

## Ep 228. Parable Insight from Hank Smith



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Jody Moore**

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

## Ep 228. Parable Insight from Hank Smith

I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 228, Parable Insight from Hank Smith.

This podcast is for people who know that living an extraordinary life is not easy or comfortable. It's so much better than that. This is *Better Than Happy*, and I'm your host, Jody Moore.

You guys, listen, I got something really important to share with you. It is the perfect Christmas gift. If you need to know what to ask for or you want to buy yourself a Christmas gift, or you want to give a Christmas gift to somebody else, which is the idea at Christmas time, then you might consider an annual membership pass to Be Bold.

Because here's the truth; what your loved one will tell you she wants for Christmas is for everybody to just get along and be happy, right? Isn't that what we say? Moms, women, dads? I just want everyone to get along, I just want everyone to be happy.

And that would be nice. If I could wrap that up in a box for you and have you give them that for Christmas, I would. But here's the truth; the only reason we want everyone to be happy is because then we would give ourselves permission to relax and be happy and stop stressing and stop trying to control the world outside of us, and that is something I can help you wrap up and give to your loved one. That is what we do in Be Bold.

So go to [jodymoore.com/gift](http://jodymoore.com/gift) and you'll get all the information you need. When you sign up your loved one for Be Bold, you're going to get a really pretty print out that you can wrap up and put under the tree so they have something to open.

And we're not going to reach out to them until after January 1 so that we don't spoil any surprises. And they're also going to get a really fun booklet that I've been working on. When I say I, I mean other people have been working on for me and with me.

And it's called *I Could Be Right: Wisdom from Jody Moore*. And it has the most brilliant sketches and illustration by my friend Britney, who's well

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known as Sketchy Leftie on Instagram. So she did a whole bunch of amazing sketches. There are, I want to say, 45 sketches of concepts that I teach, and then I wrote some captions or explanation to go with each of them.

It's just a fun little book to keep out on your coffee table. Your kids will pick it up and look through it and learn something accidentally without trying. Other people will come over and check it out. It's just sort of a fun little keepsake. And the only way to get this book is to be an annual pass holder in Be Bold.

So we're going to send that to the person that you sign up for this program. We're also going to send that out after January 1 so that we don't ruin any surprises, but they're going to get that as a little bonus. So just saying, perfect Christmas gift.

Okay, now, we get to talk to Hank Smith today. Some of you know how obsessed I am with Hank Smith. He came on the podcast before, maybe a year ago or so. It's been a little while. And I recruited you guys' help to get his attention because he's kind of a big deal.

He's a professor of religion at Brigham Young University. He also speaks at tons of things like EFY and Time Out for Women, and he has his own company where he speaks with John Bytheway and other people who I don't even know at this point.

But at any rate, he's a busy guy and he's just an amazing teacher, writer, presenter. He knows the scriptures inside and out. He is hilarious and fun and I just love somebody who's able to bring the things that we study in the scriptures and make them relatable and fun.

And that he is what Hank Smith does in his new book that he's going to talk about, and that's what he does on this podcast episode. So I learned a lot in this conversation, listening to Hank. I know you're going to learn a lot as well. And we had a lot of fun, so without further ado, here is my conversation with Hank Smith. Here we go.

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—  
Jody: So you have a newish book out.

Hank: Yes.

Jody: When did it come out?

Hank: Living the Parables.

Jody: Living the Parables. Tell me about your book.

Hank: I was pretty excited about this. It was an idea I had. I teach the New Testament at BYU and the Parables are my favorite part, mostly because some students know a couple of Parables. They'll know the Sower, Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son. But they don't know some of the others. There's 55 parables we could name.

Most people could name like, maybe five. So I like to show them that these are pretty incredible stories that 2000 years later can still help you. Still help you with depression and anxiety and family problems. So from there, I did a bunch of lectures in education week on it, then that's what turned into the book.

Jody: Oh, I see. Nice.

Hank: One by one, and talk about each one and how they can - because I'm interested not only in understanding the story and its context but also understanding how it could help.

Jody: Right. Well, and to make that application from the story in the time when Jesus was on the earth to what we're experiencing today can be a challenge.

Hank: Right. I think the first thing you have to do is understand that in its context, the Parable of the 10 Virgins, I don't know if a lot of people understand what in the world is going on.

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Jody: I don't know that I do. Can we go through one just by way of example?

Hank: Yeah, we can go through a bunch. So the Parable of the 10 Virgins, you have to understand Jewish wedding festivities. You have to understand because in this day and age, it's a completely different scenario, completely different culture for us.

I say in the book, if Hayley and Lin - these are my two friends. If Hayley and Lin get engaged today, they get engaged and everybody shares on Facebook and they have a great - I love it, I love it, and then three months later we have a wedding and everybody's super stressed and the reception and voila, it's done.

But that's not how it works. Judaism, one, you don't get to choose your spouse. Your parents choose your spouse for you. Two, there's a contract when you're engaged and the contract specifies, usually about a year, that it's going to take about a year to do this. And during this time, Lin, the boy, he has to build a house. And if there's no house, there's no marriage. I thought we should bring that back.

Jody: I like this plan. It's not sounding that bad.

Hank: And on the other side, Hayley, she has to be an apprentice to her mother and aunts, and she has to learn how to run this house because there's no Walmart down the street in some of these outlying villages in Galilea. You've got to do everything yourself from raise the chicken, kill the chicken, cook the chicken, make the clothes.

You've got to be able to do it all. And if she's not ready, there's no wedding. So over the course of a year, they don't talk to each other. They're not walking along Ninth in Provo. They don't see each other. Why would they? Other than if they're going to communicate, they'll communicate through their parents.

But then 12 months later, it's all set, the day of the wedding is going to come, and our receptions are a week or two. Their receptions, we're talking

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a week and everybody comes to your house. So everybody comes to Lin's house. All of his entire family is there, aunts and uncles and cousins are sleeping in the yard. I mean, it's this massive party.

And they're all, for days, just talking to Lin and enjoying him and celebrating his life and his family. Same thing is happening over at Hayley's house. They're celebrating her. And no one really knows when the party's going to end. Lin's family gets to decide when the wedding is going to be.

Now, everybody knows kind of, it's not going to be months from now, and it's not going to be hours from now, but somewhere between hours and days we're going to have the wedding. So if you've been invited to the wedding, you're just kind of waiting. You're just kind of waiting and watching.

You're not at either party, so these 10 girls, virgins in the scriptures, virgin means single girls, so these 10 single girls have all been invited to the wedding but they just don't know when it's going to be because nobody knows when the groom is going to decide the party's over. The groom's family.

So eventually though the party will be over and he'll send a runner over to Hayley's house, and the runner will go out and say, the bridegroom is coming, and then these two families are going to come out together and they're going to meet in town and they're going to kind of merge together. It's very beautiful.

They're going to merge together and they're going to walk to the wedding together. And if you've been invited, then you jump in on that wedding train, that wedding party that's marching to the wedding. But a couple of odd things happen. It comes in the middle of the night, which they probably weren't expecting, which the savior might be talking quite a bit about a second coming here, right?

They weren't expecting him to come and so they got to have their lamps. Now, there's nothing extra special about the lamps, other than it's like

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having a flashlight in the middle of the night. For you and I, it's not a big deal because the world is lit up.

But think about when you went to girl's camp and how dark it really can get out there, and you don't go walking out in the darkness. You need a light. So it's like flashlights. They have flashlights and so they're grabbing their flashlights but only some brought extra batteries. So like, oh no, my flashlight's gone out, I need more batteries, and the five girls say I can't share, I've only brought enough extra for me.

And so they hurry, run to the store, buy from them that sell. So they run to the store, which I imagine in the dark, it's going to take a long time. And the other five girls join the wedding party. Now, if you don't understand wedding, Jewish weddings, the parable is lost on you, right? It's like well, okay.

Jody: Well, they missed it.

Hank: Yeah, why couldn't they go? And why didn't those women share their oil? How rude. And why doesn't the groom tell them when he's coming? It can be lost on you. But I think the most powerful part of that parable is maybe lost on people and it's not so much that they - here's the idea. If you've ever watched the church video, and I shouldn't pick on it because I love church videos.

But whoever did this one, I'm just not sure. So if you've ever seen it, the whole part goes in and the door closes and two seconds later, the five girls show up. They knock on the door and Jesus opens the door and says, I don't know you. Slams the door and they walk away and the lamp drops in slow motion and the music video starts. I get it.

But the key part in this is there's a word in Matthew 25 that says, "Afterward, afterward came the five." Afterward. I asked my students, after what? They miss the wedding. They miss the whole thing. It's all over. There's nothing to go in and see.



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So I asked my students, I'm like okay, you're getting married and it's the biggest day of your life and your best friend is not there. Are you worried? Yeah, absolutely I'm worried. Does the wedding go on? Absolutely. The wedding must go on. And then they show up the next day. They show up the next day and of course you're concerned. Where were you?

And they say, I'm so sorry, I was washing my hair, or I'm so sorry, I had to run errands. I'm so sorry, I ran out of gas, whatever. And I ask them, what does that say? And usually they'll say, well, it just means they don't care. They just don't care. And Jody, do you go to - we can't go to every wedding that we're supposed to go to, right? That we've been invited to.

A lot of us, we get the wedding invitation, I probably shouldn't say this, we get the wedding invitation, we're like oh, that's nice, and we toss it or we put it on the fridge for two weeks...

Jody: We send them something off their Target registry.

Hank: Right, yeah. We jump online. And it's not that we want the marriage to fail. We're excited for them. We just don't care all that much. We're super busy. But you go to weddings that you really care about, your best friend is getting married, you attend that wedding. And if you're not there, that says something. It says, well, it wasn't that big a deal to me.

Jody: It says something about your relationship.

Hank: Very good. And I think that's what the savior is saying here. This isn't about the oil so much, although the oil is important. We really focus on the oil in the parable, right? How important it is to have oil and testimony and I understand that, but I think the part we're missing is you don't care about me.

This is the biggest day of my life and you just didn't care. You didn't think about it, didn't even think enough to go, oh yeah, I might need extra batteries in the flashlight. Come on. So I ask my - it's nice when the students open up and I'm like, the second coming is really not about stockpiling oil.



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I mean, that's good thing to talk about, testimony and scripture and spirit, there's nothing wrong with that, but it's about a close relationship with Christ, in which you don't care about other things. You care about him and his big day. Second coming's got to be a big day for him. He's got to get ready for it, he's got a speech prepared. I imagine it's a big day for him. And did you show up? Were you...?

Jody: Such a great - honestly, I don't think I understood that parable in that way at all. To your point, without the context of the Jewish wedding tradition, it's sort of confusing.

Hank: It's harder. And I think with each of the parables, I just went through and I said, "Okay, let's understand context first and then with the understanding of the context, we can now understand what we can do now. What does this look like in 2019?" The Prodigal Son - I've probably got the most feedback on the Prodigal Son.

Brad Wilcox just read my book last week, which I was really grateful for and he said, "I loved it," he said, "But man, that parable of the Prodigal Son, that really changed the way I looked at it." And I said why, and he said it was the - I think he got what I was hoping he would get and what I hope other people get from it is it's all about the details.

Some of these parables have just these tiny even phrases and words, such as said the prodigal gathered all together. And we'll stop right there real quick and say, he gathered all together when he left? What does that mean? When you take everything what does that mean?

I ask my students, "Did any of you leave anything at your parents' house when you came to college?" Yes. Why? Because I'll be back. I'm going to leave it there because I can't bring it all with me right now. I said, "When do you take everything?" You take everything when you have no intention of ever coming back. When I left, when I moved out of my last house from Salk Lake to move down to Provo, we took everything. We didn't leave a couple boxes.

Jody: Your yearbooks and...

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Hank: Yeah, we'll come pick this up later. We had no intention of ever coming back to this house. So that little thing teaches you something, that he gathered all together, or he went to a far country. Why did he go to a far country instead of the next country over?

Far country, perhaps he's saying I want to be as far away from you as possible. I don't even want to be where someone might know you or might have heard your podcast. Although Jody, I don't know if we could get anywhere who hasn't...

Jody: It's all over the world now.

Hank: It is. It's amazing. And then as I just go through the parable, you can see that little tiny things along the way, for example, when he says, "When he was a long way off, his father saw him," he's coming back. When he was a long way off, his father saw him. That changes if it says when he came near to the house his father saw him. That means dad just glanced over and saw him. But if he was a long way off and his father saw him, that tells you he's been waiting for him.

Jody: He's watching.

Hank: He was watching for it. You don't see someone a long way off unless you're watching for it.

Jody: Looking for it, yeah.

Hank: Unless you're looking for them. Little things like that. And he ran or the robe, ring, and shoes. I'll ask my students, the first thing the dad calls for is robe, ring, and shoes, and they're all fitted. A robe is a fitted piece of clothing. My robe wouldn't fit you. A jacket. A ring, a ring is a fitted blessing and shoes are a fitted blessing.

So if he had all of these blessings ready for him, what does that tell you? He knew he was going to come home and he knew what he was going to do when he came home.

Jody: That's pretty awesome.

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Hank: So little things like that. Those are the fun ones.

Jody: That's fantastic. So is basically each chapter of the book focused on a different parable or how is it broken up?

Hank: Yeah, we tried to group them together. So Kathy Gordon, or Kathy Jenkins, the former Kathy Gordon, she was the head editor on this and she really did a lot of work in organizing them together. The first two chapters are really for those who are going to teach the Parables, like seminary teachers or gospel doctrine teachers. It goes through the four gospels and how they're different and how to understand those.

And then the second chapter is on what a parable is and what it isn't, and maybe how to look at them. And then yeah, chapter by chapter, she grouped them together in like, the kingdom of God, relationships, forgiveness.

Jody: I like that, by topic.

Hank: By topic, yeah. We don't cover all 55 but we do a good - we get more than half in here. So I'm pretty excited about how it turned out.

Jody: Now, is this something that youth would be able to pick up and follow do you think? Or is it written more...

Hank: I think so. I've had a bunch of teenagers come up and say I loved that. It's difficult to write a book for both youth and adults, so I basically do what I do in my college classes, and that's helpful because I've got 18-year-olds in the class who are pretty much youth, although they don't think they are, up to in my class, I've got students who are almost ready to graduate or even graduate students who are in their mid-20s.

Jody: Okay, good. So if we consider it college level, that will kind of help us determine who it's appropriate for.

Hank: Yeah. I try to throw some humor in there. I know it's lost on some people. If you've never heard me speak, the humor might be lost on you. But if you've heard me speak, you'll be like, I can hear him...

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Jody: I love your humor so much.

Hank: Because I'm really dumb that way..

Jody: Okay, so Living the Parables, and we can get it at Deseret Book. Where else? Is that the best place?

Hank: I'm a big fan of Seagull Book just because they've been so good to me over the years. But yeah, Deseret Book, Amazon.com.

Jody: You have - Amazon always has it. You have an audio version too, I saw, right?

Hank: Yeah, and I read it this time. So my first book on happiness, I didn't read because I think both covenant and I thought well, I don't know if he knows how to read, and I thought, I don't know if I know how to...

Jody: I thought that maybe you just didn't have the patience to read a whole book.

Hank: Probably part of it, and my schedule. They were like, when can you come in and read in the next two weeks? I was like, about a year from now I can come. But this one we made it happen, so I was excited to read it.

Jody: Good. I love an audio book.

Hank: Their biggest concern was I wouldn't stay on script.

Jody: Yeah, you'd throw in a little joke.

Hank: Yeah, I was like, hey, let's throw some things in, and they were pretty strict on that.

Jody: They said no, just read the page.

Hank: Yeah, I was like, the doctor's permission. You love audio books, is that what you said?

Jody: I love audio books because I can listen while I'm folding the laundry or on a walk, and when I'm reading, it's typically not until I get the kids to

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bed and I'm tired and I get through a few pages and my eyes get tired. It takes me a year to read a book, but I can listen to an audiobook pretty quickly.

Hank: I am the exact same way. I've got an hour and a half drive to go to a fireside and it's almost like a university in your car, right? And just learn as you go.

Jody: Well, I am so excited to read this book. I actually have a podcast episode that will probably come out just before this one where I interviewed a gentleman named Matthew Dicks who teaches the art of storytelling and you know, Christ was the best example of teaching through story and the power of teaching through story.

Hank: Absolutely. I ask my students, how many 2000-year-old books do you have on your phone? There's not very many. I'm like, how did that one get there? I mean, not only who the savior is of course, but those parables, they really can make a difference in your life right now.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, that is such a - I mean, and the Parables I tell my students, they're supposed to make you uncomfortable. You should feel uncomfortable after reading the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, or the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man. That to me is just a beautiful parable and scary.

Jody: Yeah, but to really - to your point, to really I think understand the power of the message, I appreciate people like you that take the time to learn about Jewish culture and Jewish tradition, to teach those nuances that otherwise just do get lost.

Hank: Absolutely. See, if you don't understand like, that Jewish and Samaritans are pretty bitter enemies, you don't understand that the Parable of the Good Samaritan is the parable of the good enemy, which is - that's like, what? I would be a BYU fan, the parable of the good Utah fan. They're like, that doesn't exist, right?

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And it does. He's really throwing this in their faces, their hatred for the Samaritans when he said listen to this story about a really good one. A good enemy who did what Jews wouldn't do, who helped where Jews wouldn't help.

The other part of that story is really fun to point out to people, that the Parable of the Good Samaritan is not only a parable about being good to our enemies and those who are not like us, but it's also a story if you look at it, and I go through this in the book, it's a story of the plan of salvation. The man represents Adam and he falls from Jerusalem to Jericho and it says he fell among thieves. The thieves represent Satan.

And here all these things come up that should be able to save him, but they can't, like the priest who maybe represents the law of Moses. He can't save Adam from the fall, or the Levite, he can't save Adam from the fall. He maybe represents the temple or the prophet. He can't save Adam from the fall.

The only thing that can save Adam from the fall is this Samaritan who is a half Jew, half gentile. Well, the savior is half God, half man. And he comes to save him. He came where he was. That exact wording. He came where he was. Christ comes to the earth, ran to him, bound up his wounds. We would say the wounds are sins.

And where does he take him? He takes him to the inn. Where does the savior take those who have been hurt by sin? He takes them to the church. And what does he say to the church? Take care of him. Take care of him and when I come again, second coming, when I come again, I will pay you back. So that teaches me, my role in a church is to take care of each other. Not gossip about each other, not...

Jody: Compare ourselves to each other.

Hank: Yeah. Our job in church, when people come to our church, no matter which church it is, when people come to our church, it's the idea of let's take care of each other. So I just find that beautiful.

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Jody: That is beautiful, and that our church is the place for the person who's struggling or "wounded," in some way. I think we get this all or nothing mentality sometimes, even as active members, that if there's a question or something you're struggling with, then you shouldn't be going to church.

Hank: Or you're kind of not with us.

Jody: Yes, exactly.

Hank: You're kind of on the outskirts, but that's not true. This is a hospital. It should be a hospital where there's different levels of woundedness. Some people come in for a cold, some people come in with a broken femur, but we all - we're here to help each other. I think an apostle said once, it's not a car dealership, it's not where we go out to show the showroom. It's a hospital. It's a place where we help each other.

And I love the idea of the savior says when I come again, I'll repay you. I will come back and I will know all that you've done to help these people. And all of us are like yes, repay me, I want all those cookies back.

Jody: I need those brownies. Well, I don't know if you know this, but about five years ago when I was first starting my coaching practice, you actually helped me. I messaged you on Facebook and said hey, I love what you do and I'm trying to sort of get my message out into the world and do you have any advice for me? And it took you a while but then you replied to me...

Hank: That's really hard. I've got to tell you, you understand, I'm sure you understand, that is probably the biggest regret or difficulty of my life is I cannot get back to everybody.

Jody: You just can't though, I get it. I totally get it. But you did happen to reply to me and you had really good advice. You said, "Just go out and start helping people. Be willing to just speak in your word or in your stake or don't think that you've above serving."



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And I took that advice and just started sharing what I knew and what I believed and helping people, and it really helped me find my voice and find my message and get me some experience, so anyway, I wanted to thank you for that.

Hank: That's incredibly sweet. I still give that advice to people when they say I want to do what you do, I'll say, well number one, are you sure? And two, I'll say it's difficult to all of a sudden walk on the stage at RootsTech and a lot of people like that, and that was a cool thing.

Walking out there in front of 10,000 people and making them all laugh was a highlight of my life. It was really cool. But it started for me, because I love teaching, it started by teaching. I remember teaching a boy scout group on a picnic table. One guy said, hey, will you come teach my scouts? I said sure, because I love to teach.

And teaching at a ward, young women's, or teaching at activity days. I didn't care what it was. I was just excited to teach. And it slowly grows over time. I can't tell you that speaking at RootsTech was any different than speaking at that boy scouts table. I mean, other than it was a bigger audience, but I think in the lord's eyes, it's all the same.

Jody: That's because you have your head in the right place I think, where you know this is about the people that you're trying to help and it's hard not to make it about you at times when everyone else wants to make it about you.

Hank: Right, yeah. Thank you so much...

Jody: Tell you you're so amazing. But when you keep your head in that space of like, this isn't about me, I just get to be the messenger and I get to be a part of this, that's important I think.

Hank: I think of a scripture often where it says we are to waste and wear out our lives in service, and I think we watched - we've seen leaders of, at least of our church do that. I'm sure leaders of other churches do that as well where you see them slowly just - they start out wiggling their ears and

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being excited, and then by the very end, they're leaning over and just giving their last breath.

And we're all on the same boat here. We are to waste and wear out our lives in service of one another. So I've loved the journey so far. I really have. It's been really fun to watch your influence grow. I remember when you asked to talk to me and I had 100 people message me.

Jody: Remember when I had to hunt you down to get you on the podcast and then you reached out to me saying, can I come on your podcast again? And I was like, why yes you can, brother Smith.

Hank: Even the vice president of BYU called me. Jody Moore wants you on her podcast.

Jody: Probably just has a wife or cousin or somebody in my program.

Hank: Yeah, vice president Richardson, okay, I will call her immediately.

Jody: I love it. So good. Well, thank you so much for coming on. I'm excited to read your book, to listen to you read me your book actually, and we'll link to it in the show notes here for people and thank you so much. It's been fun talking with you.

Hank: Me too, and don't be a stranger. I'm going to write a book on the Book of Mormons so I'm going to call you again.

Jody: Okay, let's do it. Thank you, Hank. Bye-bye.

Hank: Thanks Jody.

If you have a question about something you've heard me talk about on this podcast or anything else going on in your life, I want to invite you to a free public call, Ask Jody Anything. I will teach you the main coaching tool I use with all of my clients and the way to solve any problem in your life, and we will plug in real life examples.

Come to the call and ask me a question anonymously or just listen in. Go to [jodymoore.com/askjody](http://jodymoore.com/askjody) and register before you miss it. I'll see you there.