

Come Follow Me Class Insights – 42 – Doctrine and Covenants 115-120

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today, Doctrine and Covenants sections 115 through 120.

Let me begin with a little quote from Heber C. Kimball in the book about his life written by Orson F. Whitney. Listen to what he said here. Let me say to you that many of you will see the time when you will have all the trouble, trial and persecution that you can stand and plenty of opportunities to show that you are true to God and his work. This Church has before it many close places through which it will have to pass before the work of God is crowned with victory. The time will come when no man nor woman will be able to endure on borrowed light. Each will have to be guided by a light within himself. If you do not have it, how can you stand?

We're coming into another set of sections in the middle of this struggle in Missouri and an ongoing struggle still back in Kirtland where remember, at the end of 1837, you have apostasy that starts spreading like crazy in Kirtland as well as in Missouri where we lose many of our Apostles and seventies in the Church as well as all three of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon in the same time period and it's very difficult for these people as they're trying to get out of debt, so their financial woes are – are hurting them, the enemies of the Church are getting more active and fighting against them and now you have dissension from within the Church and more struggles and arguments within the Church and people leaving and saying terrible things about Joseph and other leaders of the Church and it's painful.

So Joseph is commanded by the Lord to leave Kirtland with Sidney Rigdon and relocate to Far West, Missouri up in Caldwell County because they've been – they've been kicked out of those counties in the southern part of Missouri. So when Joseph arrives you've got those final sections that we covered last week. Now today, we pick up the story on April 26th, 1838. This date is going to become significant for a couple of reasons. One, we get the revelation here in section 115 given in Far West, Missouri on that particular date and it's here where the Lord officially names the Church for the last time. Now some of you are wondering what do I mean by for the last time. Well

back in 1830 when the Church was organized on April 6th of that year, it was called The Church of Christ. The problem was that for those first four years, there were a lot of denominations in – in New England that were calling themselves the Church of Christ and it became confusing so in 1834 we have this little shift where we then officially call the church the Church of the Latter Day Saints. Well, the problem is, that it doesn't really stick and there are other names that the Church has gone by. We've – we've been called the Church of Jesus Christ, the Church of God, the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints, the Church of the Latter Day Saints – it's all over the map.

Well then notice what happens April 26th 1838, the Lord opens this revelation as we've come west to Missouri in Far West and he says, verse 1, "Verily thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and also my servant Sidney Rigdon, and also my servant Hyrum Smith, and your counselors who are and shall be appointed hereafter," he goes on to verse 3, "And also unto my faithful servants who are of the high council of my church in Zion, for thus it shall be called." Keep in mind, before Zion in the Church membership's usage of the language, Zion, that one word referred to Independence, Jackson County and the surrounding region. Well, we've been kicked out of Jackson County and went north and we've been kicked out of Ray and Clay Counties down south. Notice he says you're still going to be called the high council of my Church "in Zion, for thus it shall be called." What God is doing is helping them see that Zion may have that center place that will not be moved out of its place and eventually all those promises are going to be fulfilled, but you're going to still be called a stake of Zion in Far West and if you live anywhere in the world where you're living in a stake, it is referred to as a stake of Zion. It's – it's still fitting into what's being described here in verse 3, "my Church in Zion, for thus it shall be called, and unto all the elders and people of my Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints scattered abroad in all the world."

Now you've got the initial name of the Church there but we were missing the definite article in verse 3. Look at verse 4. "For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Now just a little side note here, it wasn't until the 1921 edition where we change the capitalization on the definite article – the in the name of the Church. Knowing this isn't going to get you into heaven, nor is it going to keep you out if you

don't know it. It – it's more an interesting side note that for instance in the 1876 edition and previous editions, it's just the in a lower case t for the name of the Church.

Now notice, he says thus shall my Church be called in the last days, even – now here's your capital T – The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Now we've talked about this last year when we covered the lesson in 3rd Nephi chapter 27 where the Lord helps the twelve Nephite, Lamanite disciples and apostles work through that issue of what are we supposed to call the name of your church, and then he discussed the definition of the gospel as well. But if you look at the name of the Church it's fascinating if you take it word by word by word and try to analyze what's going on because the name of the Church is long. Most other churches only have one or two or three words maximum to describe the name of their church, their title, but ours is really long, so notice the very first word in the name – and this is significant, because keep in mind, this was 1838, remember April 26th, so how old is the Church? Well, the Church was established on April 6th 1830 so we have just passed our eighth birthday collectively as a Church at this point, we're eight years and twenty days old. So twenty days after our eighth birthday as a Church and the Lord says now this is what you're going to call it, when they'd been calling it multiple things and even officially calling it multiple things differently, previous to 1838 but you'll notice nothing has changed officially in the name of our Church since April of 1838. This is the name, and he makes it very official sounding here, he says, thus shall my Church be called in the last days. This is what I want it called. Does this help give context to perhaps some of the reasons why President Nelson and our leaders made a big emphasis on us using the full name of the Church wherever possible so that we don't leave out the name of Jesus Christ. That we're not the LDS Church, we're not the Mormon Church, we're not the Church of the Latter Day Saints. We're The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Now, let's look at the individual words. The definite article – the – is a very beautiful word that shows this power of a definite article – The Church. Now sometimes we create problems when talking to other people when we create a sense or a spirit of we are THE Church of Jesus Christ and nobody else has any truth, nobody else has anything of great value. That's not helpful nor is it

true. You can find wonderful things in all kinds of other Christian and other world religions. I love the concept that has been shared by a Swedish theologian by the name of Krister Stendahl, he calls it holy envy. It's this idea where you can be – you can be solid enough in your own faith, in your own – in your own religious convictions and beliefs that you're not threatened by looking at other people and their religious beliefs or practices and experiencing what he calls holy envy where you look at them and say wow, that is a beautiful teaching or that is a beautiful practice and the amazing thing about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the way Joseph Smith described it is – in his words referring to our Church he says Mormonism embraces all truth. We're looking for truth anywhere we can find it and we want to make it a part of our life, a part of our culture so when we – when we get into this discussion of the name of the Church, it should never be in an exclusionary way to say nobody else has anything of value. We have a corner on the market for spirituality or faith in God or belief in Christ or a love of the scriptures. Those things aren't true, and as you get around and talk to people you recognize that there are some incredible truths that we've – we've learned from our interactions with people of all walks of life and of all faiths.

So we begin with The Church – it is The Church of Jesus Christ, but he has – God loves all of his children and he's scattered revelation and truth and faith among all nations, kindreds, tongues and people and for those of you who wonder, by the way, well what about other - other writings and other religious traditions and practices, are they really inspired? I can't answer that for every single practice and every single doctrine or teaching individually, but for me, the cross reference that you might consider writing next to that verse is Alma 29, this is the famous chapter back in the Book of Mormon where Alma the Younger begins chapter 29 by saying, Oh, that I were an angel, that I could have the wish of my heart and I could have a trumpet and I could just let everybody know the truth, and then he says oh, I sin in my wish. And then look what the Lord tells him a little bit later in that chapter. This is once again Alma 29 verse 8. "For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations," notice that's one hundred percent – "all nations of their own nation and tongue to teach his word, yea in wisdom all that he seeth fit that they should have. Therefore we

see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom according to that which is just and true."

I love the fact that in our Church we have – we have an inclusive doctrine that says God loves all of – all of the earth's inhabitants and revelation and inspiration and truth is going to be given to all of them in their own nation, among their own people as much as God sees fit to give each of them. And so then our message becomes not one of go and prove everybody wrong, but go and figure out where they've seen the hand of God and where they've been blessed by inspiration and then invite them to bring all that good with them and see if we can add to it. President Hinckley always emphasized that idea of bring all the good you have, see if we can add to it. We're confident we can.

I want to share a second witness to this. I've had the privilege of studying all the world's great religions and even traveling to these countries and teaching people on site about these cultures and religious traditions and I know I've been inspired by these traditions. I've been deeply inspired by Islam, by Hinduism, by Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, Taoism, and I could go on. Beautiful traditions where there is beautiful truths and I just see the hand of God throughout the world and so we don't need to feel threatened if we know Jesus Christ, he has invited us to accept all truth. Luckily for us, we know what the most important salvific truths are. And he's said here are the things that will help you get saved and once you grasp hold of that there's just great joy in experiencing other truths that are enlightening and inspiring.

So let me – let me just try something for fun. Let's do something different, something new here for a minute. I want to demonstrate something. Watch this. Taylor, just hold your hand up like that. Ready? Now watch. You ready? Okay here we go. (clap) What are you doing? I'm pushing back. Why? Because I don't like that, because I don't want to pull over and I want to win. Now I didn't prep him with this and I didn't tell him what to do. You saw the only instruction I gave Taylor here. This isn't staged, it's not pre-programmed. I simply gave him one item of instruction. I said hold your hand up. That's it. And when he held his hand up I pushed against it and what did Taylor do without being given any instructions? He pushed back.

Brothers and sisters, human nature is such that you don't like being pushed into a corner or – or pushed back. You don't like having agency removed and becoming a victim of some - some outside force. Our inherent tendency as human beings, when you feel somebody pressuring you or trying to force you is you push back, even if you know you're wrong sometimes you'll push back. Have you ever done that? Then halfway through an argument you realized oh, she's right – then you double down – and you double down on your argument. Human tendency is the natural man is an enemy to God. Let's just repeat that.

So, here's the point. What a difference it would make when we're talking about the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ with people if we didn't go in with – with an exclusionary we are the only ones who hold all the truth and we're going to tear down your faith so that we can then help you build up the true faith. When you do that to people, they – they will push back instinctively unless – unless God performs some spiritual miracle for them. What a difference it would make if instead of sitting down and trying to prove people wrong religiously, what would happen if we spent more time sitting down with people and asking inspired questions and then really listening and wanting to learn, to say something like where have you seen the hand of God in your life? Or think of a time in your life when something happened where you just instinctively knew that there was a God in heaven and that he actually cared about you here on the earth? Can you share that with us?

What a difference where you're not pushing people but you're inviting people to share not in a coercive, not in a manipulative way but in a genuine way. I trust that God has given you some experiences that are very, very shaping spiritually. Would you be willing to share those with us? And all of a sudden people are searching their spiritual memory and opening their heart and opening their mind, inviting the Holy Ghost to bring those things to their spiritual memory and sharing them and then you can validate that and say isn't that wonderful rather than, oh, well that couldn't have been from God because it was in a different church, but to say isn't that wonderful and let us share some experiences where we've seen that as well. And then as you continue to share principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ in its restored fullness, those hearts are opened and those minds are more apt to receive it rather than feeling like you're pushing them into the Church.

Beautiful. Actually I learned this from some of my Muslim friends in the Middle East and when I was visiting I saw them praying at one point and they had their hands open like this and I said tell me about why you have your hands like this, I sometimes have my hands clasped or my arms folded, and they said, this is a symbol to God that we're ready to receive his blessings and inspiration and it's a reminder to us that we should accept what God has to offer and I found it really compelling like that's a beautiful reminder and part of what we're talking about is we can also with open hands instead of pushing people with open hands learn together with other people. There's just so much beauty in the world, so much goodness and God is the author of all that is beautiful and good and we should be willing to find joy in it as he does.

Now – now let's continue with the name of the Church now. I need to make something else clear, because if – if we're not careful, sometimes you can listen to what we're saying and somebody could walk away saying well then all roads lead to Rome. I just need to be a good person and I can go to any church and they all offer the same – same benefits or the same privileges and we're all – we're all good. And while at one level that is a true statement, that you can find goodness everywhere, there are some very unique things that this Church has to offer to the world as established by Jesus Christ himself. So now let's talk about those, this – this fullness of the gospel and fullness in the restored priesthood power and ordinances and other teachings and knowledge that we have to share with the world in an inviting way, not in a coercive or a manipulative way.

So look at the next word. The word is – of. What does the word of denote? In this context it can mean a lot of things and it's - the definition is more nuanced. I'll make it very simple; I'll bring it down to very simple terms. It shows ownership or possession. So it is The Church of Jesus Christ, so if you ask anybody, you go up to anybody and say hey, whose church is this? I think that 999 times out of 1000 people in our Church would say well it's Jesus' Church. This is The Church of Jesus Christ. You'll notice it's kind of a trick question because there are two ofs in the name, in the very long name of this Church. It's The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. So the L is capitalized and the d is not in our official Church name. That was a more

recent clarification because it hasn't always been that way, so you'll notice that we have part ownership with Jesus in the Church.

So here's what I really love in – in this long name of the Church is it encapsulates an entire sermon in this – in this title and the sermon is this: that Christ who is absolutely perfect in every way, is willing to share his perfection with you and me who are flawed. We're not perfect. We're still developing, we're still under construction. We – and some of us have a lot longer to go than others and we're struggling at times. Think about it for a moment. As a God in heaven, Jesus Christ is an exalted, glorified being. He has all capacity. He has all power to do whatever he wants to do. He could give every single talk in every single sac – I don't know how you'd do it but I know he could do that this coming Sunday and they would – that would be the best sacrament meeting ever. He could give every lesson in Relief Society, in priesthood meetings, in all of our Sunday school classes and our youth classes and he could teach the Primary classes better than any of us do it. He would be the perfect ministering brother to go to families and minister to their needs.

So here's the question, why isn't Jesus doing more of these things instead of asking us to do them? You see, Jesus is already perfect but we're not and so what is he doing with the Church? He invites you and me in to have joint ownership with him, why? So that we can grow to become more like him. That's the whole purpose. That's – that's why we go to Church. It's to be strengthened together as a collective body in Christ. It's to bring us to Christ. It's an opportunity to practice doing the things that he's shown us we should do albeit as flawed as we may be, it gives us an opportunity, a safe space, where we can grow in our discipleship and develop talents and gifts, abilities, capacities to be able to do these things. Now, are you going to occasionally see some shall we call it human foibles in individuals who give talks or lessons or who are called to leadership positions in your – in your branch or your ward or your stake wherever you may live? Surely they're not perfect just because they were asked to give a talk or asked to take a leadership position. They're still a human being who has a long ways to go before they attain unto that level of perfection that we're all seeking.

You know, the Church would have been absolutely perfect if Jesus would have left it at that and said I'm going to do everything for you. You just show up. But sisters and brothers, in this Church when you show up it's not to be a passive observer in the bench or in the chair to fill seat time. When you show up in this Church it's to be an active agent, using your agency to act and to try to become more like Jesus in all that we do and in all that we say and in how we treat each other knowing that along the way you're going to get it wrong sometimes and you're not going to be condemned because you're not perfect yet. Why? Because one of the things that you do when you go to church is you have a tray come past where you can take a piece of bread and later you can take a little cup of water and have those emblems of the Savior's infinite atonement, of his infinite perfection become internalized, become a part of you where you can be forgiven by him for your flaws and your imperfections and hopefully, in that forgiving process you can then have a little more empathy and a little more understanding and kindness as you look at the other people sitting there realizing our Church is not a museum for saints; it's a hospital for sinners. It's a place where – look around. We're pretty good as human beings of putting on that public face of everything's good here, we're perfect, we're all happy, we're all healthy, we're all righteous when the idea that is shared in that hymn, in the quiet heart is hidden sorrows that the eye can't see. There are struggles. There are wrestles. There are questions and doubts and fears and anxieties and that's who you're sitting with.

Everybody's struggling with different things and different combinations of things and what an amazing thing it is when we can have The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints be a place where people feel safe to come because they know they need help, they know they need healing, they know they need to be heard and to have an arm put around them. The last thing somebody needs when they're struggling is to be told how silly or ridiculous or dumb they may be for struggling with something that they're wrestling with, but rather to be told come, I can't take your problem away from you, but I can at least make sure you don't walk this difficult road alone. I can go with you. As my good friend Bruce Jones used to teach, I love that concept, to make sure that nobody ever feels like they're walking alone, especially when they're making efforts to come to church if they're struggling.

Look at the invitation in verse 5. So he's – he's named the Church and, by the way, we're not going – we're not going to emphasize Mormon Church or LDS Church. Why? Because the emphasis isn't on Mormon. It isn't on Latter Day Saints. The emphasis should be the center point of the Church which is Jesus Christ. He's the one to whom we look to help us with our imperfections. So now he gives us some marching orders. Verse 5, "Verily I say unto you all: Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations." You'll notice that phrase. He didn't say – it's tying in here to the Sermon on the Mount, Sermon at the Temple for me when Jesus tells them in the Book of Mormon account, I give unto you to be a light unto this people, but then he clarifies for us that he is the light that we hold up, it's not me generating or producing this light independent of heaven. I can't do anything on my own. I tried that. There have been days I've had plenty of opportunities to practice going into classes and teaching, I'll just use that one little scenario where I get my lesson plan all lined out before going in to teach that group of students and I think oh, I got this. This is going to be such a great lesson, I know exactly what I'm going to do here, oh, this is wonderful, and I forget to turn heavenward and it's as if I'm saying to God, you know what? I really don't need your help on this one. I'm good. I got it. And I go in and I don't know how many times I've had to learn and relearn this lesson but it never goes well when I do that scenario and that class period ends and I feel drained. I feel terrible and I feel let down and I'm, I thought this was going to be so good and it was so bad, and then I'll remember oh, I didn't even think to turn heavenward and ask for his help and his guidance through the process because I thought I was good.

I love the fact that as Christ invites us to arise and shine forth; it's not to do that independent of him. The arising and shining forth is done through him and in him and by him and of him so that we become reflectors of his light, not generators of our own light. What he said was let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, not to glorify you, but to glorify your Father which is in heaven. So let your light so shine. Did you notice the difference between that and if he had said, shine your light in everybody's eyes. He doesn't want you shining your light in people's eyes to see, drawing attention to me, look how bright I am. That - that never works for an eternal

purpose. It only works for earthly power and gain and so I love the fact that here his invitation is, "Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations." And he clarifies to me at least, one of – one of the applications here is tied back over to the Sermon on the Mount, that they may see your good works. Those good works are a – are a reflection of God's goodness. They're seeing what Jesus would have done through your good works and it doesn't have to be huge things. It can be simple, everyday promptings that come to you just a fleeting thought, a kind word, a kind text, a kind deed or a kind small meal or a treat or something – a card, a message that can shine light into the dark corner of a soul on a given day with a given need.

Now look at verse 7, "Let the city, Far West, be a holy and consecrated land unto me; and it shall be called most holy, for the ground upon which thou standest is holy."

What we have going on here is that God is working with his people in the circumstance that they find themselves. So definitely Independence is a holy place, Kirtland is a holy place. I love that God says you can make holy wherever you are and it's interesting that God – I think he cares more about who we are than where we are. Where we are likely matters but it's who we are, and I just love that God can make holy wherever we are if we choose to follow him. And we get these interesting commands that go on in the next number of verses, where God gives specific instructions to his saints about building a temple. Isn't it interesting? Wherever God has a people, he wants a temple built: Kirtland, Independence, now Far West. We have all these holy sites. Your own home, your own abode, your own location could be – not an official temple dedicated to the Lord – but you could dedicate yourself to the Lord where you are and make it holy.

So as we continue with these verses we have God giving very specific instructions about when the temple is to be built, beginning on July 4th. In fact he also later says, I want the Apostles to leave for their mission from this very spot where the temple will be built in Far West a year from this revelation. We'll see it's very interesting, the faithfulness of Brigham Young and the other Quorum of the Twelve who after they'd been kicked out by mob violence, find

their way back in to Far West which is the opposite direction of where they need to be going for their mission and they make their way back into Far West and they have a meeting where they decide now it's time to start a mission, and they reconsecrate or relay the foundation stones for the temple which had been scattered by mob violence.

The point here is that you'll notice today there is not a temple in Far West. Why is that? Things did not turn out. God lets agency play out; he lets people choose, and yet he will build a people where they're at. Wherever you're at, God can build you as his people.

Isn't that amazing that the temple in – in this context becomes this place where perfection once again meets imperfection, where it becomes this invitation for us to come into the House of the Lord and to elevate our thoughts, elevate our words, elevate our actions, to learn how to act more in accordance with God's will and to make covenants that are more powerfully connecting him with us, saying more than ever before, I want you to be my God and I want to be thy people.

It's beautiful. It just keeps – this – this combining heaven with earth, perfection with imperfection, it just keeps coming up over and over and over again in everything we see in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It's – it's powerful to me how it connects us with that – with his perfection.

And the ongoing lesson here is wherever you're at in your life, what ever's happened, whatever's been broken, whatever promises seem to not have been fulfilled, I take great comfort looking at the historical past of the early saints, that God gave commands, he gave promises and in some cases things didn't work out the way people thought and yet God has persisted to do his work. He is still gathering Zion. So take heart, as he has said throughout scriptures, be of good cheer, be courageous, we're going to win if we choose him. The kingdom is ours, the battle has already been won. We just have to choose which side we're going to stay on.

It's beautiful. Now at this time you have – when Joseph and Sidney first come to Far West, you already have between three and four thousand members of the Church who live there, but we've got thousands of saints who live in

Kirtland who are going to need a place to live when they come west, and so they start looking in some of the surrounding regions, mostly to the north of Far West to find some suitable places, and on one occasion there in May of 1838, Joseph makes his way up into Daviess County and we get revelation given to him at Spring Hill, for section 116, one verse long. "Spring Hill is named by the Lord Adam-ondi-Ahman, because said he, it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel the prophet." Now this isn't the first time you've seen Adam-ondi-Ahman, the name. Keep in mind it showed up in section 107 verse 53 through 57, it talks about Adam-ondi-Ahman. You'll also remember perhaps that at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple the saints sang Adam-ondi-Ahman. It was a song written by W. W. Phelps who, by the way, has - is being excommunicated during this same time period of - of struggle with the Church as a printer there in Missouri. He is going to be excommunicated.

Listen to the first verse of that hymn that they sang: This earth was once a garden place, with all her glories common, and men did live a holy race, and worshipped Jesus face to face in Adam-ondi-Ahman. This was a sweet revelation for many, many, many people in the Church when Joseph came back and said, this is Adam-ondi-Ahman, Spring Hill. For any of you who happen to have been to Spring Hill or to Adam-ondi-Ahman in Missouri, you know how beautiful that ground is. The Church owns it today and farms it and takes very good care of that land. It's beautiful and there are many, many promises attached to that land regarding the last meeting that Adam had with his family before he died, and a future meeting where Michael the Archangel or Adam will once again gather posterity there in Adam-ondi-Ahman and what that looks like, there - there's been a lot written about that.

Now we come to section 117. This is a - this is a little - this is a section where Oliver Granger is given this revelation. He's been in Missouri for about a month, he's given this revelation and told you need to take this back and give it to William Marks and Newell K. Whitney who have stayed behind in Kirtland and I need them to not stay behind.

And they're supposed to be managing the temporal affairs in Kirtland. You remember that at the end of 1830 the saints gathered to Kirtland, and so over

the years, Kirtland's grown and prospered, and then there was conflict and God said, I'm gathering you out west, out to Missouri. So you have all this property and what do you do with it? Well, it turns out when lots of people have to sell their homes all at the same time, it's hard to get a great price and furthermore, not everybody can sit around waiting for those homes to be sold or properties, so these two brothers were left behind and instead of Joseph Smith calling or doing a video message – 'cause those things just didn't exist – you have the long, arduous journey of hundreds and hundreds of miles all the way back to Kirtland, and part of the reason God has commanded these two brethren to return to gather the saints is that it seems that they may have been attempting to profit a bit from the economic opportunities of now all these properties being built.

We're not exactly sure but we have this interesting phrase that shows up. Look at verse 11, "Let my servant Newel K. Whitney be ashamed of the Nicolaitane band and of all their secret abominations, and of all his littleness of soul before me, saith the Lord, and come up to the land of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and be a bishop unto my people, saith the Lord, not in name but in deed, saith the Lord." We don't know a lot about the Nicolaitane band, it shows up in the book of Revelation. The little we do know is this is a group of Christians or people claiming to be Christians who weren't always living the way they should and in some cases possibly profiting off of the wealth of some Christians who are giving their time and wealth to the cause of God. So we really don't know everything here, but it's interesting that God works with people. He calls them out; he calls people to repentance and this beautiful invitation that all of us can take seriously for ourselves, whatever we've been called to do, to be a child, a son or a daughter, a mother or a father, a minister, a bishop, a Relief Society President, don't just take that title or name, do it in deed.

So this is a beautiful example to me of how the Lord is taking a word that is used in the Bible in Revelation and the Lord is couching it in this context and speaking to Newel K. Whitney of this Nicolaitane band. In that Revelation context from the Revelation of St. John, you've got some things that are very specific to that time and that culture and that place that's associated with this tradition. Biblical tradition says that it was Nicholas who starts this heretical movement within the church and this tradition is that they would participate in

these idol worshipping adulterous practices as well as eating the meat offered to idols. Now you know that Newel K. Whitney probably isn't eating meat that's been offered to idols, so it doesn't really apply here, but I love how God takes something from its historical setting that meant something very specific to them back then and he repurposes it for today to say look, we don't know the full extent of what this – what this looked like, but it's the essence of trying to be a good member of the Church while putting one of your feet out in the traditions that are evil or – or wicked or idolatrous of the world in which we live and that's going to look differently with Newel K. Whitney in the 1838 time frame than it does for us in the 21st century than it did for people in Ephesus and Pergamos in – in John's revelation.

Now you'll notice one of the struggles that Newel K. Whitney and William Marks has is they're told by the Lord that they're being too covetous, that they're too focused on the things of the world, on their possessions. As Taylor was saying, Kirtland has gotten very big and a lot of people and Newel K. Whitney has a store and William Marks is a printer and they're pretty successful and they're having a hard time walking away from that success. Look at verse 4. "Let them repent of all their sins, and of all their covetous desires, before me, saith the Lord," now this phrase, "for what is property unto me? saith the Lord." That question, God asks these – these inspired questions in such powerfully simple ways that we can ponder that "what is property unto me? saith the Lord. You picture the God of the universe who holds worlds without number in his hand and here we are holding a few, meager, earthly possessions in our hand whether it be a prosperous store or a printing establishment or a farm, we hold this little, teeny, tiny piece of this large earth in our hand and God's saying, look, that doesn't mean anything to me from this eternal perspective.

And so he tells them, let go of those. As you – basically the essence of the section is as you are willing to let go of those earthly possessions that are taking hold of you, you are going to find that I am far more likely to have room to give you into your hand more heavenly treasures, more eternal blessings. But if my hands are closed tightly around - around my money in whatever form it comes in this life, whether it's physical money or whether it's prosperity in my business or ownership of other things, if my hand is tightly clutched on

what I have, it's not very open for God to give me more. But as I let go of that then my hands are now open as Taylor was talking about earlier with his Muslim friends with open hands praying expecting God to give – to give heavenly things, which ties in beautifully actually with section 119 and 120 that they struggled as a people collectively with the law of tithing as they had seen it up to this point. They had used the word tithe and tithing and they saw it as consecration in the United Order sort of way or in the communal living that they've tried in a couple of different ways and it's not worked well and so they – they – they're forced to go to God and say what do we do with this law of tithing? You'll notice in section 119, and then we'll come back to 118 in a minute, you'll notice in section 119 he – he says okay, from now on, "This shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people," verse 3. That you give what? You're going to give your surplus property into the hands of the bishop of my Church. And then what? Verse 4, "after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever."

So their understanding of tithing has changed over time in the Church and we could tell more stories about that but let's focus on what the First Presidency clarified in March 19th of 1970, you can now find this under section 34 of the Church Handbook, 34.4.1.1 if you're super interested. The simplest statement we know of is the statement of the Lord himself, mainly, that the members of the Church should pay one-tenth of all their interest annually, which is understood to mean – income. No one is justified in making any other statement than this.

That's pretty profound because there have been a lot of arguments or discussions where people try to take their interpretation or what that means and tell you you have to live by that interpretation whether it's gross or net or whether you should do it on gifts or on interest in your bank accounts or your stocks your bonds, and it gets really complex, or the value of your house going up or a property and I love that the Lord basically invites us - it's a simple explanation - to learn how we ourselves can give one tenth to the Lord every year of what he's given us and the word income here really I think helps.

It does, absolutely and – and I love the fact that the temple recommend interview question regarding tithing says are you a full tithe payer? It doesn't say have you been a full tithe payer on this and this and this and this for the last ten years. It doesn't ask that. It says, are you a full tithe payer? So for any of you who maybe have had some struggles in the past and you're trying to increase your – your progress on the covenant path, rather than looking to the past and feeling guilty, I love the fact that God wants us to look to him and look to the future and move forward in faith and it doesn't matter what you've been in your past, every single one of us can become or be a full tithe payer today. That's a decision that everybody has to make for themselves, today moving forward. Am I going to be a full tithe payer?

So for me, the bottom line with tithing is that it has very little to do with this, with the physical money. It has a lot to do with me saying to God, I love thee more than I love this and I want thee to be my God, not money to be my God and so I would just recommend that if you've struggled with tithing, that you follow the Savior's invitation that comes to us in Malachi chapter 3 when he says, "prove me now herewith saith the Lord if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing." It's – it's – the bottom line for me is, I have found, my wife and I have found on countless occasions that we do far better with nine tenths of our income along with the Lord's help than we would ever do with all of our income without his divine help. So tithing isn't – isn't as much a financial law as it is a spiritual law, from my perspective.

Now section 120 is the one verse revelation on how to dispose or use those tithing funds that come in and it sets up that council that still exists today, the First Presidency and of the – our Presiding Bishopric today and his council by my high council, the Quorum of the Twelve, they - they are in charge of those disposition – dispositions of the funds that come in.

Now let's go back to section 118. You'll notice that this is July 8th, we're – we're asking what do you want to do about the Quorum of the Twelve and you have in verse 1 the Lord says, "Verily thus saith the Lord: Let a conference be held immediately; let the Twelve be organized; and let men be appointed to supply the place of those who are fallen." So we've already lost some of the members of the original Quorum of the Twelve Apostles from 1835, and we

have to make some replacements. So he gives them some instructions. You'll notice who some of those replacements are if you turn over to verse 6, "Let my servant John Taylor and my servant John E. Page, and also my servant Wilford Woodruff, and my servant Willard Richards, be appointed to fill the places of those who have fallen, and be officially notified of their appointment."

You probably recognize most of those names. To me that's a lesson of God's work is going to move forward even if it's not perfect along the way because he's invited us once again to be a part of his ownership in his church, but his work is going to move forward. Look at verse 4. "...next spring let them," the Twelve, "depart to go over the great waters, and there promulgate my gospel, the fulness thereof and bear record of my name." And verse 5, "Let them take leave of my saints in the city of Far West, on the twenty-sixth day of April next, on the building spot of my house, saith the Lord."

Taylor already mentioned this a little earlier but Brigham Young is with the – a few members of the Quorum of the Twelve in Illinois when it became very clear that section 118 was not going to be able to be fulfilled very easily because the Church has been driven out of Missouri. The extermination order is - has done a pretty good job and they know that if they come into Missouri, cross the Mississippi River and come over into Missouri and try to go to the far western side of Missouri to get to Far West, that their life will be in peril, in great danger. So Brigham Young has a decision to make because Joseph at this time is still in custody in Liberty and we don't have Joseph here to tell us what to do or to give us a revelation from God, so Brigham asks the members of the Quorum of the Twelve who are with him if they are willing to help him go and fulfill this revelation because some of the people who left the Church in Missouri and have apostatized have said that section 118 is one section where they can guarantee that Joseph will be proven to be a false prophet, that they can guarantee that that revelation won't be fulfilled, that the Quorum of the Twelve is going to leave on a mission across – to cross the ocean from Far West on April 26th, 1839.

And so here's Brother Brigham and enough of the brethren said let's do it. So they do cross the river and begin to cross the state and they come all the way

out to Far West and it's at near midnight, April 25th, it's now midnight so it's now April 26th, they come quietly into Far West where consequently some of the former members of our Church who have left the Church and are no longer friendly to the Church, some of them still live there and they go to that temple site. People have removed the corner stones that had been placed on that previous July 4th as outlined in section 115 and they go and they put the four cornerstones back in place, they have a meeting, they sing some songs kind of quietly, and as it starts to get ready for dawn, they finish up their meeting and they're leaving.

Well, they have – and there aren't twelve of them, I believe there are only seven there, seven of the Quorum, so they do have a Quorum, they have a majority, but as they're leaving this is what happens. It's Friday morning, April 26th, 1839. Quote: As the saints were passing away from the meeting brother Turley turned to Elders Page and Woodruff and said, stop a bit while I go and bid Isaac Russell good-bye.

Isaac Russell, just so you know, was one of the first missionaries to go over on a mission to England. Isaac Russell has had an amazing – amazing life and an amazing experience – set of experiences in the Church but more recently in 1838 he - he left the Church, he and his wife. So here's his good friend Brother Turley who says before we leave, I'm going to go bid Isaac Russell good-bye. So knocking at the door, called Brother Russell. His wife answered come in. It's Brother Turley. And Russell replied, it is not! He left here two weeks ago, and appeared quite alarmed. But on finding it was Brother Turley, asked him to sit down but the latter replied, I cannot or I shall lose my company. Who's your company? inquired Russell. The Twelve. The Twelve? Yes. Don't you know that this is the 26th and the day the Twelve were to take leave of their friends on the foundation of the Lord's house to go to the islands of the sea? The revelation is now fulfilled and I am going with them. Russell was speechless, and Turley bid him farewell.

Brothers and sisters, isn't it interesting that even after it was fulfilled as a prophecy from Joseph Smith that actually did occur that you didn't get any of the thirty-one people who were excommunicated at that meeting that they had that night at the temple, none of them said, oh, I guess we were wrong in this

particular context. And now that happens in other places in Church history but in this particular one we don't seem to have any of them coming and saying, oh, I was wrong. It seems to me that the devil doesn't care what it is to get us to – to leave our faith or to get off the covenant path or to stop trying to connect with God, he doesn't care what it is as long as we take our focus off of God, off of the Savior, off of that covenant path that helps me work on my flaws as I combine more fully with Christ in his perfections.

May the Lord bless us all as we now finish exactly where we began this particular episode with that quote from Heber C. Kimball, the time will come when no man nor woman will be able to endure on borrowed light. Each will have to be guided by the light within himself. If you do not have it, how can you stand?

The Lord has given to you and to me capacity to become lights in a darkening world. Not lights that go and make people feel bad or pressured or coerced or bullied in any way, but rather lights that reflect his love and his goodness, where we can bring them into arms of fellowship asking questions and listening and creating a space where all of God's children can feel welcome to come and begin working more fully and more completely to become more like Jesus in – in their own covenant path journey of their life.

In closing, I know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is led by God. And I know you can find wonderful truths and wonderful practices in all kinds of other religions, but there's an amazing power that comes with his authority and his ordinances and additional scriptures and revelations that he's given us to share with the world as light. I know that God lives and I know that Jesus is the Christ and he stands at the head of this work and he stands at the head of any progress I ever hope to make in this life or the next. And I leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Know that you're loved.