

“132 Problems” Interview with Michelle Stone
Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.
August 27, 2023

Michelle Stone: There you are... Can you hear me?

Denver Snuffer: I can hear you. Can you hear me?

MS: Perfect, yep, there it is. We're just barely getting set up—the last-minute stuff with the kids, always.

DS: Hah.

MS: Okay, let me get this started.

Well, thank you again for agreeing to talk to me!

DS: Yeah, yeah!

MS: I appreciate it. Okay, anything you want to start with? Should we just go ahead and get going? Is there anything you want/topics you want me to avoid or make sure to cover?

DS: Well, if you ask something that I don't want to talk about, I'll just not talk about it. Umm...

MS: Perfect.

DS: I don't really like doing these kinds of things. So, you know, I'm not enthused, but I'm willing to participate. So...

MS: Well, thank you!

DS: ...we'll do that. Okay.

MS: We'll hope for the best! Well, I'm gonna go ahead and start recording, if that's all right.

DS: Yeah, that's fine.

MS: And then...

DS: Yep.

MS: Okay. I had a super late night last night. So hopefully, I can remember all the words I need to... I'm a bit sleep deprived. Hopefully, it will all go well. So, okay.

(Oh, let's see what's going on with this. One sec. Gotta get the microphone going as well.)

DS: Do you need me to talk to check volume level?

MS: Umm, I think it sounds good. I'm gonna put you on a separate recording. So it should... I'm sadly low-tech. So it'll just be the best it's gonna be. Okay, we'll go ahead and get started, if that's all right.

DS: That's fine.

MS: Okay.

Welcome to this conversation that I am having with Denver Snuffer. Denver, I really, really want to thank you for coming. I know this is not your favorite thing to do. This is not your cup of tea. But I also wanted to explain... Well, I've kind of explained to my audience a little bit about why I wanted to talk to you. There are so many things I would love to talk to you about. For those who don't know Denver's story, I'm sure we're going to go into that. And for anyone who feels nervous having Denver here, I just want to repeat that I have talked to many different people who are not members of our faith who have different journeys and different paths. And I think that we can all rely on the fact that the Lord has given us the gift of discernment, so we can listen to what people say and discern truth and error without fear and without needing to just reject people. That's part of why I wanted to have Denver come. It's 'cuz I feel like his voice has been silenced, and other people have been talking on his behalf in ways that don't feel very fair to me.

So Denver, with all of that being said... I guess I should say Denver was/has been a member of the church, I believe, for 40 years. He was baptized, and 40 years later, to the day (if I'm getting the story right) was excommunicated in 2015 for, I believe, a book tour, right? Like a series of lectures you were giving?

DS: Yeah. I was baptized on September 10th of 1973, and I was excommunicated on September 10th of 2013...

MS: Oh, of 2013. Okay.

DS: ...and it was exactly 40 years to the day.

MS: That is amazing. So, yeah, this is a complicated conversation, 'cuz I really want my faithful LDS listeners to feel comfortable and welcome and not be afraid, so I'm hoping that people can just listen. But I want to tell a little bit about my...

So I've shared before that I was struggling in my church membership 'cuz I felt like the church was not living up to what I expected it to be if it was the true church of God. And I was reading the Book of Mormon and just getting these powerful, strong messages from it: mainly, that it was TO us and ABOUT us, that we ARE the Gentiles, we are the ones being called to repentance. And also, what I started to see was this pattern of people coming into the presence of God, basically telling us how to do that. It seemed like an instruction manual with part-by-part, and it starts with Nephi telling us everything he possibly can until the Lord tells him, "You can't say anymore," and ends with Moroni basically summing it all up and saying, "If you have..." you know, and right before Moroni, we have Ether, that's one of the most profound stories, the brother of Jared telling us, "Wait, this is how you come into the presence of God." And then again, Moroni setting it up. And I felt so... Yeah, I just felt like how... What

is going on here? How can I dare believe that this is what the Book of Mormon is about—because someone would have TOLD me! How can I think I know more than everybody else or that I know something different than anybody else? I really, like, it really was actually quite a bit of turmoil. And that was when I was led, really, by the Lord to this book that I believe is... I don't know if this is the first book you wrote, but it's the one that I found pretty early on.

DS: It is...

MS: And it sure...

DS: ...the first.

MS: Is this the first one you wrote?

DS: Yeah.

MS: So this is *The Second Comforter* (so they can get it in the screen), ~~Communing with the Lord through the~~ *Conversing with the Lord through the Veil*, and it—for me—served as this beautiful second witness. It gave me permission to believe what the Lord was teaching me without feeling like I was all alone and crazy, you know? So I want to thank you for that. That really was a gift to me. And I want to say also, for those worried about Denver, he wrote this book as a fully active, participating member of the church, I believe serving on the High Council, if I'm not mistaken. And...

DS: Yeah...

MS: ...and this book didn't do anything to get you into trouble. This book is not...

DS: Oh, no; heavens, no.

MS: ...unsafe for continued members.

DS: No. And in fact, the manuscript for that book was submitted to Deseret Book, and they took seven months to evaluate it before deciding that they thought the content was too sacred for them to feel comfortable putting out there. But when they finally decided not to publish it, they encouraged me to find another publisher to put it out there, and ultimately, yeah, it got into print. But I didn't want it advertised; I didn't want it... I didn't want to do book signings. I didn't want it to become something that a lot of attention was drawn to.

Because I refused to advertise or publicize or do book signings or promote it in any way, I had to bear the cost to get it into print. I had to pay the cost out of pocket for the cover art. I had to pay to get the professional editor. I had to... It took a lot of money to get it into print, but I was hoping it would be a very quiet book—that people for whom it was appropriate would find it, and everyone else would just go their way and pay no notice. But the printer—the month before it went into print—the printer was acquired by the world's largest bookseller, Amazon; it's a subsidiary of Amazon that printed the book. And when a title comes out on Amazon and anyone does a word search like... The title of the book is *The Second Comforter, Conversing with the Lord through the Veil*. If someone picks up and does a

search for "the second comforter," Amazon has worldwide, global reach. And so the, uh... It got more attention than I wanted it to.

It's a very personal book. But it's personal **to the reader**. It's taking the reader on an individual, internal journey in themselves. But there are vignettes about me. The vignettes illustrate how to get something wrong. And then the chapter that follows the vignette explains how to get it right. And so it's personal in the sense, for me, that I'm talking about a lot of personal failures. And it's personal to the reader because it's pushing the reader internal to themselves in a search. And your mention of the Book of Mormon... I mean, there are three chapters devoted to Nephi's struggle and search, because his experience illustrates a great deal about the process. And so Nephi figures prominently for three chapters early in the book.

MS: Tell people what those three chapters are, so they can go and look at 'em...

DS: Oh, I don't have the book with me. And I don't have the index. But if you look in the table of contents, it talks about Nephi's journey and how Nephi came along. I mean, initially, the first thing that Nephi did was to struggle and have a confrontation meditatively and prayerfully with God, struggling to try to believe what his father had said. And it begins with something as simple as that, and then it culminates in what happens with Nephi. And the Book of Mormon, I think, intends to invite everyone—every reader—to go on that same journey.

MS: Exactly. Yes. And I just was rereading... We were speaking to some friends the other night that were talking about it in Moroni 9. One thing that I really also appreciate about your book—appreciated at that time, especially—was that it seeks to almost, I don't want to say "normalize" but "give people permission" to have spiritual experiences, to have manifestations and visitations, and the things that we have made... They seem crazy. Like, I know that at one point, you know, I had people decide I was schizophrenic if I would share experiences. That literally happened, you know? And it's very difficult for people to be able to understand that not only do we have the opportunity but almost the obligation to believe that these kinds of experiences, the ministry of angels for, you know, a start are not only possible but are part of what is expected of people of faith. And Moroni 7 makes it so clear (I hope people will read that/reread it) that if angels are/have ceased to minister to/if we aren't experiencing these kinds of things, it's not because the heavens are silent; it is due to our lack of faith. And that's what I think is part of the essential message that all of us are trying to spread is, like, this shouldn't be so suspect; it shouldn't be so strange and scary and odd to have communion with the divine. That is the very purpose of the gospel; like, that's the message I was getting from the Book of Mormon is: What the gospel is, is the power to overcome death and hell (which means separation from God—right?) and physical and spiritual death. And so instead of saying, "So, I can live with God again, someday," which we mean, just live a good life on the safe path, and then when you die, you'll be in the presence... It's so minimized and dumbed down—when what we actually have is the process to come back into the presence of God, overcome spiritual death, and then (eventually, the next step) be translated, overcome physical death (which is the city of Enoch), which is everything we claim to believe in, right? And there's a literal-ness to all of this that it's maybe too great and marvelous, too terrifying for us to be willing to accept and embrace and pursue.

DS: I think that's... Yeah, I think that the institutional encouragement is for Latter-day Saints to outsource spirituality to a hierarchy and trust them to then feed you whatever it is that you need to have fed in order to obtain salvation. And the Book of Mormon is going in an opposite direction, in which we all become individually accountable before God and independently authorized by God to pursue the path of faith in order to reach the point where we, "having been true in all things, are prepared to converse with the Lord through the veil and receive further light and knowledge" (which is still a preserved part of the LDS temple ceremony, despite all of the other changes that have been made). You know, you're introduced as "having been true and faithful in all things" and desiring now for "further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord through the veil," and that's a ceremony—but it's a ceremony that's pointing to a divine invitation and a religious expectation. And the Book of Mormon is ratifying that in account after account, experience after experience—and I mean, why are those accounts given to us if they're not meant to be accepted, trusted, and acted upon? And you're right: In chapter seven of Moroni, *If these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also* (Moroni 7:38 LE). It's kind of an indictment of the institutional position of outsourcing spirituality and trusting other people to tell you what it is that's important.

I think we become easily submissive to religious authority and that the temptation always is if you are given a little authority, that you begin to want control. It's chaotic when everyone is given the opportunity to believe and trust and act for themselves. And yet, you do not want (and the Scriptures do not encourage you) to seek order at the price of unrighteous dominion, control, compulsion, and abrogating the agency of man. Joseph's "teach them correct principles, and let them govern themselves," actually did result in a mess in Nauvoo, in a mess in Far West, in a mess at Independence, in a mess at Kirtland. I mean, gathering after gathering, group after group, "teaching correct principles and allowing them to govern themselves" always resulted in unruliness and the fringes of the folks who were gathered being up to a lot of mischief and engaging in a lot of expectations. But I don't think that is a poor reflection upon either the Lord's plan to give us all agency or Joseph Smith's calling to start a rough stone rolling down the hill, to fulfill what Daniel foresaw. What it means is that, individually, we're just not accepting the responsibility devolving upon ourselves to be peaceable with our fellowman, to be obedient, to be true and faithful, to be something more than the kind of wayward, chaotic, self-indulgent, ambitious, self-promoting people that vied for power and influence in Kirtland and then in Independence and in Far West and in Nauvoo. And Joseph never lived to see a group of people who would rise to the occasion that he had hoped—in teaching them correct principles, that in governing themselves they became like the people of Enoch.

I don't think that Joseph was deficient as a teacher. I just think Enoch had a better audience. I mean, Christ is clearly the best teacher of them all, and Christ's audience didn't become Zion. And of all those who heard Him throughout His mortal ministry, at the end, the account that we're given in Paul's writing is about 500 people were there to see Him ascend on the Mount of Olives. So at the end, after the thousands—perhaps tens of thousands—who had heard the Lord minister, the greatest teacher (greater, more intelligent than they all) only managed to make about 500 people really adopt and accept the lesson. It wasn't for want of a good teacher that the people at the time of the Lord's ministry ~~we~~ didn't realize Zion, and so I don't think you can indict Jesus or Joseph Smith. I also don't think you can laud Enoch. I

think you have to take the realization that the people themselves have a say—they all have a say...

MS: Okay!

DS: ...they all have the opportunity to rise up or to not. And so it's not... You can't point to the failure by saying the Lord didn't send someone adequate to the task, because I think Joseph was more than adequate to the task. It's just that...

MS: As was Jesus, right?

DS: Yeah. It's just that people had... They had more interest in worldliness and the weaknesses of the flesh and the aspirations and ambitions of mortal men, and the consequence was: No Zion. And even now, while I think the Lord is fully prepared to permit a group of people to rise up, the problem remains the same. "Lo here" in hierarchy, "lo there" in a-faction-that-practices-fundamentalism. There are chaotic voices, but none of them penetrate to the heart of the people living today to allow them, with deep reflection and with humility, to live according to... I mean, it's... If you've got your Doctrine and Covenants, it's D&C section 93, verse 1. I mean, right there is the formula; that's what's required: *It [should] come to pass that every soul who forsake[s] his sins and come[s] unto me, ...and [hearkens to] my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am.* I mean, that long—well, long?—relatively short list of things is something...

The battleground is internal to the person. It's not how you get along with other people; it's how you slay the dragon within. Then having slain the dragon within, you can live at peace with your fellowman because the turmoil, the turbulence, the disruption, the fear, the anxiety, the ambition, the hope, the aspiration... All of those things go away if you can slay the dragon within and be right with God. And we have far too many people in Joseph's day and today who don't get that first verse of section 93 right. And we're looking for—and we actually want to be—oh, hey, "Lo here! I'm good! I'm great!" Yeah...

MS: Okay, there are so many things I want to respond to that you just said because... Oh, they're like... Let me start here: I think that it is an individual responsibility. And part of the reason that it's messy... Like, I live in the Doctrine and Covenants, and I won't remember the section right now, but where it says, "If you build a house unto my name, all of the pure in heart can come and will see God" (see D&C 97:15-16). And then right over on the next column, it says, *this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART* (vs.21), right? True Zion is made up of a people who walk and talk with God, which is why... So when those people come together... And it is an individual responsibility. I even... Well, I see God's hand in this entire thing. God needed the pattern set with the city of Enoch to show the rest of mankind. Enoch had hundreds of years. They... You... Their lives were much longer. God established that pattern, if we see that as a literal story, right? And since then, it's been... Like, I see the Restoration and the—I guess, if we want to call it the "failure" of the Restoration, the failure to establish Zion, the "being disparate" and following under what I consider the covenant curses (because that's what seems to have happened, you know, to the states in Utah)—I see this all in God's hand, because everything God does is good. And God is the author. And so all of us, even the leaders of the church are—Brigham Young and the continuing leaders—are playing

their role because there has to be this... There's this necessary traction or friction that you have to grow through, right? I don't... Like, I think that all of us want to find this perfect place, find this perfect thing where we'll all just be in the presence of God, without recognizing that that's not how it works. There has to be the opposition in all things, even—I've said before—even in Eden, even in paradise, there was a snake to set this all going, there was a poisoned tree, you know, like, there's not going to be this perfect place to escape to. And so I think that even our leaders... Like, the process is internal, and we come to God however we will, in whatever organization we're in; that doesn't matter very much. The question is, Are **we** following the promptings **we** are having? The church structure cannot in any way keep us from God any more than it can bring us into the presence of God, as can no other structure or no other leader—or just like you were saying, even Jesus and Joseph Smith couldn't bring the people into the presence of God. All they can do is, like the Book of Mormon strives to do: give the example, give the instructions, try to encourage, and try to promote faith, because that's... Does that make sense?

And so I think that, like, the faith is multifaceted. We have to have faith, first of all, that this is a possibility. But maybe the harder step is that it's a possibility for each of us. I know so many people who are like, "Well, I don't think God expects that of me. That's..." Right? That it's... And then the possibility that God can lead us through that process and that whatever effort we make in that direction is good; it's not like a "you've succeeded" or "you've failed." It's that: Are you striving on this path, in whatever setting the Lord wants you to be in while you are striving on this path? That's how I see it.

So I don't see any church leaders as being obstacles to this journey. In some ways, they serve us as helpers because everybody, you know, like, everybody in our life is a helper for us on this journey if...

So anyway, and then I do think that Joseph, what he established and where that all went, God knows the end from the beginning. God knew that the whole time. It wasn't a mistake in the plan or a failure. It's this incredible opportunity that I feel that we now have to pick up the mantle, to begin finding what is still there. It is still there, absolutely, in the Book of Mormon, and it is even still there, like you said, in the temple and in the gospel and in the church, we see...

Well, I guess I should talk... Your second book that is... The other one that I have of yours (these are the only two books I have of yours), *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, which I think this was the troubling one, right? This was the trouble book?

DS: Yeah, that... Yeah.

MS: And so this, but this does, I remember, it does talk about the embers still being there; you can still blow carefully on the embers and reignite the flame.

DS: Right.

MS: It is still present in the gospel that we have. And so, anyway, so that's why I wanted to, like, clarify... I don't think... I think that people get scared, thinking, "If I go on this path, then it threatens everything I know. It threatens my family, my membership in the church, and..."

DS: Yeah.

MS: While... Okay, a couple of things, and then ~~I'll~~ I'll let you talk again; I'm talking too much. But a couple of things, because you were talking about the messiness of this path. And it is messy, because striving to become pure in heart... And I think that there are so many false spirits and so many opportunities to be tempted from one side to the other like... I think there is—maybe it's an inevitable part of this path—this sort of grandiosity, this feeling of, "I'm really important. I'm really special." And we, as mortals, want to put people on pedestals. That's part of what the problem is. It's not just that our leaders are claiming that they're on pedestals. It's that we want to put them on—we want people on pedestals—and as soon as people get disillusioned with the church, then they want to find someone else to put on the pedestal, whether it's you or someone else that is vocal about their experiences with the divine, right? So we want to put people on pedestals, and then a consequence of that is we want to be put on a pedestal...

DS: Hah.

MS: ...as soon as we start... Right? I think... To me, that's part of the problem, right there. It's just our desire. Like I think every time we want to be around someone that we think is important, it's because it makes us more important, and if we can recognize, "Oh, I'm trying to fill that person in for God; it's God that I really want to be in connection with, not that person, not..." and "I don't want people to glorify and put me on a pedestal." We all... If I'm feeling the desire to have people put me on a pedestal that also is my lack of connection with God.

DS: Hmm.

MS: I think connection with God fills all of those holes. And I think all of those holes are what make this such a crazy, messy, complicated process for every individual. And so, luckily, kind of when you're a little further down the road, you can see, "Oh, I think they're at/in that place on the process that I relate to," you know—not that everyone's journey is the same, but when you see someone being a little bit, maybe, self-glorifying or when you see someone wanting to glorify somebody else (you or somebody else), you can kind of recognize that and just pray, "Lord, okay, help them make it through that journey on their own."

Anyway, does that resonate with you? Do you find some truth in that?

DS: Yeah. I think there's very little I would quarrel with. The purpose of a Zion is to have a community that, in effect, a community that finally lives the Sermon on the Mount—because the Sermon on the Mount was simply a blueprint for how a society would get along. And it really is Jesus explaining to people, in a sermon, how He lived, how Christ dealt with the law of Moses as an internal challenge that He was trying to face.

Zion is a community, and there's no such thing as an individual Zion. I mean, if you're gonna have a Zion, you have to have a community. The impediment to the community is the failure of the individual to internalize what the Lord has invited us and commanded us and asked us to do. And part of what interferes is that very notion about, "Hey, there's something special about you because the Lord took note of you."

I can tell you that there's absolutely nothing special about me. And in fact, as I look around at Latter-day Saints generally, as I was being baptized in September 10th of 1973, I was convicted and convinced that Joseph Smith was a prophet, the Book of Mormon was true, and that I needed to be baptized. I was convinced of that. But I looked at the Latter-day Saints ('cuz they invited me into family's homes), and I did not think that I was as good a person as the people in whose homes I was being taught. Some of these were very young married people with children, who were, you know, in their early 20s; they were still very youthful themselves, and yet they were living chaste, moral lives with families: they didn't smoke; they didn't drink; they did all of the Mormon things. And I did not believe myself to be capable of living as good a life as the lives I was seeing on display. But I had this conviction that I needed to be baptized because I had gotten an answer to prayer—and that if I failed to respond to that, that I would be losing that connection (because this connection was important to me, and I wanted to preserve it). So I went and I got baptized but didn't believe I was as good a person as the people I was joining. And realistically, as I look back on my life, I **don't** think I'm as good a person as the Latter-day Saint model would suggest.

I do think that forgiveness from God is absolutely important in order for someone to be reconciled to God, but the fact that God forgives you doesn't change that you were never good enough in the first place but for Christ's forgiveness. Therefore, of what do you have to boast? Is there something about you that makes you better than someone that did not need forgiveness for these errors? And my view is that, No, there isn't. And it's preposterous to think that, in a spiritual journey, that your stumbles and your falls and your bruised knees and your bloodied elbows are something that **you** can overlook when you think about **yourself**. The Lord may forgive you, but you're still that weak individual that needed to be lifted, that needed to be forgiven, that needed to be buoyed up by the Savior. And the idea that now, "Oh! You get to be a great model, and you get attention!" is foolish. I try to do what the Lord asks, in the way that He asks for it to be done, using what I'm told to do, at the time I'm told to do it, and nothing more. And I believe that anyone that then inserts themselves into the process cannot be trusted by God! And part of what gets favor with God is trustworthiness: the desire to give heed and diligence to Him and to His agenda and to lose yourself and your ambition and your desire. And there are a lot of people who, once having a spiritual experience of any kind, wants to go out and shout about it and call attention to themselves and go stand on a street corner. I mean, I did not want to—throughout, I did not want to call attention to myself. And even now, I don't like doing interviews because it does seem like you're trying to get noticed and get airtime with someone. And I don't like that!

MS: Put the focus on you.

DS: Yeah.

MS: I think the focus on you is always a... I struggle with that with my podcasts. Like, I feel like this is what I'm supposed to be doing. This is...you know. But it is a challenge to not want the focus to be on me. Of course, it's nice when people say nice things to me. I appreciate it, you know. But at the same time, I don't want to *drink* that—right?—because...

DS: Yeah. I don't think the Lord can trust someone who has that within their heart, within their ambition. And I think that "being trusted by God" is a rare thing. It does not happen

much in Scripture. It does not happen much in life. But if you ever obtain something like that, the last thing you want to do is betray it. And so...

MS: Absolutely.

DS: ...~~I worry about~~ I don't worry about the Lord trusting me, because I know what I'm about. However, I worry that people misinterpret, misread, and project onto someone else ideas that don't belong there. And if they project that onto someone—but they're trying now to follow a path towards God, and they think that that becomes part of that path towards God—then they're led astray by that. And so you have to be careful about the misimpressions that people take into themselves and then hope that they can get over on God, employing the misimpression that they've obtained from their misread of someone's motives. And I think that happened to Joseph all the time.

I think, as I read carefully the *Joseph Smith Papers* and look at, you know, what was going on in the contemporaneous material, there's a lot of people who are throwing onto Joseph their views of what they think he's about. And then they go about what is in their own hearts, believing that if they imitate the projection that they put upon Joseph in their own lives, that that will then let them get over with God. And I worry that just as the Lord was misunderstood, and Joseph was misunderstood, and undoubtedly, you know, Peter and Paul and others were misunderstood, that anyone who says, "I have come to know God," will be misinterpreted and that there will be projections put upon them as a consequence of which they are misled—which is one of the reasons why I think the telestial world includes within the "list of those who are damned" those that say, "I, I am of Cephas, and I am of Peter, and I am of Paul, and I am of Esais," because what they're doing is they're taking someone who was merely employed temporarily to deliver a message, and they're reading into that individual and projecting onto them what they believe to be a useful pattern to mirror their own lives when that is not the case. The one... These are true messengers that are listed in those that inherit the telestial world. The problem is that they project onto that messenger instead of saying that the messenger was following only the Lord and that...

MS: Can you back up and say that again? I lost the audio for just a second. Can you...? Say the problem is that they worship messengers...

DS: Yeah. The problem is that they project onto the messengers a pattern that they interpret as being the way to follow the Lord. And so they've substituted someone between the Lord and themselves. The messenger ought to be listened to...

MS: Absolutely.

DS: ...They ought to be heeded. But the purpose is to take that in order to try and draw closer to the Lord and only to the Lord—because the only one that ever got it right was the Lord! All of these other people are serving as delivery boys. But the cook in the kitchen and the food is coming from somewhere else. I mean, your DoorDash guy is not the... There's a whole infrastructure behind him.

MS: He's not the gardener that grew the food. Right!

DS: Yeah.

MS: I think this is exactly what it means with “cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh” (see 2 Nephi 28:31 LE). Because I do... I really... That has been my pattern is, for a time I feel so inspired to learn from this person, you know...

DS: Yeah, sure.

MS: ...and I drink up what they're teaching. And then they say something or something happens, and I'm like, “Oh, that doesn't resonate with me. They're off on that.” That doesn't mean I reject them as a teacher, but I... The spirit is the teacher. What is the truth is the teacher, right?

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS: And I'll learn from this other person, and I'll learn from this other... And so, I take the messages from all of these people with messages to deliver, but keep the eye on... Don't... It's so tempting to want to be in someone's good graces or in someone's good favor, 'cuz it makes you feel more important, right? And that's, I think, exactly what you're talking about. And then, when we start having experiences with God, all of a sudden, we can start trusting in our own flesh, in our own self-speaking: “I can lead these people.” And that is really... That's a real temptation. To want to be put on a pedestal is as much of a...**more** of a temptation than wanting to put someone on a pedestal, right? And all of those things are part of this messiness that we have to avoid. Just true messages, letting the Holy Spirit be the guide, not any individual person.

DS: Yeah, yeah. And that is... We have to be wary. And wariness isn't confined to the motives or intentions or desires of the heart of **another** person. Wariness needs to be addressed internally to myself. We never escape the weaknesses of the flesh; so long as you're occupying a body of dust, that body is weak and vulnerable to the appetites of the flesh, the weaknesses of the flesh, the desires of the flesh. We get hungry; we get thirsty; we feel ourselves all the time in need of something else. And our egos are just as big a problem to be wary about as anything else. I don't think we ever escape the weaknesses of mortality, and we fool ourselves if we think that we do. But the purpose, I think, that we best serve if we have something to offer is in teaching others and helping to lift them so that they draw closer to the divine, closer to light and truth. And in that sense, if you are able to raise someone else and have them accept more light and truth into their life, that's all you can do to please the Lord and to satisfy your obligation to your fellow man. After that, you don't get to control them! You don't get to collect...

MS: Right.

DS: ...tithes from them. You don't get to, you know, pay yourself a dividend, and you don't get to, you know, stand up and ask for adulation. You really... If you succeed...

MS: You don't get to become the authoritarian, institutional leader.

DS: Yeah.

MS: The Lord's messengers are rarely, if ever, ~~the institution~~ the authoritarian, institutional leader.

DS: The letter from Liberty Jail that Joseph Smith wrote, *No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood* (D&C 121:41 LE) is an indictment of church leadership. And all of what follows in talking about the only correct way is by "love unfeigned, gentleness, meekness, pure knowledge," all of that is about the church leadership. It has nothing to do with the government. And it has nothing to do with individual rank-and-file members sitting in the pew. It's about people who **claim** to have power and authority by reason of the priesthood. If Jesus Christ is the head of the priesthood, if He is the one from whom all priesthood authority is derived through generations, if He's the head, **He did not come to BE served but to serve.**

MS: Yes.

DS: And so...

MS: And I do have to push back on you just a tiny bit...

DS: Yes?

MS: ...for saying it's an indictment of church leadership. Because I would say... Like, there are so many leaders who truly are servant leaders in the church, and I don't want to paint...

DS: Yeah.

MS: ...with a broad brush there. Like, that is... I think each of us has the opportunity to be a servant or to be an authoritarian. Even as a parent, when I look at myself with my kids, and I'm like, "Go to bed; stop bothering me," 'cuz I want my time alone. And I...right? Am I being authoritarian, or am I serving? That's a question for each of us to ask at all times, in everything that we're doing. And so, we can't... Again, we can't put that off on somebody else when it's something... It's in all of our hearts all of the time. I think whatever authority we have—I'm bigger than you; I'm in charge of you, I...right?—we always can get into unrighteous dominion or into servant leadership. So anyway... So I don't want to... Like, I think that's a question for all of us all the time. Because how we interact in the stewardship we have shows us how we will interact if we had a bigger stewardship, if we were the president of the church, our own little authoritarianism that would come out with... But in a way, the worst thing that happened to Brigham Young is that he accumulated so much power. If he hadn't had so much power, he couldn't have done so much mischief and caused so much damage, right?

DS: Yeah.

MS: And so that's the question for each of us in our... I think that applies to all of us all the time is, What do we do with the authority we're given?

DS: Yeah.

MS: And one example I use, like, my stake president is, you know... At a very, very difficult time, the way he used his calling was he brought the stake presidency over to clean my kitchen three weeks in a row when I was going through unthinkable things—because he was using his calling to demonstrate the service that can and should be done in our communities. And that... You know, so I really think there is a power to... It is possible to be in any position and abuse authority or not abuse authority. So anyway, continue, I didn't mean to cut you off.

DS: No, no, no! I think I don't have any quarrel with that. You know, I have met some... Some of the greatest people I know have been local Latter-day Saint leadership. The stake president who called me to the High Council, President Lorin Pugh, deserves special mention because I think he was a a godly man and a righteous man.

We had a stake patriarch. He was actually the stake patriarch before Lorin Pugh; he was released, and he became the stake patriarch. And the high priest group leader wouldn't call him to be a home teacher—because he didn't want the stake patriarch to be burdened with home-teaching or to have to deal with any family's problems or issues. And President Christensen went to the High Priest group leader, and he said, "I WANT to home-teach. I don't feel like I'm doing my duty if I don't home-teach." So the high priest group leader called me in and said, "Okay, I'm gonna let the patriarch home-teach a family, but I want to make sure it's the right family. And so I'm calling you and your family to be the home-teaching family that I'm sending the patriarch to because I don't want him to have to bear any burdens or be troubled by anything." And so, we were called to be the home-teaching family to whom the stake patriarch was assigned as his single home-teaching family.

MS: That's great!

DS: And he was a wonderful home teacher! He was the patriarch that came to know my children sufficiently well that when it came time to get patriarchal blessings, we took our kids over to Brother Christensen for patriarchal blessings 'cuz I thought he certainly would know and understand them. We still have a straggler who was too young, and so she hasn't yet gotten a patriarchal blessing—so maybe I'll just give her one; we've talked to her about it.

MS: Wow.

DS: Anyway, there have been some wonderful men that...

MS: Yeah.

DS: ...that I've encountered who have been in local church leadership, and you're right! There are some great... There are no categoricals; there are good people everywhere.

MS: Right.

DS: Yeah.

MS: So, okay, so I have a couple of different areas I really want to get into. The reason I asked you to come on the podcast, specifically—it's not the only thing I want to talk to you about, but...is... One of the things... So, I talked about how you have different people that you learn

from and listen to, and I told you what a service your book (your initial book)...that I was just miraculously led to. I was online, and there was a little link down at the bottom to some other page that just like shot... I had no idea what it was. Clicked on it. It took me to some conversation where there was another link that kind of glowed; I clicked on that. And it took me to some discussion where someone mentioned your book.

DS: [chuckling]

MS: That was my process of finding your book, which I had no idea what it was; I just knew that it was... The screen was glowing extra bright, and I was like, "I have to buy that book!" And I did. So, I do think it worked that the Lord led people to it who needed it. That was my experience, you know. So...

DS: Oh, hey, while you're talking about that: *The Second Comforter, Nephi's Isaiah, Eighteen Verses, Beloved Enos* are all written by me as a member in good-standing, a High Councilman, active Latter-day Saint, and they all are LDS orthodox. I've had a number of people say, "Why don't you go back and rewrite the books now that you are on the other side?" And my position has always been: Every one of those were written to reflect what was then LDS orthodox teachings, and I don't... Well, they are an artifact at this point.

MS: Right.

DS: Every one of them is a reflection of what the doctrine, what the teachings, what the principles, what the understanding was of Latter-day Saint Mormonism at the time those books were put into print. And so if something has changed between then and now (and some things have changed), I want to preserve what it was like at the time that I was a member in good-standing, holding a temple recommend, attending the temple with some regularity, serving on the High Council, and having taught either Gospel Doctrine or Elders Quorum or High Priest Group priesthood for three decades. I understood the orthodox teachings of the church. Now, those books are, in context, an exposition of Mormonism as it was when I was a member—active and in good-standing—and I won't edit them to change them at this point. And you will see a lot of encouragement to orthodoxy in all of those books; even *Passing the Heavenly Gift* encourages faith in the Restoration and fidelity to the church—although it takes some of the varnish off the historical narrative of the church, it doesn't say you should run and hide from LDS orthodoxy; it's just saying that the narrative is not accurate, it ought to be improved, and suggests ways in which it might well be improved. But it was that and the lectures that followed...

One thing that excommunication did (in the lectures that followed) was freed me up from what I perceived to be an obligation to pull punches. I really...

MS: ...to be careful, to be gentle. Okay.

DS: Yeah, I really did.

MS: I feel that.

DS: Even in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, I am not hitting anything very hard. In fact, a...

MS: Okay, I felt... I will say, as a member, I felt... I loved the terms that you introduce in the first one. Like, the term “institutional pride” was one that, really, I was like, oh, my goodness, that is what the Book of Mormon is talking about, our institutional pride of “we are the chosen people; we have the fullness of the gospel; we're the ones; everyone needs to be like us,” right?

DS: Yeah.

MS: But you do hit pretty hard. Like, if people, you know... Like, I have a little bit of a softer tone, but I was able to tolerate it; I thought that it was very useful. I just always... I kind of argue back at you a little bit, ‘cuz I have a slightly different “come from” or way of approach. But I still think that you were... But my understanding—and I need to clarify a few things—but my understanding is you still were trying to preserve faith and trying to...

DS: Yes.

MS: ...preserve [indecipherable] membership in the church—your own and of those who would be your readers. I think that was your goal, even at that time.

DS: Right. It was, it was—and let me illustrate with one little incident. I had a (or I HAVE a) law partner who left—he had been on a High Council—he had left the church, and he had actually become Catholic. And he's a lay Catholic minister. (He can't be a fully ordained priest in Catholicism because he's married, and he has a family.) But he had left the church. I took a copy of *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, and I gave it to my law partner to read, and he read it. His reaction was, “Well, this is an apologetic book, AND I have to tell you, if I had read this book before I had left the church, this may have kept me in the church. So, you know, it's too late now; I'm not going back. But it's really an apologetic book.” That's in the view of someone who I think is a more objective reader than someone who is a Latter-day Saint and who doesn't want to acknowledge that there may be some unresolved issues, some fudging on history, some shading of accounts...

MS: We're plagued by defensiveness.

DS: Yes. Yeah.

MS: I think the defensiveness is one of the greatest things...

DS: Yeah.

MS: Like, anytime I feel defensive, it's really... I really take that as a signal of going, “Okay, God, I know this is not from you.” Defensiveness is about pride and fear and shame and things that are the adversary's tools, not the Lord's. And so it's our defensiveness that makes us object to these things. And I think that's one of the main things we need to get rid of. And so, yeah—so that's my experience of those books. I will say, and I don't... This is just, you know... (Someone just called me honest to a fault; it's true.) But I read your first book—very much inspired by the Lord; greatly appreciated it. I didn't feel inspired to read any of your other books. I shared your book with my sister, and she went and bought all of your books, and lent one to me, and I started reading it. And while I appreciated it, I wanted to read the

Scriptures—do you know what I mean?—like, I didn't get very far into it, 'cuz I just felt like, "I'm reading his interpretation of Scriptures, but I want to read the Script..." I get my own interpretation of Scripture. So it wasn't anything against it; it was just the Lord saying, "Hey, you got what you needed. Now go back to me," right? That was my journey.

DS: Yeah.

MS: And so I never became sort of a follower or, you know (which I don't think you even like the term "follower," from my understanding, you know). So I don't think you'll object to my journey that I... That was the book I needed from you. And then my journey has been in the Scriptures.

But I do know... One of the things I wanted to talk to you about (because I don't know where you talk about this or if I misunderstood), but at some point—and I had, I don't know, I'm trying to... The memories are fuzzy [on] the timeline. But I know at some point, I heard you say something about polygamy, which led me to believe that, at that time, you believed polygamy was of God, right? Because we all... 'Cuz I believed polygamy was of God; I'm not... You know, like we all grow and learn. And so that's kind of what I wanted to talk to you about because I know there was a time where, based on all of the information all of us had, we believed polygamy was of God. And I think maybe what it was... I have sort of now developed a sort of a maybe unhealthy, maybe not knee-jerk reaction to hearing men talk about women's identity or destiny or purpose that... Do you know...?

DS: Yeah...

MS: Like, that's... I don't mean to come up with that. It just is how it is for me at this point, and it has been for many years. And so maybe you were talking about men and women or something, and that's where I kind of was like, "Okay, I'm tuned out for a little while 'cuz I can't have any more men get the answers that are mine and my sisters to get and to present." Does that...?

DS: Yeah.

MS: That's my... I'm sorry. I'm a little bit of a feisty ~~low-cap~~ I mean, small-cased "feminist," you know?

DS: Yeah.

MS: And so, I just kind of instinctively feel that way. So... But what I wanted to talk to you about, because I've gone on this journey of **strongly** believing polygamy was of God and that it would be Zion and that it would be, you know, very much the Bruce R. McConkie perspective, that it would be the celestial kingdom, and it was... It would be a privilege when we were able to live that. I was incredibly naive, went through the journey of learning, first of all, that polygamy was never of God, then, yeah... I was naive about polygamy. I only saw the glowing, you know, top level—not all of the underbelly. And then went through the process of learning that polygamy was not of God and then, more recently, have come to this conclusion that has become... You know how you finally accept truth and then the Lord confirms it and confirms it and confirms it?

So, now in the position of not believing that Joseph was the author or any sort of participant in anything to do with polygamy, but that he didn't define it. And I believe you've gone on a similar journey. And I kind of wanted to hear your, like, how you got from point A to point B to point C, what your journey was, and what convinced you, because I think it's a valuable... People like to write me off. I'm, you know, I'm dealing with a lot of people saying I'm too emotional, and I'm too... They, like... It's pretty unpleasant. You're a lawyer, hard-nosed guy, pretty logical. Let's hear it from you, Denver: Why should people consider that polygamy is not of God, and that Joseph wasn't a polygamist?

DS: Well, if... Let me start by just talking about the way in which I had understood it at the beginning because, as a Latter-day Saint, you accept what the Latter-day Saint tradition tells you. So I began with the proposition that it was of God and true, and section 132 is in the Scriptures that...

MS: Right.

DS: ...I got, and I respected. And if it's in the Scriptures, then it just...

MS: It's canonized! Yeah!

DS: ...as a matter of fact, it's part of the religion! And so I accepted it.

There was a time when it got called into question. And so, while I accepted it, I then became a little more sensitive to the historical source material that it was predicated upon. And it actually became an issue for investigation that I investigated for more than a quarter century. I didn't... I accepted it as true; I began to investigate it; it took a long time before I began to question it; then when I began to question it, it didn't arise to the level of doubting it until I read enough source material ~~that may~~ that troubled me. So I went back to section 132, and I wrestled with the content of section 132 because it is an internally inconsistent document.

MS: Absolutely.

DS: It doesn't hold a constant theme. And one of the things that I was trying to reconcile is how can this unsteady voice in a single revelation make contradictory statements? I began by accepting the notion that Joseph Smith had received the revelation early on. I found were Brigham Young—in that five volume set of Brigham Young's discourses—there is a place in there where he says that the revelation was originally received in 1828, while they were translating the Book of Mormon. He says that Joseph and Oliver became exposed to that. I became acquainted with little known history about Oliver Cowdery (one of the first four missionaries going out), and one of the ideas that they entertained on that mission was that they could grab Indian squaws (they refer to them as that; I'm not being disparaging—this is their view) and get them pregnant; breed with the Indian squaws and produce half-breeds. (There was an entire section of land on the other side of the Mississippi River in the Iowa side, opposite Nauvoo, that was called the half-breed section, in which children that American soldiers had fathered with Indian women were considered, you know, the appropriate landowners in the half-breed section.) Well, the first four missionaries that went out were engaged in the thought of taking extra wives and impregnating them.

MS: Now can you clarify that: Are you saying they actually did that? Or that's the report that came later?

DS: No, that was what was part of what motivated Oliver Cowdery in the first trip out west to engage in the missionary work. They got into Kirtland, and one of the missionaries converted—or started the conversion process for—Sidney Rigdon. Rigdon then went up to where Joseph was in New York. Missionaries continued on and wound up in Independence. But that's... All of that is a separate issue. It was Brigham Young that put it as early as 1828. And so, one of the questions about section 132 is:

- Was it a singular revelation?
- Was it multiple revelations?
- If it was multiple revelations, is there any way to divide it up into the time...?

And I looked at it, and I thought, “Well, they’re so different in the way that this subject gets treated. It’s so different that this HAS to be separate revelations,” and I parsed it into four and maybe five different revelations, while *still accepting* the notion that it was true. And it took some time after that before enough information accumulated that I changed my mind. And that was not a, you know, hasty thing.

I changed my mind, and I concluded that section 132 was not at all reliable. Its provenance was very dubious. And it's attribution to Joseph is very suspect.

In Michael Quinn's exposition and in Brian Hales' exposition, they acknowledge that there is only ONE document contemporaneous with Joseph Smith that clearly ties him to the practice—and that one document is section 132. And so if section 132 is suspect because its provenance is insufficient that it shouldn't be trusted, then we have nothing to tie Joseph to the practice, other than the *enormous* library of material that was generated years/decades after the death of Joseph Smith, in which they attribute—back into the “Nauvoo era”—things TO Joseph which made sense after the 1852 public announcement and the public advocacy that went on and the indoctrination and the propaganda that went on. It makes sense that they would feel comfortable providing these narratives years/decades after the death of Joseph Smith.

So, one of the challenges...

MS: Right.

DS: ...that I thought needed to be undertaken—which I undertook—was to look at everything that existed on June 27, 1844 and before then as evidence that linked Joseph to the practice, and what you find...

MS: So you wanted to limit the search to the contemporaneous evidence...

DS: Only!

MS: ...because I'm just watching everyone... 'Cuz what we have... They **claim** that 132 is contemporaneous. It's not! It appeared magically after Brigham's death in 1852, which is not contemporaneous with Joseph or when it was received.

DS: Right.

MS: And then the very first testimonies we have start in 1869 and then continue on throughout the rest of that century, right? So from what I'm hearing, you were saying, "Okay, we have all of these later documents. Is there anything that can tie them to Joseph's life? Is there anything contemporaneous I can find to validate or verify any of these later claims?" Is this what I'm...?

DS: Yeah, I...

MS: Okay. ...which is what a good lawyer would do (or a good critical thinker). Yes.

DS: I wanted anything that I could find that would tie Joseph directly that existed June 27, 1844 or before then. And so in looking at that, I concluded that the **overwhelming body** of information was Joseph Smith denouncing/opposing/holding church courts to discipline anything and everything which suggested spiritual wivery, polygamy, multiple wives. He was absolutely opposed to the practice publicly and in any of the private meetings that were held in church disciplinary proceedings. And even the stuff that purported to tie him to it... That McClellan letter about Emma Smith catching Joseph in the barn in the very act—with exclamation points—which was written after the fact and based upon an interview that McClellan had with Emma Smith **decades** after the event (and she denied Joseph had done that) appears to be not about sex or intercourse or even marriage; it appears to be something about a ceremony being conducted, in which they were in the barn. And that's it. And what was that ceremony? Because Joseph was in the process of employing a sealing power in order to link people together in order to provide for the eternity of marriage—and the only way that you could make the eternal marriage work in a family in the next life was to link them through Joseph to the eternities. And Joseph was doing something which... You don't find it in any of the documents (because I've looked carefully) until October of 1843, when Joseph (for the first time) mentions the word "adoption." And so whatever was going on was designed to preserve a family into eternity, and it included a concept which Joseph finally employed the vocabulary word *adoption* to describe. But one of the problems with saying "sealing=marriage" and "marriage=sex" when it comes to this whole subject matter is that Joseph Smith never fathered a child with anyone other than Emma Smith. Fanny Alger is supposedly someone with whom he had sexual relations, and there was some kind of sealing. Well, she went on to get married to another man, and I forget, it's either eight or nine children. She was fertile, and she bore eight or nine children. She's at the...

MS: She also never claimed to be Joseph's wife.

DS: Correct.

MS: She never claimed there was anything between them; she refuted... And I will push back a little bit against you again...

DS: Yeah.

MS: ...if you don't mind. You know, like, I think that... I think you're bringing quite a bit of speculation to the Fanny Alger situation, because we don't even know if there was any sort

of a ceremony happening at all. We'd, like... What we do know is that Oliver said that he had misunderstood; Emma did not hold Joseph accountable/was not angry. We know that the wording in that... Like, it—again—is a very convoluted, like... Something happened in the barn that was somewhat misunderstood and that all works out. As soon as Joseph...

DS: Yeah, they...

MS: ...was able to talk to people—people that he was not manipulating or exerting power over—he just was finally able to explain, and they were like, “Okay, I've got it.” So, the reason I get a little uncomfortable, like... And Joseph did talk about adoption, but nobody has any idea what that meant or what it was, other than we can listen to his own words saying it had nothing to... There was no...

DS: Right.

MS: ...allowance for any kind of sealing to anyone as a wife.

DS: Right.

MS: And so, for me, I guess, the reason I get a little bit feisty about it is because, for me... Emma is my connection to this, you know? Like, I am perfectly happy to defend Joseph, but it's really Emma—studying **her**—that convinced me...

DS: Right.

MS: ...that this did not happen—because to believe this about Joseph, you have to believe this about Emma. And for me, if Joseph did anything that felt like a betrayal to Emma, then that was a betrayal of their marriage, even if it was some sort of a sealing that Emma didn't understand. And so, for me, if he was doing some sort of ceremony in the barn with Fanny that upset Emma, that's not okay. Do you know what I mean? Like, I'm not good with that.

DS: Yeah, well...

MS: And so, still, there's so little that we know.

DS: Well, let me be clear, because apparently you're misunderstanding. The only source material that we have for recounting the incident with Fanny Alger is the very late McClellan letter...

MS: Yeah.

DS: ...which, again, it's decades later, and it's filled with exclamation points, and it's intended to be scandalous. But at the time, I think McClellan felt comfortable in writing it in that fashion because word had leaked out decades earlier about what was going on in Utah.

You also have the Far West High Council disciplinary court involving Oliver Cowdery, in which, purportedly, Oliver Cowdery said something about Joseph and Fanny Alger; however, the court disciplined Oliver, and he testified that there was never anything untoward that Joseph Smith had done, and that he was unaware of anything that Joseph had done that would violate any of the commandments.

And then we have Emma's statements that are contrary to the idea that there was something untoward that took place.

But the final piece is: The son of the man who claimed that he performed the ceremony in the barn... We don't have an account of his father; we have his [the son's] account, and his account is also late! And therefore, I question whether the son's hearsay comments about what the father did are reliable.

So the whole Fanny Alger thing... IF something happened—and I don't think there's enough to clarify *if* or *what*—I am fully satisfied that if the answer to *if* is, “Yes,” that the answer to the *what* question is, “The sealing, if it was something that took place, had nothing to do with marriage or intercourse.”

As I was saying before you interjected that last part, she was at the height of her fertility at the time...

MS: Yeah.

DS: ...that this encounter purportedly took place. Joseph Smith fathered, I think, eight pregnancies through Emma (some of whom, you know, died and others miscarried). But he was...

MS: Well, I want... Just to clarify that as well.

DS: Yeah.

MS: 'Cuz now... I want to interject again. Well, you finish your sentence, then I'll interject. I apologize.

DS: She was at the peak of her fertility, he was at the peak of his fertility, they were young, they were youthful, and yet, if something happened, it produced nothing! I don't think that you can say that Joseph had 37 (or however many they now aggregate to) women other than Emma, and there was no progeny produced, when most of those women DID bear children and yet Joseph, who—according to 132, its purpose is to “raise up seed unto the Lord,” which is a euphemism for, you know, getting them pregnant and having your cattle produce offspring, which is what Brigham Young did. I mean, you look at the pregnancies, and Joseph was not engaged in whatever it was that Brigham Young began teaching in the absence of Joseph Smith. And the number of plural wife pregnancies mushrooms as soon as Joseph is killed.

MS: Right.

DS: And before then, it's just... It's kept on the down-low. One of the things that I think you have to take into account (if you're examining this whole narrative about the credibility of section 132 and its authenticity) is the lack of any offspring other than through Emma and the presence of this 50+ offspring from Brigham Young that begins after Joseph's death; it... The narrative doesn't match the conduct on the ground! And when you've got—June 27, 1844 and before then—Joseph denouncing it, Joseph convening church disciplinary councils to discipline those who are caught in this process and asking those, “Where did you learn

about this?” and then bringing in the people from whom they learned it and holding a church court for them. These aren't public; these are private matters, and Joseph is doing this in private. In public, he's giving lecture and discourse and sermon denouncing this stuff; he's running denunciations in the *Times and Seasons*; he has Emma (and he assisted) publishing a declaration from the Relief Society of Nauvoo and trying to get the sisters in Nauvoo to cut off these wayward men seducing them by saying, “Oh, Joseph teaches this nonsense in private.”

I went to dinner with D. Michael Quinn, and he had a great opening line for starting a conversation: After we settled in for dinner, he said, “I think your position on polygamy is bullshit.” And I said, “Okay, so let's just think about it for a moment: If you take June 27, 1844 as the cutoff date and you look at what information we have available to us from June 27, 1844 and before—if that's the library you look at, and you ignore everything after then—tell me what proof you have that Joseph was involved.”

And he reflected for a minute, and he said, “Well, yeah, the Far West High Council doesn't quite get there, does it?”

And I said, “No, it doesn't!”

And, you know, he mentioned two or three other things and then said, “Okay, I understand your position,” you know, it wasn't that...

MS: Okay...

DS: ...he agreed with me. It was like, Okay, if that's going to be where you focus, then you're not just full of bullshit; I mean...

MS: Yes.

DS: ...there's something there for that. But he and Brian Hales and others who are proponents of the narrative, immediately turn to, “Yes, BUT you have to believe that hundreds of people were lying in the years afterwards, and you can dismiss one or two or three, but you can't dismiss hundreds of people being liars!” And that's the problem with this whole subject area. Because a person who wants to support the narrative that polygamy is legit can list off a hundred sources in rapid fire and say, “There! I've now proven my case.” In order, then, to respond to that position, you literally have to go through every single one of the examples...

MS: Right...

DS: ...one by one by one to show:

- It couldn't be true,
- They weren't in a position to know anything,
- They contradicted themselves elsewhere,
- They borrowed words from an affidavit that was put in front of them by Joseph F. Smith (who pre-wrote the affidavit),

- They were locked into a system in which polygamy was the law, and it was being enforced, and
- These are vulnerable women who are signing the affidavits, and by not conforming to the narrative, they could be put out on the street. And so there's pressure put upon them.

There are so many problems...

MS: And not only put out on the street... Not only put out on the street in this life, lose their entire exaltation!

DS: Yeah.

MS: These are the men telling them they have control over their **eternal** destiny.

DS: Yeah.

MS: And so, lying for the Lord **became** part of your way to qualify; it was very much a... Obedience... I mean, the preaching of obedience at this time is hard for us to imagine, and the connection between "Follow counsel or go to Hell" ...

DS: Yeah.

MS: ...was profound. Your life will be made healthier, or your eternal life will be hell...

DS: Yeah. And...

MS: ...literally. The fear is something we can't relate to.

DS: One of the things that I tried to explain or bring to people's attention in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* was what was really going on during the Mormon Reformation. I mean, things are going very, very bad in Utah, and Brigham Young blamed the saints, not himself; he blamed the saints for that failure. The Home Missionary Program asked a series of questions that were designed to determine whether you had sinned in a way that justified the shedding of your blood, because blood atonement was being preached. And so the intimidation that was going on during that time period was... I mean, it was life-threatening! If you wanted to be a righteous saint, you had to conform to the system, and the system included plural marriage. So the gathering of hundreds of affidavits in an atmosphere that is oppressive and threatening is not something to say, "Oh, we've proven our case with"—because every one of those has flaws in their credibility, in their reliability, or even whether they were present at the time they claim they were present. I mean, Orson Pratt is rather famous for talking about things that he witnessed when he was in a complete different location, and it was impossible for him to be able to testify to something. I mean, it... Yes...

MS: Right...

DS: ...the conclusion I reached is, yes! Hundreds of people can be lying!

MS: Well, and I want to also say it doesn't require even hundreds of people to be lying. Because even, like, there are just a few of the women who claim to be... There are a few of

the women who have to be lying and a few others. And I guess my question is, How many do we have to **show** our lying absolutely?? Like, we have turned out so many lies! Even the church has many of these people that claim to be wives of Hyrum and Joseph that the church doesn't accept!

DS: Yes!

MS: That means the church is acknowledging they were lying, right?

DS: Yeah.

MS: And I guess my question would be, Hey, do you think that the FLDS—before they became this, you know, before that fell apart—do you think they could get hundreds of affidavits saying that Warren Jeffs was not a pedophile and was not a rapist and was not abusing control? Do you think that...? Like, that's this kind of system we have to get our minds... Anyone who doesn't think that that absolutely would and could happen is up in the night. And when we recognize that that is what Mormonism was at that time, it should not surprise us at all that we have all of these affid... Everyone was lining up to do affid... I mean, they were being pressured so much. Everyone of these affidavits you see was in response to being asked for it, to being pressured to give it in some way or other.

DS: Yeah...

MS: We've gone through so many... And more and more all the time saying, "That's not true. That's not true. That's not true." There is no... Like even Helen Mar Kimball, who's one of the best known, all of her reasons that she gives, all... Like, none of it is recognizable to anything we would recognize as eternal doctrine. There's nothing about it in Joseph Smith's writings anywhere or the revelations. And so it's bizarre that we say, "No, these things are all true! And God told them that was the truth!" Well, where did that truth go then...

DS: Yeah.

MS: ...right?

DS: Yeah.

MS: If we needed these dynastic sealings, why don't we still need them? Like, why could it... I mean, there are so many, many problems. So, I guess that's what frustrates me is this idea of...

And it's not hundreds. It's not hundreds. We have affidavits of people that were [age] three at the time. They wouldn't know, right?

DS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS: We can prove all of these things. So if we can prove so many of them automatically false, and then we have a *few* that are hard to deal with... Like, we're calling the women liars. And my example for that is Elizabeth Smart. You can't look at a trauma-bonded woman and call her a liar.

DS: Yeah...

MS: You look at the situation that she is victimized by, and go, “Are we wise to listen to the words of her oppressor, even if they’re coming through her mouth? Is that serving that woman well?”

DS: I think that this subject is also extremely problematic for the LDS Church and its narrative—because the official position of the LDS Church in the essays that they have written on this subject and published on lds.org makes...

MS: ...are written into their history *Saints*, now; it's been written into that narrative form, uh-huh.

DS: It makes Joseph Smith:

- a liar;
- under the law at the time, an adulterer;
- someone who disobeyed the marital law at the time that governed conduct, and therefore, a criminal;
- it makes him a pedophile because of the ages involved;
- and given the narrative that they've adopted about how he solicited them, it makes him a predator.

Therefore...

MS: Um-hmm, and also a hypocrite because he was disciplining other people...

DS: Yes!

MS: ...for doing what we claim/what they claim he was doing.

DS: Therefore, the people who are bitter, angry, anti-Mormon, former Mormons who are vociferously denouncing and fighting against the the Restoration itself are not irrational or ill-motivated.

MS: Right.

DS: They are simply accepting the way that the LDS Church claims that Joseph Smith lived. And they're saying, “This is abhorrent!” If you accept the church's view of Joseph Smith, I understand why you would throw the Restoration itself out, Joseph, the Book of Mormon, everything. I understand why you would do that. The reason why I hold on to Joseph Smith, to the Book of Mormon, to the Restoration, and to God's promises that He intends to have a shoot come out from the dead stump and still live and survive is because I believe Joseph Smith did NOT engage in hypocrisy, pedophilia, predatory, hypocritical, adulterous relations. I believe that Joseph Smith was honest in his public denunciations. And I believe that God would never deal with a man subject to so many flaws, weaknesses, so much treachery, so much betrayal.

My read in the *Joseph Smith Papers* is not that Joseph Smith merely loved Emma, but he admired, respected, and **deferred** to Emma!

MS: RELIED on her, yes! He NEEDED her. And...

DS: She was better educated than him; he respected that. She was older than him; he held her in esteem—she was an elect lady. I think if Emma contradicted Joseph in a discussion, that Joseph would not only listen to her, he would give heed to and probably surrender his opinion to hers if it was better informed—and very often that WAS the case. And I think you read the letters between Joseph and Emma in the *Joseph Smith Papers*... I don't get any sense that this is a two-faced, hypocritical, dishonest, treacherous husband betraying a woman that he had little enough regard for that he would consign her to destruction.

One other thought that I forgot to include earlier. I mean, section 132, was written by someone who was not very well acquainted with the Scriptures, wherein you justify by servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in having multiple wives. Isaac didn't have multiple wives! It...yeah.

MS: Right. The very first problem reveals what a farce it is. In fact, the very first verse reveals what a farce it is. And then it goes on from there to innumerable other... My podcast is called "132 Problems." Exactly! There is, like... And we can see... Well, I have Brigham Young and others were... Brigham Young was not familiar with the Scriptures. Joseph Smith very, very much was.

DS: Yeah.

MS: And there's consistency in his teachings. He believed them; he tried to carry them out.

DS: Yeah, yeah, there's... Yeah. And so I've come, ultimately, to the conclusion that section 132 is a—wherever it originated from—it's not a product of Joseph Smith's. There may be some internal teachings that reflect what Joseph was teaching about the eternal nature of the marriage covenant. There may be some morsels of truth that migrated into the 132 that originated from Joseph, but 132 did not. I don't think it is authentically something that we can rely upon. And I don't think the practice of polygamy is something that originates with Joseph.

Now, I'm willing to look for additional proof. But the meticulous search that I have made to this point, leads me to the conclusion that the more carefully you examine the credibility of the authority...

You know, Jeremy Hoop is trying to put together a website and a product that gets everything out there and allows people to make an examination for himself. I gave him a copy of a jury instruction that gets used in court about the credibility of witnesses: You can find one witness to be credible and find ten witnesses that oppose the one not to be credible, and it's not the number of witnesses that carries the day; it's the underlying believability and credibility. The church certainly has numerosity on their side. They have... The LDS Church has been effective propagandists. And when they take on a subject, they generate libraries of material to support their position. But that doesn't mean that the library is trustworthy. You

can have a single voice crying in the wilderness, like John the Baptist, who, as Joseph put it, The kingdom of God was with John and not with the Jews at the time. But John was a lone voice crying in the wilderness. He certainly didn't have numerosity. But he did have the kingdom of God with him.

MS: I... Okay. And I think it is useful to look at the modern-day examples. I was trying to remember the woman's name—I won't remember it—but the one woman they finally got to testify against Warren Jeffs to hold him accountable, right?

DS: Oh, yeah.

MS: They have... Like, it was so hard. Oh, and I know there's a book, *The Witness Wore Red*, and it's her younger sister ~~that Joseph~~ that Warren married off/forced to be married as underage. And to get that ONE woman who was courageous enough and crazy enough to testify against her entire community, and the entire community lined up, called her liars, called her... Right? It isn't the number; it's the veracity of the testimony. I just want to emphasize that in this modern case, in our day. That as soon as that one woman was willing to go to trial, it was a slam dunk! It's so obvious what Warren did! And then, they went in and did the raid and found the tape recordings and found the, you know, then they found much more evidence, but...which I believe is what's happening, to a great extent, now as we're getting more access. And that's one thing I say often: The more gain access, the more we gain scientific valid verification through things like DNA testing, the more information we have available to us, the more innocent Joseph is; the stronger the case is in his favor. And that is a really good way to determine where truth is, right? So to just go by, "I believe these women!" Okay, well, then you need to believe all the polygamist women who *still* don't believe that Warren Jeffs was doing anything wrong. You need to do that to be consistent. And people don't do that!

DS: They don't. By the way, I went down to the Colorado City community area, and spoke directly to the polygamists a while ago on the subject of plural marriage. I don't know of any outreach that's being made by Latter-day Saints, but I don't think you just sit back and criticize people for believing something—because there is a library of material that justifies their conclusion. I went down there to address them, you know, face-to-face to discuss candidly with them and to try and disabuse them of things that they need to be confronted with and taught about...

MS: Yes.

DS: ...and some effort made to reclaim them. And, you know, I'm not interested in just sitting back and throwing rocks. If there's a way to help people to overcome something, I'm happy to go and attempt to do that—don't know what...

MS: I love that! I feel like that's one of the tragedies happening now is the LDS's...

DS: Yeah.

MS: The church's insistence on keeping 132 and keeping this doctrine continues the abuse; we are complicit in the ongoing polygamist suffering that's happening.

DS: Yeah.

MS: And even the anti-Mormons and ex-Mormons insistence on saying it was Joseph also continues this abuse. If people could look at this evidence honestly, we could actually help men, women, and children suffering under this deplorable satanic system, this abomination today. We can really make an... Us coming to truth and sharing that can help people today! It's not just a historical question.

DS: You know, earlier I mentioned Doctrine and Covenants 93, verse 1. I believe Joseph to have been an honest man and an authentic messenger called by God. I do not think you can be a morally corrupt man and have that kind of assignment given to you by God. And I think that first verse of D&C 93 defines the character of Joseph Smith: *...who...cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am* is not just a recitation of, you know, a laundry list of interesting facts. I think it is a description of the kind of character that is required in order for someone, as Joseph did, to come into the presence of God. And to impute to him hypocrisy and predatory behavior and dishonesty is to completely confuse the kind of character that God will deal with in asking for a message to be delivered.

MS: Absolutely.

DS: I think Joseph was naive in that he trusted a lot of people that he should not have trusted. I think he was imputing to others the kind of character and heart that he had within himself. And so he assumed...

MS: We all project. He projected his goodness onto other people. I've done the same thing and gotten myself in trouble. We assume people are the same as us. Right? And so...

DS: And Joseph did that. And he trusted a lot of untrustworthy people. And THAT, I think, is his biggest mistake, but I don't believe that to be a sin!

MS: Absolutely.

DS: To trust someone when they're untrustworthy doesn't reflect poorly on your character; it reflects generosity and big-heartedness on your part, requiring that they *prove* themselves to be untrustworthy before you assign to them untrustworthiness. And Joseph made that mistake.

MS: But if we're going to be hard on Joseph, then we need to also be hard on Jesus...

DS: Yeah.

MS: ...who called Judas. Right? It's... We can see the Lord's hand in it, or we can blame the individual, which is ridiculous. Yeah.

DS: Yeah, it's true.

Well, this is a workday. And I have work to do! So, is there anything else that you wanted...?

MS: Can I ask a couple more questions?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Let's hit your list of whatever you want that's important, and let's wrap it up. Okay.

MS: Okay, this is great. Well, I do want to know, and this is a question for you. So, as we talked about, you did want to stay in the church, and you did want to assist people in staying in the church dealing with this messiness. So my question is for people who are in the church who are coming onto this path, ummm... I guess it's a two part question. First of all, do you see anything that you... Do you ever deal with regret or self-reproach? I struggle with those things a lot. Do you ever feel like, "Maybe if I had done this a little differently...?" Or do you feel like it was inevitable? And what would you tell people who are dealing with that fear today of "How can I embark on this path without threatening my life as I know it? Or do I need to get rid of that fear and maybe threaten my life as I know it?"

DS: Umm, I think everyone has to sort that out for themselves. However, I do think that preserving marital harmony is important. I... From time to time... Look, the LDS Church has a great Primary program. I have some granddaughters who are benefited by going to the church on Sabbath days to get through the Primary program. It's an occasion for them to actually put a dress on, to sit and be reverent, to engage in the kind of personal self-discipline that you only get if you go to church before you go to school. And when my granddaughters go to church, they go to the ward I once belonged to because that was where my daughter... (And actually, my daughter and son-in-law lived in our basement; that's where they went to church after they were first married.) And I go with them. And we go to a local LDS ward, and when the Sacrament meeting ends, I escort my younger of the two granddaughters; she knows exactly where the nursery is, and she runs down the hallway because she's eager to get there—now that they're through with the sacrament thing—to get into the nursery. And she and I go down the hallway, and I get her safely into the nursery. And my daughter—because, you know, her children are in Primary and in the nursery, and she's got to stay around—my daughter will stay and attend Relief Society, and my wife will stay and attend Relief Society with her. And I'll just go home. And I'm welcomed; in fact, I keep getting invited to stay for Priesthood, but...

When they excommunicated me, they did not tell me that I couldn't participate (normally, they give you instructions that say you can't speak up). And so for some period of time, we attended church after the excommunication, and I did speak up in—back then it was Gospel Doctrine still—and in Priesthood. And there was one fellow in particular that that made uncomfortable. Ultimately, I concluded that it's better off if I don't make him uncomfortable. So I go to Relief or I go to Sacrament, but I wouldn't attend the other meetings. I don't think that I benefit anyone by going in and answering questions 'cuz my questions at this point would be honest.

I don't see a thing wrong with someone continuing to enjoy LDS membership. I think you can believe in the gospel of Christ, the Restoration, Joseph Smith, and attend a Methodist Church. I mean, his mind had become somewhat partial to the Methodists for pretty good reason (if you read about Methodism and some of their earliest advocates). I think you can belong to whatever church you want to belong to because churches, generally, are fellowshiping forums. How you relate to God and being baptized—because used to be Latter-day Saints were rebaptized with some regularity, and I believe, today, being rebaptized if you're going

to accept the Book of Mormon as a covenant (because the LDS Church has not done that) and if you're going to repent and try to accept Joseph as an authentic prophet-leader and the version of Joseph that throws out 132—I think you can be rebaptized, but after that, I think you can go sit in an LDS Church, and if you find fellowship and comfort there, I think that's fine!

I know there are a lot of people who are independently fellowshipping now. They don't contribute tithes to an organization. They gather tithes in little fellowships, and then once the tithe's gathered, they look at the needs of the people in that little fellowship so that money doesn't aggregate and go to some institutional purpose. Tithing goes to help with the transportation, the food, the rent, the housing, the medical bills of the local people and isn't spent elsewhere. People do that, and I think THAT is fine.

But how you deal with your reconciliation with what you're hearing in the LDS Church is an individual matter—and I wouldn't encourage anyone to go storming off and becoming an enemy to Mormonism. Even now, I don't pick a fight with the LDS Church. I don't go around denouncing them or challenging them. I try to state clearly and plainly my understanding, and if it contradicts a narrative that the LDS Church is advancing, I try to explain why I view it differently than does the institution—but that's not picking a fight! That's an attempt to give clarity to why I understand what I understand.

But I'm not interested and I do not hope for the ultimate failure of the LDS Church. I think Utah and the Mormon corridor from Canada to Mexico is *enormously* benefited by what the LDS Church offers. I think that the communities all throughout the Mormon corridor have better citizens, they have better people, they have better neighbors who are Latter-day Saints. And so I don't want the LDS Church to lose its members. I want them to try and hold onto them and continue to make good citizens of them. But that doesn't mean that I think that they bear the imprimatur of truth and that everything they say is “God speaking on high.” I think that's kind of a silly notion.

But I do think that Joseph was authentic, the Book of Mormon is reliable, God was up to something then, and I believe that God intends to conclude that, vindicating everything that had been foretold to happen. It's just that I don't think it's gonna happen, at this point, institutionally. I do think it's gonna involve the individuals who rise up and who become pure in heart before God, so that they can become pure, neighborly with one another, so that there can be a city of peace. I don't think you can impose that hierarchically. I think the only hierarchy is you getting right with God, which will in turn make you right with your fellow man.

But I don't think anyone should run away from the church. And I do think that the church has—in particular, for youth—a marvelous program. I think foreign missions and learning another language... It helps people prepare for life. It gives them a leg up on other...every other religious community! The programs of the LDS Church make people better off.

The most articulate people in my high school were the Mormon kids; you could almost pick them out...

MS: Wow...

DS: ...because they were composed; they were used to public speaking; they had gone through the Primary program, the Young Men and the Young Women's program; they had spoken in a Sacrament meeting. And so when they get up to present a paper in class, they were FAR more polished than the contemporaries. People that go on a foreign mission and come back with a second language that they've learned, they're all benefited.

One of the guys I baptized fell away from the church, asked for his membership to be withdrawn, has become an anti-Mormon. Talking to him, he said the best thing that ever happened to him was when he joined the LDS Church; it set his life on a new direction that benefited him from that moment, and he doesn't regret one moment of having been a member of the church. I worry that a lot of people display horrible ingratitude for everything the church has done (to personally help develop them into a much better, more polished individual) when they discovered that there are problems with the church. Be grateful for what you got—even if you part ways, and you say, “Ah, it's just nonsense!” Still, you were benefited. Every one of them were benefited, and they ought to acknowledge it.

And I'm grateful for what the LDS Church gave me. And I'm still—although kicked out; I didn't leave, I got kicked out—still believing in Joseph, the Book of Mormon, and in the Restoration.

MS: Okay, I love that. It sounds like we're kind of on the same page. My desire is that people—as many as possible who feel it's their path—can be in the church but not of the church (is the way I describe it). I think that even aside from the kind of utilitarian benefits of the church...

DS: Yeah.

MS: ...there also is the training to listen to the Spirit, the training to pray, to believe in God, to... Like, all of the seeds of the path that we believe in and that we walk are taught and nurtured in this church, and there is a way to—for many people, I hope—a way to try to be elevated while in the church and, as a process, be part of elevating the church. That's my hope, but...

DS: Yeah.

MS: Denver, I really appreciate you taking the time to talk to me. I didn't give you much time to kind of share some of your experiences or share a testimony. Is there something—some encouragement or guidance or testimony—you want to share, just as we're wrapping up?

DS: I think Joseph Smith understated who he was and what exposure he had gotten to things beyond the veil. And I think that when you underestimate Joseph Smith, you make a grave mistake. You would be better off paying careful heed to everything that we got from him, and realizing that he could—and would—have offered a great deal more if the people had been prepared to receive it. And the problem that existed in 1820-1844 (while we had him here) is not a problem that reflects on Joseph Smith as having failed. It's a reflection on the people who lived contemporaneous with him, who underestimated and who went off with exaggerated self-importance simply because they got close to the man. It's about penetrating

our own veil of darkness—because our flesh IS the veil, and the weaknesses of the flesh are what alienate us from God.

There's a great deal of truth out there to be found anywhere and everywhere. And some of the most profound teachings (that echo and mirror what Christ was teaching and what Joseph was trying to get across to us) can be found in all of the world's great religions. They all have some truth, or they wouldn't have any adherents. You can find truth in Judaism. They translated in the—I think it's the CPART project down at BYU—some of the Islamic texts, and there's a teacher, al-Tha'labi, whose teachings resonate with light and truth that were preserved in Islam at a time when Christianity was so oppressive from the Catholic dominance that everyone was darkened in their mind. And God was still preserving truths there. Taoism and Buddhism and Hinduism...

I have a fellow who went to India to learn from the Maharaja in India in the 60s who, upon the death of the Maharaja, came back here and rediscovered in the Doctrine and Covenants truths that he had learned in Hinduism—and was excited about the possibility that Mormonism was really every bit as transcendental as what he had been studying over there; began to teach Transcendental Meditation here in Utah, and he read *The Second Comforter* and looked me up, and said, “How did you find this? How did you find this without a trip to India? How did you find this without going first through Hinduism?” He said, “I didn't... I couldn't see it. I couldn't realize it was there until I had taken this other path.”

Joseph Smith restored to us [a] phenomenal wealth of information; he could have given us more—we just weren't ready at the time to accept it. So if God starts up things again, we really have to be careful about the heed and the diligence, because we have—in the past—wasted opportunities, and without individually reconciling ourselves to God's work, we can forfeit opportunities again, which is generally what mankind does. I mean, we only had Zion in Enoch's time, and then Melchizedek (who was Shem—that used to be a teaching; people doubt it now, but nevertheless) reckoned from before the flood, and he had the covenant. He had the promise that he could be translated, and he lived through the flood, and he was here until Abraham—after generations of apostasy—got fully endowed in the Holy Order, and then Melchizedek acted on the covenant, which was really derivative from before the flood and belonged to Enoch. Melchizedek realized it too, and there was a second city that got taken up (that's a big story and beyond the scope of this). But twice now (Enoch and then—derivative from Enoch—Melchizedek) two cities have gone up. The next time—the prophecies tell us—the city isn't going up, but there is a city returning, and there needs to be people here to welcome them so that we can fall on one another, and we can kiss each other's necks (which is the way that it's put in the Scriptures: we will fall upon one another and kiss each other's necks in the welcoming return of Jesus and his ten thousands—Enoch with his ten thousands with Jesus—as He returns in glory). All of those prophecies are going to be vindicated; it's gonna happen! But the question isn't “Will it happen?” The question is, I mean, are we gonna have ten thousands falling on two dozen, or are we gonna have ten thousands falling on ten thousands? And it's just... Numerosity has never been a big deal. Jesus managed to get 500. Joseph got about 18. (That is another discussion.) And the question is, what, if anything, can we do? And...

MS: Yes.

DS: ...expectations need to be modest.

MS: So what can people do to try to be among ~~that~~ the residue, the small portion? What would you tell people?

DS: Take very seriously the Book of Mormon. It is the keystone of our religion, and a man can get closer to God by heeding its precepts more so than any other volume. And that's still true today. Just take the Book of Mormon seriously. And if you have a real problem understanding or parsing the Book of Mormon in a way that elevates your view, that was the purpose of *The Second Comforter*, *Nephi's Isaiah*, and *Eighteen Verses*. Every one of those... Well, and *Beloved Enos*. Every one of those books is simply parsing the Book of Mormon, trying to get people to look at it. The Book of Mormon is a shallow book [when] read by a shallow person. The Book of Mormon is a profoundly deep, deeply meaningful book if you bring enough with you to the party. Those books are intended to help someone bring more with them to the party—because the Book of Mormon is very serious stuff. And it doesn't have much good to say about us. It doesn't have much good to say about our churches. It doesn't have much good to say about our superficial religion these days. So...

MS: But it does offer us a tremendous amount of hope for those who will allow the scales of darkness to begin to fall from their eyes. 'Cuz we can't just read it as we've always read it, through the lenses that are provided to us, through only the Scripture Mastery verses or the lessons. We have...

DS: Yeah.

MS: We have to read it as a vehicle to come to know God and with God's mentorship as we... Like, we should always approach it asking God to help transform us through its pages.

DS: That Scripture Mastery comment reminds me—it made me laugh at the time—there was a talk in general conference; it was quoting from the Book of Mormon something about Christ, and the quote in the Book of Mormon was from Sherem, the first Antichrist. And I looked it up to make sure, because when I heard it, I thought, “Well, that's the wrong source.” And sure enough, there it was, in general conference: an Antichrist being quoted with favor! But that's probably...

MS: That's why we need to know on our own, so we can discern.

DS: Yes!

MS: That's why we can't take these people as our guides. We need to take the spirit and the book as our guide, because often ~~the same~~ general conference is filled with false doctrines and false attributions to Scripture and false interpretations. So... I shouldn't say it's “filled.” It has plenty of it, though. So...

DS: Yeah.

MS: ...you've got to ask individually. Ask: you and God, right? Every individual person.

DS: That's where it belongs.

All right. Well, thank you.

MS: Thank you so much. I appreciate it. I hope to talk to you again sometime.

DS: Take care.

MS: All right.

DS: All right. Goodbye.