

Well, my friends, Happy Birthday to you! You're saying, "What birthday?" Why it's one year exactly to the day that we started the podcasts. What interesting time this has been for Margie and I. Let me just tell you how this all started.

We served missions in various places of the world. Two of those three missions were CES missions, Church Education Systems mission. The fact that I was a retired Church Education System employee made it a natural thing for us to be considered to serve CES missions. The first mission we went on was to Mongolia and our assignment was to train the first ever, professional, full time CES country director for the country of Mongolia. He is a marvelous man that I still meet with weekly on Skype and is now the first stake president of that country. I remember when we first met. Training him to be a CES man would not be difficult at all. So, when we first met, a very bright man with a Ph.D in Forestry from Moscow University, and was being trained by the Russian political system to become a communist boss. So he has a very interesting background.

I sat down with him and within the first two hours he got there, private one on one, and I looked at him and I said, "President Ogtero", he was the district president at that time,"what do you know about the atonement of Jesus Christ"? He had been a member for about ten years, and he bowed his head and looked down into his lap, then he looked up at me and looked me in the eye and said, "Elder Stroud, I don't know anything about the atonement". I said, "that's a good place to start". That began an exciting in-depth study of the scriptures. Training him to be a CES country director was only incidental to what we did. We spent every day at a certain time, we would go into a room, shut the door, take the phones off the hook, take our scriptures, and we began at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, First Nephi, chapter one, verse one. We went through, in two years I was in Mongolia, all of the Book of Mormon verse by verse, all of the Doctrine and Covenants verse by verse, all of the Pearl of Great Price verse by verse, and much of the New Testament. That study, as we came back, he asked if it would be possible to continue to study. So we set up Skype meetings. I have been meeting with him every week for ten years and we have gone through every verse of all of the standard works of the church together. What a marvelous experience that has been.

It was his request that we continue to study that kind of started that. We also had some people in Austria who wanted to do the same thing. We went to the Philippines on a second mission and there again my assignment was, among other things, to teach institute classes to the adults. They didn't have any adult religion classes. So I taught adult religion class and institute classes every day, 5 days a week, for a year and a half in the Philippines. When we got ready to leave, those good people asked the question, "Elder Stroud, is there any way we can continue to study together"? So, that fit in another group with the Mongolian group that we continue to get together, at first on emails and then later on Skype, and finally through the podcasts.

We went to New Jersey on a third mission, a young single adult mission. We worked with the young people 18 to 30 there and it was a CES mission again. My job was to teach institute classes and then to party with these kids, and that was really hard for me because I'm not by nature a partying person, but I'll tell you that in New Jersey, I learned how to do it. So, when we left New Jersey, guess what, some of the people there that we had learned to love said, "Brother Stroud, is there any way we can continue to study"? They wanted to continue these classes. One of those young women there, Kate Foster, talked to Margie and said, "Instead of doing this through emails, have you ever thought about doing it on podcast"? Neither one of us had ever heard about podcasts. My sweetheart, who is extremely talented in computer science and IT, went to work and before long she had system set up where we could record these classes and put them on the internet via the podcast and that's kind of how that came to pass.

So anyway, it's been one year and it started out with those small groups of people a year ago, probably less than thirty people in three of four nations that we were studying with and I would record little lessons and then put those out for other people to hear. Now a year later, this has gone way beyond what we ever thought that it would. To my amazement and to my great joy, because through the podcast system, Margie and I have made some wonderful new friends. We continue everyday to learn as people share their stories and their experiences. Some of these experiences, very sacred, as they feel prompted to by the spirit, which I am grateful that they cast their pearls to us and those pearls bless our lives in ways that we could never have imagined.

So Happy Birthday to the religion class podcast series. With that, my announcement is that this mission now comes to a close. We have had feelings and have received blessings and have had multiple witnesses, over the last two months, that this mission, and we look upon it as a mission, was coming to a close. The day was not far away that what the Lord wanted us to do, that the purpose of the Lord would be fulfilled and there would no longer be a need for us to do what we have been doing. So this weekend as Margie and I were getting ready to go to the temple over in Snowflake, we'd been thinking about is it time for us to make some changes here? A number of reasons for that, but the main reason was that we don't want to be between anyone and the Lord Jesus Christ. We just don't want to be in that place. It's not

like that's designed to happen, it just appears to be the nature of this kind of a program that we've been doing for a year. For persons like myself that are sharing knowledge in our teaching or lecturing or whatever you want to call it, doing workshops or classes, it's very easy to slip into a place where that teacher and those that he teaches considers him a light to the world. Without really trying you find yourself between those that you are teaching and the Lord. I think it must be a part of our human nature, especially our fallen nature, living in a dying world, to want to take those who the Lord sets up for guides and directors for us and to put them up as the light on the hill. So that they are now are considered as being the fount of all knowledge and wisdom and experience. That subtle trap is that it begins to rob people of their precious right to go to the Lord and receive personal revelation.

So we senses that that was a challenge, that was a danger. I have been ware that pride is always in the wings, especially as the classes got bigger, the numbers got bigger. You've been so gracious in the things that you have said and kind in your words. It is very easy for Satan to take that whole situation and twist it to where it becomes an issue where you can easily seek for the honors of men and for the things of this world. Just as I've said in my podcasts, are the two great disqualifiers as per section 121 for power in the priesthood. So with that in mind, we went to the temple yesterday, considering making some changes and maybe discontinuing or stopping doing at least the program we designed. We went to the temple with prayer in our hearts and when we came out the decision had been made and confirmed by the Holy Spirit, that there were some changes to be made.

So here is what we are going to do. The regular scheduled Sunday night podcasts will now cease. There will not be anymore weekly podcasts. That's not to say that sometime in the future the Lord impresses me that I need to share with people in the podcast communities some precious truths that I have been taught or some insights that I won't get on line and record a little message and put it out. As far as weekly and we have been doing this every week. You'll notice now that there are 52 or 53 different podcasts there. That's one per week and we've been pretty strict on that, that will now end. There won't be any more regular Sunday podcasts. We are going to leave the podcasts online so you can continue to share that information with your friends. We think that's a valuable thing to be up there. From what you've told us that's a valuable thing. The people that have been in charge of seeing that our first book was put into print, *Highly Favored of the Lord*, which is the first twelve podcasts, if they want to continue to put those podcasts in a book form and make them available, at no cost other than printing and putting the book out, nobody makes any money. I'm very careful to avoid what the Book of Mormon calls priestcraft, and that is being compensated for preaching the word of God or teaching the Doctrine of Christ. If these books will help you in your study of the doctrines, some people have said that it is so much better to have the written word in front of them, we first backed off the book a little bit and said that it was going to be cumbersome and I told the people why don't you just go on line and print off the transcript. The people that were encouraging the book, which by the way I am glad has happened, said that by the time you ran off the cost of paper and ink to print off these podcasts it would cost you more than just to buy the book. So, if those folks want to continue and put the remaining podcasts into a book form, *Highly Favored of the Lord Vol. 2*, Vol. 3, whatever, I'm okay with that. I just want it to be blessing to peoples lives and help. That is our main desire and what we'd like to see happen. I will leave that up to those folks.

I will also leave my email and phone number up there and continue to talk to people if they have questions or comments. You will find me more and more say, "You need to take that to the Lord". There is always a place for mentors in this journey that we are on. One of my mentors told me once I had asked him a question about a gospel topic and he said this, "I was about to answer that, but then the Holy Ghost said, I'll take that". I've never forgotten that. I asked him a question and he had the answer but he deflected to God and the God told him "I'll take that". I think, too often, as we do our studying, our due diligence, and our pondering, that if we could see the Holy Ghost, he would kind of be over n the corner with his arms folded, tapping his foot and saying, "When is it my turn"? I want to be able to continue to stay in touch. You can call me, I love talking to you. You can write your comments, share things that are happening, we just love to hear that, where you feel it is appropriate.

So, in summary, the regular Sunday podcasts, as of today, will not be there anymore. If I have something that I want to share with you and you're in the follower group, then when I post that it will automatically go out and you will receive a notice to that. We will keep that option open. The books are open, the transcripts are open, everything is for free. We encourage you to continue to email and if you feel so inclined to talk or just not too busy to talk. I know a lot of you say "Oh, I know you are so busy", well, if your that busy, you're too busy. If we are too busy to talk about the Doctrine of Christ, we're too dang busy and we need to realign our priorities. We're all on the same journey and moving in the same direction.

I'd like to share with you a scripture. If you'll go with me to 2 Nephi 9:41 *O then, my beloved brethren, come unto the Lord, the Holy One. Remember that his paths are righteous. Behold, the way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course before him, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name.* This part, " he

*employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name*”, is what motivated us to what we have done. The fact that he employeth no servant there, everything in this world is combined to put somebody or something between you and the keeper of the gate. Mentors, leaders, general authorities, prophets, apostles, are all guides. They are all directors. They are pointing you to the Holy One. What happens to us is, we get hung up at the guide and director level. We look to them. So in essence, your path, at that point, has an employee between you and the Savior. You have to use wisdom on that.

As we were considering doing what we talked about here an interesting thing came to my mind. For a years podcasts, it's interesting that the very first podcast had to do with the foundation of all of the Doctrine of Christ, as the Holy Spirt, the Light of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and the relationship between those two. That was the very first podcast. I can thank John Pontius and his marvelous book, *Following the Light of Christ into His Presence*, for setting that foundation for me and my own personal growth and expansion in the Doctrine of Christ. What an appropriate way to start out our podcast series and then ended last week , even though last week I hadn't intended on it being ended, with a podcast called, *The Tip of the Spear*, which deals with the doctrine of translation. The highest honor that man and woman can obtain in this world, in a telestial world, is to obtain unto translation. Everything in the scriptures is pointing us towards that. Here we are living in the day when translation is a reality and will become more so as each day and each week goes by. So, I thought without thinking about it, I could see the hand of the Lord in the podcast series. Going from the foundation, the beginning, of listening to, harkening and heading to the voice of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Ghost all the way up to obtain the greatest of all the things which you can obtain in this life and to be among those people the Lord will use in the coming day, which is soon coming, fast approaching, where he will bring those which have been gathered and prepared to serve as rescuers and saviors for their brothers and sisters who were trapped in a dying world. I think that's appropriate. We covered the full spectrum in 52 broadcasts, from the foundation to the very Tip of the Spear.

So brothers and sisters, we love you so much. We have learned so much from you. The Lord has been so gracious to Margie and I, so kind. We continue now, our quest, to obtain the face of God, to receive the second comforter, and to be blessed to be translated and be a part of the 144,000 who rescue their brothers and sisters in a decaying world, preparatory to the establishment of Zion and the coming of the New Jerusalem. We are so grateful to be apart of this. I bear you my testimony of these things and all that I have taught in these podcasts over the last year, all of it can be summed up in the one thing, the Doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Holy Messiah, amen.

