doesn't seem so. It seems like this cycle goes on and on. The Lord is always there to say, "But I still love you. I'm welcoming you back." That's what I'm thinking.
Hank Smith:	00:02:28	Yeah. Gary, what are you looking forward to as you've been prepping?
Dr. Gary Little:	00:02:31	Actually, your listeners, that's been my favorite part. Pouring over the text, of course, but thinking about them, praying for them. I don't know their stories, but I've been on earth long enough to know that we all have one, each of us. And the messages in these two books are remarkable. They reach our address. Really looking forward to this journey together with you two and our listeners joining along with us. Hosea and Joel, when you think about those two, minor prophets, we call them those mostly just because they're short and I hope we don't treat them minor. They have these major messages that can reach out and speak to us. When you think about these two, face value, well, what are we talking about today? We're going to talk about God commanding a prophet to marry a prostitute and then Armageddon. Aren't you glad you came today?
Hank Smith:	00:03:21	Yeah.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:03:21	Wow. Okay. That's where we're going. That's kind of surface level, but the reality is today we're going to talk about a love that is otherworldly that can reach into our world. And we're also going to talk about how your children and your grandchildren are going to prepare earth for Christ to come. That's the two books we're going in today.
Hank Smith:	00:03:44	I love how you said that, minor prophets with major messages. That's really fun. And then can you imagine someone comes up in second meeting? The topic I've been assigned is how God assigned a prophet to marry a prostitute and Armageddon.

Dr. Gary Little:	00:03:58	Okay. That's what you gave me when you reached out. There it is.
John Bytheway:	00:04:03	Then we'll sing, Where Can I Turn for Peace?
Hank Smith:	00:04:08	As we close. Yeah. I was excited, John, because we're going to have Gary on, but these are books that I don't automatically think of when I go to the scriptures to really feast. But my friend Clayton Christensen, who's in skilled nursing, he's an executive there, he said, "Hosea is my favorite book of the Bible." I really respect the opinion of my friend Clayton. I thought, "All right, that's what I needed. I got Gary Little coming. I've got my second witness from my friend Clay. I'm ready to go." Now, John, you and I know Gary well, but I'm guessing there's a couple listeners out there maybe on the other side of the world who are thinking, "I don't know who Gary Little is. How come I don't know who Gary Little is? What do we know about him?"
John Bytheway:	00:04:50	He's more like a sober dove with a really good heart.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:04:55	Wow, can I add that to my resume? That's nice. Thanks. Sober dove.
John Bytheway:	00:04:59	Gary enjoys laughing, meeting people, being in the outdoors. This is my favorite part of your bio. He was born in the South and raised in the swamps of North Carolina. He mentioned before we hit record the great dismal swamp. Can anything good come out of the great dismal swamp? Yes, absolutely.
Hank Smith:	00:05:17	North Carolina.
John Bytheway:	00:05:18	In North Carolina, he helped with the family greenhouse business, grew up playing sports, driving a tractor, served his full-time mission in Utah Ogden mission. He's loved his experience being at the Utah Valley Institute. He says the best institute in the whole world. He's loved it. He graduated with a bachelor's and master's degree in marriage, family, and human development. He has a PhD in leadership and religious studies. His favorite people are his wife, Elizabeth, and they're eight little littles. He's spoken at EFY for 18 years without stopping, which is an incredible feat. He's worked for seminaries and institutes for 20 years and loves learning with and from the students at Utah Valley Institute of Religion. One of his favorite things, I love this, is to go road tripping with the family in their 15-

passenger van named Flo. I want to see a picture of that van.

John Bytheway: 00:06:14 If there's any dents, I know a guy who can fix those. Brother Little, he loves the gospel more than anything else. Looks forward to meeting you, to meeting our audience. Gary has a podcast called The Divine Gift. He does with Ryan Bennett. They base that on Elder Neil L. Andersen's book, The Divine Gift of Forgiveness. Check that out with he and Brother Bennett. And you have guests on that podcast too. Don't you want to tell us a little bit about that?

Dr. Gary Little: 00:06:42 Oh my heavens. It's been a sacred journey. Ryan and I both have taught it at the Institute for years. It's a full Institute course. The message was so good that we can't just keep it in the classroom. We had no experience with podcasting, but the message deserved to be told and we said, "Let's do it." And we prayed and jumped in. It's been sacred. We have about 40 some episodes still going. We're just walking through the book. The best part is highlighting truths from the message of Elder Andersen, this powerful witness of the grace of Christ and healing through Christ, and then having people come in and share their stories. It's probably highlight one as we think about Hosea, an experience where these people that have come on are just now a part of my story. Come check it out, please. It's a sacred work to expose the Savior's goodness.

Hank Smith: 00:07:26 I just followed the show, took me about eight seconds to find it, hit follow, just read a review. Listening to this podcast has brought me so much peace through the power of the Savior. Wow. Thank you, Gary and Ryan, for so tastefully reminding me of the divine gift Jesus Christ. I love it, Gary.

Dr. Gary Little: 00:07:46 It's a privilege. It's a privilege. We love it.

Hank Smith: 00:07:48 John, Gary didn't know I was going to say this, but one of my very earliest memories of Gary. Back when you worked EFY, I don't know if they still do this, we had a place like a headquarters room. I'm sitting in there. I think we had been assigned to watch it for a couple of hours. A young man comes in. He was struggling. I'm not sure what he was struggling with, but I could tell he was struggling. And I watched Gary. I still remember he's sitting, dangling his feet off a table that we had in there, and he is walking this young man through the scriptures. It impacted me enough that I remember it now, almost 30 years later. Wow, he knows his

		stuff. I remember it was section 130. He said, "Let me show you something in section 130." He's a young 20 something. He wasn't trying to impress anyone.
Hank Smith:	00:08:32	I'm just watching him teach over there. It really touched me. It wasn't a jealousy thing for me. It was a, "I've got to be able to do that. I need to be able to open up scripture like that and help other people."
Dr. Gary Little:	00:08:43	It's very kind of you to say that because you two are masters at this. And as listeners, you can imagine us sitting here and how are we going to handle all this? Really, I feel like I'm sitting down with two friends. We're going to study about the Savior and the word, and thank you for coming along with us. This is going to be a sacred journey.
Hank Smith:	00:08:58	Come join our conversation. Let's start in the Come, Follow Me manual. The title of the lesson, I will love them freely. Hosea and Joel. Israel's covenant with the Lord was meant to be so deep and meaningful that the Lord compared it to a marriage. The covenant, like a marriage, included eternal commitment, shared experiences, building a life together, exclusive loyalty, and most of all, wholehearted love. Sadly, the Israelites were not faithful to their covenant, and yet the Lord's message to them was not, "I will reject you forever." Instead, it was, "I will invite you back. I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness," he declared through the prophet Hosea, "I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely." This is the same message he gives to us today as we seek to live our covenants with love and devotion. Joel shared a similar message. "Turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness.”
Hank Smith:	00:09:53	Reading these prophet's words may prompt you to ponder your own relationship with the Lord, to think about how his faithfulness to you inspires you to be faithful to him." That is right on. I have a testimony of that. Okay, Gary, how do we want to go about this?
Dr. Gary Little:	00:10:09	Both Hosea and Joel, we'll start with Hosea, invite us to sit in discomfort. What I'm saying is don't stop listening halfway through the episode. Stay for the whole story. We have to sit in discomfort a little bit. Just a tiny little bit of background with Hosea. He's a prophet in the Northern Kingdom, so Israel about 750 to 722 BC. So it's the decades leading up to the Assyrian army coming in, scattering Israel. That's the context of his preaching, his time there.

Hank Smith:	00:10:43	Gary, it sounds like Hosea maybe a little bit before, but overlapping with Isaiah.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:10:49	Trying to prepare the hearts of the people to repent, and then as they don't, then the consequences come in.
Hank Smith:	00:10:54	Got it.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:10:54	Helpful. Thanks for building that bridge between the other prophets that are working so hard to try to get Israel's hearts right. Verse two, should we start? Here it is. The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. The Lord said to Hosea, if I can interject for just a second, as a nerd that loves God's prophets, it's kind of interesting to think about the first talk that when President Oaks was sustained as President of The Church, of course I was excited to hear what he said and I went back and listened to his first talk. And maybe you've done that before. What is the first thing that they say? And this one's a little atypical of a first message through the Lord to his servant where the Lord said to Hosea, Go take unto thee a wife of whoredoms.
Hank Smith:	00:11:36	Wow.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:11:38	Okay. I'm not going to put too much into that, but the Lord's commanding Hosea to marry someone that virtue isn't the pattern.
Hank Smith:	00:11:49	Is this the part you said, don't turn this off? Stay for the whole story.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:11:53	Stay for the whole story. Yes. And I'm reading scholars, what are they saying about this? And a lot of different ways you can read it. Literally, was Hosea an individual? Yes. Did this happen the way it's rolled out or is this a wonderful symbol? We don't know. Not everyone agrees on that. Obviously has some symbolism, but we're going to read it this first read through as God speaking to his servant and commanding him to marry someone who is not virtuous as a pattern. The confusion, I guess I'm not going to try and solve it for you, but just there it is. That's the invitation. There it is. In their marriage, here's what happens. He, Hosea verse three, went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, which conceived and bare him a son, so thus begins their family. They start a family and they name him Jezreel.

Dr. Gary Little:	00:12:45	Those of you that have had children, that moment of choosing to get married, choosing to start a family and the selflessness that that demands and all of that, press fast-forward on their story in verse six. And she... Oh, did we tell? Yeah, her name's Gomer, by the way. That's the wife's name.
Hank Smith:	00:13:03	Her name's Gomer, by the way. Any relation, John?
John Bytheway:	00:13:10	I'm thinking here's Gary from North Carolina. Here's Gomer, like Gomer Pyle and the Andy Griffith Show in North Carolina, but it's a guy. Gomer, it's a female in the Bible. It's a name that you don't hear very often.
Hank Smith:	00:13:25	What would Barney say to that, John? I don't even know what Barney would say. Gomer's a girl?
John Bytheway:	00:13:31	Well, Barney calls him Gome. Hey, Gome.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:13:37	Will you two come to my personal scripture study? I think I would stay awake better. This is really good. Here we go. So they're moving forward in their family life. Verse six, "And she conceived again and bare a daughter. God said unto him, Call her, call this daughter, Lo-ruhamah. "Now, one thing about biblical names is often they have meaning and intention. If you look at the footnote on 6A, Lo-ruhamah means not having obtained mercy. You're like, "Oh, where'd you get that from?" It means no mercy in my life. Oh, wow, that's kind of a downer. Why'd you land there? Of course, there's symbols and types. I need to keep us moving too. The story is just majestic, but an interesting note is look back up in verse three where Hosea takes Gomer as his wife and she bare him a son. So it's very clear that Jezreel is the child of Gomer and Hosea.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:14:37	When you look at the language in verse six, she conceived again and bare a daughter. God said, actually, this child, there's no mercy here, suggesting that Gomer has returned to previous patterns of immorality, that there's not a scriptural explanation that this is his child. Fast-forward, verse eight, "When she had weaned Loruhama, she conceived and bare a son, then said God call his name Lo-ammi." And then if you look at the footnote, 9A, "Not my people," suggesting that Gomer is not being faithful. They have three children now, and according to the text, suggesting strongly that one of those is Hoseas. Now, wow, this is hard. And I know we're reading scriptures, and I don't want this to be hard because sometimes in our life, this can

		be really hard as we contemplate family life, but that's the story as it rolls out. I'm going to fast-forward a little bit.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:15:41	If you go over to chapter two, Hosea is trying to navigate this. Here's his own description. Verse five, chapter two, "Their mother hath played the harlot. She hath conceived them and hath done shamefully." She said, "I will go after my lovers that give me my bread, my water, my wool, my flax, my oil, my drink." Wow. Could you imagine a husband trying to navigate this? He's trying to hold his family together. She's trying to find pleasures outside of the marital union and the heartache. And then him watching this happen, she shall follow verse seven of chapter two, "And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them. She shall seek them, but not find them." She's going after pleasure and satisfaction and purpose in these immoral relationships, but it's just not providing the joy, the satisfaction. Yeah, sit in discomfort. Here we are.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:16:40	I hate it. I hate it. I hate it. I hate it. But that's the story as we think about that. I don't want to dwell too much on the pain and the sorrow. As you two are considering this, what might Hosea be feeling? What might he be thinking? And then we'll see if there's any symbols for us in the narrative after that.
John Bytheway:	00:16:57	Yeah, obviously you're like, "Ow, this sounds awful. What am I supposed to do with this? What's he supposed to do?" All of us listening with our spiritual ears can maybe think he's likening this to the way the house of Israel is treating the bridegroom maybe, but to have to be the object lesson, that sounds really hard.
Hank Smith:	00:17:21	Gary, we all teach at the university and quite a few of them are not married. And I'll say, "Have you ever broken a bone?" And they'll say, "Yeah." And I'll say, "Tell me about it." And they're like, "Oh, the pain." Especially if someone's broken a bone like a femur, they're telling me about the pain. I'm like, "Tell me all about the pain." Every second hurts and it's just overwhelming. I'll say, "How many of you are married?" And some will raise their hand. And I'll say, "How many of you would rather have every bone in your body broken than have an adulterous relationship in your marriage?" And every one of them raises their hand. And we want to be sensitive. There's people listening who have gone through this. We don't want to drudge up these feelings, but this is the point of the lesson, isn't it, Gary, to

		sit in this pain for a second and go, "How overwhelming for this husband?"
Dr. Gary Little:	00:18:19	Well said. Thanks for painting that picture. I also share that sensitivity teaching the Eternal Family class at BYU and at the Institute. The realities of family life are tender, and it's not an accident that the Lord uses the imagery of family to try to explain the covenant connection that he offers to us. Can we go back to verse two at the beginning, this jarring command from the Lord and the Lord said to Hosea, Go take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms. And then he explains, here's something I need you to get. Here's something I hope for you to understand. "For the land hath committed great whoredoms departing from the Lord. Then I hate it, and I acknowledge that I am Gomer. I am in a covenant relationship with God. And actually, here's the beautiful part about this, the parallels, is that Hosea went into this marriage knowing that the other marriage partner, the other covenantal partner here has a pattern of not faithfulness and he still enters into it.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:19:25	God did the same with me and he did it with all of us. He knew our patterns and he chose to enter in this covenant relationship, and there is heartache when we break the covenant. So I am Israel. I am Gomer. Not in a self-debasing kind of way, but it's actually quite liberating to stop and say, "Oh, but he chose to marry me. He chose to be in covenant connection with me." Then as we continue to follow the story of Hosea and Gomer, we can learn about the sacred relationship that he offers us. Before we jump back into the story, can I share a quote from President Nelson? This is a remarkable talk. If this isn't in your sphere, it's called The Everlasting Covenant from President Nelson. It's in October 2022 Liahona, and he talks about Hesed, that incredible love. Perhaps some of the listeners will associate with this.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:20:15	President Nelson's just laying down the doctrine. It's beautiful. And then he says this phrase, and I noticed something in me when he said the phrase, "Once we make a covenant with God, we leave neutral ground forever." And I read that, and this is a sad commentary on me, but when I read that, my heart kind of did this. It was like, "Ugh." Because in my head, it was, "Oh, okay. So once you make a covenant with God, then you're more accountable, and it'd be better if you didn't even know about the gospel," that kind of an idea. Then the next sentence, he launches out with the exact opposite. It was 180 degrees different than -

Hank Smith:	00:20:49	This is why it's a good thing.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:20:51	Yes, yes, because being in a covenant with God is actually remarkable. That's the story of Hosea. I was in a youth training mission prep thing this last week. The teacher asked this question, you've probably been in these settings before where the teacher says, "What's a covenant?" Then almost in computer voice, we're like, "A two-way promise." That's what we do, which is true. A covenant is a two-way promise, but if we stop there, then we get in weird places like once you make a covenant with God, you leave neutral ground forever. Now you're in trouble if you sin. If we see it as this strictly contractual type of an idea. If I can quote from President Nelson to set the stage for Hosea, because we're going to see this modeled as beautifully as I know in scripture, President Nelson describes, "God will not abandon his relationship with those who have forged such a bond with him, a covenant bond.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:21:42	In fact, all those who have made a covenant with God have access to a special kind of love and mercy." In the Hebrew language, that covenant love is called hesed. Then he goes on to explain that, and your listeners have probably heard this, hopefully your other guests have talked about this too, but chime in with any ideas. But this idea that the hesed, that word, when the translators are translating into English, there wasn't an English equivalent, which is like, wait, that's amazing. It doesn't even... Well, let me give you an example. This is a silly case study. Here we go. Follow me. I love a good hamburger. I love my wife.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:22:21	I use the same word to try to... So we say God loves us, and you're like, "What even is that?" So you see the translators of the Bible coming through and they come to this idea of hesed. That word is laced all through throughout the book of Hosea. We'll see it as we go through, but what is that thing? What is this love that he offers that is, in my language, otherworldly? It's a special kind of love. Once you enter into a covenant that God will be engaged with us all... He never tires in his efforts to help us. So we're going to see that. We're going to see that play out in Hosea. Any other thoughts you want to add about hesed or the setup before we get into the narrative?
John Bytheway:	00:22:59	I appreciate what you said about the two-way agreement thing, because I feel like sometimes we might think of a contract, I do this and I get this. Based on some talks in General Conference over the past few years, when I talk

about covenants, to think of it more of a relationship than a contract, because a two-way agreement can sound like a contract, and I have a contract with my cell phone provider, but if I'm late on a payment, I don't think that Verizon has heartache and sadness, but in a relationship, oh, that's different then. There's hurt and there's sorrow. I'm trying, at least in my conversations and teaching, to talk about this is a covenant relationship, which you've just showed us here and which this chapter is showing us instead of just a contract, a two-way agreement. Yes.

Hank Smith: 00:23:48 Gary, some of our listeners might think, wait, hesed, I've never even heard that word in the Old Testament. I'm glad you're bringing this up because it is a particular word that appears over 250 times in the Hebrew Bible, but each time it's translated as something different into English, like loving kindness or love or...

Dr. Gary Little: 00:24:09 Mercy. Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:24:11 But this is the love, let me see if I can get it right, of a covenant relationship. God loves all of his children. He does. That is true doctrine. This is different, not that he loves Israel more. He's saying when you enter a covenant, this is a different type of love.

Dr. Gary Little: 00:24:29 To be honest, when I heard President Nelson describing in this talk, the Everlasting Covenant, and he's saying it's a special kind of love that you have access to when you enter into covenant, there was a part of me that was like, wait, God loves me more if I make a covenant. As I use the analogy of a spouse, that of course I love you too, and yet my love for my wife is different because it's a covenant connection there. It's not that God's capacity... It's wild. It's otherworldly. It's hard for us to understand. I actually had a student share this with me one time. They said, as we try to understand hesed, we've never experienced it in this life with any other relationship. So it takes a massive effort to understand, to seek to receive it. But I guess the one thing that I would, in trying to navigate that it is a special kind of love that he talks about, President Nelson refers to, that it actually...

Dr. Gary Little: 00:25:21 It's not that God changes when we make a covenant because he's fixed, he's established, He is charity. But as I enter into covenant with him, I'm accessing a different level of his love that was always offered. I'm able to receive. So similarly in a marriage relationship that Elizabeth, she loves

everybody, but now that I'm in a covenant with her, there's a unity and an intimacy and a connection and a longevity that allows the flourishing of this hesed. Hesed is offered to us powerfully from him and we're invited to return it to him. That's the journey.

Hank Smith: 00:25:55 It involves commitment and there's a sense of permanence. This is not a temporary thing.

Dr. Gary Little: 00:26:01 Yes. I'm hearing you hint at Elder Kearon's relentless pursuit idea that there's a commitment that is not affected by variables of sin sometimes in our worldly or earthly experience with it. I'll go with you until this point. God doesn't have that point. He's in for the long haul. Now, something that's really interesting as we look at the text, I hope we're not painting a picture that God's fine with sin, that Hosea, this masterful type of Jesus Christ, is like, "It's fine, Gomer. It's fine that you're off sinning." It's not. It's not.

Hank Smith: 00:26:36 I'll love you no matter what. It doesn't hurt at all.

Dr. Gary Little: 00:26:39 Yes. I mean, his loving commitment is offered, but our ability to access and to be blessed and to become... And you look at the children, perhaps that's the best part of the text. As Gomer goes after lovers to try to find purpose and satisfaction, the product of that, the children, are you can't obtain mercy there or you're not my people. This isn't the way we do this in covenant relationship. This awareness that we have a God that has hesed for us, for me as a Gomer, someone who had patterns of disloyalty, he entered into covenant with me, and unfortunately I have patterns of disloyalty after that it's not okay, but he will still continue to have hesed for me. We'll see that as the story continues. Should we jump into the next verse? As we see the tragedy of chapter one verses one through nine, we have this infidelity and the products of infidelity.

Dr. Gary Little: 00:27:37 Then that beautiful word, if you have a paper scriptures or a digital, the word yet is powerful. Yes, here's the circumstance. Here's where you are. It is not ideal. It is laden with sin and the products of sin. Yet, the language that he uses, it's covenant language. "The number of the children of Israel shall be as the sands of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered." That's Abrahamic covenant conversation right there. Even though we've broken the covenant, God is his commitment to that covenant relationship, John, that you were highlighting, is

		right there. And then at the end of verse 10," You're the sons of the living God." I hear President Nelson's description of our core identifiers, that you're a child of God, a child of the covenant-
John Bytheway:	00:28:27	Covenant.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:28:28	And a disciple of Jesus Christ, that those things are primary. Then there's Gary when he reads the phrase from President Nelson," Once we make a covenant of God, we've left neutral ground forever and our tendency is to go negative. "Oh, no. No, no, no, no, no. I need to take my eyes off of me and turn them to him. His covenant commitment is where I need to put my focus.
Hank Smith:	00:28:47	When you think of your marriage date to Elizabeth, it shouldn't be, "Oh no, I've left neutral ground forever." That's not a bad thing. That's an excellent thing. That's a blessed day.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:28:57	So beautiful. And I've repented a lot. Repenting is turning to the Savior. We'll talk more about that in Joel, but that day, our marriage date is beautiful. I haven't been perfect since then, but look what the Lord's doing because she's committed to this long term. Thanks for that parallel. I'm going to steal that. That's good. In verse 11, he speaks about gathering. Then we go to chapter two. Notice, "Say unto your brethren," speaking to Jezreel, the oldest child, the legitimate child, "Say unto your brethren, Ammi and your sister Ruhamah..." Wait, that's not their name. Their name was Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi. But if you look at the footnote in chapter two, A and B, The Lord is seeing them as my people and having obtained mercy. Yes, you have sinned, the products of sin, but God can change that. He will bring his mercy. It's nothing that we earn.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:29:54	It's something that's given powerfully. So that idea Elder Kearon, where he mentions God is in relentless pursuit of you. That idea is what we wanted to celebrate right there. I'm coming for you. I'm trying to help you. In the rest of verse two, I'm still sad that Hosea is hurting, that God hurts when we sin. He said, "Plead with your mother, plead for she is not my wife. Currently she's not in this covenant connectedness. Neither am I her husband. Let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight." And look what he does in relentless pursuit of her. Verse six, look at the relentless pursuit that Hosea makes in pursuit of his wife. "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up the way with thorns and

make a wall that she shall not find her path." That's in the wake of her going after her lovers to try and find satisfaction.

Dr. Gary Little: 00:30:53 And it's interesting that let me put up hedges, fences, barriers to try to stop this downward cycle, this downward spiral. This is not natural. When someone betrays you deeply like Gomer has to Hosea, a natural earthy response would be, "Go ruin your life. You've ruined mine." But we see a God who is the exact opposite. Let me try to stop this. How can we turn it? Verse seven, "She hath followed after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them" because he's trying to help that experience. In verse 11, "I will also cause all her mirth to cease for her feast days, for new moons and her Sabbath and all her solemn feasts. I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, those things that she thinks are bringing her happiness." Let me stop that. So in verse 13, it talks about her efforts to try to find satisfaction in those places that will underserve her saying, "She hath forgotten me, saith the Lord," and the tragedy of that.

Dr. Gary Little: 00:31:56 You mentioned earlier about how this contract idea, praise God that the covenant is a contract, that it has the element of commitment to it. But if it stops there, I'm not seeing everything that God's offering. Here's a quote from President Henry B. Eyring. He shared a time where he was teaching this story, this chapter to a group of seminary students back in the day as an early morning seminary teacher. And he said this, "All my life, I had heard explanations of covenants as being like a contract, an agreement where one person agrees to do something and the other agrees to do something else in return. During those days of teaching Hosea, I felt something new, something more powerful. This was not a story about a business deal between partners. This was a love story. This was a story of a marriage covenant bound by love, steadfast love." And I would offer this hesed love.

Dr. Gary Little: 00:32:55 As I'm picturing the listeners out there, thanks for coming along in this part of the journey. Can I give you an invitation? This set me on a quest of what is this hesed love that God offers? What does it look like? What does it taste like? What does it sound like? What is he offering that I might not be seeking after and experiencing because of just not knowing it existed or by going after things that will underserve me? Go on a quest. President Emily Belle Freeman said this phrase when she's talking about the covenant path. She said, "Perhaps you hear these words,

		covenant path, and think of check boxes. Maybe you see a path of requirements. A closer look reveals something more compelling. A covenant is not only about a contract, although that is important, it's about a relationship." And she quotes President Nelson saying, "The covenant path is about our relationship with God." I'm grateful for the book of Hosea exposing the character of our God.
Hank Smith:	00:33:55	Gary, can I take a side note? You are a marriage and family specialist in your earlier degrees. I think it would be misreading these stories to use them as a way to keep someone in an adulterous relationship. Should we mention that?
Dr. Gary Little:	00:34:12	I'm so glad you're bringing that up.
Hank Smith:	00:34:14	Well, that just doesn't feel like the intent.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:34:17	No, not at all. And I hope some listeners aren't thinking like, "Oh wait, I'm supposed to continue." But this is exposing the amazing love that God has for us. Prophets have repeatedly taught that we should never remain in abusive relationships that prophets have taught there are times and places where divorce is the best course forward to help families heal and progress. So yeah, please don't misread the story that this is saying you should stay in a unhealthy, destructive relationship. Seek the words of prophets, pray, counsel together and move forward. So thank you for clarifying. It would be tragic to convey that we need to stay in abusive relationships.
John Bytheway:	00:34:54	Hank, we had a previous guest, help me remember who it was who said these are descriptive, not proscriptive. This is describing what happened to Isaiah. This is not prescribing how you should live your life. This is descriptive, not proscriptive. That's what we draw from it. And look at Hosea 2:13. "I will visit upon her the days of Baalim wherein she burned incense to them and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels and she went after her lovers and forget me, saith the Lord." I thought, "Oh, I am going to use that when I'm teaching Isaiah three or 2 Nephi 13." Everybody knows this. The daughters of Zion are haughty. They walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go. And then Isaiah just lists their chains, their bracelets, their mufflers, their bonnets, their rings, their nose jewels, their changeable suits of apparel, their mantles, their wimples and their crisping pins.

John Bytheway:	00:35:54	We all know what those are, except we don't know what they are. But anyway, when we look at 2 Nephi 13, that's the point. And it's not condemning women's fashion, it's this. It's the house of Israel. Men and women are going after other lovers. And I think, oh, that Hosea 2:13 perfectly explains she's decked herself with earrings and jewels and went after her lovers and forgot me. So I'm like, oh, I got to use that with 2 Nephi 13.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:36:25	Beautiful imagery. With that set up, look at the very next word in chapter two, verse 14. Therefore, now if we're looking at it from a strictly how I would look at that, okay, so things are horrible. She's repeatedly rejecting her husband. All these things are happening. Therefore, what should it be? Actually, some scholars describe that the name Gomer means finished and complete. And one read, if we were to say, therefore, I'm finished. It's done. I'm done with this. Look at this hesed, this unparalleled type of love. Therefore, behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness and speak comfortably to her. Another New Testament translation says speak tenderly to her. This is how our God receives us. Many of us know people in our stories where everything about their story does not deserve love, and yet we see the Lord bringing this, speaking tenderly, pulling them into the wilderness out of that hellacious experience they're in.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:37:31	I will give her, in verse 15, her vineyards from thence and the valley of Achor, footnote, trouble. She's in a valley of trouble, but I will give her a door of hope.
John Bytheway:	00:37:44	It's like a dismal swamp. Yeah.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:37:47	I got out. I got out. A door of hope and she shall sing there. And this imagery, just my heart. I know we're looking at Gomer and the horrible things she's bringing to this marriage and the tragedy and the children are having to live with all of this, but she's miserable. She is miserable. This idea that Gomer brings is, yes, you're in this troubled place, but I have a door of hope for you and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. Remember when before all these horrible patterns, we can get to a beautiful place again through this marvelous covenant connection. And this is where it lands for me in verse 16. "And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi and shalt call me no more Baali." Names mean things.

Dr. Gary Little:	00:38:40	If you look in the footnote, we'll translate it and then let's dissect it and what it means for us. Thou shalt call me my husband and shalt call me no more Baali, my master. What are you two seeing in that explanation of what he wants for this relationship?
John Bytheway:	00:39:00	It's a new start. It's a repentance, forgiveness. I'm not even sure if that was the right answer.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:39:09	That's fantastic. It's fantastic.
John Bytheway:	00:39:12	I may have Gomered that.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:39:13	I've got some thoughts too, but I've just been talking for a long time and nobody wants to listen to me forever.
Hank Smith:	00:39:18	I'm sure they do.
John Bytheway:	00:39:19	Yeah, we do.
Hank Smith:	00:39:21	My favorite chapter in scripture, besides Jacob 5, I do love Jacob 5, is Isaiah 54. It's the chapter that Jesus quotes to the Nephites, very similar to this. This woman is homeless and childless. I would say Isaiah, the prophet says to this woman, your husband is calling for you. Something's happened where they've split up. She's miserable, maybe thinking he'll never want me back, yet your husband is calling for you. He says in Isaiah 54, yes, this did hurt. For a small moment, I have forsaken thee. In a little wrath, I hid my face from thee for a moment. This does hurt when you do this. We sometimes think, oh, they deserve it. This is how the Lord sees her. This is Isaiah 54:11. Oh, thou afflicted, tossed with the tempest and not comforted. He sees sin for what it is. We sometimes think they deserve it.
Hank Smith:	00:40:20	They went and had fun. And he's like, no, sin's not fun.
John Bytheway:	00:40:23	No, it's not fun.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:40:25	Yeah. And then he doesn't come in as a condemning God. He's not as the woman taken in adultery. Neither do I condemn thee. He doesn't condone the sin. He has that magical balance of never condoning the sin, but not coming in with a condemning hand. The sin does all the destructiveness. God doesn't need to do anything in that. We just get to allow him to help us go and sin no more. Let's transform life. Let's change. Yeah, I love that.

John Bytheway:	00:40:52	What was President Packer's statement? Sometimes we're punished as much by our sins as we are for our sins. The Lord knows that we're hurting. I like that Isaiah 54 example that you used, you're afflicted, you're tempest. I know that. I love what you said. It's not that just you're out there having fun. Yeah. How much fun has that been now that you're feeling so horrible about yourself? I have mercy for that. He has mercy for that, which is kind of a, isn't it?
Hank Smith:	00:41:19	A little bit like the prodigal son when the son returns and the older son says, oh, he's been out devouring your living with harlots. He's had a great time. The father's like, no, he has not had a great time.
John Bytheway:	00:41:32	He's self-loathing and self-hating and
Hank Smith:	00:41:35	He was dead and he is alive. Here's President Kimball. Jesus saw sin as wrong, but was also able to see sin as springing from deep unmet needs on the part of the sinner. This permitted him to condemn the sin without condemning the individual. He just sees it for what it is. You're self-medicating in a very unhealthy way. Let me heal you.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:42:05	The master physician, amen. You guys have depicted very well the hurt that sin brings to the story. Wonder what that might have meant in verse 18 and 19 when he's sending this message to Gomer in the midst of this horror that she's created, "In that day will I make a covenant for them" and then in verse 19, "I will betroth thee unto me forever." Then in her mind, she's like, "No, no, like the prodigal son, I've already lost the covenant. I've already blown that." The prodigal son is saying, "Maybe I can just be a servant in his house. It's better than where I'm at now and the father, and in this case, Gomer says, no, no, no. Betroth. Let's reengage in this covenant. I've always remained steadfast. You left it. It's here. Come back to it. Then you look at the rest of the language.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:42:54	I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and in judgment. And there's that hesed word, in loving kindness and in mercies. I'm inviting you into this relationship that is larger than you have the capacity to comprehend. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness and thou shalt know the Lord. That's the result of hesed. We actually come to understand his character. That's what changes us. No amount of behavior modification can, that's the difference. And then down in verse 23, remember the children, their names, how it was, no mercy, you're not my people. That as

		we engage with God repeatedly in his amazing hesed, I will sow her unto me in the earth. And that sowing, that's the Jezreel that means to sow, God sows, I will help you sow beautiful things. You've brought ugliness. You planted ugly weeds, but I will sow beautiful things to you.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:43:55	I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy. Remember the one child's name? I will say unto them which were not my people, thou art my people. Then here's the beautiful part. We get to practice in hesed to him. They shall say, thou art my God. I choose you as my covenant companion. We do it over and over again. Sometimes with my students, I'm thinking, how serious is God about this? Really? Give me some evidence. Give me some evidence that he really means he intends to exalt us. And then we'll numerically look at it. Let's think of an ordinance that is very similar to the language we just talked about right there. Come back to me. Let me cleanse you. I'll make you my people. I will heal you. How often does the sacrament happen? I mean, minus General Conference and stake conference, 48 times a year.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:44:44	If we did any more than that, we should start a bread company. He's so serious about the sacrament that he really is showing us, I intend to change you. Sometimes we've even had students take the number of years old they are times 48 and say, that's the number of times God's reached out his hands to you officially. Come back to my covenant connection right there.
John Bytheway:	00:45:07	Beautiful.
Hank Smith:	00:45:08	John, where is it? It's Paul, I think, who says the Lord has made a down payment on you. He's put earnest money forward, right? I'm going to buy a house. I'm showing the seller that, hey, I'm really serious about this. I'm going to put earnest money down. I'm going to lose this earnest money if I back out. I believe it's Ephesians where Paul says, the Holy Ghost is God's earnest money. This is a down payment. He intends on saving you. You can see it right in front of you. The fact that he's given you the Holy Ghost, you're like, all right, he's serious. He is going to exalt me.
John Bytheway:	00:45:41	One of the things I love about these messages, which is kind of confusing because I'm a human/natural man/silly dove without a heart, but how God just keeps coming back and is so relentless pursuit. If I could say that in an English accent, it would sound even more true like Elder Kearon, but we

read these stories in the Old Testament and over and over again, you're being unfaithful, but I am right here and I will take you back to the point you're like, wow, this is unhumanlike how willing he is to take us back. It's beyond our ability to do.

Dr. Gary Little: 00:46:20 Yes. Can I give a more modern experience with this? One of our guests that we brought on the Divine Gift Podcast, Danny Deaton, he shared this publicly on the Divine Gift Podcast, so I feel comfortable repeating it here. And he's very vocal about his witness of the Savior, but he and his wife came on. We had him in two different episodes, but he shared a story back in Hosea chapter two. As I'm reading this story and studying, preparing for this conversation, verse 10 where Hosea is just this otherworldly love and outreach, just this really sad scene. And now I will discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers. He's going into the ugliness. Danny shared this incredible story of his life, and I'll quickly chronicle it, but it's this idea that it was modeled by someone on earth. He described he was raised in the gospel, Eagle Scout, all the things, went on a mission, came back, and substance abuse was really problematic.

Dr. Gary Little: 00:47:16 So much so that he separated from the family. It got so bad that he found himself in a basement, a dark basement. There had been a car accident, both of his legs broken and the friends scared, take him and just put him in his basement. They don't know what to do. And been there for a couple days. And he's telling the story, I'm like, oh my heavens. Then this visual in verse 10 of Hosea going in to go discover, going where the hardness is, this amazing father, Danny's father and brother, they're trying to find him and they end up finding out that he's in this basement. He said, I'm laying there in the lowest of low. I can't imagine I'm coming off of drug abuse. I'm broken. I'm emaciated from years of drugs and I'm just laying there in this darkness dying. I'm in the process of dying.

Dr. Gary Little: 00:48:08 Then my father and my brother opened the door, and it's the first time I'd seen light in a couple days. As they come down to the bottom of this drug house, they open the door and the light's there and I see my father and my brother walking towards me. And Danny explained that his father with all the love in the world said, I want to help you. I want to help you, but I can't do it for you. Will you let us help you? And he said, I was just soaked in shame that my father's seeing me in this horrible state. I'm dying. I couldn't say anything. And he said, probably the hardest thing in the

		whole world, my dad turned around and walked away, walked away, and my brother's like, "What are you doing? What are you doing? We want to help you," as they're walking away.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:48:55	And then he said, as they were about to shut the door, I just felt this energy inside my cry out and I just said, "Help." Then his dad goes in and scooping up his boy, taking him and taking him to the hospital and helping him detox off all the drugs and he's a remarkable husband and a father contributing in the community and helping people out come up. But this visual right here of now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers. God will go where we are. He's not scared of it. He'll run to it. And then this phrase that I saw in Danny's story, none shall deliver her out of mine hand. His hand is enough. He will pick us up and he will carry us and he'll help us through the healing. Something that Danny did, it's episode five on the Divine Gift Podcast.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:49:41	He talked about the prodigal son story. The scriptures don't give us the account of when he decided, when he arose and came to himself and then he goes to his father. That's a long road. There's a lot going on there and he kind of helped me understand that journey back, but we're never alone. That's the beauty of hesed. That's the miracle of this incredible experience. I'm grateful for people on earth that are working really hard to develop this hesed in themselves too. And parenthood is probably one of the greatest manifestations of trying to be like God.
Hank Smith:	00:50:14	Wow. Wow. What a story. I hope if you have a young adult or a teenager, take them over to Gary's podcast or show him this clip. Go back a few minutes and say, you guys listen to this that is real and also brings out the lesson you've been showing us today. Gary, you did a great thing there by saying, look, there's a beautiful balance. Again, it's hard to even know how to describe it. No, this is hurtful to God, but he won't leave you. Elder Holland, this is an old talk, 30 years old. It's called Personal Purity, almost 30 years old, October 1998. In one part of the talk, he said this, "Please never say, Who does it hurt? Why not a little freedom? I can transgress now and repent later. Please don't be so foolish and so cruel. You cannot, with impunity, crucify Christ afresh."
Hank Smith:	00:51:08	I remember way back when I thought, what does that mean? It basically means crucify him again. You cannot just

do that and think it'll be fine. Who does it hurt? He said, “Remember the incalculable suffering in both body and spirit endured by the Savior of the world. We owe him something for that. Indeed, we owe him everything for that.” There's that side of it. Well, a little bit later in this exact same talk, he says, "If you are carrying these wounds of sin, to you is extended the peace and renewal of repentance available through the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. In such serious matters, the path of repentance is not easily begun nor painlessly traveled, but the Savior of the world will walk that essential journey with you. He will strengthen you when you waver. He will be your light when it seems most dark.

Hank Smith: 00:52:07 He will take your hand and be your hope when hope seems all you have left." Do you feel that both sides of this coming out in Hosea? We have to teach both sides of this. I don't know. There's a tension between them that makes it beautiful.

Dr. Gary Little: 00:52:24 I see that tension in chapter three, verse two. I'm so grateful. Thank you for sharing that quote. So beautiful. We're talking about God's love and mercy, yet if I ignore the other half of mercy, which is justice, then mercy means nothing. It means nothing. What's intriguing here that in chapter three, verse one, he talks about, yes, you went after lovers, and then the reality of chapter three, verse two takes me to the foot of the cross. So I bought her to me, that we cannot just celebrate the hesed and the love of God without recognizing the price that was paid to allow that hesed, that covenant relationship to be ours. And in their case, look in chapter three, verse two, he tells the price. In her case, for 15 pieces of silver and for a homer of barley and a half homer of barley, that was the price.

Dr. Gary Little: 00:53:18 For us, it's 2 Corinthians chapter 6:19 - 20. We were bought with the price. It's the Son of God. That was the price tag for us. We think, what's the worth of a soul? Doctrine and Covenants section 18. Well, the worth of a soul, we could quickly say priceless. And while that's cute, it's not true, there was a price and the price was the Son of God, and God willingly offered that and the Son willingly fulfilled that. This hesed is remarkable. It inspires me. It makes me want to be a better person, a better husband, a better father, and because of the price that was paid, that's where I go. When I'm a Gomer and I'm not, I'm falling back into silly habits and patterns, I go to the cross. I go to the tomb and I remember the price that's paid and I trust him that he will bring the

		hesed and then I try and engage with him again in that covenant relationship.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:54:18	Thank you for the Elder Holland quote that brought the fullness of this hesed that is the Savior. He paid a price so that we can have a door of hope. We can sing again like we did in our youth. That's the message of Christ.
Hank Smith:	00:54:31	A door of hope. What a beautiful phrase.
John Bytheway:	00:54:36	And what would Satan tell you in a time like that? Don't go back to the cross. Don't go back to, you're not good enough. You don't have a door of hope.
Hank Smith:	00:54:44	God doesn't want to see you like this.
John Bytheway:	00:54:47	Recognize if you feel that where it's coming from because the God of hesed isn't that way.
Hank Smith:	00:54:55	Hey, Gary, I have a question for you. I've noticed for some of my young adult students, and I imagine there's old adult students who feel this way, it's difficult to accept that mercy knowing that I'm the one who hurt him. So I think I don't deserve it, therefore I'm going to turn away. I should be doing better. It can become almost an OCD of obedience that I am over the top. I miss a scripture study session and I can't function. And you're, oh no. Have you helped students and even yourself say, I have to have the mercy. It's my only option and I don't deserve it. By definition, mercy is something I don't deserve. If I deserve it, it's justice.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:55:39	I know you're saying hypothetically with students, it's my story from being a young teenager in the swamps of North Carolina, trying to figure it out and then being a religious educator and still trying to figure it out, that I focused a lot on what I brought to the table. Hosea addresses this in chapter six, this idea of 'Can I earn this?'. What do I need to do? And John, you're mentioning those satanic voices that are saying you're never enough. One reality is I'm not enough. I'm not going to listen to Satan. I'm not going to let him be the divider, but I do need grace. I do need mercy. One thing, and it's interesting that you brought that up, Hank, is in Hosea chapter six, verse six, actually let's go up to verse four because you see the hesed in there. Oh Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?

Dr. Gary Little:	00:56:26	Oh, Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness, that hesed, is as the morning cloud and as the early dew, it goeth away. Can I translate that? If your hesed, Gary, what you bring to this covenant relationship evaporates by morning.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:56:47	You don't have the staying power that God does yet. That's not comfortable. It actually can become miserable as a, I'm a child of God, I'm a child of the covenant, I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ, and I keep falling short like the dew evaporating in the morning and the cloud that just wisps away, that's my hesed. This is hard. This is hard stuff. But look in verse six where the Lord said, "This is more than just a question, Hank, brother, this is my heart." The Divine Gift of Forgiveness book, it's changing me. No, Jesus Christ is changing me. And that book exposed his character to me in ways I didn't even know it. Look in verse six, "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." Now you have to be Old Testament lens with that on. He's talking about ceremonies and rituals.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:57:39	Interestingly enough, this scripture, Hosea 6:6, Jesus Christ during his mortal ministry quoted it twice in Matthew chapter nine, Matthew chapter 12. This is something that this is like, "Oh, it's a nice verse." He said, "No, no, no. You know what? I want more than your sacrifice and more than your burnt offering. I want you to desire mercy and I want you to know God. That's what I want." With your inspired question, I'm still learning this, Hank, but when I think about me not bringing enough, that's the problem. It's not that I'm not bringing enough, it's me thinking about me not bringing enough. Perhaps the problem isn't that I'm making mistakes. The problem is that I'm thinking about me making mistakes that our focus. Am I sin focused in my repentance or am I Savior focused? Am I focusing on my mistakes or am I focusing on who's healing me?
Dr. Gary Little:	00:58:36	Here's some ideas. Perhaps our repentance, our healing, our becoming will be more meaningful if we focus less on our badness and more on His goodness. Focus less on your falling down and more on him lifting you up. Focus less on your sinking and more on his reaching. Focus more on his strength than on your weakness. Focus more on his sacrifice than your sins, that he's the focus. It's come to him, put my attention on him and the sins will be taken care of. But if I'm just thinking about, I didn't read my scriptures today, so I can't possibly have the Holy Ghost and whatever weird rubrics we create, I just focus on him and scriptures are the

		mechanism to get there. I think that's perhaps what he's teaching in verse six is you're focusing so much on the rituals and the rites and the dos.
Dr. Gary Little:	00:59:30	He's like, no, I'm about something bigger. More. It's you and the connection, this relationship.
John Bytheway:	00:59:37	Yeah, verse six, this is the Lord talking. I desired mercy from you and not sacrifice. I desired the knowledge of God more than... I appreciate the more than. It's not I didn't desire burnt offerings, but I want you to know me more than I want the burnt offerings. It's the school master, law of Moses to bring us to Christ. But what I really want, Hank, you've got a contemporary English version. What's Hosea 6:6?
Hank Smith:	01:00:05	I shouldn't feel foolish for loving the contemporary English version because it is a very simple reading level. It's like a third grade reading level, but I like it. It helps me understand. Here's Hosea 6:6 in the contemporary English. "I'd rather for you to be faithful and to know me than to offer sacrifices." John, I like how you said that. It's not that the sacrifices aren't important, but I think you're forgetting the point. Can you imagine saying to the Lord, "Oh, I'm taking the bread and water every week." He's like, "Well, that's not the point. I mean, that's good. I want you to do that, but the point is to know me, to connect with me."
John Bytheway:	01:00:40	To come with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Yeah, that's what President Freeman said that you mentioned, "Don't get checklisty about it." What was her phrase? Yeah.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:00:51	Perhaps you hear those words and think of checkboxes. Maybe all you see is a path of requirements. Closer look reveals relationship.
John Bytheway:	01:00:59	There you go.
Hank Smith:	01:01:00	Beautiful. Gary, thank you for that. I want to use that with students I know who really they do, they focus on what they bring to the table. It gets out of balance when they do that. What do we want to do next?
Dr. Gary Little:	01:01:14	Well, Joel, shall we move on? This week during Come, Follow Me, we have two books of scripture. They're shorter. This book is actually only three chapters. First, let me get some history. The book of Joel is very hard to date, meaning

		put it in chronology. Like we said, Jose is around Isaiah's times. Oh okay, that's before the Assyrian scattering of Israel. He gives us some mixed messages on when it could be. Scholars have agreed that we don't know exactly when he spoke. One scholar particularly mentioned this. He said it's fine because he was focused more on our day too. So good. He's going to be speaking to us in a lot of ways, so we'll just kind of not worry about that.
John Bytheway:	01:01:56	I can relate to that. It wasn't hard to date. It was hard to get a date. Hank's heard me say that something about look into my face made girls want to go on a mission.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:02:05	Right.
John Bytheway:	01:02:07	I could give their names and their missions, but I'm not that bitter, but I'm close.
Hank Smith:	01:02:13	You were doing the Lord's work.
John Bytheway:	01:02:15	Kim is legally blind in her left eye, so I just stayed on that side and it all worked out.
Hank Smith:	01:02:21	You do what you got to do.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:02:22	Eternity to come. There we go. Let's go.
Hank Smith:	01:02:24	Difficult to date. That's not what you meant, Gary, but man, that made me laugh.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:02:28	Difficult to thank you for clarifying that.
Hank Smith:	01:02:30	Yeah.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:02:31	Now that I'm on a roll, let me start with this little analogy because the book of Joel is pretty crazy. The language is intense. The imagery is graphic. What does it mean? How does it relate to me? Here's an analogy. You mentioned earlier that I was raised in the dismal swamp, the great dismal swamp of North Carolina. The accent was so thick, so words would just blend together. And if you're an outsider... One time we had a family gathering back in North Carolina, Granddy White, and I know you probably... Could you translate that? It's Granddaddy White, but it's Granddy White was talking. My amazing sister-in-law from Orange County, California is there, and Granddaddy White's just going. He's just talking. My sister-in-law's just trying to

		understand what he's saying. Afterwards, we asked like, "Hey, how did that go?" And she just said, "You know what? Once I just kind of relaxed and sat back, I could get the gist of where things were going."
Dr. Gary Little:	01:03:28	Welcome to the book of Joel. That's it. Sit back and relax. It's helpful to look at the words and what does that mean and do all that, but also just kind of sit back and let the idea, the storyline flow across you and you'll get some really powerful things.
Hank Smith:	01:03:43	So when I read Joel, I don't have to know every word.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:03:45	Yeah. I guess one thing that's helpful is understanding a lot of his prophesying is about the last days. It makes it relevant. And let's jump in actually. As he's describing, he starts off with hearing. Verse two, "Hear this, ye old men and give ear all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days?" So he's asking, "Can you imagine this? Can you picture this?" What we're going to talk about in verse three, "Tell ye your children of it. Let your children tell their children and their children of it." So we have this multi-generational, what we're talking about is so important. It can't just stay with us. It needs to keep going even farther. Then it gets sad. Verse four, he describes destruction. The visual that he uses, that which the palmer worm hath left, hath the locust eaten. Now I don't know what a palmer worm is, but a locust, we can picture that devastating.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:04:40	And even in our church history, there's episodes of locusts coming and devastating crops. You get that visual in your mind. "That which the locust has left, hath the cankerworm eaten, and that which the cankerworm hath left, hath the caterpillar eaten." Again, scholars, they get into it and it's really fun. It could be the life cycle of one animal that's coming through or it could be multiple animals coming through. Moral of the story for us. Sit back and relax. Devastation. When you think of it, not just like, "Oh no, they ate the tomato plants." This is livelihood. This is an agrarian society. When they're eating all this, this has economic implications, familial, all of it. This is really, really significant devastation.
Hank Smith:	01:05:23	That verse four, that's a tongue twister. Try to read that one four or five times fast. Man, the palmerworm hath left the locust eating and that was the locust hath left the cankerworm eating.

John Bytheway:	01:05:33	There's a good footnote in there. The invading or conquering armies are compared to four varieties or stages of growth of locusts. And I've never heard of a palmer worm before. I bet brother and sister Palmer don't like that characterization.
Hank Smith:	01:05:50	So devastation is coming.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:05:52	And notice the next word in verse five is you want to be awakened to it.
Hank Smith:	01:05:56	Wake up.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:05:57	You don't want to be ignorant. This is not a time to bury your head in the sand. There is devastation and destruction coming. Joel's speaking to his people, but it also has a dualistic meaning for last days. I'm going to skim through some verses, verses five through 10. Everybody needs to wake up. The drunkard, you need to wake up. The master of the vineyard need to wake up. The priests in verse nine needs to wake up. If you're a farmer, everybody wake up. Be awakened to this reality that devastation's coming. As you get the result of all of the destruction, we come to verse 12. The vine is dried up and the fig tree languishes. The pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, the apple tree, even all the trees of the field are withered. Really sad. And as you think about that, I've never lived through a famine.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:06:50	I've been blessed to live in a lot of security food-wise. Some of our listeners maybe have experienced something as dramatic as that, but if I just try and sit with that, that would be pretty terrifying that all of the resources are just gone physically and what that might do. But then also the Lord is showing that, Hey, it's not just a physical thing, but look in the end of verse 12, joy is withered away from the sons of men. This has a connotation of things are not good because of the destruction, but also sin and wickedness eroding joy. So we have this physical and this spiritual joy, this withering away and the sadness. And then the Lord takes it to the next level in verse 13, that this devastation, he connects it with the temple. "Gird yourselves and lament ye priests officiating in the temple."
Dr. Gary Little:	01:07:40	How ye ministers of the altar come lie all night in sackcloth, the mourning type of feeling language. Ye ministers of my God for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God." Some read is just this physical devastation, but then it's not just that it's

		physical, but also spiritual. We don't even have anything to bring to God anymore and joy is withered. Once again, aren't you glad you came today? Sad things that are being laid out for us. Verses 16, maybe we don't read all of these. It gets sadder. "Is not the meat cut off before your eyes? Yea. Joy and gladness from the house of our God. The seed is rotten under the clouds. The garners are laid desolate where you store food. The barns are broken down. The corn is withered. What do the beasts groan? How about this visual right here?
Dr. Gary Little:	01:08:36	"The herds of cattle are perplexed." If you're an artist, I'm not sure how you draw that one. The cow's like -
John Bytheway:	01:08:41	Ever seen a confused cow?
Dr. Gary Little:	01:08:44	You're supposed to feed me. I give you milk and meat. It's not happening. Where's the economy of all of this happening? They have no pasture. The flocks are made desolate. It's just sad in this destructive state. Then in verses two, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. So much so that people are going to say, "There hath not been ever the like." Do you remember it ever being this rough? Neither shall any be more after it even to the years of many generations. This is the fire devoureth before them. And then it turns to war imagery in verse four that there's this horseman coming and attacking the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains and just everywhere, this loud visual. Stay with us. We are going to have some hope in here. Verse six, "And before their faces, the people shall be much pained.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:09:38	All faces shall gather blackness." On this attack in verses seven and eight, it talks about the attacking forces. They don't break ranks, meaning that they're just strong. And then it even describes that when they fall on the sword, they're not wounded. There's no way to be delivered from all of this. So what do we do with all of that? What can we? Verse 19 in chapter one has some thoughts on when things get really hard in the last days, when things become extremely difficult. Verse 19, this is the answer to devastation. Oh Lord, to thee will I cry. That's in the middle of all of that, but I chose to read all of the devastation and say, what is the answer? That's it. Maybe it's too simple. We might go there last after trying everything, but oh Lord, to thee will I cry. As you hear all this devastation, what are you thinking?

Hank Smith:	01:10:31	I think of listeners we hear from who are in the middle of life's devastation. They tell us that just reading the scriptures with us helps them find some respite. If anybody out there is feeling this, I like what Gary pointed out there. Here's all this devastation. I won't turn from the Lord. I will turn to him.
John Bytheway:	01:10:54	I like that you said that about food security because I think it's so easy to read a verse that says, "And there was a famine in the land." Can you imagine not knowing what you're going to eat for them without preservatives and refrigerators and Costcos and grocery stores just stacked with abundance? Most of us have never known a day of hunger unless we're fasting. To know there's a famine is emotionally got to be as physically, and you've got children. So for us, maybe we can think some of us have plenty to eat, but our spiritual lives are a mess. Or like you were saying, Hank, people might be listening that there's the things that are going on. I've got enough to eat, but other things are so difficult. Same answer. Oh Lord, to thee will I cry.
Hank Smith:	01:11:49	When I think of famine today, you both know, you've heard
John Bytheway:	01:11:52	When the wifi is out.
Hank Smith:	01:11:58	How do I handle this kind of torture? We have an epidemic of loneliness in the world. That's a type of famine. I have nobody.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:12:09	That helps me appreciate the text because there's some of these verses I'm like, I don't know what to do with that yet. And that's the beauty of scripture for me is I'm reading through something will pop. It'll mean something more to me in a different context or different life circumstance. Back in chapter one verse 14, Hank, you're talking about this epidemic of loneliness. Sanctify ye a fast. Call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord, your God and that imagery of cry unto the Lord. That gathering, to be honest, we think, oh, if physical famine, do I have enough food storage? But the reality is if it gets really bad, it's going to be teamwork. It's going to be gathering. And I'm not trying to create a scare on physical things. This is a lot of imagery.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:12:51	He's using physical things to help us understand the spiritual destruction that's happening, but the gathering, I appreciate that. Anyone that's feeling lonely, whatever that

word is, I'm not known, I'm not seen, I'm not needed, all the different manifestations of that. Gather, you're needed. We need you in this. And look in chapter two, verse one where Joel offers this, "Blow ye the trumpet of the Lord." That imagery is used twice in this chapter, and there's a footnote there, the shofar, a ram's horn. Can we go show and tell for a second? Ram's horn, shofar, the blowing. I'm not going to blow it because I don't want to make the... Other people can do it, but this idea of in the craziness of all of that, it's easy to feel isolated and alone. And it's interesting that the prophet saying, "No, no, no, let's make a noise." Now this particular noise compared to others because a shofar could be used for different things like a military war cry.

Dr. Gary Little: 01:13:50 That's not this one. This was a wake up call. This is a wake up that we don't have to stay in this state, that as I was researching this and what commentators were saying about this verse, that this trumpet in Zion sound an alarm in my holy mountain, let all the inhabitants of the land tremble for the day of the Lord is come. Now day of the Lord can have a lot of different meanings, but one of the interpretations that could fit with this context, it's the time when the Lord brings judgment to the wicked and deliverance for the righteous. So let's be awakened to that, that where we are and the way we're seeking this crying out, that will have a huge impact on how we navigate the difficulties. What kind of worm was it? The palmer worms of life. Let's be awakened to it.

Dr. Gary Little: 01:14:41 Chapter two verse 11, "The Lord shall utter his voice before his army, for his camp is very great, for he is strong that executeth his word, for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible." This question is one that we can camp on, and I'd like to bring a personal touch to it, but where he says, "And who can abide it? Who will be able to live in this great and terrible day?" How does that work? It reminded me of a talk from Elder Ronald A. Rasband. It's called Be Not Troubled, but he shares this idea as we're thinking about the difficulties that are happening in the last days. I think about my children, future grandchildren, and what earth will bring. He offers this, "Some years ago, one of our young married daughters and her husband asked Sister Rasband and me a very important question, life influencing question.

Dr. Gary Little: 01:15:29 Question: Is it still safe and wise to bring children into this seemingly wicked and frightening world we live in?" Yeah, as we look at these last days and this picture that Joel has painted for us, that's what triggered that mind of like, Wow,

		yeah, other people are asking those questions. I teach a class called Eternal Family, and these young adults are like, what does it look like to start a family, to navigate that? Elder Rasband continues, "Now that was an important question for a mom and dad to consider with their dear married children. We could hear the fear in their voices. We could feel the fear in their hearts. Our answer to them was a firm yes, it's more than okay. As we shared fundamental gospel teachings and our own heartfelt expressions and life experience. Then he goes on to teach some beautiful things. The talk is called Be Not Troubled.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:16:21	I recommend it. Other phrases he says is, "Fear is not new." Another phrase, "Since ancient times, fear has limited the perspective of God's children." One thought is we think about the last days, the days... Armageddon is a term that sometimes we use. Joel doesn't specifically mention this, but a lot of the imagery points to that type of a time period. But how do we navigate fear? It's easy to say, well, in chapter one, verse 19, he says, "O Lord, to thee will I cry." But what does that really look like? How do we navigate the fears of these last days? That's hopefully something we can discuss and describe, but do you guys have any initial thoughts on navigating the fears that sometimes the last days bring?
John Bytheway:	01:17:05	Hank, remember how we were talking when we did the book of Ezekiel about people making charts and lists of when do you think the second coming is? It's because it seems like the real safety is come unto Christ right now instead of spending too much energy trying to figure out when Christ will come, be there, just come unto Christ right now, then you're already there when he comes.
Hank Smith:	01:17:26	I have something that I read at the beginning of my classes when I teach the Book of Mormon. We're in the Old Testament this year, of course, New Testament next year; we want to be in these books. Here is a promise of President Nelson. I promise that as you daily immerse yourself in the Book of Mormon, you will be immunized against the evils of the day.
John Bytheway:	01:17:48	And that other thing, he said, if you read it every day, you'll make better decisions.
Hank Smith:	01:17:53	Every day.
John Bytheway:	01:17:54	Yeah.

Dr. Gary Little:	01:17:54	I add my witness to that. There's a power that God gives us. The book is a book, but it brings us to the Savior. Again, listeners just zone out for a minute and think, wait, who can abide the day? What does that look like? What does it look like on my street? What conversations can I have with my children, with my grandchildren, with a neighbor? How do we live in this day and thrive and not get sucked into the destruction?
Hank Smith:	01:18:18	I had a student, we discussed the second coming and she was up front just in tears, and I felt bad afterwards. I said, "Are you okay?" I'm used to people not liking my class, but not that emotional. I said, "Are you okay?" She said, "I'm just so scared of the second coming. I do not want to see any of it. I don't want to live through any of the upcoming. I don't want to live through any of the signs." And I said, "Oh, oh, hang on. Well, I have news. You're in it. Right now. We're here. It's called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. We're here right now. I said, "How are you doing?" She said, "What?" I said, "Yeah, we're in it right now. How are you doing?" She said, "Oh, it's hard, but I'm doing well." Yes, you are.
Hank Smith:	01:19:09	And why do you think you're doing well? Because look where you are. Look what you're doing. It helped her feel a little bit better. She's like, "Oh, okay. We're in it right now. Yeah, we're in it right now."
John Bytheway:	01:19:20	You are abiding the day. You guys help me out. I've got a note here on Joel 2:11, "Who can abide it?" It's got a footnote to Malachi 3:2, and I've got a note in my scriptures, Malachi, that verse, "Who can abide the day of his coming?" That's in the Book of Mormon, that's in the New Testament, that's in the Pearl of Great Price, that's in the Old Testament. That question, I just thought, I don't know. I hope my note is correct, but that question of who will abide the day.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:19:51	It's fantastic.
John Bytheway:	01:19:54	Here's Joel saying it.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:19:55	I love what you guys did with that. That's so fun. Can we look at verse 12 and see Joel? What does he bring to this conversation? "Therefore, also now saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and with mourning." And the word turn there, Hebrew, shube, shuve to turn means to repent. It's an interesting

thought, and again, I'm kind of a nerd having taught the divine gift of forgiveness class for years, which just means as a repenter, I don't like referring to myself as a sinner, I call myself a repenter, which infers sin, sadly. But as a repenter, this is the joyful way of being. It's interesting that that's where Joel goes at least. There's a million answers and they're all correct, but he says, "Who's going to abide the day? Repenters." And then he tells us in the next verse, "Oh, what does it not look like?" Look in verse 13, "Rend your heart and not your garments.

Dr. Gary Little: 01:20:56 Turn, repent unto the Lord your God." And we talked a little bit with the Hosea conversation that, "Is my repentance sin-focused or Savior focused?" Because this one, it's turn unto the Lord your God. "No, no, but I keep doing this, this, this, stop it. God knows you're doing that. Stop. I know. But where's your focus? Are you focused on him? Why? The next phrase. "For he is gracious and merciful." Hesed. That's him. Keep your attention on who abides today? Savior focused. Repenters that are turning to him and letting his grace carry the day. "For he is slow to anger and of great kindness, hesed, and repenteth him of the evil. There's a JST in verse 14 that talks about, When we repent, who knows, but will God give us blessings? Of course, it'll flow out of there. You asked a question earlier, Hank, and I went off on something personal, in my wrestle to really not just like, "Oh, that's a good verse," but to what does that look like in the life of Gary?

Dr. Gary Little: 01:22:01 Here's a passage of scripture where... I don't know if you've had that before when you read a scripture and you're like, "Nope, nope. Here's mine." Hebrews chapter four. The writer of Hebrews starts in Hebrews chapter four, verse 12, "For the word of the Lord is quick and powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and joint and marrow. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It's a lot of words, a lot of visuals for getting to the core of things. The writer says, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." My translation of that is I can't hide anything. I can’t hide anything from God. He sees everything naked.

Dr. Gary Little: 01:22:50 It's a vulnerable place to be. It's uncomfortable potentially when I know that I'm not perfect. But then here's where the writer takes us. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the son of God,

		let us hold fast our profession." He says, "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched." Let's do it the other way. "For we have an high priest, which can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, our weaknesses. He was in all points tempted, like as we are, he did it without sin." Now that's all the setup. Here's the word where I got to, "Nope, that's not me. I can't. Therefore, let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that you may obtain mercy and find grace for help in time of need." Now, that should be beautiful, but my first few reads of that was like, mm-mm.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:23:43	“Come boldly to the throne of grace." I can picture myself coming to the throne of God, groveling, crawling. That's how I'm coming. And he's like, No, no, no. Because you have a high priest that went through everything you did and he actually passed through the veil into the celestial kingdom, come boldly to the throne of grace. And I had to come to a place, I don't know that this is the answer, but it's been one that's been helpful for me, that I can come boldly to the throne of grace, not because I'm good, because I'm not, but because he is good. That's the language of Joel where he says, "Turn unto the Lord your God, for he is full of grace. He is merciful. He is slow to anger.” I notice my repentance is not fun when I'm thinking about me, when I'm thinking about my sins. Now, I have to be honest that these things are underserving me.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:24:42	These things are trying to meet needs, unmet needs that you talked earlier in the episode. But if my focus is on the sin, then it's angsty, it's uncomfortable, it's burdensome. And when my focus goes to him, then he shines light on the reality. Is it Ether? He said, "Come unto me and I'll show unto you your weakness." You're like, well, that's not nice.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:25:05	Come unto me. And I'll be like, "Hmm." But it's not that God's like, "Oh, look at that. Look at that, look at that, look at that." He says, "Come unto me and my light will show you where we need to apply grace because my grace is sufficient. I can help you there." This healthy repentance of Christ-centered. Who will abide the day? I'm intrigued that Joel lands on, "Oh, turners, repenters, that's who abides the day." People that are looking to Christ for a source of strength rather than their sins.
Hank Smith:	01:25:36	Wow. Who can abide the day? Repenters.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:25:39	Yeah, it's been helpful for me.

Hank Smith:	01:25:42	I'm trying to remember. John, I think in the Doctrine and Covenants, we had people say, "We have a delightful forgiver, so repent relentlessly."
John Bytheway:	01:25:51	Repent relentlessly. I was thinking of that too. I just wrote that down, what you said. I don't call myself a sinner, I call myself a repenter. Repent with a Savior-focused repentance. That's great stuff.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:26:08	It's fun. The conversations in our home, we have 10 humans and now a daughter-in-law coming in there and there's a lot of bumping into each other and earth that happens. Sometimes people will say nice things like, "Tell me about your family. How come? Oh, we repent a lot. We repent a lot. In verse 15 right here, "Blow the trumpet." There's the shofar again. This time, the connotation, the text here isn't a wake up call. This is a gather call. This is a returning to God type of a feeling. And look who he invites. Now, this is going to set us up for a little bit later in verse 16. Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble, start noticing the variety of people, the elders, gather the children, those that suck the breasts, nursing children, grab them, get them coming, the bridegrooms and the bride out of her closet.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:26:58	And you're like, wait, no, we're getting married. No, no, come, come, come, come, come, come like this. Just this get everybody because what's happening... Guys, I'm getting goosebumps right now. What he's building for is amazing, what he's trying to set up right here. And that goes into more difficulty. But then interesting, remember how there was devastation and just this total loss of everything that as we repent in the beautiful sense of repentance, not trying to earn any forgiveness, as if we try to earn our repentance, which suggests that God doesn't want to forgive us. I'm bringing a weird thing to the equation there that I have to earn this. He's like, I'm holding it back. He's giving it freely. He gives it to Enos so freely in the Book of Mormon that once he gives it to him, Enos is like, Wait, wait, wait, wait.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:27:45	How is it done? I know God's not a liar. How's that done? He's like, Oh, it's my son. You believed in my son. That's why. That's why. Verse 24, we get, "The floor shall be full of wheat and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil." This repentance just brings this milk and honey imagery that the promised land brings to us. Then we come to, remember he's gathering all these people of all different walks of life. I think most people, when you think of the book of Joel, you're like, oh, that's Old Testament, right? Okay. Oh, that

prophecy, the prophecy of Joel, this is the one in these verses, verse 28. "And it shall come to pass afterward." So again, this is prophecy for Joel, and we have prophets talking to us that these things are being fulfilled right now. "That I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters," wow, I love this verse so much.

Dr. Gary Little:	01:28:43	"Shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams. Your young men shall see visions. Also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." The prophecy of Joel, that's what people call it. There's men, women, children, servants, old men. There's this massive pouring out of the Spirit, which begs the question, has that happened? When is that going to happen? That sounds nice.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:29:14	We see a fulfillment of this in Acts chapter two when Peter at the day of Pentecost, "But this is that which was prophesied by the prophet Joel, and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith the Lord, I will pour out my Spirit." So Peter gives us an example that, wow, this fulfillment happened during the day of Pentecost in the New Testament. Then we come to Joseph Smith History where there's young 17-year-old Joseph where he's praying because he's conflicted with his sins, his foibles, his mistakes, and God sends an angel and this angel visits him three times. And as part of that message, the angel Moroni tells Joseph, he recites the prophecy of Joel that we just read, verse 28, 29 This is yet to be fulfilled. Oh wait, I thought Peter said it was fulfilled back in Acts. Yes, that's a fulfillment. Then this restoration narrative, there will be multiple manifestations of this.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:30:13	Then we fast-forward to 2001 where President Hinckley in general conference, this is the October conference. Yep, it was October 2001 general conference. He says, "The vision of Joel has been fulfilled wherein the Lord declared." Then he recited that scripture that we read. After reading it, he says, "There has been more of scientific discovery during these years than during all the previous history of mankind, meaning between when Angel Moroni comes and today. Think about the technology, transportation, communication, medicine, public hygiene, the unlocking of the atom, the miracle of the computer with all of its ramifications have blossomed forth, particularly in our own era." And then he said, "During my own lifetime, I have witnessed miracle after wondrous miracle come to pass, and sometimes we take it for granted." We have this

		prophecy of Joel that in the last days there'll be this pouring out. Now, it's not my right to say, "Oh, here's where the prophecy was fulfilled." That's Peter's job, it's President Hinckley's job, but it's also nice to sit back and say, "How am I seeing this prophecy in my sphere?
Dr. Gary Little:	01:31:24	How am I witnessing God doing his work?" John, when we were off camera, you mentioned the church news article that just came out. Do you want to take us there and what was exciting about that one?
John Bytheway:	01:31:36	Yeah, a few days ago from the time of this recording anyway, there was just a notification that said that there are 90,000 missionaries and 30,000 of those are sister missionaries, which is fun. One of those is my daughter, one of those is your daughter Gary. One of those is Hank's son. Incredible to get that notification. That number is so big. I guess in my day they were close to 30,000 missionaries total. Now there's 90 and 30 of them are sisters.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:32:13	We see that number. Thanks for the awe-inspiringness of that. And we look at the actual text of verse 28, God promised in these last days, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. In the book of Revelation, gift of prophecy is testimony. How powerfully illogical it is to serve a full-time mission. I remember when I got my mission call, we were the only Latter-day Saints for 30 miles. My older brother served in a mission. He went to Japan. His best friend, the next person in our branch to go on a mission went to Japan. I get my mission call and people say, "Hey, you going on one of them Mormon missions?" And I was like, "Yeah, I'm planning on it. You get to choose where you want to go?" "No, no, actually I submit where I'm willing to go and they send you where.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:32:57	"Oh, you don't even get to choose?" Wow. "Well, do you get paid for it?" "No, no, actually I
Hank Smith:	01:33:04	I pay.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:33:04	You're looking at that, you're like 90,000 teenagers are like, "Sign me up." There's no other explanation on earth than the Spirit of the Lord being poured out. And we're in the classrooms with these youth, these young adults. The 90,000 is fascinating to me because again, as we look back, we're like, "That's unprecedented in our time." But more of the fact that 90,000 ones are saying, "I'll go. I'll go. I'll tell

		people about this message." It's so illogical in today's absolutely selfish society that these teenagers, the Lord's doing his work in them and through them remarkably. How else are you seeing this prophecy be fulfilled?
John Bytheway:	01:33:45	I was in Helsinki, Finland this summer, went to the Helsinki Third Ward. A young man got up to speak. I think he was 16. His name was Osmo. He bore the most beautiful testimony about going to FSY and learning what a gift it was to have the Holy Ghost and how much it had helped him in his life. I was so impressed. And then during the sacrament hymn, I looked over at the priests and the teachers and the deacons. They were all singing the hymn. They're not too cool to sing the hymn. And I just looked at that and thought, wow. In Finland, I've seen that and just thought, way to go, way to go guys. Taking it seriously, quietly, reverently, taking it seriously, singing the sacrament hymn, getting ready to pass the sacrament. Impressive.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:34:44	I don't live in Europe, but I'm familiar enough with Europe. The youth, the challenge that they face, and it's not unique to Europe, but them choosing to gather, to hear the shofar, say, gather to this solemn place and worship here. The thing that thrills me about that is that they are good boys, but I'm thinking about their grandchildren, that they are unlocking power in the life of their grandchildren that they don't even know yet. It's not even on their radar and it's fine. But that's the beauty of this spirit being poured out, that it's not just limited. We think of Elder Rasband's story, those young men in Helsinki, Finland choosing to let the spirit of the Lord be poured out upon them and to move forward. There's so much confidence. I hope as we listen to the prophets speak about what the Lord's doing in these last days.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:35:37	Yes, there are dark things. Yes, there's palmer worms and hard things. But it's interesting, back in chapter two, verse 17 has temple language that, "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar." That's the temple between the porch, the entrance there and the altar. "Let him weep in this place of repentance. Please spare thy people, oh Lord, and then he keeps other things. But this temple, that's a part of the outpouring that's happening. It's unprecedented. I can't even keep track anymore. I used to say there are this many temples. I stopped because the Lord's doing his work is manifesting itself in so many majestic ways. It just thrills me. And I'd love to emphasize this phrase in verse 28 where he says, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." The experiences that

		I've highlighted have been with Latter-day Saints, but let's be honest, there's eight plus billion of us on earth and 17 and a half million of us.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:36:41	Is this prophecy only going to manifest itself within the church boundaries membership? Well, that's not what happened in the day of Pentecost with Peter. The Lord's spirit was poured out upon all the languages and all the... Here's a sacred experience I had seeing this passage play out. We have dear friends that are involved in international things, and there was a UN conference that came to Utah. These UN delegates from all over the world were there and we were there just helping out along the way. And one of the things was, "Hey, would you like to take a UN delegate to see music and the spoken word on Sunday morning and take him around Temple Square?" This one brother that we just clicked from Africa was a UN delegate and we're walking around talking and we're standing at the feet of the Christus after hearing the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and we're talking.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:37:26	He's a faithful person. Actually, he's a pastor in his country that's also a UN delegate. I had just taught these passages in seminary, so it was fresh on my mind and we were talking about what the Lord's doing and I quoted these scriptures and he looked at me and he said, "No, no, that's our verse." I was like, "What do you mean?" And he talked about his little network of congregations and these tribes in Africa. "That's our verse this year. That's the one we're studying." Then he went on to share, this is a member of another congregation, another faith tradition, but he shared with me, he said, "The Lord is moving in Africa." And he described these congregations have a network that everyone signs up for a period of time, 24 hours a day. These youth were praying 24 hours a day collectively for all of the youth in Africa that they would be converted to Christ.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:38:18	I was like, "What is..." Here's this man and I'm watching the Lord pouring out his spirit on him, the fruits that are happening in Africa because of this collective fulfillment of the prophecy. I just love the Lord. He is so capable of doing his work and that's why I love this passage so much.
Hank Smith:	01:38:39	This is 1971. This man's name is Anthony Obina in Nigeria, 42-year-old Nigerian school teacher. He takes out a pen and paper to write to the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He says, "I have read several books in

		search for salvation and have at last found the answer." He and his wife had been confined during the Civil War or Nigerian Civil War. He somehow opened up an old magazine and had seen something he was not expecting, a tall stately stone building with several large spires. You guys think of a building like that? He had seen the building once before in a dream, a dream he'd had before the Civil War broke out. In the dream, the Savior had guided him to that magnificent building. It was full of people, all of them dressed in white. "What is this? "Anthony had asked.
Hank Smith:	01:39:41	"These are the people who attend the temple," the Savior replied. "What are they doing? They're praying. They pray here always. When he woke, Anthony had yearned to know more about the things he had seen. He recounted the dream to his wife, Fidelia, and his friends, asking what they thought it meant. No one could help him. He finally asked a reverend for guidance. The reverend could not interpret the dream either, but he told Anthony if the dream was from God, his questions would someday be resolved. As soon as Anthony saw the image in the magazine, he knew he'd found his answer. At the top of the picture was a caption identifying it as the temple in Salt Lake City, Utah. This is beautiful. Your young men shall dream dreams.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:40:25	Do I allow for a God that communicates through dreams? Do I have place in my framework for a God who speaks through visions? This is our God. He offers this. Now, if I haven't had a vision in a way that I was... Oh, I mean not like Joseph Smith's first vision, but what is that? What does a vision mean? And I'm not going to get interpreting that, but one thing this prophecy asks of me is, do I give place for God to do his work in the ways he promises he will do? We can go and look at our own family history stories and see people experiencing dreams and having visions. We talk about Joseph Smith's first vision, and that's an interesting title because it suggests there was a second one, but actually his father having dreams, Joseph Smith Sr. having dreams that helped prepare the soil for this restoration to come.
John Bytheway:	01:41:21	His grandfather too.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:41:23	Yes. Yeah.
John Bytheway:	01:41:24	Asael Smith.

Dr. Gary Little:	01:41:26	It's just so fun to think about. The Lord is so involved and so willing. One invitation for me is just to slow down enough, to notice it and then to be open to it and to play my part in it. And it doesn't have to be anything grandiose. Be open to a God who wants to pour out his spirit upon you in the context of these latter days. He knew it was going to be bad. He knew there was going to be devastation, but he also knew there were going to be young men and young women and old men and older women who were prepared to be a part of this pouring out of the spirit. And it's just a privilege to watch it. You mentioned church news. Check that out every week.
Hank Smith:	01:42:09	Yeah.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:42:09	Just look at it like, look what God's doing this week. Watch this. It's fascinating. Don't doom scroll. Just get on church news and you'll leave uplifted every time. It's so good.
Hank Smith:	01:42:20	Both of you, I'm sure you remember the seminary video about Wilford Woodruff and Robert Mason. Robert Mason was a man that Wilford Woodruff knew before he joined the church. Wilford Woodruff says one of the reasons he joined the church when it was presented to him was because of Robert Mason, who he knew in his youth. He said, "This man, by many, he was called a prophet." Says, "To my knowledge, many of his prophecies have been fulfilled. He told me that the day was near when the Lord would establish his church and kingdom upon the earth with all of its ancient gifts and blessings. He said such a work would commence upon the earth before he died, but he would not live to partake of its blessings. He said that I would become a conspicuous actor in that kingdom." Then Robert Mason tells Wilford Woodruff, this is again before he joins the church, he said, "The last time I ever saw him, he related to me the following vision.
Hank Smith:	01:43:18	Wilford, I was carried away in a vision and found myself in the midst of a vast orchard of fruit trees. I became hungry and wandered through this vast orchard searching for fruit to eat, but found none. While I stood in amazement finding no fruit in the midst of so many trees, they began to fall to the ground as if torn up by a whirlwind. They continued to fall until there was not a tree standing in the whole orchard. I immediately saw therefore shoots springing up from the roots and forming themselves into young beautiful trees. They budded and blossomed and brought forth fruit which ripened, most beautiful to look upon anything my eyes had

ever beheld. I stretched forth my hand and plucked some of the fruit. I gazed upon it with delight. When I was about to eat of it, the vision closed and I did not taste the fruit." He then has quite a prayer and answer from the Lord.

Hank Smith:	01:44:05	He said, "When Father Mason had finished relating the vision and its interpretation, he said, calling me by my name, Wilford. I shall never partake of this fruit in the flesh, but you will." He then turned and left me. These were the last words he ever spoke to me on the earth. To me, this was a very striking circumstance. He said the vision was given to him in about the year 1800. In 1830, I was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Almost the first person I thought of was this prophet, Robert Mason, in which I had informed him that I had found the true gospel with all of its blessings. The authority of the Church of Christ had been restored to the earth as he had told me it would be. I had received the ordinances of baptism and the laying on of hands.
Hank Smith:	01:44:50	He received my letter with great joy and had it read to him many times. He handled it as he had handled the fruit of the vision. He was very old and soon died without having the privilege of receiving the ordinances of the gospel. Then of course, the first opportunity I had after the truth of baptisms for the dead was revealed, I went forth and was baptized in the name of Robert Mason. He was a good man, a true prophet, for his prophecies have been fulfilled.” Isn't that great?
John Bytheway:	01:45:25	Thank you you've heard me tell this too many times on the podcast, but my dad, 19 years old, a gunner's mate on the USS Saratoga, not a member of the church, 19-year-old buddies, 18 and 19-year-old buddies dragged him to church, my dad's words, dragged him to church. Maybe I'm not here. These young men grabbed my dad and said, "Hey, come with us to church." And he said, "Most of the time, I didn't know what they were talking about. Thank you to those young men, Keith Crawford, Cal Miller, these guys who grabbed my dad said, "You're coming with us.”
Dr. Gary Little:	01:46:05	Wow, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. There are dark times, but the multi-generational impact of the spirit being poured out, it's not an accident that he says, "Call your children, call your brides, your bridegrooms, the suckling child, the old men, get everyone because this will have a ripple effect that you cannot see, you can't comprehend because the Lord's preparing earth for the

		second coming, for him to come and to rule and reign and to be received. And it's going to take miracles like this in individual family stories that will perpetuate. And I love your humility. You're like, "I might not be here, for sure not connected to the covenant if it wasn't for those boys that had the spirit poured out upon them." But then the impact that the Lord has accomplished through your ministry and the ripple effect. I trust God that he is doing his work and miracles and visions and dreams and simple testimonies and daughters and sons and missions.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:47:11	It's a marvel to behold him doing his work. It's so fun.
John Bytheway:	01:47:17	I was serving in Angeles City in the Philippines with Elder Kelly Comstock. We had this girl that kept coming to primary. She was nine and she wasn't baptized. Her parents were less active, but she was always there and we said, "Bishop, what do you want us to do? She comes every week. Don't you think she should be baptized?" We taught nine-year-old Shirley Lee and baptized her. And a few years ago, I get an email, phone call from Shirley Lee Aguilar, who's married a wonderful man, is firm in the faith and has now moved to Texas. It's just one of those that generationally, she at least knew enough to come to church. She felt it was a happy, safe place. Now I get to contact her once in a while. Look what's happened to her and now her posterity after her. Way to go, Shirley.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:48:20	Shirley. My parents joined the church on a six-month trial basis. You can't do that, but they did.
John Bytheway:	01:48:29	Where's the box to check for that?
Dr. Gary Little:	01:48:31	Yeah, the missionaries are teaching them and then separately my parents just decide, "Well, the only way we're really going to find out is if we join." So they do. A year and a half later, my dad's the ward mission leader. My mom's in the primary presidency and they're like, from them, they've had children and grandchildren's… and this was humbling for me. This is no honor or recognition, but just in this two generations past them, they've had full-time missionaries serve on every continent minus Antarctica, just from that tiny little swamp town conversion, what God's doing, and it's him. It's his work. Chapter three comes back into some of the gloom and the realities of life. I feel so elevated in this conversation of the beauty and seeing God's work, and then the podcast episode is going to end and

		we're going to go back at life and we're like, "Oh yeah, it hits me back in the face." Here we are.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:49:24	It's interesting that verse two in chapter three, the Lord said, "I will also gather all nations and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat." Now that has a lot of historical stuff I'm not going to unpackage right now, but it has the connotation of the Lord judges. There's craziness on earth. There's good and there's evil and there's miracles and dreams and visions, and there's also all the opposite of that too. And there is a judgment, and as you go through all of chapter three, it has some of that Armageddon language and the last days type of imagery.
John Bytheway:	01:49:59	Boy, and look at verse 10. It's the opposite of peace. It's beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. It's like, no, no, no, it's supposed to be the other way.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:50:11	The exact opposite of Isaiah is that has the trumpet call almost to the battle like a war cry. But as you listen to our prophets, the trumpets, the ones blowing the call together, it's peacemakers needed. Peacemakers doesn't mean passive, I get run over, but what does that look like? I appreciate that you brought that up, John, that we need to be able to promote the values of the family. That's the language in the family proclamation of the world. How are you going to promote these measures? We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government to promote measures that will strengthen the family, because if not, the calamities will come. It's a proactive thing that you're describing there in verse 10. It's not a passive, God's just going to go do his work over there. Of course, God's doing his work, but he invites us to be a part of his work.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:51:01	There's some language in verse 14. We have valley of judgment in Jehoshaphat in verse 14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision for the day of Lord is near.
John Bytheway:	01:51:14	I like that you said the day of the Lord and that you talked about there are probably many days of the Lord. It's not just one day, but it's this day of what? Accountability, of announcement. So you're going to see that phrase a lot in the scriptures, the day of the Lord, and it's like, which one? Well, there's lots of them, and I guess there will be some ultimate ones coming up.

Dr. Gary Little:	01:51:35	Yes, yes, yes. In verse 16 where it describes the heavens and the earth shall shake, that's more trepidation type of language, but the Lord will be the hope of his people and the strength of the children of Israel. Wanted to land on that one for sure. Yeah, yeah, it's crazy, crazy times, but the Lord will be the hope. That's where my hope is. That's where the strength is. That's where children of Israel, and I think that's us. That's just people, normal, everyday people that our strength is in God. Our strength is in the Lord. And then he says, "So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain." If I can conclude with Elder Rasband, we started with the idea of his wonderful, faithful daughter, this young wife saying, "Can we do this? We bring children into this crazy world?”
Dr. Gary Little:	01:52:30	And of course, as a dad, we confidently, yes, you can move forward. Elder Rasband concludes his message by saying, "Now, what about that daughter and son-in-law who asked the very heartfelt and probing fear-based question years ago? They seriously considered our conversation that night. They prayed and fasted," it's a lot of the language of Joel, "and came to their own conclusions happily and joyfully for them and for us, the grandparents. They now have been blessed with beautiful children as they go forward in faith and love." And then he gives us this counsel, "Take heart, brothers and sisters, as we consider," this is me talking, as we consider a lot of the difficulties that are here. And Hank, you talked about your student that was like, "I'm so scared about it. It's here. It's called Tuesday.”
John Bytheway:	01:53:22	And you're doing great.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:53:23	Yeah. “Take heart, brothers and sisters. Yes, we live in perilous times, but as we stay on the covenant path, we need not fear." Then he offers this blessing, "I bless you that as you do so, you will not be troubled by the times in which we live or the troubles that come your way. I bless you to choose to stand in holy places and be not moved." That's his blessing. There's a passage in scripture that captures it for me. I'm already prone. I'm a professional worrier. I do it really well. I practice at it. So don't fear, don't fear, I'm like, "Yeah, but it's kind of what I do." There's a sacred passage in Doctrine and Covenants section six that addresses some ideas with fear where the Lord says, "Look unto me in every thought, doubt not, fear not." That's a passage that's probably familiar to most of us, considering Joel and the prophecies of the not good ones and the good ones.

Dr. Gary Little:	01:54:17	And I hear the Savior saying, "Look unto me in every thought, doubt not, fear not." And I think, "Well, look unto me in every thought. That's a really high percentage of our thoughts, so I'm probably going to fail at that. Doubt not, dang, but I do that really well too. And fear not." We're like, "Well, okay, three strikes, you're out." That's kind of a devastating... Thanks for bringing that one up, Gary, that moment. But again, I have to be honest, this is the Savior. He's saying, "This is the way I want you to move forward." I had a colleague share this idea with me once, the punctuation, that marvelous semicolon right there, the look unto me in every thought, semicolon, doubt not, fear not, suggesting that perhaps there aren't three impossible things, but there's one thing we could really work at, and then that will produce two outcomes to not fear and to not doubt.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:55:09	How it works for me is when I have fear and I have doubt, which is a regular part of my narrative, unfortunately, it's the trigger for me to go back and do the first. How do I look unto the Savior in this thought or in this fear when I'm still paralyzed? I love that in verse 37, the Lord tells us the next thing to do. He says, "Behold the wounds which pierced my side and also the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet," that when I'm experiencing paralyzing fear or doubt, I can again come to the cross and come to the tomb and look at his hands and his feet and in his side, and that helps me. It doesn't change my environment, but it changes
John Bytheway:	01:55:53	Your focus.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:55:54	The focus is that repentance thing again. Where am I focused?
John Bytheway:	01:55:58	It's like in the world you'll have tribulation, but fear not, I have overcome the world." You see him in that moment and think, "I'm anchored to somebody who has overcome all of this." Yeah, I love what you said, because I doubt that I can doubt not and fear not. I fear that I won't be able to doubt not and fear not.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:56:19	The dizziness of discipleship, but look unto him in every thought. That's the thing, right?
John Bytheway:	01:56:27	That's great.

Dr. Gary Little:	01:56:28	The last phrase of Joel chapter three, verse 21, For the Lord dwelleth in Zion, as we think about the Savior coming, of course there's going to be a lot of craziness that happens between now and him coming, but the thought of him coming just thrills me. Second coming used to terrify me, used to terrify me. And I'm not naive to what's happening and what will happen, but just think about who's coming and he chooses to dwell with us. What's better? It's worth the effort to stay on the covenant path because who's coming? I love that Joel ends with that narrative, and it's a comfort to me and hopefully my family as we try to follow him.
John Bytheway:	01:57:07	Follow him. That's got a good ring to it.
Hank Smith:	01:57:09	It's got a good ring to it. Hey, Gary, thank you so much for your time today.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:57:16	It's been a privilege. I love you both. Thanks.
John Bytheway:	01:57:19	It's been great being with We Three Repenters together. It's been really nice.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:57:24	Hey, and the listeners too, it has been such a privilege for me to get outside of my little world and to think about you because I'm also a listener when I'm not on this side of the microphone. It's been a privilege to be here with you and praying for you. Thanks for praying for me, and God is good.
Hank Smith:	01:57:39	Yeah, the Lord is good to us. He truly is. For those of you who'd love to leave a note for Gary, come on to YouTube, leave a comment there or come to our website, followHIM.co. We'll get those over to him. We would love to let him know where you're listening from, Paris or Panguitch, especially if you're in North Carolina, you might have to send a message over to your boy. Thank Elizabeth for us.
Dr. Gary Little:	01:58:02	Hey, thank you. She loves you guys. We're grateful.
Hank Smith:	01:58:05	What a great day. Well, with that, we want to thank Dr. Gary Little for joining us on followHIM Today. Wow. We want to thank our executive producer, Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. And every episode, we remember our founder. Talk about a man who dreamed dreams. Steve Sorensen. We hope you join us next week. We've only got a few more lessons in 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:	00:00:01	This is followHIM Favorites where John and I share a single story to go with each week's Come, Follow Me lesson. John, we are in the book of Hosea this week, and it's a hard book to read. It's a little bit odd. You have a story for us?
John Bytheway:	00:00:14	Yeah, I do. I have a verse that I like, Hosea 13:9, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help." A former student of mine was named Justin Sua. He was an All-American baseball pitcher at BYU, and he wrote a book called Parent Pep Talks for Kids, and he told this story in here. He said, "I was on a plane from Salt Lake City, headed to Denver, Colorado to speak. I boarded the plane, situated myself in the seat. The lady occupying the window seat next to me was looking out the window. “What's taking you to Colorado?" I asked. To my surprise, the woman calmly gripped the armrests, gave me an uncomfortable smile, showed rapid eye movement and stuttered, "I'm going to be in a piano competition." This was a common case of the physiological effects of stress. And from that moment on for the entire flight, she elaborated on why this competition was filling her with so much anxiety.
John Bytheway:	00:01:09	As we soared through the sky, she told me three things in particular that were causing most stress, the judges, the other competitors, and performing in front of an audience.
Hank Smith:	00:01:20	So pretty much everything.
John Bytheway:	00:01:21	Yeah, pretty much everything because she'd seen them before. Yeah. She said, "The judges have seen me before. The competitors were coming from all over the country. They're really talented." And he said, "The flight attendants invited us to get ready to land when my newfound friend suddenly said, Hey, I realize I've been doing all the talking. So trying to get to know Justin in a few minutes, she said, I've been rude. How about you? What do you do for a living? He smiled and said, I think you might be mad at me

		when I tell you what I do. Oh, why would I be mad? He said, I'm a mental conditioning coach. My job is to help people perform at a high level under stress. She paused for a moment to digest what I just said and the look of realization crossed her face. What? That's what you do for a living?
John Bytheway:	00:02:06	Why didn’t you help me this entire plane ride? Although she said it in jest, I knew she was serious. I told her a common strategy we use is to let the performer get it all out. I wanted to be a sounding board for her. She thanked me and added an invitation. Is there anything you can do to help me with my anxiety? I told her I would share a simple yet powerful principle with her that would serve her well. She opened a notebook, was ready to write. I said, focus on what you can control. Let go of the things you can't. We then spent the next few minutes identifying things that were controllable and thinking she needed to let go. She came to the realization the three things she was most worried about, the judges, the competition, and the audience fell under the I can't control category.
John Bytheway:	00:02:54	So she decided to shift her focus. "I don't know what happened to that woman," Justin said, "but as we were leaving the airplane, she assured me she was going to keep this simple principle in mind. It was already helping her feel more relaxed." And then Justin says, "This a principle you might find on a fortune cookie, but common knowledge isn't always common practice. Focus on what you can’t control. And you can destroy yourself, as Hosea says, with the negative thoughts, but look to the Lord. He's where your help is. Ask him for help with both things, the things you can't control and ask him for help with the things that you can.
Hank Smith:	00:03:33	Yeah. Ooh, I love that. In fact, John, our guest this week, Dr. Gary Little, who walks us through these chapters, he says that our repentance needs to be more son-focused. We can focus on Jesus rather than on our sins and the past, which you can't do anything about the past, but you can focus on the Son. You can control that action. I love it. I love it. Hey, like I said, we're with Dr. Gary Little this week. You can find us anywhere you get your podcasts. We're called followHIM. Then come back here next week. We'll do another followHIM Favorites.