

405: Fall and Freedom (Old Testament Lesson 3; January 16)

January 9: Genesis 1-2; Moses 2-3; Abraham 4-5    Creation  
January 16: Genesis 3-4; Moses 4-5                      Fall and Freedom

This episode covers the single most important topic in the gospel, agency.  
How do we live well?  
Why is it so hard?

Outline (This will be our format for all our episodes)

- Framing
- Announcements
- Reading Review
- Discussion
- Comments on last week's reading
- Preview/Conclusion

These two topics are brilliant to look at together, the War in Heaven and Fall. We are discussing nothing less than human nature and how we can access our agency, the most precious resource in eternity.

Human nature and how we can engage human nature to thrive is literally my favorite topic. I'm literally dedicating the rest of my life to this topic (show medallion) I've rebranded the Olam Institute with the motto "Soul and System Engineering". As we'll discuss, I believe that we should opt in to the minimal level of structure we need to be our better selves

This is the application of consciousness to wellness, love, thriving. Attention is the currency of consciousness, and discipline unlocks agency.

We'll talk about why it is so hard to use our agency well. Again, that is the summary of the entire gospel. I believe we use our agency as well as we are incentivized and empowered to do so. Think about Sunday School as an example... we know we should be reading our scriptures every day, but often we only do as much as we are accountable for!

### Announcements

A note about the structure of the podcast

Asked Facebook group and they voted to have the episodes for when Sunday School is taught in Church or every week, and the current vote is 15:10 for the more efficient version. So starting this episode

Some other exciting news!

Updated Handbook note: Using other Bible translations and editions is supported in the official Handbook! "Academic study" is also supported officially, and that is a very big deal. I'm hopeful this update will facilitate constructive conversations about the nature and use of scripture.

"When possible, members should use a preferred or Church-published edition of the Bible in Church classes and meetings. This helps maintain clarity in the discussion and consistent understanding of doctrine. Other editions of the Bible may be useful for personal or academic study."

[38. Church Policies and Guidelines \(churchofjesuschrist.org\)](http://churchofjesuschrist.org)

Finally, if you are in a position to make an end of year donation to the Olam Institute, please do so. There are donation links in every episode and you can donate with PayPal with the email [OlamInstitute@gmail.com](mailto:OlamInstitute@gmail.com) or [EngagingGospelDoctrine@gmail.com](mailto:EngagingGospelDoctrine@gmail.com). Please renew or begin a new monthly subscription so that the podcast will be sustainable.

Let's get into the reading, Moses 4-5 and Genesis 3-4. These are tremendously significant chapters and have impacted views of human nature and the roles of men and women for thousands of years.

Reading notes are back! I'm really focusing in on what I consider the most important points for life application, along with a few pertinent academic clarifications.

Reading Review

Discussion:

Framing the Fall

Growing Up

Agency and Human Nature

Redemption Routine

Falling down the Rabbit Hole (The Fall down the rabbit hole)

1. The Fall is literally true, exactly as it is told in the Bible
  - a. Can't responsibly hold this position
2. Eden Bubble
3. The Fall happened, but not the way it is told in the Bible
4. Humans are fallen in a way that requires redemption
5. (Humans are not fallen)

Eden, Fall, and Life

Great framing is that the story of Eden represents us leaving innocence and accepting the responsibilities and costs of adulthood. I regularly admit that I am pouting and throwing toddleresque temper tantrums, and I have been actively working on decreasing their frequency. I believe that much of adult behavior really does boil down to “but I don’t wanna!”

Growing up: Accepting accountability, responsibility, living in truth; leaning in to work and pain (keep pain clean, redirect rather than resist)

Our relationship to each other and the earth (including gender roles) VERY important to push back on this “rule” framing. Stewardship, collaboration, working as equal partners. We are of the earth, we are part of nature, an interconnected web of life. Sustainable well-being of life on earth.

Agency: “A matter of a few degrees”

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2008/04/a-matter-of-a-few-degrees?lang=eng>

We are profoundly limited and overwhelmingly influenced. Name and be aware of all the forces and limitations you are working with (for one thing, within global exploitative systems), name your power and agency, then train yourself to make good use of it.

Think outside the box. Work within the box. Change the box as possible.

Halloween costume as an adult gifted child

What are you supposed to be?

I was supposed to be a lot of things

We can all relate, and that’s the situation we all are in

To realize our divine potential, we need to take human nature seriously

Redeemed realism

How do we maximize our free will and agency? Perhaps paradoxically, by opting into structure. Discipline. My favorite framing for wellness and life improvement, however you want to call it, is training. Practice. There is no substitute.

The first meme I ever made: Lucifer demanded a recount. They called it correlation. LDS culture excels at affirming those who do things the standard way, and making it uncomfortable for those who don’t. This is description, not judgment at this point. This approach is powerful, as many members go inactive, leaving those who are willing to conform, which in turn reinforces that conformity. I know each ward has its own personality, but I do believe this is the normal way LDS congregations function.

Self-expression vs. loyalty and conformity... these are fundamental social struggles. It is up to each of us to navigate. (Bring up Religious Exemptions for vaccine mandates)

One of the trickiest factors in being human is that we too often have quite terrible judgment about what is good for us. Our desires certainly aren't good guides! That is why we have tradition and ethics, wisdom passed down from generation to generation. We don't know what we want as much as we know what we are glad to have done or regret to have done.

Opt into the minimum amount of structure we need to be our better selves (irony of prison is that we invest so much so late)

What are our goals? What kind of people do we want to be?

Most important, what choices and practices do we need to commit to in order to become those versions of ourselves?

I personally believe we have free will... but quite little. Only a few percent. We are overwhelmingly impacted by systems, our genes, our resources, addictions, and other factors that limit our ability to choose. But I genuinely believe in that few percent, believe that we can use that few percent of free will to increase it, trigger virtuous cycles, and become increasingly free. In fact, I think that is precisely the purpose of the gospel.

As most of us do, I spent much of my early adulthood striving. Striving to be what I thought I needed to be, what I thought I should be. I'm ABD... just that should tell you plenty.

But ministry, specifically my approach to ministry, has taught me to turn striving upside down. Don't push yourself. Not yet. LEARN yourself. Learn who you are, what you value, plug into those values, then seek the best path to become your better self, your particular, one-of-a-kind self.

Discern. Motivate. Empower.

Show up to your well designed life with proper form.

Redemption Work out Routine:

1. Train yourself to endure the truth, even when it's uncomfortable
2. Sit with that truth as cleanly and gently as possible
3. Take accountability (not my fault; my responsibility. Why me to now what)
4. Spend the currency of pain and consequence; make the best use of what is real (redirection rather than resistance)

Catch up comments: For Sunday School, I recommend that you cover the reading for week, and then pick a point or two from the reading from the previous weeks, and ask if there are any comments and questions. That will encourage everyone to read the full schedule rather than only the sections covered in Sunday School.

Notes on Creation:

- God's word in the Bible and God's word in the rocks (Henry Eyring Sr)
- Continuing Creation (Tikkun ha Olam)
- Living with wonder and gratitude

Preview: We are skipping Moses 7 which I believe is one of the most sublime passages of World Scripture, so next episode is going to be one where we integrate the in between readings more fully with the Sunday School readings.

Jan 23: Gen 5; Moses 6      Enoch

Jan 30: Moses 7              God who weeps

**Feb 6: Gen 6-11; Moses 8**      Flood and Aftermath