

Come Follow Me Class Insights – 15 – Doctrine and Covenants Sec. 30 - 36 - Class
Transcription

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today, Doctrine and Covenants sections 30 through 36. As we jump into these sections today, I wanted to share with you an insight that I've heard recently, and it's this. Facts tell; stories sell. We all love a good story. Now what's really important is that the stories we listen to, we should be listening to factful stories.

The Church has provided tremendously valuable resources, stories that enhance our understanding of the Doctrine and Covenants. So if you have access to the gospel library app that the Church has put out, they have a whole group of very capable, faithful, dedicated scholars and others who have produced these resources, and if you look in the gospel library app, you will find things like – there's a whole set of resources: the First Visions account, the Saints volumes. You can get more information on the background on Joseph Smith's revelations, a great book called Revelations in Context. We'll be using some of the resources today from that particular book. Also, there's Church history topics, Church history videos, women in Church history – lots of great resources, so as you dig into the scriptures, also avail yourself of what the Church has put together to provide kind of a background story for what's going on with these revelations.

And as you dig in, you ask yourself, what do I learn from the lives of these real people who are like me? They also wanted to follow God; they wanted to be in his kingdom. What can I learn from their choices, their actions? And we'll see today a whole variety of individuals who early on in the Church wanted direction from God about their role in the Church.

Now let me just say on a personal note, I recently started a new job, and there's a bit of anxiety because it's a job I've never done before and I want to do well, but the stakes for failure are not quite the same in terms of like, say launching the Restoration. So, when I think about these early saints who are joining the Church and go to Joseph Smith and say, find out from God what he wants me to do, what work he wants me to do in the kingdom, I think about that myself. I have colleagues who are very seasoned, who have been at the job for a while, and I could talk to them and say, what are the things that I could do where I could perform well at my work? And they can provide me guidance.

And where I make mistakes, well, unlikely no one's going to lose their testimony or leave the Church or die, whereas in the early Restoration, these saints were very anxious to get it right, they wanted to make sure they knew exactly what God wanted of them. And even in our own lives we might say to ourselves, what does God specifically want of me? So, there's two things that we encourage you to think about. We can learn from these early stories what God would have you do, and you can also look towards your patriarchal blessing and personal revelation, and God can guide you as you help build his kingdom in these last days.

Okay, let's dive in. We've got, as Taylor mentioned, we're going to be covering from section 30 all the way to section 36. That's seven sections, and all of them are devoted to individual people, or parts of them are devoted to individual people, and every one of those people have stories and have real life events occurring. In section 30 you get the three Whitmer brothers, starting with David, then to Peter, Junior, and then to John. Now keep in mind that in the 1833 Book of Commandments these three separate revelations were given their own section, and then in the 1835 edition they're put all together into the same section as they appear for us in our current edition in section 30 together.

So, this Whitmer family is very, very key to the unfolding Restoration as it's coming forth. And keep in mind, their oldest sister Catherine, she's the one who marries Hiram Page, and remember, if you look at the date on section 30, this is given in September following that three-day conference at their home, and it was right before this when we had that whole situation with the seer stone and Hiram Page receiving revelations from a different source and Oliver Cowdery being asked to go and correct him. There's a lot of complex human relationships in this. As the Church is growing, their family is growing, and they're all trying to figure out what to do, and it's pretty amazing to watch God work with these people.

Look at verse 1: "Behold, I say unto you, David, that you have feared man and have not relied on me for strength as you ought." Keep in mind, David Whitmer is one of your Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon. You know somewhat of his spiritual experiences that he's been able to have, and here's God reminding him, don't fear man.

Look at verse 2: "But your mind has been on the things of the earth more than on the things of me, your Maker, and the ministry whereunto you have been called; you have not given heed unto my Spirit, and to those who were set over you, but have been persuaded by those whom I have not commanded." We don't know for sure if he's referring to Hiram Page here in verse 2, but at least it's a strong possibility that that's part of the issue going on here, and keep in mind, the Whitmers are farmers, and so it could be that the Lord is referring to, your mind has been on the earth, on farming, more than on this mission that I called you to.

Do any of you find it interesting that Jesus, when he's on the earth, he's calling fishermen and a tax collector and other people from these common trades of -- and these pursuits to provide for their families? He's calling them from those things to a much higher calling. To Peter and James and John and Andrew he says, "Follow me, and [I'll] make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). You'll notice he's not using any of those kinds of analogies in the Doctrine and Covenants. These are farmers. So what analogy does he keep using with them? Farm analogies. "The field is white [ready] to harvest"; thrust in your sickle; you're going to carry many sheaves on your back (Doctrine and Covenants 14:3). I'm going to give you a huge harvest; you're going to be carrying it in. It's not nets filled with fish.

I love this for one reason, because God meets you where you are. He speaks to you according to your language, according to your understanding to then get you to engage in things above whatever the earthly pursuits are in order to build his kingdom. I like that.

Now, we then go to verse 4 where he tells David what to do. "Your home shall be at your father's house, until I give unto you further commandments." Because keep in mind, we're going to be moving this whole body of saints from New York to Kirtland in 1831 – in just a few months, and so he doesn't want David going out somewhere else. Just stay here at your dad's home and more directions are going to come. And keep in mind, the Church, according to the Whitmers in September of 1830, we're talking a little less than seventy members. This is not a big organization six months into its existence. And so you have to read this revelation in context of, it doesn't look very big, the work isn't, hasn't been this astronomical success story. It's quite slow. Kind of like farming, where you plant a whole bunch of seeds and you have to work and labor and toil and pray and plead for the weather to be just right and then you have to work really hard to get the harvest to come in. I love watching this unfold with this group of people.

Now you go to the second brother here in verse 5: "Behold, I say unto you, Peter, that you shall take your journey with your brother Oliver; for the time has come that it is expedient in me that you shall open your mouth to declare my gospel; therefore, fear not, but give heed unto the words and advice of your brother, which he shall give unto you." That second elder of the Church, being Oliver Cowdery, is going to preside over that mission that they're getting called to and we'll talk more about that in a few moments.

In preparation for that mission look what he's told in verse 6: "And be you afflicted in all his afflictions, ever lifting up your heart unto me in prayer and faith for his and your deliverance." Brothers and sisters, they are going to need that. The mission that they are about to go on, to head west of the Mississippi to teach among the Native Americans, it is going to be a very difficult journey, and we'll talk more about that later. He's going to need verse 6.

Look at verse 9, the third brother mentioned here: "Behold, I say unto you, my servant John, thou shalt commence from this time forth to proclaim my gospel, as with the voice of a trump." And he tells him to go "wherever you can be heard, until I command you to go from hence" (Doctrine and Covenants 30:10). Go and preach the gospel, beginning with the home of Philip Burroughs. That's where he goes, and he has some really good experiences and good success there at Philip Burroughs' house, and many people are going to join the Church, and then he says, verse 11: "Your whole labor shall be in Zion, with all your soul, from henceforth; yea, you shall ever open your mouth in my cause, not fearing what man can do, for I am with you. Amen."

Have you noticed how many times in the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord uses phrases like that? "Lo, I am with you", or, "for I am with you always" (Doctrine and Covenants 33:9)? Our God is not a go and good luck kind of a deity. Our God is a come, work with me, come, labor with me, walk with me, help me build up my kingdom, assist me in doing my work. That's really important for any of you who have a Church calling or if you ever serve a mission. It's not the

Savior saying to you, go into this calling or go into that mission or go into this pursuit of life and good luck. It's him inviting you to come with him as you do these things, and it's beautiful.

Now we shift over in section 31 to Thomas B. Marsh. This is a very, very important person in Church history. Thomas B. Marsh is going to end up being the first president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Now when the original quorum is established in 1835, they establish their seniority based on seniority. Who is the oldest? Who was born first? And Thomas B. Marsh was born in 1799, and he's the oldest; he's about six years older than Joseph, and then David W. Patten next and on down the line with that original quorum.

So, this is an interesting character in Church history for a variety of reasons, one being something we need to be careful of, is that it's easy to define people by their worst experience of life or by something they did that was terrible and ignore everything else in their life that was good. We'll do this with scripture characters. Sometimes somebody like Thomas. What does everybody remember Thomas as? Doubting Thomas, because of one statement he made, but they don't see the other statements, other things where on another occasion he says, let us all go to Jerusalem with him so we can lay down our life with him. Let's all go and give up our life for the cause of Christ. Or Zeezrom in the Book of Mormon. We love talking about the six ounces of silver and the experience of him being this deceptive lawyer in those chapters, and rather than giving him the benefit of a doubt of all the amazing things he did for the rest of his life. And I know that we don't all do that, but we have to be careful with Thomas B. Marsh because of the experience that's going to happen in Missouri a few years down the road involving his wife and a pint of cream. And we'll talk about that story in context when we get to section 112. But for now, let's talk about the beginning, this incredible journey of faith that Thomas B. Marsh makes.

Let's take a look at section 31, the first couple of verses, and though we are talking specifically about Thomas Marsh, you also can apply this to yourself and you can insert your name where you see the name Thomas. So we have this: "Thomas, my son," and you can insert your name and have God say to you, my son or my daughter, "blessed are you because of your faith in my work" (Doctrine and Covenants 31:1). Wherever you are, know that God will bless you because of your righteous desires, just as Thomas Marsh.

Further, verse 2: "Behold," Thomas, "you have had many afflictions because of your family." I'm sure my kids would love this verse because I'm sure they could make some claim that they have afflictions because of me. But it's very interesting, with Thomas Marsh, at a young age, he kind of ran away from home at age fourteen and had to make his way in the world. Here he is about fifteen years later after running away from home, he's about thirty years old, and he has a small, young family. So he's had a lot of trials and difficulties. We don't know all the circumstances of why he felt like he had to run away from home when he was a teenager, but though many of us could say we were "born of goodly parents", it's not like all of us have had perfect family lives (1 Nephi 1:1). God understood that there would be difficulties and challenges in family life, and that's why he revealed the gospel, so we all can practice faith and forgiveness and repentance.

So I just love that God knows where we're at, and he says to Thomas in very kind language, "...you've had many afflictions because of your family; nevertheless...", as we have been taught by Tyler many times, always the greater, "...I will bless you and your family, [you and] your little ones;" (Doctrine and Covenants 31:2". At this point Thomas's children were all under the age of ten. "...And the day cometh that they will believe and know the truth and be one with you in my Church. Lift up your heart and rejoice, for the hour of your mission is come; and your tongue shall be loosed, and you shall declare glad tidings of great joy unto this generation" (Doctrine and Covenants 31:2-3).

If we roll back the clock just a few months before this time, Thomas Marsh had felt the stirrings of the Spirit telling him that God was about to reveal a great work on the earth, and he felt prompted to move from New York and move westward out to the Palmyra area. And as he spent some time there, he heard the stories of a golden Bible, the Book of Mormon, and in his heart he felt like there's something here I need to learn more about, and he found Martin Harris in E. B. Grandin's printing shop. And there for the first time, he encountered the Book of Mormon and his spirit was thrilled to discover the truth. He knew that he had found what God had prompted him to seek, which was the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. And at this point, Thomas rushes back to his family and tells them what he has found and says, we need to gather.

And if you look at Thomas's life, he actually spends a lot of time moving from location to location in – for the purpose of building the kingdom of God, and I can tell you, I've moved a lot of times in my life, and recently I was telling my wife, I'd be really happy to never have to move again. It's quite a disruption. We become creatures of habit, and I just feel gratitude to people like Thomas Marsh and many other early saints who uprooted their lives on numerous occasions in order to build the kingdom of God and to build the communities that God had told them to go serve in. So if you --wherever you are in your life, just know that even though you've had afflictions, God will bless you, and he can turn those afflictions into strengths and joy and memories of beauty and goodness and love from God.

Look at verse 4 and 5. The Lord tells Thomas: "You shall declare the things which have been revealed to my servant, Joseph Smith, Junior. You shall begin to preach from this time forth, yea, to reap in the field which is white already to be burned. Therefore, thrust in your sickle with all your soul, and your sins are forgiven you..." (Doctrine and Covenants 31:4-5).

Now we get it. Most of us today in the 21st century aren't farmers where we're trying to live off of the land like most of these people are, and so the analogies of thrusting in our sickle and laboring all the day and sweating and toiling out in the fields to try to get these sheaves upon our backs to bring them in safely stored for the winter ahead, so to speak, I understand that this analogy is a bit foreign to most people today. But I think we can understand that whatever you're familiar with, this thrust in your sickle, this go out and work in the vineyard of the Lord or in the fields of the Lord in the earth, notice the promise, "...your sins are forgiven you..." (Doctrine and Covenants 31:5). I think that's beautiful, and I don't think it applies just to Thomas B. Marsh. I

think it's part of our covenant obligation as we do the very best to labor in building up the kingdom of God, that God is willing to forgive our sins. It's beautiful. And then he's promised again at the bottom of verse 5 that “[his] family shall live”.

Now jump over to verse 7: "Yea, I will open the hearts of the people, and they will receive you. And I will establish a Church by your hand." Keep in mind, he's going to be the president of the quorum, and once the missionary work starts to go international, over to England and up into Canada, and as the work starts to spread through the other states in the United States, the population is going to start growing incredibly, and he's given that promise. Hearts are going to be opened and his Church is going to be established by your hand. "...You shall strengthen them and prepare them against the time when they shall be gathered" (Doctrine and Covenants 31:8).

And then verse 9: "Be patient in afflictions, revile not against those that revile. Govern your house in meekness, and be steadfast." Fascinating, if you look closely at verse 9: "Be patient in afflictions." Why didn't the Lord instead say, be joyful because I'm going to remove all afflictions from your life? Your life's going to be easy, Thomas. He didn't say that. He didn't promise that things were going to just work out smoothly. He gave him counsel to be patient when things don't work out smoothly, because they won't all the time, and then the idea that he needs to “Govern [his] house in meekness” is going to be counsel that would be really, really relevant a few years down the road in Missouri when his wife and the neighbor's wife were going to have the pint of cream incident that we'll talk about when we get to section 112 (Doctrine and Covenants 31:9).

Now, turn over to section 32. This is – this is an amazing section that opens up a chapter of the Church's history that is just fascinating because these early members in upstate New York, for the most part, they are reading the Book of Mormon and they're seeing the promises of the Lord to the descendants of Lehi, and they look at Native Americans all over, and they see them all as Lamanites. These are the Lamanites, and we've got to go and preach the gospel to them and give them their book. This is their book, and it's beautiful, so you're going to see everything in these sections referring to the Lamanites.

It's important to note that there are a lot of different groups of people who the Lord has brought to the new world before Columbus. There are a lot of estimates of the number of groups of people. Some would say, you know, over 180 different language families; others would say you've got all this archeological evidence of distinct and different groups of people scattered up and down the New World, from South America all the way up to North America. The amazing thing about the Book of Mormon is, we're told in Alma 63 that thousands, if not tens of thousands, of Nephites are going to migrate out of the land of Zarahemla and out of the land southward into the land northward, and they're going to scatter upon the face of the land once they get there.

And then in Helaman chapter 3 you're going to get major migrations that involve not just Nephites, but Lamanites as well in Helaman chapter 3, and they go exceedingly far northward,

and they spread forth on the land and you're going to get this intermarrying. So I love the fact that God is referring to these people as Lamanites, the seed of Lehi and Ishmael and the Mulekites can be scattered among all the people over the course of those, you know, subsequent fifteen, sixteen, seventeen hundred years between the end of the Book of Mormon and these events here.

Section 32 verse 1 says: "And now concerning my servant Parley P. Pratt, behold, I say unto him that as I live I will that he shall declare my gospel and learn of me, and be meek and lowly of heart." And then he gives him a very specific mission call in verse 2. He's going to "...go with my servants, Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer, Junior, into the wilderness among the Lamanites" (Doctrine and Covenants 32:2).

So you've got those three that are listed there, plus Ziba Peterson, so you've got these four missionaries. They don't have vehicles; they don't have airplanes to transport them a thousand miles to the west of the Mississippi River. They're on foot, and look at the date. Look at the date. It's given to them in October of 1830. For any of you watching who aren't familiar with weather patterns in New England in the U.S., it's really cold and stormy for at least six months of the year starting in October. Hmm. This is a very inconvenient time to get a mission call to travel on foot over a thousand miles. But you'll notice God doesn't always wait until it's the most convenient or the most logical as far as we're concerned, to give us a command to go and do things, because part of life is a trial of faith and to see if we will follow him in all things. And in this case, the command comes, go on this journey to the Lamanites, and he tells them in verse 3 Ziba Peterson also is going to go with them, "...and I myself will go with them and be in their midst."

We always talk about this mission of four missionaries. I love the fact that Jesus says, no, you're wrong. If I've called you, I'm going to go with you. I'm going to be with you. It's five people going on this journey. Whether you're going into a mission yourself, or whether you're going into a new career that the Lord's inspired you to go and pursue, whether you're going into a new marriage, you're not going with just the people that you can physically see around you. It's him going with you on these journeys. I love those words, and I've got them marked. In fact, we said this before, but you could mark that phrase in verse 3, "and I myself will go with them and be in their midst," and if I were you, I would mark it and then mark it again, because as we said before, it's remarkable. "...And I am their advocate with the Father, and nothing shall prevail against them" (Doctrine and Covenants 32:3)

Brothers and sisters, this mission is not going to be easy. There's going to be a lot of snow. They're walking through snow most of those thousand miles, and storms and hunger. They're without purse and scrip, and these aren't well established, you know, byways and highways with inns and interstates. They don't exist. We're coming out into the frontier of this young, relatively young nation, and ironically, it was in 1830, this very year when the President of the United States, Andrew Jackson, had passed this decree to remove all the Native Americans out of the U.S. and push them to the west of the Mississippi River, and so there are all these migrations

heading to the west with all of these tribes being displaced. And so now you get these four missionaries, plus the Lord, saying, we're going to go teach them. We're going to go where they are and teach them.

These are the words of Parley P. Pratt, recounting an experience tracting through Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, across Missouri, “for three hundred miles through vast prairies and through trackless wilds of snow--no beaten road; houses few and far between; and the bleak northwest wind always blowing in our faces with a keenness which would almost take the skin off the face. ... After much fatigue and some suffering, we all arrived in Independence, in the County of Jackson, on the extreme western frontiers of Missouri, and of the United States.”¹ At this time the border of the United States was the Mississippi River. Everything east was mostly the United States; everything west was now Indian territory. And what happens after this massive, long journey, Tyler?

They get there and they preach for a little bit, and William Clark, the famed William – Lewis and Clark, the Lewis and Clark who actually trail-blazed all the way to Oregon, William Clark now in 1830 has been put in charge of Indian affairs by the United States government. And when he finds out there's a couple of Mormon missionaries, what does he do? He kicks them out and he says, stop. And other missionaries from other religions beat them there and got there first, and they complained and got these four missionaries basically ejected from the land.

So can you imagine? I grew up in Minnesota. I really cannot imagine walking for a thousand miles in the Midwest in the middle of winter, and I know God's with me, and I get to my mission only to be kicked out of my mission. It would be a little bit discouraging, but what's fascinating about this is the enormous miracle that happened along the way. That, to me, is the most important part of section 32, and this whole mission is that.

You see, here's what happens often. We find ourselves at point A, and we get a directive or a commandment or a revelation or a vision or some – something that tells us, you need to get to point Z. Now for them, it's, go from New York out to the Mississippi River and teach the Native Americans. This journey of over a thousand miles is going to take them through all kinds of experiences to get here, only to be completely rejected. It seems like their mission is an absolute failure. It seems that everything they set out to do didn't happen.

Now sometimes a student will begin a semester and put all of their emphasis and all of their effort into a final exam, but they won't work along the way. They'll just wait for the end to then cram like crazy during those few days or hours before taking the test in hopes that they can get a good grade. Brothers and sisters, there's this wonderful idea that if we're not careful, you and I will focus so much on life's final exam that if we're not careful, we'll end up failing the daily quizzes and the daily assignments that the Lord gives us as learning opportunities where we can practice and make mistakes and learn from it and move on forward. And then, and only then,

¹ Rust, Richard Dilworth. “A Mission to the Lamanites.” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, 2016, abn.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/revelations-in-context/a-mission-to-the-lamanites?lang=eng.

does the final exam make sense because we understand the material, because we've been focused on the daily quizzes of life.

So some of you watching may have had the thought cross your mind, you know, if only my life were easier, then I could be happier. If only I didn't have to take care of this individual with a disability of one form or another in my family or in my life, then I would be able to serve people and build the kingdom. If only I didn't have this physical or mental or emotional struggle that I have to deal with, then I could be a sharp instrument in the hands of the Lord and do amazing work, again putting the focus on the end goal rather than realizing, wait a minute, those people that are surrounding me with all of their needs, with all of their struggles and with all of my struggles, none of them are in the way. They are part of the way that God has mapped out for me. They're part of my curriculum along the covenant path to become more like God. They're not distractions.

So watch what happens. These four elders, they leave New York and they start working their way west, but along the way we stop for a short time in Kirtland, Ohio. Parley P. Pratt is from this area. He left a fairly prosperous farm to go and seek the truth, felt driven by the Spirit to do it, and he comes to Kirtland and visits an old friend, Sidney Rigdon, and he teaches Sidney about the Book of Mormon, and Sidney believes. And you get other people in the Kirtland area who listen to the testimony and believe, and Edward Partridge and others, they're going to go east after these four missionaries leave, they're now going to go and meet the Prophet, and amazing things are going to happen because of them. The Church is going to more – it's going to double in size because of that one stop in Kirtland. It's going to change the whole future of the Church. It's going to become the new center of the Church. They're going to move from New York to Kirtland, and it was all this early stage of a long journey to take the gospel to the Lamanites.

Now check this out. Shortly after leaving Kirtland, they're in a neighboring town on their way west, Amherst, Ohio, when we're preaching the gospel in the home of Simeon Carter. While they're preaching, a knock on the door comes, and a constable is there to arrest Parley P. Pratt and take him into custody on trumped-up charges. So they spend all this time in this court case with false witnesses coming and they can't convict him. They demand that he pay a price, a fee, a penalty for breaking a law that they can't prove he broke, and the judge keeps the court going late into the night, thinking that eventually Parley's going to wear down and pay this price, this money, and Parley's not going to. He and another brother sing a hymn, and then he tells the judge, I'll tell you what I'm going to do, if you'll repent and the attorneys will plead for forgiveness, we'll pray that God will forgive you, and this doesn't go well for them.

So he gets thrown in jail. He gets put in prison for the night, and the next morning the warden brings him breakfast, and they – and after breakfast is done, Parley P. Pratt decides to, says, I'm going to step outside for a moment, and, why don't you join me here, Tyler, there's this funny exchange. We're going to read directly from the words of Parley P. Pratt who's such a capable

story teller and had such an interesting life. But this is out of his autobiography, the autobiography of Parley P. Pratt.

He says, he was in the inn and he went outside. “In the meantime, my fellow travelers came past on their journey and called to see me. I told them in an undertone to pursue their journey and leave me to manage my own affairs, promising to overtake them soon.” You can imagine them walking away going, how, okay, off they go. “They did so. After sitting a while by the fire in charge of the officer I requested to step out. I walked out into the public square accompanied by him. Said I, Mr. Peabody, are you good at a race? No. But my big bulldog is and he's been trained to assist me in my office these several years. He will take any man down at my bidding. Well, Mr. Peabody, you compelled me to go a mile. I have gone with you two miles, you've given me an opportunity to preach, sing, and have also entertained me with lodging and breakfast. I must now go on my journey. If you're good at a race, you can accompany me. I thank you for all of your kindness. Good day sir.” He then says, “I started on my journey while he stood amazed and not able to step one foot before the other. Seeing this, I halted, turned to him, and again invited him to a race. He still stood amazed. I then renewed my exertions and soon increased my speed to something like that of a deer. He did not awake from his astonishment sufficiently to start in pursuit until I had gained perhaps 200 yards. I had already leaped the fence and was making my way through a field to the forest on the right of the road. He now came howling after me and shouting to his dog to seize me. The dog being one of the biggest – one of the largest I had ever saw, came close on my footsteps with all his fury. The officer behind, still in pursuit clapping his hands and hallooing, ‘stu-boy, stu-boy – take him – watch – lay hold of him, I say – down with him,’ and pointing his finger in the direction I was running. The dog was fast overtaking me, and in the act of leaping upon me, when, quick as lightning, the thought struck me to assist the officer in sending the dog with all fury to the forest a little distance before me. I pointed my finger in that direction, clapped my hands and shouted an imitation of the officer. The dog hastened past me with redoubled speed towards the forest, being urged by the officer and myself and both of us running in the same direction.”²

He then tells us that he gained the forest, lost sight of both the officer and the dog and very shortly thereafter found his traveling companions, and they continued on their journey.

Doesn't the Word of Wisdom which has not been revealed at this point tell us that we will be able to walk – be able to “run and not be weary” (Doctrine and Covenants 89:20)? I'm sorry we're being a little funny with that, but I just love the story of Parley P. Pratt, his faith and the way he makes use of inspiration.

So here's the point that for me is very relevant, is that you get these experiences along the way of this thousand-mile journey, and while they thought that was the target, they're growing faith, their discipleship. Their ability to sacrifice for the Lord seems to be much more relevant.

² Various Authors. “The Infant Church Expands.” *Chapter Seven*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2003, abn.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/church-history-in-the-fulness-of-times/chapter-seven?lang=eng.

Brothers and sisters, sometimes if you're not careful, you'll put all of your emphasis on the product at the end, rather than where I think God puts more emphasis which is on the process of your discipleship. What do you do along the way to grow your faith and to build your trust in God?

Now jump down to section 33. Here you're introduced to two additional new members of the Church, Ezra Thayre and Northrop Sweet. Just going to share a brief bit about Ezra Thayre. This is written by Matthew McBride in Revelations in Context in the Church gospel library app, and what we have as an introduction is that Ezra Thayre was a bit of a skeptic, and many of us humans are a bit skeptical where when we hear something that doesn't sound familiar, we possibly, our immediate response is like, I just don't believe that.

And Ezra had heard about Joseph Smith, about the Restoration, about the Book of Mormon, and some of his family members wanted to go hear Joseph Smith preach, and Ezra's like, there is no way I'm going to spend any time listening to that message. There's not going to be anything true there. And his brother prevailed upon him to take the time to go, saying, look, there's no harm in just listening. And when he listened, when Ezra listened to Joseph Smith, he felt the overpowering sensation of the Spirit convince him that what he was hearing was true, and he came to know for himself that the Book of Mormon was the word of God, and Ezra becomes a very important figure in the Church to spread the gospel kingdom. But also we hear some important messages that God gives to him as well as Northrop Sweet. We're going to let Tyler talk about that for a minute, and then we'll talk about what lessons we learn from these two early saints.

So, Northrop Sweet is an interesting character because he happens to be the first person who breaks away from the Church after being a member of the Church and starts his own break-off group called the Pure Church of Christ. That Church, that movement, doesn't ever really get off the ground. I think they end up with a total of six members who follow him, but he feels like he's getting revelation and he's been called as a prophet to replace Joseph, and he starts his own Church and it doesn't go anywhere. Notice that they're told in verse 8: "Open your mouths and they shall be filled, and you shall become even as Nephi of old, who journeyed from Jerusalem in the wilderness. Yea, open your mouths and spare not, and you shall be laden with sheaves up on your backs, for lo, I am with you. Yea, open your mouths and they shall be filled..." (Doctrine and Covenants 33:8-10). Have you noticed that? Three times in a row, open your mouth, open your mouth, open your mouth, and I'll fill your mouth with my words.

What are you going to say? "Repent, repent, and prepare the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Yea, repent and be baptized, every one of you, for a remission of your sins; yea be baptized even by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost" (Doctrine and Covenants 33:10-11). Are you noticing what the words are that God's going to put in their mouth? It's not, let me teach you all of the immensity of space and the enormity of deep, deep doctrines that people really wrestle with. He says, open your mouth and

I'll fill it. With what? Verse 12: "Behold, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and remember that they shall have faith in me or they can in nowise be saved. [This is the rock on which] I will build my Church; yea, upon this rock ye are built, and if ye continue, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you" (Doctrine and Covenants 33:12-13). Now, gratefully, that was only a problem for the 1830s, right?

So as humans we seem to love priestcraft. If you look back in section 33 verse 4: "My vineyard has become corrupted...". God goes on and says, "they err in many instances because of priestcrafts...". Now it's fascinating what we've just heard from Tyler. When God has a message to share, he focuses on truth, and he focuses on the truths that save us. So our encouragement to all of us is we stay laser focused on the message of the gospel that Jesus Christ has revealed and find ourselves ignoring or avoiding all the other voices that want to preach their own gospel.

I learned something important from my father some years ago. I was much younger at the time and I didn't understand his statement. He had served in Church leadership for some years and he'd seen a lot of life experience, and he said this to me, and I've now come to see that it's true. He said, there's two forms of apostasy. There's apostasy because of too little belief, and on the other trajectory, too much belief. Now let me just clarify this a bit. This one kind of made sense to me. I could see that people would stop believing in God, his truth, his revelation, and they apostatize, they leave, whatever, they make different choices. That one made sense to me. What didn't make sense to me was too much belief. And what I've since come to realize is that God is here teaching faith, repentance, baptism, Holy Ghost, endure to the end. Sometimes people want to believe beyond that, they want to teach beyond that. For example, really, since the time of Jesus, Christians have been trying to predict the day and hour when Jesus is going to return. Might we humbly suggest that whenever anybody's trying to predict the specific time that Jesus is returning, that is a form of false prophecy unless it's the prophets of God.

So private individuals who are publically going forth preaching too much belief potentially could lead themselves and others away from what really matters, which is what we hear that God revealed to Ezra and Northrop, stay focused on the gospel, the rock. And when I say too much belief, I don't mean believing too much in Jesus, or believing too much in the power of faith and repentance. It means going beyond the mark, believing in things that are less than likely to guide you to salvation, that are a distraction from what really matters, that take you away from the center, that take you off the rock of Jesus Christ.

So again, don't misunderstand when I say too much belief, that you shouldn't be focused on Jesus, it's, be centered in Jesus. This comes back to God has revealed and restored the Church today and has modern-day prophets, and if you ever want to know how to stay centered, you ask yourself, am I following the words of the living day prophets and being grounded in the express and clear revelations of the gospel that teach me to trust Jesus, to repent of my sins and encourage others to do the same?

So really, the gospel is quite simple. There's no reason to make it more complex. I have to tell you I've spent a lot of my life studying the scriptures. I think the deepest doctrine I've ever encountered is faith. And I still have yet to find the full depth of the power and doctrine of faith, and so we encourage you to stay focused on what matters, just as God revealed here in his words in Doctrine and Covenants section 33.

Okay, the next person that we're introduced to is a fascinating Church history character, Orson Pratt. I love studying his story. He spent so much time immersed in the scriptures. He became one of our earliest, most devout disciples of Christ through a study of the scriptures. He knew the Book of Mormon inside and out from his time period. In fact, it's Orson Pratt who is credited with creating the 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon. Some of you are wondering why should I care about that? Well, if you open up your Book of Mormon today and look at the page, it's Orson Pratt who did this. It's Orson Pratt who gave us the dates of about 124 BC, about 73 BC. He's the one who puts the chapter breaks where they currently are, the verse breaks where they currently are. So our scriptures today are heavily – the Book of Mormon is heavily influenced by the work that Orson Pratt did with his 1878 or 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon.

And he is quite young when this revelation is given; he's 19. He had been converted and baptized because of his brother Parley P. Pratt, and as you read through this section, just pay attention to some of the counsel given to him, knowing a little bit about his future role in bringing forth the gospel to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples, the four quarters of the earth, okay?

Now, go to section 35. This individual, Sidney Rigdon, becomes one of our most important characters in the early history of the Church. In fact, it's Sidney Rigdon who is going to be spokesman, largely, for Joseph. He is an amazing preacher. He can speak for two hours without any microphones or amplification device out in the opens and he can preach a sermon and keep people engaged. Apparently had quite the gift as a leader of the Church in those early years, and, in fact, it's Sidney Rigdon who, after Joseph is martyred, it's Sidney who's going to claim that he is now supposed to be the overseer of Joseph's Church when Brother Brigham is going to stand up and give his speech, and you get that incredible story that we'll cover many months from now.

So here at the beginning, Sidney Rigdon listened to the preaching of those four missionaries that came through Kirtland, he accepted the Book of Mormon, he came east to visit Joseph Smith, and here in December of 1830, just a few months after those missionaries left, he's now with Joseph, and he receives this beautiful revelation. Look at verse 3: "Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you my servant Sidney, I have looked upon thee and thy works. I have heard thy prayers, and prepared thee for a greater work. Thou art blessed, for thou shalt do great things. Behold thou wast sent forth, even as John, to prepare the way before me, and before Elijah which should come, and thou knewest it not."

Sidney had built up a Church in Kirtland with a lot of people, and he was preaching out of the Bible, when he now learns about the truths of the gospel from the Book of Mormon, and many of the people in his group now join the Church and become a new core for the Church of Jesus

Christ as it's going to come to Kirtland and the Kirtland area. And he was a forerunner like John the Baptist or like Elijah, and God's telling him, you didn't know that I was doing all that for you. All that success you were having wasn't for that particular organization, it was to prepare the way for what you are now going to do.

I love that, for you and me, because sometimes in our lives we can be doing things and not have any idea that God is preparing us to use those very things that we're accomplishing to accomplish something very different that he has in store for us, and it's being able to let go of the old and embrace the new elements that come from the Lord – that adaptability that's beautifully portrayed in Sidney Rigdon's story.

Look at verse 13: "Wherefore, I call upon the weak things of the world, those who are unlearned and despised, to thresh the nations by the power of my Spirit." Now just as a side note, in the 1981 edition of the triple combination, the word there is "thrash" the nations. But if you read it on the current edition of the scriptures, the word "thrash" is changed to "thresh". I like that because you see missionaries and apostles and prophets and Church leaders aren't supposed to go out and thrash and beat up the world. We're back to the analogy of farming. To thresh the world is to gather Israel, to gather in the tribes safely into the house of Israel again, so it's a beautiful adjustment that was made that fits more what our missionaries and our leaders and parents do on a daily basis.

Look at verse 15: "And the poor and the meek shall have the gospel preached unto them, and they shall be looking forth for the time of my coming, for it is nigh at hand." And then verse 17: "I have sent forth the fullness of my gospel by the hand of my servant Joseph; and in weakness have I blessed him;". Notice the pronouns: "my servant Joseph ... in weakness have I blessed him;" (Doctrine and Covenants 35:17). That should give every one of us hope that, as God calls us to certain things, it's God who will help us. What's the phrase that President Monson used to say all the time? Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies. And that doesn't have to just apply to Church callings, brothers and sisters. That can apply to being called to pass through anything in this life, whether it be a blessing or a trial or a tribulation or a struggle or a physical, mental, emotional setback, or a loss, God will qualify those whom he calls to pass through certain things.

Look at verse 27 to finish off this section: "Fear not, little flock, the kingdom is yours until I come. Behold, I come quickly. Even so. Amen." Once again, there's a sense of urgency. This isn't a sit back and relax.

So we finish today with section 36, a revelation given through Joseph Smith to Edward Partridge. Edward's story is fascinating. He initially was kind of resistant to joining the Church. Then he read the Book of Mormon and he was convinced, he was baptized. Edward is going to be very critically important with the group that moves west to Independence, Missouri. He's going to be the bishop there, so it's Bishop Edward Partridge, and in 1833 he's going to be in the middle of all of these struggles of the Church being abused and the mob action in Missouri. He'll

be tarred and feathered. He's facing some serious opposition in the future for his Church membership.

Look at verse – so you're in section 36. Look at verse 2: "I will lay my hand upon you by the hand of my servant Sidney Rigdon, and you shall receive my Spirit, the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which shall teach you the peaceable things of the kingdom." It's interesting that God is going to give him the peaceable things of the kingdom, and yet Edward is going to be in the epicenter of some of the least peaceful experiences of this early Church within a few years in Missouri.

Notice he says, verse 7, the things that he's told him to do, crying repentance and praising God. Verse 7: "This commandment shall be given unto the elders of my Church, that every man which will embrace it with singleness of heart may be ordained and sent forth, even as I have spoken." Did you notice the word in there, that "every man which will embrace it with singleness of heart may be ordained and sent forth" (Doctrine and Covenants 36:7)? You see, God doesn't seem to be as interested in our capacities and our abilities right now as much as he's interested in our willingness to give him our heart and our best effort to love God with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength, and then he qualifies us.

So to finish off this lesson involving so many people with so many real life experiences and stories, brothers and sisters, I'll return back to that mission that those four elders, with the help of the Lord, went to serve among the Lamanites. If you have put forth great effort trying to accomplish some mission and you don't feel like you've been successful, whether it's a literal mission where maybe you didn't teach or baptize as many people as you thought you should have in order to be a success, or maybe it's as a parent you've raised some children and maybe one or more of them haven't turned out the way you had hoped or dreamed or expected for them. Maybe instead of looking at those outcomes as the end-all be-all, maybe what God has been doing is shaping you and molding you and working with people along the way, but preparing your heart to love him and to trust him and to rely on him more.

In closing, just know that he lives. Know that he is working with you, side by side with you, if you're on his errand, regardless of what that errand is, to build up the kingdom, to gather Israel on both sides of the veil. No kind word, no kind thought, no honest effort goes unnoticed by the angels in heaven. And I leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.