

Episode 22

Mormon identity EFFECTIVE GOSPEL LEARNING

WOMAN'S VOICE: The views and opinions expressed here are those of the guests and are not the official position of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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NARRATOR: Welcome to Mormon Identity, a thirty minute talk radio program that addresses Church topics important to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our host is Robert L. Millet, professor of Religious Education at Brigham Young University.

[MUSIC FADES AND ENDS]

ROBERT MILLET: Welcome to Mormon Identity I'm Bob Millet and I'm joined today by my friend and colleague Professor Daniel Judd of the department of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University. Welcome Dan.

DANIEL JUDD: Thank you Bob.

ROBERT MILLET: Today Dan, in this segment, we want to talk about *effective gospel learning*. How to become more serious gospel scholars. Is that too hard? Is that language seem inappropriate to you? That we ought to become gospel scholars?

DANIEL JUDD: What was it that Elder Maxwell said years ago? "If you're in the Church there are too many of our women who are the, who are..."

ROBERT MILLET: ...Christians...

DANIEL JUDD: ...Christians and men are the theologians."

ROBERT MILLET: ...yeah...

DANIEL JUDD: We really ought to be both. Is what he was teaching us in that comment I believe.

ROBERT MILLET: I agree, I agree. Effective gospel learning. Maybe I can get us started by suggesting an idea. I'm reminded of a statement from President Heber C. Kimball years ago, you'll remember this one Dan, where President Kimball said that the time is coming when no man or woman will be able to exist on borrowed light. Now he was talking about a witness or a conviction of the Holy Ghost that every person needs to have. But I, I would say, that the principle holds for gospel study as well. It seems to me that too often we rely upon what other people know.

DANIEL JUDD: Or I think even sometimes we rely upon the own light that we've experienced from a previous time in our lives. Back when we were missionaries. "When I was a missionary..." [LAUGHS]

ROBERT MILLET: [LAUGHS] That's right.

DANIEL JUDD: We live in the past.

ROBERT MILLET: That's right. We hope to have a few experiences between then and the time we die.

DANIEL JUDD: Or, or as you say, on someone else's light and we look to other people's scholarship and commentaries and instead of really get in there and taking responsibility for ourselves to learn the gospel of Christ.

ROBERT MILLET: I'm reminded of a statement from President Joseph F. Smith who's, who's speaking about what he calls the sanctity of the true testimony and he says, "a testimony is not something that's just to be shouted from the housetops nor is it something that's to be given to people whether they want it or not." And he goes on to say that out testimony needs to be substantive, we need to have a witness of something and that really it isn't enough to just say, "well, I don't know much about the gospel, but I know it's true." Well that's nice. It's nice when I'm pushed up against the wall of faith. To say, "look I don't have the answer to your question, but I want you to know I have a witness, I have a conviction that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches the truth." That's good. That's a wonderful thing.

DANIEL JUDD: Right, right.

ROBERT MILLET: But think how much more effective it is to be able to say, "let's talk about your question." We talk about it and *then* to bear testimony. I remember our friend, our wonderful friend Robert Matthews heard President Hugh B. Brown once say, "I'm impressed with a man who can stand up and say I know the gospel is true." and brother Brown says, "but I want to say, "but sir, do you know the gospel?""

DANIEL JUDD: [LAUGHING]

ROBERT MILLET: I think that's a very interesting point! Because a witness, a conviction, a testimony has to be of propositions. It has to be of things, of statements, of truths of doctrines.

DANIEL JUDD: You know we oftentimes hear this verse quoted from the °dc in the context of teaching, but I think it's also appropriate in learning. "Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word..."

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah.

DANIEL JUDD: "...and *then* shall your tongue be loosed." So really it's not enough just to say

that we know some things and talk about some things, but we've got to have *obtained* the word of God by serious study.

ROBERT MILLET: Well, and there's just no question that there is something about a person who *knows* the gospel well, who has spent time with the Holy Word, who is not a distant acquaintance with Scripture, but someone who knows Scripture, who knows the gospel. There is something about the power of their word that is so much more *effective* in, in persuading appropriately and touching other people, than someone who really hasn't paid the price.

DANIEL JUDD: That's right. And we live in a great information age. There is just so much around us, so many things to know and to learn and to understand but, but those who really put the gospel as a *priority* in their study, what a blessing they are to the world.

ROBERT MILLET: You know I go back to President Joseph F. Smith's statement about the sanctity of a true testimony he ends that little section by saying, and I love this, it's rather piercing, he said, "of those called to speak in the name of the Lord, the Lord desires humility not ignorance."

DANIEL JUDD: Hm.

ROBERT MILLET: That's so...

DANIEL JUDD: ...powerful.

ROBERT MILLET: ...really...

DANIEL JUDD: ...yeah, it's a good word

ROBERT MILLET: You just can't get by without *knowing* the gospel. We've got to *know* it better than we do. Dan, do you have the °dc there?

DANIEL JUDD: I do.

ROBERT MILLET: Why don't you read for us Section 88 verse 118. This great revelation known as the "olive leaf" and this very fascinating bit of instruction. Read that for us.

DANIEL JUDD: "And as all have not faith seek ye diligently to teach one another words of wisdom. Yea seek ye out the best books." Words of wisdom. "Seek learning even by study and also by faith."

ROBERT MILLET: There's a lot there. I'm going to start, though with this very interesting thing that the verse, 118, *begins* with the clause, "as all have not faith." I mean it's as if the Lord's saying, "now since everyone *doesn't have* sufficient faith" what...? Seek out the best books.

DANIEL JUDD: Yeah. And I think that's true, you know, we have testimonies and we're committed. But all of us experience highs and lows, ebbs and flows.

ROBERT MILLET: Mm-hm, mm-hm

DANIEL JUDD: Even, you know there are those, even though you're studying and you're living but life is challenging.

ROBERT MILLET: It is. And I, and I think this, since all don't have the faith that they need, since we all don't have the kind of conviction and witness we need, since we don't have the understanding we need, seek learning out of the best books.

DANIEL JUDD: That's an interesting two words there, *best books*. Lot of books out there.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, and some are *better* than others. And I think that certainly goes *beyond* the Scriptures I mean we ought to be as widely read as we can afford to be in terms of time, and resources. You'll remember in that same Section 88 the Lord encourages them to, this, the, those who are called to go out into the ministry to study history and geography and...

DANIEL JUDD: ...right, right.

ROBERT MILLET: ...anthropology and political science. All of those things mentioned in that, in those verses. But of course gospel learning is more significant than them all.

DANIEL JUDD: What did Elder Maxwell say? "There is not a democracy of facts?"

ROBERT MILLET: No, no.

DANIEL JUDD: [LAUGHING]

ROBERT MILLET: And I think it's important, you know a person could get up in a sacrament meeting and say, "I want to talk today on...the laws of motion"

DANIEL JUDD: [LAUGHING A BIT HARDER]

ROBERT MILLET: And could give a very fine presentation on the laws of motion and everything he says will be completely true.

DANIEL JUDD: Mm-hm

ROBERT MILLET: But he hasn't taught the gospel.

DANIEL JUDD: Right, right.

ROBERT MILLET: Some things matter more than others. We'll be right back.

[PAUSE]

ROBERT MILLET: Welcome back to Mormon Identity, I'm Bob Millet joined by Dan Judd both of us work in the Department of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University. Dan, we're talking about effective gospel *learning*. We've dealt with the matter of the fact that we can't abide on borrowed light. That we have to be, there has

to be a growing edge in our lives. *Today's knowledge* isn't sufficient for tomorrow, is it?

DANIEL JUDD: Correct.

ROBERT MILLET: And we've talked, we've begun to speak on this matter of "seek learning even by study and also by faith." What do you think of when you hear that phrase? By study, and also by faith.

DANIEL JUDD: You know I think sometimes we may make an inappropriate or maybe a confusing dichotomy there. We say there are some things that are, we arrive at by *thinking* and other things we arrive at by things spiritual.

ROBERT MILLET: Almost implying you don't have to gospel thinking, you just have to, you just have to sit back and let the revelation pour into your soul.

DANIEL JUDD: Yeah. And that's incorrect. I don't think that's what the Lord intended there in that verse. That we're meant to, to study *all* things, but I think *especially* gospel things by using the power of intellect, the power of *reason*. Every intellectual faculty we have should focus on gospel kinds of things.

ROBERT MILLET: I remember President Romney, Marion G. Romney, saying years ago that he's convinced that *no* kind of decent learning comes *except* by serious study. But that he is also persuaded that by the power of faith and the power of Spirit, some learning comes that supplements our study.

DANIEL JUDD: That's right. Yeah. *Arouse your faculties*. We learn in Alma. And that's every, every faculty you have should be focused on the gospel especially.

ROBERT MILLET: Well does this say anything to you, Dan, about say our study habits?

DANIEL JUDD: Well and even in all study and also by faith...faith simply doesn't apply things spiritual it also implies *action*.

ROBERT MILLET: Mm-hm

DANIEL JUDD: What did the Prophet Joseph Smith say about faith in action?

ROBERT MILLET: It's a principle in action.

DANIEL JUDD: That's right. And so not only should we be *learning* and *understanding* but also *living* and *applying* what we're learning.

ROBERT MILLET: Mm-hm

DANIEL JUDD: That's also how it sticks with us as we act upon these things.

ROBERT MILLET: You have a statement there by President Hunter on reading habits, don't you?

DANIEL JUDD: I do. I'll see. I've got it right here handy. [RUSTLING PAPERS]

ROBERT MILLET: I think about, I think about my own reading habits and it's so easy to sort of get in the rut of read a bit...OK, I've done my reading! And not sort of pay the price to *read, ponder, reflect* allow the Spirit of the Lord to bring personal application...go ahead.

DANIEL JUDD: Brother Hunter said this, "Reading habits vary widely. There are rapid readers and slow readers. Some who read only small snatches at a time and others who persist without stopping until the book is finished. Those who delve into the scriptural library however, find that to understand requires more than casual reading or perusal. There *must* be concentrated study. It is certain that one who studies the Scriptures everyday accomplishes far more than one who devotes considerable time one day and then lets days go by before continuing." Sounds like physical exercise for a few of us. [BEGINS LAUGHING]

ROBERT MILLET: Well it's almost like, you've seen this, and I've even tried it myself. It's not very effective. It's called "marathon study".

DANIEL JUDD: [LAUGHING HARDER] That's right.

ROBERT MILLET: I don't do anything Monday through Saturday but I study scriptures *eight hours* on Sunday.

DANIEL JUDD: We're "weekend warriors". [LAUGHING]

ROBERT MILLET: [LAUGHING AS WELL] That's good.

DANIEL JUDD: He continues, "Not only should we study each *day*, but there should also be a regular time set aside when we can concentrate without interference."

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, I like that.

DANIEL JUDD: Challenging for young mothers.

ROBERT MILLET: Especially. And you know, and part of it has to be that there's a time and there's a season for everything. And it may be while we've got those little ones, and we're having to carry them out in the hall so that they're not disruptive to others, maybe for this time and season I'm not able to get as *much* out of church. And maybe I don't have as *much* time to devote to gospel study as I'd like. But that time will come.

DANIEL JUDD: And that's also, I think, an invitation for fathers and husbands, you know, to be especially aware of mothers. Young mothers especially.

ROBERT MILLET: Mm-hm.

DANIEL JUDD: Who, we *need* to give, help them have time to nourish their souls.

ROBERT MILLET: Including, maybe taking the kids for a ride so mom can have some time alone.

DANIEL JUDD: That's right. And, as you said earlier, in fact it was President Packer that said to the brethren, "you are the one that should take them out during the sacrament meeting." I don't, was that him? I don't recall that.

ROBERT MILLET: Mm-hm, that was President Packer.

DANIEL JUDD: But again, allowing the, the mother, the wife to, to be nourished during sacrament meeting.

ROBERT MILLET: Let me read you this wonderful statement from Elder Bruce R. McConkie from The Promised Messiah. Elder McConkie wrote this, "those who preach by the power of the Holy Ghost use the Scriptures as their basic source of knowledge and doctrine. They begin with what the Lord has *before* revealed to other inspired men, but it is the practice of the Lord to give added knowledge to those upon whose hearts the true meanings and intents of the Scriptures have been impressed. Many great doctrinal revelations come to those who preach from the Scriptures. When they are in tune with the infinite the Lord lets them know *first* the full and complete meaning of the Scriptures they are expounding. And then He oftentimes expands their views so that new truths flood in upon them and they learn added things that those who do not follow such a course can never know." You see, that's not just true with gospel *teachers* that's true of gospel *students* too. Those times when you find yourself reading Alma 31 or 32, maybe you're in 32 and you're so excited to study faith or you're in 34 and you're so excited to focus on atonement and yet each time you find your mind sort of drifting over to this or that, and other times where you ought to rivet our minds and, and be disciplined there are other times when we probably ought to be not too upset that our mind is drifting, it may be a divine drift. It may be that I am being let to think about or feel something I hadn't supposed I would.

DANIEL JUDD: Yeah. We always quote in Section 50 about teaching by the Spirit.

ROBERT MILLET: Mm. Mm-hm.

DANIEL JUDD: But also there's the same phrase, "learning by the Spirit" and that's what you're describing.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, it, it's to *allow* ourselves to be open to those little inroads, those little side canyons where maybe the Spirit of the Lord tries to get through to us. Whether it's listening to a General Conference address or whether it's reading Scripture or sitting, sitting in a sermon in sacrament meeting. Brother Brown may be teaching about so and so and speaking about that in the sacrament meeting but suddenly we *feel* impressed to write something down on that three by five card. We'll discuss this a little more when we come back.

[PAUSE]

ROBERT MILLET: Welcome back to Mormon Identity, this is Bob Millet I'm with my friend Dan Judd and we're discussing *effective gospel learning*. Dan, we've just been talking about how significant it is to, to know that the Holy Ghost can prompt

us when we least expect it. We may be focusing on this or that matter or this or that chapter or doctrine and suddenly we find ourselves thinking about something else, and I, I mentioned that it's pretty significant sometimes to, to take a moment and write down what we feel.

DANIEL JUDD: Mm. Mm-hm. There's a phrase, I don't know who the author is, but he said, or she said, "the dullest of pencils is better than the sharpest of minds."

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, it, probably the case that later that day, that night or the next week we're not going to remember what came to us.

DANIEL JUDD: Yeah, I see in your pocket there's a, there's a 3 x 5 card. In my pocket there's a little book, black book that I use, and I take this everywhere but the shower...

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah.

DANIEL JUDD: And I *write down* things as they come to me...[THIS IS SAID SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT FROM ROBERT MILLET]

ROBERT MILLET: ...sometimes I wish I had it in the shower because that's where some of my finest revelations come, in the shower.

DANIEL JUDD: [HEARTY LAUGHTER] That's exactly right!

ROBERT MILLET: Now I think that's critical and that's why I bring those 3x5 cards. Ideas hit me and I think you know I need to write that down.

DANIEL JUDD: Mm-hm. Right.

ROBERT MILLET: Well, I remember you telling me once about or discussing with me something that Elder Ballard said, Elder M. Russell Ballard.

DANIEL JUDD: Elder Ballard, as you remember served as a mission president in Canada...

ROBERT MILLET: Mm-hm.

DANIEL JUDD: ...and had a wonderful group of missionaries he served with and after he had returned home and was here and had been called as a General Authority, I don't know if he was a, one of the Twelve by then, one of his missionaries came to visit with him. And this missionary was deeply troubled. And he said, "Elder Ballard, President Ballard, I have serious concerns, I've been reading things about the Church that I didn't know about before, and I have questions."

Almost demanding and challenging Elder Ballard after these questions that he had. You know the typical anti-mormon objections that we hear. So Elder Ballard listened very carefully and said, "Elder, I'm happy to answer your questions." he said, "but I want to do this, do this right, do it *well*. You give me ten days and come back and I'll have every answer for you that you are

looking for.” and he said, “Elder, now you’ve given me an assignment, now let me give you yours. During these next ten days you study one hour from the Book of Mormon, and then come back and we’ll talk.”

So ten days later he comes in and they sit down and Elder Ballard says, “OK Elder, let’s pray and then I’m ready.” and he says, “Elder Ballard, I don’t need your answers” and he bore his testimony to him, “I *know* that God lives, I *know* that Joseph Smith is a prophet, I *know* the Book of Mormon is the word of God.” and Elder Ballard said, “what have you learned from all of this?” and he said, “I’ve learned to give the Lord equal time.”

ROBERT MILLET:

Mmm. That’s good.

DANIEL JUDD:

He hadn’t been reading the Scriptures. He hadn’t been reading the teachings of the living prophets. He had been reading *other* kinds of things...

ROBERT MILLET:

You know, I, I, that, that experience reminds me of one I had as Stake President where...

DANIEL JUDD:

...and, and, you are what you eat...

ROBERT MILLET:

I had a young man...that’s good!

DANIEL JUDD:

[LAUGHS] Go ahead!

ROBERT MILLET:

A young man came in, the bishop sent him in, in fact, and the bishop explained to me that he had a very bitter attitude, the boy did, and that I should be prepared for that. The young man came in and, and what he said was very interesting. He said, “I, I have a serious sin in my life, it probably needs confessing, but I have no intention whatsoever of confessing.”

DANIEL JUDD:

[LAUGHS A BIT] Mm-hm, yeah.

ROBERT MILLET:

“And I don’t have any intention of spending time with *you*” and he went on and there was a bit of cockiness about him in terms of kind of condescending comments about the Church and he was much more knowledgeable now, and he, he had sort of grown and developed into a higher plane than our *traditional* way of looking at things. And I, and I sensed that, and it was a bit offensive but I tried to hold my temper and I finally said, “you know I was thinking of an assignment for you but I’m not sure you’re up to it...” [PAUSE]

DANIEL JUDD:

[LAUGHS QUIETLY]

ROBERT MILLET:

...and he said, “what do you mean I’m not up to it?” And I said, “I’m not sure you’re intellectually and spiritually capable of handling it so maybe we ought not do this.” “What do you mean intellectually and Spirit...? “I’ve just got something I’m just not sure you’re up to it. I don’t think you’re equal to the task.” “Well of course I’m equal to it!”

DANIEL JUDD:

[LAUGHS A LITTLE HARDER NOW]

ROBERT MILLET: And I said, “well it’s going to sound very plain to you, but I’m just not sure you can handle it.” “Well tell me! What is it?!” I said, “I don’t want to see you again for two weeks. But in that two weeks, I want you to read the Book of Mormon.” He said, “well, I’ve read the Book of Mormon.” I said, “well, yeah, but this time I want you to read it in *two weeks*. I don’t want you to do any cross referencing, I don’t want you to do any writing down, I just want you to read for two weeks.” And I said, “I think that entails...” and then I named the number of pages that would entail, per day.

DANIEL JUDD: [LAUGHS A BIT] Hm, hm, hm.

ROBERT MILLET: And he was cocky and he was rebellious, “oh, I don’t see what the...” and I said, “well I didn’t think you could handle it. It seems to be a bit over your head. It’s probably more than you can handle in two weeks” ; “Aw! I could read this thing in...” and I said, “well let’s see.”

DANIEL JUDD: I’m going to recall that stratagem.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, I’m using a little stratagem.

DANIEL JUDD: [LAUGHING HARDER AGAIN]

ROBERT MILLET: Catching him in his guile. You know, he left. And I wasn’t quite sure where that would go, to be honest with you. He came back in two weeks, entirely different countenance. Very tender, very...very broken in spirit.

And he said, “I read the Book of Mormon.” and I said, “really?” and he said, “President, I’ve read the Book of Mormon many times, but this was different.” and I said, “why?” and he said, “I don’t know, I guess I saw some things I’d never seen before.” I said, “did you feel anything?” he said, “yeah, I felt some things I’ve never felt before either.”

But then he turned to me and said, “ before we talk about these things I have some things I need to confess.” and I said, “OK.” and we dealt with that. Now we took care of his serious transgressions and, and he had to, to face some Church discipline, but bless his heart what a difference. What that said to me Dan, it sounds so simple, what it said to me is Scripture, the study of the gospel is *amazingly* therapeutic. And it can solve so *many* of our problems. The power of the word is far greater than we’ve ever given it credit.

DANIEL JUDD: A renewed faith led to repentance and a renewal of the covenants, and return of the Holy Ghost.

ROBERT MILLET: Agreed. Do you have something?

DANIEL JUDD: There’s an interesting verse here in Alma 32, that really highlights or testifies of what you just said. “If ye nourish it, with much care it will get root and grow up and bring forth fruit. But if you neglect the tree and take no thought for its nourishment behold it will not get any root and when the heat of the sun

cometh and scorcheth it because it hath no root it withers away. And ye pluck it up and cast it out.”

ROBERT MILLET: Mm. That’s good.

DANIEL JUDD: And all of us, that sun scorches every one of us. It comes and it burns and it challenges us. We’ve got to make sure that our hearts and our minds have been nourished by the good word of God.

ROBERT MILLET: Well said. You know, Dan, I close for us by suggesting there are so many ways to study the gospel. Study the Scriptures sequentially as we always do, or study them topically, or use the topical guide and study different topics and, and study them from all four of the standard works. Cross referencing can be important, but I have found, not just cross referencing pertinent scriptures, but cross referencing the teachings of Presidents of the Church, I have teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith throughout my standard works. Cross referencing conference reports. See SWK, Spencer W. Kimball conference report April 1976.

DANIEL JUDD: I do the same thing.

ROBERT MILLET: And I think that makes us better students of Scripture. There is just no substitute for knowing the gospel, Dan. And brothers and sisters, there is just nothing quite like the satisfaction and the peace that can come when the Lord can draw upon what we’ve studied, what we’ve learned, what we’ve prepared, and we sense that all of that was worth it. Because the Lord can now use what we’ve studied and learned to bless his children.

[MUSIC BEGINS]

NARRATOR: You’ve been listening to Mormon Identity. Thanks for tuning in, we hope you join us next time.

[MUSIC FADES AND ENDS]