

Come Follow Me Podcast
Elo Viz production
Week 11
2 Nephi 26-30

I found this story posted online the other day:

A man's phone rang in church by accident during the sacramental prayer. The Bishop reprimanded him, the faithful warned him at the end for interrupting the service. His wife continued to preach to him about his negligence all the way home. You could see the shame and humiliation on his face.

He never stepped foot in a church again.

That night, he went to a bar. He was sitting there nervous and shaking. He spilled his drink on the table by accident. As the waiter wiped it up he apologized and gave him a napkin to clean himself up. The janitor mopped up the floor and the manager came over and offered him a complimentary drink, while also giving him a hug and saying: "Don't worry, man. We all make mistakes."

Since that night he has stopped by that bar everyday.

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With that image in your mind, consider for a moment Lehi's vision of the tree of life. And listen carefully how as he describes the great and spacious building:

"**26** And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the **other** side of the river of water, a great and **spacious** building; and it stood as it were in the **air**, high above the earth.

27 And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the **attitude** of **mocking** and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit."
(1 Nephi 8:26-27)

When we look at these two stories side by side we can see the shocking evidence that those in the church who criticized the man when his phone accidentally went off, were not the ones at the foot of the tree, but rather the ones in the great and spacious building. Those that were supposed to be the faithful were actually the ones pointing their fingers and mocking the one that was partaking of the fruit of the tree. From this comparison we learn that the great and spacious building is not a place or even a building at all, but rather it is an attitude.

And what I find incredibly sad is that often, it is that attitude that we can sometimes find not out in the world but inside the church. And what is crazy is that those that have that great and spacious building attitude most of the time don't even know it.

So, what do we do? How do we address this issue?

Well, first, let's consider a subject that no one likes to talk about.

When someone is a little shaky in the church we tend to think there is a problem with them.

When their faith is starting to waiver, we jump to the conclusion that they are sinning or doing something wrong in their life. It makes sense: A lot of us believe that we do everything perfectly and keep the commandments exactly and follow what the prophets say: then everything is supposed to be sunshine and roses, rainbows and gumdrops. And if they are not, if things are not going well, well then, you must be doing something wrong.

Of course we believe this. Because if we are having feelings of doubt or questioning doctrine then most would say: you are heading down that wrong path and need to do some repenting to get the spirit back. We think that because of what we hear from the brethren. Here are some quotes:

-“Doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith.” - Dieter F. Uchtdorf

-“Doubt is not the precursor to faith; it is the opposite. Doubt is a destroyer of faith.” - Neil L. Andersen

-“Doubt your doubts, not your faith, and you'll always stay grounded.” -Jeffrey R. Holland

-“Doubt never has and never will produce faith.” -Russell M. Nelson

You can see how this stigma has crept into our culture as something to run away from.

When someone expresses doubt it's easy to point out that they must be doing something wrong in their life. There has to be, or else why would this person question what is being said?

Well, let's muddy the waters a little so we can get to the bottom of this and find the truth.

Because not all the prophets and apostles believe this way. Some actually have said just the opposite; that doubt is not evil or something to be ashamed of, because we all experience it. We all have times in our lives when we come face to face with our own truth and have to reconcile that truth in ourselves. Here are some other Prophets and Apostles who will clear things up for us:

-“Doubt is not the opposite of faith; it is an element of faith.” -Richard G. Scott

-“Doubt is the precursor to faith.” -Boyd K. Packer

-“Doubt is a natural part of the human experience, but we should never let it consume us or hinder our progress.” -Quentin L. Cook

-“Doubt can be the beginning of faith, if we let it drive us to seek answers.” - Richard G. Scott

And my personal favorite:

-“Doubts do not remove faith any more than storms remove the sun.” -Harold B. Lee

Shocking, isn't it? This conflict creates doubt in all of us as we stand on one side of the other. Which goes to prove that doubt is a natural reaction when something we hear, or read, or think or even sometimes feel conflicts with what we believe.

So how do we reconcile these conflicts? What should we do when those feelings of doubt arise in us? Or when we disagree with church leaders? Well, we can throw up our hands and walk away Or, we can embrace the truth that there was only one perfect person to ever live on the earth. Which means that everyone else beside Jesus, is flawed and imperfect. No matter how inspired they may be they are still mortal and lacking in understanding and in actions.

To further illustrate this point and help you recognize where you stand on this subject let's look at a familiar story.

The Prophet Abraham was a great man. One that we all revere as the father of all nations. In fact when someone is facing a challenge in their life we often use Abraham as an example or parallel to what they are going through: saying “oh, he or she is having an Abrahamic trial”. Meaning that they are going through something that deeply changes you as a person and your relationship with God.

It was a crazy thing that God asked Abraham to do, to sacrifice his only son on an altar. We look back at that experience and try to put ourselves in his shoes. Would you do it? That is a good question to ponder on. But consider for a moment, if you were Abraham's neighbor, or Abraham's bishop, stake president or even his ministering brother, and you found out that Abraham thought he was told by God that he needed to sacrifice his son. What would you do?

I can tell you what most of us would do:

We would march ourselves over to his house and forcefully explain to Abraham that there is no way that God would ever ask you to do such a thing. God would not want you to kill your own son. It is against every heavenly and earthly law. Most of us would try and talk Abraham out of doing what God told him to do because we doubt that God would ever tell him or anyone to do that. And what if we were successful in convincing him? What if we were able to talk Abraham out of the one experience that would truly define him?

Have you ever had an experience like that? When the spirit told you to do something that didn't make any sense, and it was not what you wanted to do, and it certainly was not what you would have thought would be a good solution. And someone tried to talk you out of it. Because they

didn't think it was the right thing to do or they doubted that God would tell you to do such a thing? I have, that struggle is real. It was real for Abraham and it is also very real for everyone of you.

See, it's that earthly judgment things that gets in the way sometimes. The way we judge a situation, the way we judge ourselves and certainly the way we judge others.

To this day one of my favorite scriptures of all time is Luke 6:37 where Jesus Christ, the judge of the universe says:

“**37 Judge not**, and ye shall not be judged: **condemn** not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be **forgiven:**” (Luke 6:37)

I often ponder on the way that the Savior handles doubt when one of us is struggling. He has some extensive experience with it, one of His disciples was nicknamed “doubting Thomas”.

It was in the upper room after the resurrection that the disciples saw the resurrected Jesus. But, Thomas was not there. When they told him that He had appeared to them he didn't believe them, he couldn't. How could this be true? Eight days later when the door was shut Jesus again appeared to them and “Stood in the midst of them”. (John 20:26)

What do you think Jesus said to Thomas? Dude, why are you doubting? What's wrong with you? Do you have some sin that you need to repent of? Why don't you just have more faith?

Not even close to how he reacted. His call to all of them was: “Peace be unto you”, then turning to Thomas he said:

Come, come feel the prints of the nails in my hands, come feel the wounds in my sides.

The Lord taught that when you have the truth you don't have to be scared of doubt.

Doubt is not something to be frightened of. All It is is an opposing force that pushes against the direction we are heading. And considering what we just learned I believe that doubt should be celebrated. A tree that doesn't not experience wind will not grow roots deep enough to support it as it grows taller. And a life free of hardships will not produce character strong enough to withstand the fire darts of the adversary, or in some cases the fire cannonballs of the adversary.

I saw a good reminder the other day that said: “Do not judge others by their seasons. David was just a humble shepherd boy in one season. In the next season he was the King. Ruth was once just a beggar in a field, then she was the owner of the field, and through her posterity came the Savior of the world. Paul was a murderer of Christians in one season and then He was a Christian. Alma the younger was a tyrant, in the next season he was one of the greatest missionaries of all time. Life ebbs and flows and gives us all different experiences to learn from.

I know this to be absolutely true. It wasn't too long ago that I felt so many blessings. My life was completely full. I remember having the feeling as though the Heavens were showering down so

many blessings that I didn't know what to do with them all. Then in the next season feeling as though the heavens are sealed, and my whole world is crumbling around me. How easy it is to forget those times of blessings and doubt the faithfulness of God to His children in times of need. But, if you listen carefully you will hear the endless call from the giver of peace whispering: This too shall pass. “[peace](#) be unto thy soul; thine [adversity](#) and thine afflictions shall be but a [small](#) moment” (D&C 121:7)

The other day I was driving through this nasty snow storm. I could barely see 20 feet in front of the car. It was dumping snow, and the roads were slick and icy. I didn't think it was ever going to end, as we drove for what seemed like hours in the storm. I didn't realize it at the time but the storm diaped slowly until it was completely clear and the sun was shining. I looked in the rear view mirror at the wall of black clouds behind us and I the Spirit spoke softly to my soul saying: “You may feel like you are in the middle of a storm now, but the end is near, and you will once again stand in the light. So it is with life. The winds may blow and the rain may beat down upon you. But God always has, and always will deliver you from the storm.

And on the other side if you are currently standing in the light being showered with blessing, remember that others around you may still be battling the storms of life; so, be kind, be supportive. Please don't sugar coat the experience they are having, and certainly don't try and interpret the promptings they are receiving from God. God is able to do His own work. (2 Nephi 27:20)

Did you know that the first time we see the word charity in the book of Mormon is in 2 Nephi 26. And God's words are by way of commandment when he says: “Wherefore, the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have [charity](#), which [charity](#) is [love](#). And except they should have charity they were nothing.” (2 Nephi 26:30)

So might we have the courage to replace our:

- criticism with kindness.
- Our judgment with charity.
- and our lectures with love.

Just as Jesus does. In His sacred name, even Jesus Christ, Amen.