

Eric D. Huntsman:

Thank you Virginia. As she alluded to that, I have sometimes been asked why I look so happy on *Music and the Spoken Word*. I have a joke—and it’s only half a joke—that it’s because I’m not scoutmaster or on the high council. So when you have the opportunity to have as your church assignment singing and praising God, you know, it doesn’t get much better than that.

Well, sisters and brothers, thank you for being here today. In addition to my own presentation—which technically doesn’t begin for seven minutes—I’ve been asked by the board to say a few words about this conference this morning, particularly in relation to our new *Come, Follow Me* curriculum. *En archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos* (John 1:1). Not that we have a favorite gospel, do we, but we certainly like the way this particular one opens: “In the beginning was the word,” where it’s talking about Jesus Christ. So we thought it would be interesting to begin our conference, to have our conference focused this year on “in the beginning were the *words*.”

Now as we study as individuals, as families, as groups of friends under the new arrangement that we have in the Church now, it will require a lot more individual and group effort as we have a few minutes every other week to cover two lessons. We are hoping that what we are providing in this conference and in our commentary series and through links to other resources the means by which more and more people can supplement and support their study of the text. We in no way want to get away from the text. That is what we do with the *Come, Follow Me* new program of study—we are studying each year scripture. But we now have the opportunity that we haven’t had for some years, to actually study as groups. As Elder Cook introduced this in April, a lot of us were heartened to hear it was okay to get together in study groups, whether those study groups be families or groups of friends.

Since I still have three minutes off the clock, let me just make a plea for this. As we move to a more home-centered and Church-supported approach to living the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, I make a plea to remember all those who are not in “traditional families.” How many people actually live in homes with a mother and father and children at home? How many never marry, never have children? Are widowed or how many empty nesters do we have? So I hope that people do not get lost in the rush to do something new and that if you in your social circles in your wards find that there are people who do not find themselves in that configuration that you’ll reach out to them, that you’ll invite them to study with you.

Now as you see from our schedule, I’m going to begin my formal address in a few moments on the term *disciple*. Julie Smith will talk about *the way*, Jack Welch will talk about *blessed*. We’ll have a small break and then Brent Schmidt will talk about *grace* and Richard Draper about *love*, then we will break for our lunch, and in your program there are a few suggestions as to where

you can get your lunch during that break. We'll reconvene at one o'clock with John Gee talking about *the scribe*, Michael Rhodes *mystery*, Brent Schmidt about *faith*—Brent's doing double duty today—another break and then Kent Brown will talk about *inheritance* before we move to our panel discussion.

In regards to the panel discussion, let me just prepare you for this. Since each of us only has a half an hour for our formal presentations, we may not really have a lot of time for questions on each presentation. Keep those in mind, but I really want you to be thinking, particularly if you've had a chance to look at Julie's wonderful commentary on the Gospel of Mark to be thinking about questions for her in the panel, particularly on the Gospel of Mark, but on any of our study of the New Testament this year. You can write it on a note card—I don't know who will be collecting those, but someone will—but you can also log in, if you are tethered as so many of us are all the time to our phones and devices, to the Facebook page *BYU New Testament Commentary*. So that's the plan.

I still have a few more minutes. I'll take some of it for my presentation.

For those of you who do not have immediate access to looking at the New Testament in Greek, in addition to the BYU renditions for several of our volumes, which are now available both on our website and at *deseretbook.com*, let me just put a plug in also for Thom Wayment's wonderful translation of the New Testament, a Translation for Latter-day Saints, a Study Bible. I would encourage you, of course, in the English speaking church, to use the King James Version, That's what we hope you will use in Sunday School, Priesthood, and Relief Society, but in your personal study, we really do advocate using multiple translations, study bibles, other things that help you better understand the King James Bible. Then, of course, we will all be looking at our *Come, Follow Me*—a very kind of basic structure, not just for Sunday School classes but also for our youth and primary classes and our individual study.

So, with that said, I'll take three of my remaining minutes and add it to my half hour and we will talk a little bit about the term *mathētēs* which is the word that I have selected, which, of course, is generally translated as *disciple*. So we'll talk about the term *disciple* and then in broader terms, the idea of discipleship as we move through the conference today.

So let me begin by talking about the Greek term *mathētēs* and how we arrived at its meaning. Of course, with the New Testament we're in a language situation which is kind of unusual, right? New Testament Greek is not really a form of Greek necessarily; there's classical Greek and then there's what we call *Koinē* Greek of the Hellenistic period and the Roman period. This, of course, is not unique to the New Testament, but the New Testament borrows also from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, and also reflects some idiosyncratic uses.

So it is *koinē* or common Greek of this period, but it draws upon the lexical usages of the New Testament as well as some peculiar Christian uses.

So let me talk about the term *mathētēs* first in its classical context, what the term originally meant in earlier periods of Greek and if you look it up in a dictionary, of course it comes out as *student – learner*, and then, of course, as *disciple*. It comes from the Greek verb *manthanō*, which we usually say means *to learn*, so we have the idea of someone who directs his mind towards something, okay? Hence, a student who learns from a teacher. (*off mic remarks to Julie Smith about needing to advance their laptops at the same time that they advance the projected slides*). It's also appropriation or adoption of a certain knowledge or conduct. As I reviewed in Kittel, the big *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* and in the large Liddell and Scott *Lexicon of Classical Greek*, the earliest use of the term *mathētēs* that I could find was in the fifth century by the classical historian Herodotus, who spoke of a Scythian—we're talking about a barbarian, north of the Black Sea—who was a student of Greece. But it was more of his wanting to be Greek. He was eager for Greek things. I think of the Latin verb *studeō*, from which we get *student* and *study*, which actually can be translated *eager*, right? A student is thus someone who is eager for something. So Anacharsis, the Scythian chieftain was eager to act and be Greek.

Now what's interesting—even though this isn't part of the actual etymology—is that by analogy to the Greek verb *mimēsthai*, which means *to imitate*, we also get the sense that a *mathētēs*, in addition to being a student or a learner or someone who is eager for something, is someone who wanted to *be* something, much like the Scythian Anacharsis, who wanted to be Greek. And so we also find as an alternate meaning of *mathētēs* the word *apprentice*, right? Someone who wants to become like the master.

In the Koine period we can see this in some of the Oxyrhynchus papyri. For instance, *mathētēs* is clearly used as an apprentice. So, for instance, in this particular fragment of papyrus, we have a young person who is an apprentice to a weaver (see P. Oxy. IV.725.14). Now why this is so interesting to me is as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we don't just want to learn from him; we want to become like him. So we need to see [in *mathētēs*] these ideas of learning as well as becoming.

Now in later periods, this close bond between a teacher and a student or a master and an apprentice was extended so that in a philosophical or religious context, someone can be a disciple of someone who lived hundreds of thousands of years before. So as I have here [on the PowerPoint slide] an intellectual, philosophical link between a model and a follower who are widely separated in time. We'll see in a moment that this usage has already begun to appear in the Book of Acts when people who never knew Jesus are described as his *disciples*. One can be a disciple or a follower of Platonism or Aristotlianism even though we're thousands of years away

from those philosophers and, of course, we are disciple-students, apprentices of the Lord even though we are also removed from him.

So that was the meaning of the term in Greek, both Classical and Koinē Greek. Now how does this term appear in the Bible? As I mentioned, New Testament authors regularly quote the Hebrew Bible in Greek, so they are informed by uses in the Septuagint. However, in this instance we draw a blank because in the standard text of the Septuagint, *mathētēs* doesn't ever appear. In Jeremiah there's a secondary textual tradition where there are actually three instances of *mathētēs*. But what you usually find is a participle of the verb *manthano* – meaning *learning* or *those who are learning*. So what we find in the Septuagint is people who “are learning” or people who “are following.” This is, of course, analogous to the Hebrew term *tālmīd* for a student and particularly in later periods, rabbinic periods which are after our period, we see *tālmīdim* or *students* of the great rabbis, and we'll talk a little bit about that in a moment. However, in the New Testament, the term explodes. But only, consistently at least, in the Gospels and the Book of Acts.

Now as I've been working through Julie's commentary, and also as I worked with Amy's Easton-Flake's chapter in our recent Sperry volume, they talk about “narrative Christology.” In the works of both of these friends of ours who talk about narrative Christology, who Jesus is as determined by how is described in his actions rather than just by his titles and the frequency with which they are used. This narrative approach thus helps control my earlier fascination with titles and the frequencies or occurrence of such terms.

So although I'm going to back off of this a little bit as we talk, I just want to at least mention the number of times that forms of *mathētēs* appear in the Gospels and Acts: seventy-two times in Matthew, forty-six times in Mark, thirty-seven times in Luke, seventy-eight times in John, and twenty-eight times in Acts. Now as I mentioned, I found a control on this kind of numerical analyses as I was reviewing what Julie wrote in her front matter, her introduction, of her commentary on the Gospel of Mark. There she talks quite a bit about discipleship, but if we just look at numbers of occurrences, Mark looks like it uses discipleship the least frequently.

Now part of this is a numerical control, right? It's a shorter gospel. When I was doing my study of miracles some years ago, I found that Mark featured nineteen discrete miracle stories as opposed to twenty-one each in Matthew and Luke, but because Mark is such a shorter gospel, that frequency is actually higher. Then, as Julie notes, discipleship is a controlling theme of the Gospel of Mark even though the term is not always used with people who are clearly disciples. So while it's fun to have numbers, we always need to kind of contextualize what is around them.

Now with the exception of references to the followers of John the Baptist being *mathētai* or disciples, and an occasional reference to disciples of the Pharisees, there's a single reference in

John 9 to “the Jews” in John—and this is not talking about Jewish people but rather about the Jewish leaders or the Jewish opponents of Jesus—the Jews claiming to be disciples of Moses. This meant they were eager for Moses’ teachings and perhaps wanted or were striving to be like him. But almost in every other instance [in John], the term is about either the students, the apprentices, or, as we’ll see, the followers of Jesus, and this is why we can identify disciples even when the term is not used. In fact, almost as often as talking about someone who’s a *mathētēs* of Jesus, we have someone *following* him, and so the Greek verb *akoloutheō*, “to follow,” almost becomes a technical term for being a disciple.

Alright, let’s talk about disciples of Jesus, just a few of the characteristics in all four of the Gospels. A disciple of Jesus. Sometimes someone will come up to Jesus and say, “Lord, I want to follow you.” But more often than not, Jesus initiates the relationship. He *calls* someone to be his disciple. Now we think of someone, for instance, who joined the Church six months ago, and what’s happening is the Holy Spirit called him into communion or fellowship with us. For those of us who served Latter-day Saint missions, we often talked about those golden investigators, right, who had been prepared despite any of our efforts to teach and persuade. So I think many of us would agree that conversion is most often initiated by a loving Heavenly Father who wants his children to follow him and his son Jesus.

Disciples in the Gospels are devoted to the person of Jesus. They frequently give up homes, occupations, and even families to follow Jesus on his itinerant mission. Although in the Synoptics there are instances of people we can call disciples who don’t follow him full time, this is more often than not the case in the Gospel of John. They are devoted to learning and becoming like him. Now once again, although this is a little past our period, as we move into the Rabbinic period following the fall of the temple in A.D. 70, what we often see with the disciples of the rabbis is that they are not so much *tālmîdîm*, or students, of a particular person, they are *tālmîdîm ḥākhām*—students of wisdom. They are wanting what the rabbi is teaching more than trying to become like the rabbi necessarily himself. That’s not the case with Jesus.

Now here are some interrelated terms: *hoi mathētai*, disciples or followers; references to the Twelve (Greek, *hoi dōdeka*), the inner circle; and then we have the term *hoi apolstoloi*, those who are representatives of Jesus and after the resurrection who are sent out. Now these terms, of course, are not always the same. Disciples can be a much broader group. The Twelve are always the inner circle. As Latter-day Saints we are a little predisposed to always seeing apostles as equaling the Twelve. But of course the term is sometimes used very differently in the New Testament. The apostle Paul, for instance, talks very frequently about apostles who are not members of the Twelve. These are simply people who are “sent out”—we can call them missionaries, people who have their own witnesses of Jesus. So this is something we need to be aware of as we’re studying discipleship in the Gospels and there in the Book of Acts, which terms are we using.

Now, after doing my best to talk about discipleship broadly, I have no choice but to come to my particular interest which is discipleship in John. And once again, I'm reevaluating some of these things as I am reading what our colleagues are sharing on the other gospels. But I still think it is safe to say that John focuses not just in the number of occurrences of the term *mathētēs*, but in his featuring of individuals as disciples more than the other gospels. In Matthew and Mark the term *disciples* is very often associated with the Twelve. Remember that the phrase – the Twelve appears fairly often but the term *apostle* very rarely. Only once in Matthew and Mark, perhaps twice in Mark and one of these is a textual variation; six times in Luke and only once in the Gospel of John but in such a non-technical sense it's not translated as apostles: "He that is sent greater than he that sent him" (13:16). So be aware of that. A lot of times when we see *Twelve* and disciples, perhaps informed a little bit by Third Nephi and our own current usage in our own current quorum of the Twelve Apostles, we kind of necessarily sometimes conflate those terms.

Once again, reviewing Julie's work, I would point out that the depiction of disciples in all of the gospels, and here I'm again particularly what happens in Mark, is much more pervasive than simply the number of the terms, the number of occurrences of the term. However, I still think it is safe to maintain my initial view of this, which is Mark and especially Matthew where the Twelve are highlighted more. Disciples are frequently that inner circle in addition to some others. Luke uses the term a little bit more broadly but it is in John where it is used very broadly indeed, and here the contrast between the Twelve and the disciples is very marked. The term *Twelve* or the phrase *the Twelve* appears pretty rarely in John actually. Only explicitly in John 6 and then in the farewell discourse as you kind of read it into it a little bit, but what's interesting is even though there are individuals whom we know are part of the number of the Twelve from the apostolic list and the synoptic in the Book of Acts, the group is not highlighted very much except, as I said, at the end of the *Bread of Life* discourse in chapter six. Instead, John seems to be very interested and uses the term freely for people who are not members of that inner circle.

So, in John there is this clear emphasis on a disciple not only being a learner, someone who learns something and hence knows something about Jesus in terms of if you love him and keep his commandments, learning from Jesus, there is an emphasis on action and an emphasis on being. So a disciple is someone who comes to know something and hence does something, *if you love me, keep my commandments*, but then becomes a friend of Jesus, and so there's a transformation, if you will. We could say having faith in who Jesus is, following, loving and keeping his commandments, becoming his friend, and then as any good apprentice who one day wants to become like the master, becoming like him. (Let's see, we've got twenty minutes.)

So let's look at some character in the Gospel of John. One of the things that I'm increasingly intrigued about in terms of the Gospel of John, is like the Gospel of Mark, performance here is really important; I mean we think that the Gospel of Mark was recited or could be recited or read

in one sitting; you don't have that sense with the Gospel of John but they both have real dramatic elements and I am interested in the characters in the Gospel of John, not just being representations of historical figures, but also looking at them as types, not only of disciples in the time of Christ but ourselves. This is the idea of using a scriptural text not only as a window into the ancient world, but also as a mirror we can hold up to ourselves and see ourselves in the text (*unclear?* – 11:27:00).

So anyway, characters in ancient literature including scripture were likely to be types as well, as I said, of representations in other historical figures. Now in all the Gospels, there are, of course, people who are not named. As I was reading Julia's commentary she talks about a Jairus, for instance, he's named, but the woman with the hemorrhage is not. But this is very pervasive in the gospel of John where I would actually argue the most meaningful characters are not named at all, even to the extent that characters that we think we know, most of us presume the blood of the disciples is the Apostle John, and the mother of Jesus who we all know is named *Mary* are not named at all. Their identities, their names, are almost suppressed in the text.

Then there are other characters like the man at the pool of Bethesda, the man born blind, etc., who are not named, and the result of this is that it's easier, I would argue, for us to relate to those characters. If it is only *Mary* in all these images of the mother of our Lord, that's just her and her experience is not as easy for us to appropriate. This is the case if the Beloved Disciple is the apostle John—well, *he*, not us, would be the Lord's best friend. He gets to lean in Jesus' arms, he gets the stand at the foot of the cross, he runs to the tomb, but that's not me. But these anonymous characters are ones through whom we can actually inject ourselves into the story, and so John illustrates the principles of discipleship, not just with these anonymous characters, but through any number of sharply drawn characters. I'm going to talk about the Samaritan woman in a moment, a very sharply drawn character who is also happens to be anonymous. And so in my recent work on becoming a beloved disciple, I argue that as current Christians and modern Latter-day Saints, we can find one or more characters in the Gospel with whom we can easily identify. And given the diversity of situations, backgrounds and responses of faith that we have in these characters—this is, of course, a drum beat I have been banging for a year or more now—we can find another plea for openness and inclusion in the Church, not just as we become an international, world-wide church with people from many different cultures, but even in our own neighborhoods and families where people's life experiences are often very, very different from the “usual” people.

Let me mention, of course, this figure of the Beloved Disciple before I take two or three, or whatever the time allows me to do, of the other characters in the gospel. The Beloved Disciple figure appears explicitly only in the second half of the gospel, in the passion and resurrection narratives, where he's described as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Now he may appear in some other instances—it's not uncommon, for instance to see him in the opening chapter of John

when the prophet John, John the Baptist says, “Behold the Lamb of God” (1:36), and Andrew, a follower or disciple of the Baptist, and “another” disciple then follow Jesus. We’ll look at this instance in a little bit more detail in a moment. But a lot of times people assume that this “other” disciple—once again though name suppression here—is John, the Son of Zebedee, not wanting to identify himself in the experience but presenting it to stand for all of us. So in addition to being the disciple whom Jesus loved in the second half, we may have a figure who starts out as the disciple of someone else, but when he’s introduced to Jesus then follows him. Likewise, in between the Last Supper and the crucifixion, when Jesus is arrested, Peter and “another disciple” follow Jesus to the house of Caiaphas—and to that of Annas as we have it in John of course—and this may be him as well.

For a number of reasons, this figure has been traditionally identified with John, the son of Zebedee, but as I’ve mentioned, he is kept anonymous and I’m particularly interested in him, so wherever I am at 9:42, I’m going to break off from my discussion of other disciples and come back to the Beloved Disciple figure, particularly because of this image of his leaning in the bosom of Jesus at the Last Supper (see 13:23). This image, by the way, is interesting because the only other time that term *kolpos* is used is in the *Logos* Hymn, where the Word is in the “bosom” of the Father. Likewise the Beloved Disciple has a similar relationship with Jesus. He, as we know of course, runs to the empty tomb after having stood at the foot of the cross, and then he gets the final acknowledgement in the epilogue, chapter 21, where Peter says, “Lord, and what shall this man do?” And Jesus pointedly says, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.” In other words, “It’s none of your business.’ Then the final editor of our text says, “This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.” And so we have this figure, purposely unnamed, reclining in the arms of Jesus at the Last Supper, standing at the foot of the cross, running to the empty tomb, and then be the one whose testimony we know is true.

So let’s take five—well maybe let’s take three characters, let’s see how far we get with that—or a series of characters. In this case, we’ll start with the first disciples, and see how people can respond differently to their encounter with Jesus and yet still ends up in a position where they too can become like the Beloved Disciple, someone who rests in the arms of Jesus’ love, someone who has a testimony of his sacrificial death, someone who has hope in the resurrection, and someone whose testimony we know is true.

Now for several years, I had always assumed the prologue of the Gospel of John was just that grand opening hymn, the *Logos* Hymn. But I have become increasingly convinced that the entire first chapter is the prologue. So we have this hymnic introduction of the word—which begins with God, which was God and becomes flesh—which introduces the main theme of John its high Christology, this divine presentation of Jesus. But then we have a secondary theme introduced by the experiences of the first disciples—how do people respond to the Word? How do they choose

to follow him? So after the *Logos* Hymn, we have the witness of Jesus who is mentioned in the first eighteen verses, John the Prophet—in the Synoptics, he is the one who baptizes—who bridges into the second half of chapter as the one and starts this ball rolling, starting a kind of cascade or succession of witnesses. He says, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (1:29), and he then repeats that to Andrew and the other disciple in verse 35, and they follow Jesus. Remembering that the verb *akolouthēō* comes to almost have the technical sense of “become a disciple.” Indeed, the title of our manual, *Come, Follow Me*, comes from the call of Peter and Andrew in Matthew 5:19, and when they follow Jesus, we have this same sense of “becoming disciples.” In John, Andrew and the other disciple say to him, “Master, where dwellest thou?” using *menō*, a verb that, translated “abide,” is so important in the Farewell Discourses, especially in John 15, where it means not just staying with Jesus but actually abiding in him. Jesus says, “Come and see” (1:39), and this is so often the way we are introduced to Jesus, right? Someone else testifies to us, we then come to Christ as best we can, and he says, “Come and see. Come and see what I’m offering to you.”

So whether that testimony is first planted into us by a prophet or an apostle or a friend or a missionary, whether it comes in the form of a text as we are reading the scriptures, or whether, as is the case so many of us, it comes from our parents, especially our mothers, we then follow Jesus because of that testimony until we come and see for ourselves. In chapter 1, Andrew then goes and finds his brother Peter and says, “We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (1:41). Very interestingly—we don’t have time to talk about Brother Peter too much. Peter—although *Shimon* or Simon gets a wonderful, new name—Cephas, *Kephas*, or *Petros*, “the rock—Peter is a rather empty character in chapter one. While he is going to become “the rock,” he is the only one in this this succession of witnesses in chapter one who doesn’t make a Christological confession. The Prophet John declares that his is the Lamb of God, Andrew says he is the Messiah or the Christ, and we’ll see what Philip and Nathanael say in a moment. But Peter doesn’t say anything. He does respond, he does follow, but he’s going to have quite the road to walk before he becomes the rock and makes his own confession.

Philip then goes and gets his friend Nathanael and says, “We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (1:45). Then, of course, we have Brother Nathanael. We don’t have time to do a detailed exegesis of this episode, but Nathanael’s first response is, “Can there any good thing come from Goshen?” No offense to our friends from the south end of the valley from Goshen,” but “can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (1:46). And we all know what Jesus says, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” (1:47). Because of Bishop Partridge’s experience in the Doctrine and Covenants 41:11, we assume this is a good thing, that Nathanael had no guile when it very well could have been, as we know from Mark in particular, that Jesus might have been be sarcastic. He might have been calling Nathanael out” “I know what you said about me, ‘How can anything good come from Nazareth (which might have meant something like “branch town,” from *nezer*, meaning a

branch of the House of David).’ I know what you said about me. When Nathaniel asks how Jesus knows him, Jesus says something very interesting, “Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee” (1:48). We don’t have any details about what Nathanael is doing at the fig tree, but since he’s about to make a great Christological confession here, he may very well have been praying about the Messiah. Jesus knew this, and this led Nathanael to give us the greatest the Christological confession in the text so far: “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel” (1:49).

Well, the pattern of cascading witnesses we see in the second half of John 1 is what I like to call—I’ve been saving this phrase—a great chain of witnesses. I’ve already alluded to the fact that when we find Jesus, we naturally want to share him with our family and with our friends and then have the joy of serving in the Kingdom together. So I like to call this becoming part of a great chain of witnesses. And this is how discipleship is usually introduced to us as Latter-day Saints. We’re particularly comfortable with this, right? We are used to getting our testimonies from prophets and apostles and parents and teachers, and we’re going to accept their witnesses, get a testimony of our own, and it’s going to be all nice and neat. But this is not where John puts his interest from this point on. After giving us the ideal, or perhaps the typical, succession of discipleship, he begins to move to examples that are more disruptive, upsetting our expectations.

Now our next example is poor brother Nicodemus, who usually gets a bum rap. Now I am going to give you an alternate translation here to describe him. At one point, after talking about being born again or born from above, Nicodemus has no idea what Jesus is saying. Jesus says, “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” We could render this, Are you a professional teacher, a *disdaskolos*, and can’t figure this out?” He was actually as teacher, right? Nicodemus is like us, a college professor, that’s his job. In my recent study on this, I use Nicodemus as a type of an intellectual—and is there anything wrong with being that? There’s nothing wrong with being an intellectual. There are some of us who are more comfortable with questioning and arguing and reasoning. There’s nothing wrong with that, it’s just a different road—and sometimes a longer one—but in his main cameo, Nicodemus in chapter 3 misunderstands Jesus and doesn’t yet come to the solid, comfortable testimony.

Now he appears again very briefly in chapter 7. Many people overlook this scene, but when Jesus is almost arrested by the Jewish authorities, Nicodemus speaks up in council for Jesus and says, “Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?” (7:51). At this, he gets shouted down, and so his attempt to express some belief is evident but he backs off when people challenge him or disagree with him. Then, as we all know, in chapter 19, we have this lovely scene where he and Joseph of Arimathaea, who is mentioned in the other gospels (Matthew mentions he’s a disciple of Jesus but John emphasizes that he’s a secret disciple, because of fear of the Jewish leaders or perhaps worried about what his friends, his fellow teachers are going to think) come out in the open, claim the body of Jesus, and bury him.

Nicodemus does so with a kingly amount of spices meaning, showing that he recognizes Jesus as the anointed king. All this, of course, fulfills something Jesus had prophesied to Nicodemus in chapter 3: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up” (3:14), and so when Nicodemus sees Jesus lifted up upon the cross, he knows that Jesus is, in fact, the one who came down from heaven.

And so Nicodemus ends up firmly on the side of Jesus, recognizing his sacrificial death, and honoring him even though his walk had been much different than those disciples in the first chapter who simply heard the witness from John or others and then came, saw, and moved forward. But just as Nicodemus’ final offering was accepted, we should likewise honor those whose walk of faith is different than ours.

Well, the only other one I’ll have time to treat before we come back to the Beloved Disciple is the Samaritan woman at the well. I’m glad we can do this one. This is a scene we all love, and a very picture of this scene appears in countless Relief Society rooms throughout the Church. We love this figure, and many of us probably already have a basic sense of why it’s so amazing.

Ethnically, she’s different from the Jews of this period, so she’s not liked by most of the Jews. She is also a woman, and although we sometimes over-caricaturized the status of women in this period, the fact is that women did have a tough row to hoe in this time and culture. There certainly was some issue about a man and a woman who were not related being alone together, and then, of course, Jesus revealed that he knows that she’s had interesting, that is problematic, marital history. So she has lots of strikes against her, and yet he teaches her this beautiful concept of how he is the water of life. She accepts this, and she goes to her village and she bears that witness and the whole village. When Jesus comes to the town, everyone goes out to meet him. And what do they say?

Oh, by the way, I’ve almost forgot this, but when the woman is still at the well and while Jesus is introducing himself, she says, “I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things” (4:25). To this Jesus responds directly, “I that speak unto thee am he” (4:26). In Greek, *egō eimi*, “I AM” or even “I AM THE ONE WHO IS,” recalling how Jehovah introduced himself to Moses. She believed his declaration and went to tell her village. Then many of the Samaritans said unto the woman, “Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world” (4:42).

You know, in order, I guess, to reverence the name of Jesus, many of us in the Latter-day Saint community frequently don’t use his name—instead we often will refer to him by a title, right? I think for many of us “the Savior” is the title we use most frequently. Yet I think that many people are not aware that the term *Savior* only appears three times in the Gospels, twice in the

Infancy Narrative of Luke and this single time here in John, where he is not just the Redeemer of the House of Israel but the Savior of the entire world.

Now in terms of what the example of the Samaritan woman teaches us, I cannot help but use the example of the woman that the producers, directors, and writers of the “Jane and Emma” movie, especially our friends Tamu Smith and Zandra Vranes, have reclaimed for us: the figure like Jane Manning James, who ethnically and as a woman was not readily accepted or expected to be a missionary just like the Samaritan woman wasn’t. Yet Jane led members of her family on a *walk* from Connecticut to Nauvoo that left their feet bloody, and she remained faithful. She came out to Utah with some of the first companies of pioneers, and even though she was denied the temple ordinances she sought, she remained faithful. How many different people are like her. [Shows a picture of a diverse crowd] I like this picture because this is what I wish every congregation in the Church looked like. Men, women, white, black, American, non-American. This is sadly not always the image that those of us who grew up in the Mormon culture zone have—I’m sorry, I forgot we’re not Mormons anymore!—the Latter-day Saint culture zone. This is not the kind of people we expect and, sadly, always respect.

Well, our time is up, so I will pass over some other examples. I’ll just quickly show some of these slides to let you know that we could have talked about the disciples in John chapter 6 who now longer followed Jesus because of “had sayings.” We could have talked about friends of Jesus, which is one of my favorite groups: people whom Jesus loved like Martha, Lazarus, and Mary. We could have talked about faithful but fallible disciples, but we don’t have any more time. So let’s just simply end in my last two-and-a-half minutes with, once again, this enigmatic figure of the Beloved Disciple.

Okay, here we go: “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved” (13:23). As I’ve mentioned, this compares with John 1:18: “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten God,” this is what the best manuscripts read rather than the only begotten Son, “which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” For Latter-day Saints, this image of resting in the arms of Jesus’ love finds beautiful scriptural echoes. I love Father Lehi’s faith in 2 Nephi 1:15: “I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love.” And while the Beloved Disciple’s resting in Jesus’ bosom can simply represent a personal or an individual affection in connection with Jesus, the Last Supper setting suggests something more. Even though the institution of the Lord’s Supper is not something that John records (it is only found in the Synoptic accounts of the Last Supper), in this setting I can’t help us to think of Eucharist or communion or the sacrament, right? So many of us feel the love of God and the love of Jesus as we participate in ordinances, especially as we partake of the sacrament. I have borrowed a concept from our Catholic friends that I love. They who look at their sacraments as “conduits of grace.” We’re saved by grace, but that the grace so often comes to us through the sacrament or through ordinances.

Standing at the foot of the cross, where the Beloved Disciple with the Mother of Jesus, both unnamed, have a testimony that Jesus has, in fact, died for the sin of the world. Then that wonderful scene where the source or author of the gospel can't help but let us know he's a faster writer than Peter! He and Peter run in *hope* that what Mary Magdalene has said about Jesus being risen is true. And he enters the tomb, and he's the first one who sees and believes, not as Mary does on the next page because she actually hears and touches the Risen Lord, but simply because of the sign of the empty tomb and the discarded grave clothes.

So what is the take away for us? Scripture is not just a window. If we can use John and other scripture as a mirror to our own experience, then we can use them as New Testament scholar Brendan Byrne has noted, as a means by which later readers such as ourselves can have an encounter with Jesus that's every bit as valid and indeed more fruitful than perhaps the original characters themselves did.

I close with my testimony that I have come to know and have become sure that Jesus is the Son of God. My own walk of faith has been that of Nicodemus; it has been that of Lazarus and Mary and Martha. I hope it will become more and more that of the Beloved Disciple. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.