

366: April 26; Spiritual Rebirth... Sustainably (House Church/Come Follow Me Book of Mormon Week 15)

Happy FIFTIETH earth day!

This episode is about THE question! The gospel question! How do we become better people? How do we become conduits of love and goodness?

Outline

Covid Check-in

House Church

Hymn: Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Prayer:

Lesson:

- Spiritual rebirth! (the target, transformation of character and soul)
- Caring for ourselves and each other
- Order of operations and sustainability (don't run faster than you have strength)
- Retaining forgiveness (metanoia, thinking in a new way, acting in a new way, becoming new)

Devotion

Conclusion

Covid Check-in

I did a "Grief in the time of Covid training today and wanted to share some highlights with you. What we are dealing with is

- 1) Complicated grief
- 2) Anticipated grief (focused on the future, produces anxiety, reaching for control)

Things that will help:

- 1) Name
- 2) Identify what you can and can't control
- 3) Make specific plans for the future, plan grief rituals in detail
- 4) Be mindful, anchor yourself in the present (5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste).
- 5) *Care for your body*

- 6) Express gratitude, including for the “little things”
- 7) Lower expectations and be gentle with yourself (how will I ever get used to not wearing pajama pants with my dress shirts?)

https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/04/15/834021103/who-sets-6-conditions-for-ending-a-coronavirus-lockdown?utm_term=nprnews&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=npr&fbclid=IwAR2OxMCaOFt92IDII4vPprQKt3ps2zG4I-Hseer212Ox66uJ8lwaZ5OHSQo

House Church

Hymn: Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPKpkrqBwNs>

Prayer:

Sacrament: Covenant and renewal

Lesson:

- Spiritual rebirth! (the target, transformation of character and soul)

This is everything! This is the target! The ENTIRE point of the gospel! To make us new creatures that “have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually”)

Mosiah 5:1-8

Turn everything upside down (wellness is almost opposite what we want to be true and especially the cultural messages in the world today)

How do we transform our nature? How do we become “Children of Christ”? How are we spiritually reborn?

This is literally my greatest passion and vocation. I am dedicating my life to this.

It really does come down to the two great commandments (with its hidden third)

Love God

Love yourself

Love others (that’s literally everything)

A few principles I’m working on living into:

Resist nothing. Let love and calling invite/pull us forward.

Love ourselves where we are. No exceptions.

Be grateful for everything.

Open, expand.

What do we have control over? What can we change? One thing I've learned is that changing *our contexts* is the most effective step, then focusing on our responses. Over time, our feelings shift or more effectively, we realize that no matter what we are thinking and feeling, we don't need to act on those thoughts and feelings! We can honor them, listen to them, then live according our principles and values and covenants. This might be one of the single most important principles I've practiced: Feeling my feelings, letting them be what they are, breathe, give myself a time out if I need, care for myself, and keep acting the way I believe in. There is nothing more powerful than knowing that I can stay calm and grounded pretty much no matter what.

1. Our feelings
 2. Our responses
 3. Our contexts
- Caring for ourselves and each other (This passage and the Book of Mormon makes very clear that this is LITERALLY THE REQUIREMENT AND MEASURE OF SPIRITUAL BIRTH)

In my eight years of the podcast, no topic has been more challenging and gotten more pushback than the question of wealth. Money is a very weird taboo... our culture is obsessed with it, but we are not supposed to talk about it in a normal way. Mosiah 4 is one of my very favorite sermons on this principle, and teaches it in a balanced way. One of my favorite sacrament talks ever was about wealth and finances.

Mosiah 4:16-27

This is not a strength of mine. I am learning. I am grateful. I would welcome advice from people who know more than I with better practices. I got my first salaried, full time job just two years ago at 40. I have over \$100k in student debt, as so many do. I have only owned a house once, and it didn't work out well. I just barely entered my information into a finance app, Mint (recommended, especially since it can link to your bank accounts) I'm where I am. Have never done better, have far to go. I help where and when I can. My next priorities are to get to the point where I am not paying off credit cards and am instead building up savings. Also worth knowing that our entire economy is designed to keep us indentured servants always paying off debt and living paycheck to paycheck at best.

If I could have any wish, it would be to make everything cost its true price.

Principles

- 1) Cultivate/practice the gospel perspective
- 2) Be grateful for what you have
- 3) Use what you have well: Get your own life/finances in order
- 4) Share as you can
- 5) Work toward a better world (systems of radical inequality, just two examples)

We are all interconnected. We are all stewards. Nothing is actually ours. As King Benjamin says, we are all beggars and debtors, and we should be grateful as we devote ourselves to God's work and building the kingdom

- 2) No need to feel guilty about opportunity and even wealth. Guilt is not productive. Be grateful and mindful (recommendation about needs and tithing, figure out what you actually need, pay tithing on "increase")
- 3) Be wise (this is that huge topic I'm working on)
- 4) Share as you can. Primarily to those around you. Right now I'm helping my oldest with car insurance, just got contacts for two other children, help my brother, help friends when I can, etc. See need, meet need within your network.
- 5) thoughtfully decide what causes you want to contribute to, especially in your local communities. Here are just two bits

From Reflections of a Scientist, about President Kimball

My family and I were having dinner one night with Spencer and Camilla. The doorbell interrupted us at one point, and Spencer went to give some time (and apparently substance as well) to a caller.

This prompted me, upon his return, to relate an experience with a visitor in my home of a few nights earlier. This fellow was an apparently destitute member of a minority group who had come to see me about once a year for the previous two or three years. He always had a wonderfully sorry story to tell and would introduce me to his wife or other companions and ask if I could help him out. One year I gave him my sweater and some money, and other years just money.

On this most recent occasion, however, alcohol had rendered him decidedly strong of breath and wobbly of gait, and his "wife" was not the same one as in the previous year. I gave him twenty dollars and sent him on his way with the stern admonition that he shouldn't come back again. (Indeed, I've not seen him since, and this was twenty years ago.)

The conversation turned to the particularly troublesome scripture in this regard in Mosiah: "And ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish. Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his

misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just—But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God.” (Mosiah 4:16-18.)

I asked Spencer what he thought of my chances and how he dealt with that particular scripture, since he must have a never-ending stream of such visitors. His eyes twinkled, and he smiled slightly as he said, “I always read fast when I get to those verses.” He didn’t mean it, of course. I don’t know anyone who comes closer to meeting the high standard of that scripture than Spencer, but it’s nice to know that he understands the rest of us.

Elder Holland: Are we not all beggars?

Down through history, poverty has been one of humankind’s greatest and most widespread challenges. Its obvious toll is usually physical, but the spiritual and emotional damage it can bring may be even more debilitating. In any case, the great Redeemer has issued no more persistent call than for us to join Him in lifting this burden from the people.

Given the monumental challenge of addressing inequity in the world, what can one man or woman do? The Master Himself offered an answer. When, prior to His betrayal and Crucifixion, Mary anointed Jesus’s head with an expensive burial ointment, Judas Iscariot protested this extravagance and “murmured against her.”

Jesus said:

“Why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work. ...

“She hath done what she could.”

“She hath done what she could”! What a succinct formula! A journalist once questioned Mother Teresa of Calcutta about her hopeless task of rescuing the destitute in that city. He said that, statistically speaking, she was accomplishing absolutely nothing. This remarkable little woman shot back that her work was about love, not statistics. Notwithstanding the staggering number *beyond* her reach, she said she could keep the commandment to love God and her neighbor by serving those *within* her reach with whatever resources she had. “What we do is nothing but a drop in the ocean,” she would say on another occasion. “But if we didn’t do it, the ocean would be one drop less [than it is].” Soberly, the journalist concluded that Christianity is obviously *not* a statistical endeavor. He reasoned that if there would be more joy in heaven over one

sinner who repents than over the ninety and nine who need no repentance, then apparently God is not overly preoccupied with percentages.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2014/10/are-we-not-all-beggars?lang=eng>

Ok, now systems, which are 99.9% of the problem/issue. Our global economy runs and depends on radical inequality, exploitation, dissatisfaction, debt. The corona virus is an overwhelmingly powerful invitation and challenge to look at and hopefully change this. How about instead of economic growth, we focus on well-being?

And remember: if you earned \$100k a year, a very generous salary, it would take TEN THOUSAND YEARS to earn ONE billion dollars.

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/apr/15/amazon-jeff-bezos-gains-24bn-co-ronavirus-pandemic>

Jeff Bezos, richest man in the world, just increased his wealth by 24 BILLION and still won't provide paid time off during the pandemic.

I LOVE Amazon and think it deserves to make Bezos super rich. But not THAT rich, and he would not be that rich if he actually took care of the people making him rich.

This puts it in perspective for me:

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/jan/21/world-26-richest-people-own-as-much-as-poorest-50-per-cent-oxfam-report>

Yup. TWENTY SIX people own as much as about FOUR BILLION.

Science of wealth and satisfaction: (Kahnemann's famous \$60k point), which now is more \$75k

<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2019628,00.html>

Translation: As soon as you aren't stressed about how the bills will be paid, the relationship between money and happiness FLATLINES and actually starts to decrease, given unhealthy habits and expectations associated with being rich.

What actually contributes to happiness is genetics (50%) and our attitude (40%), then our choices and context, which intersects with our attitude.

- Order of operations and sustainability (don't run faster than you have strength)

Tell the truth about yourself and your life (redeemed realism, requires courage and fortitude)

Love yourself where you are now

- Retaining forgiveness (metanoia, thinking in a new way, acting in a new way, becoming new) Love the emphasis on having reminders “before our eyes”. One of my favorite things about my ministry training (I just picked up FOUR new classes on top of everything else) is that I am motivated and incentivized and empowered to effect real change in my life. I am a significantly different version of myself than I was three years ago. Radically, and it is all linked to ministry, catalyzed by my second divorce, the last thing I wanted.
(Share my rebirth ritual on leap day)

Devotion

“Niceness” — wholesome, integrated personality — is an excellent thing. We must try by every medical, educational, economic, and political means in our power, to produce a world where as many people as possible grow up “nice”; just as we must try to produce a world where all have plenty to eat. But we must not suppose that even if we succeeded in making everyone nice we should have saved their souls. A world of nice people, content in their own niceness, looking no further, turned away from God, would be just as desperately in need of salvation as a miserable world — and might even be more difficult to save.

For mere improvement is not redemption, though redemption always improves people even here and now and will, in the end, improve them to a degree we cannot yet imagine. God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man. It is not like teaching a horse to jump better and better but like turning a horse into a winged creature. Of course, once it has got its wings, it will soar over fences which could never have been jumped and thus beat the natural

horse at its own game. But there may be a period, while the wings are just beginning to grow, when it cannot do so: and at that stage the lumps on the shoulders — no one could tell by looking at them that they are going to be wings — may even give it an awkward appearance. (pp.183-84)

Conclusion: How this episode and anything else can change your life: We are as good as we are incentivized and empowered to be, so build in incentives and then empower yourself.

Choose a few principles, figure out a way you are going to act on it each day, turn it into a practice. When you have mastered that, pick a different principle, rinse and repeat.