

LEADING SAINTS

Disrupting Your Calling | An Interview with Whitney Johnson

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leadinglds is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing leadership ability and capacity of lay leaders in order to accelerate the mission of the church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints. leadinglds is not owned nor operated by the church in any opinions expressed on this podcast do not reflect the views of any specific organization. All donations given to leadinglds are tax deductible and go towards the support of leadinglds. For more information visit leadinglds.org a few years ago. I put together a list. A bucket list of sorts of individuals. I definitely want to get on. The podcast. And I never did publish that list. But one individual on. That list was Whitney Johnson. And I'm so grateful for Neil who's probably listening to this listener in the leadinglds audience. Who sent me an email a few weeks back. And said hey. You should really interview Whitney. And I said yeah I know. Can you make a connection. And he did he knows what new well and we started emailing and she was coming to Salt Lake. And so we'd lined up an interview with Whitney Johnson now. If you're not familiar with Whitney Johnson you're probably familiar with somebody. Wouldn't he's worked with. Who is Clayton Christensen. The Harvard business professor who is famous for his his books and research around disruptive innovation and Windy actually worked with Clayton Christensen who Phillips you don't know is Elliot's as well and they started a fund together to All based around this concept of disruptive innovation and we talked about that in our interview but she's also the author of some exciting books. One that comes out here in a few months but her serve her flagship book that most people would know her by is disrupt yourself putting the power of disruptive innovation to work and so in this interview we talked about a lot of things and we were all over the place. But that's how the interviews that I do we. It was interesting to hear about Whitney's faith development a sort of a transition of face. She went through early on her. And and how that how she got through that and especially with the support of her husband but then we delve into the concept she. She's research in disrupt yourself about how these applied to the church context. How can a newly call bishop newly called really say president really create disruption not in a negative sense but in a good sense because disruption leads to change and how you be agents of

change as leaders in the and groups that we serve in and it was a fantastic discussion. Can't wait to share it with you. But before we jump into the inner. Be sure that you're visiting leading the dot. Org clicking on the donate button. we need your help. Who all we ask as a dollar month for the content that we provided leading lds and but having for ten dollars twenty dollars a month. We need your help There's also an option to to recurring yearly donation. And that makes you a core leader. And there's options additional content and resources. You'll have access to as a cord leader but this is really an organisation made by the community of you listeners. And so without your help we can't move forward and so if you haven't yet taken the time to go to leading dot org and hit the donate button. Please do so. And while you're there be sure to join the newsletter because we have unique content that goes out the newsletter that if you're not on the newsletter you'll never see so be sure to that leading lds dot org and now here's my interview with winnie johnson. Today have the opportunity to sit down with whitney johnson. How are you whitney. i'm fine. I'm happy to be here yet. You were both in salt lake and you're not from here but we arranged this to do that in person. I prefer doing in person when we can and here we are now. And where where are you from. I live in lexington virginia. My husband teaches at southern virginia university. And it's just it's about three hours. Southwest of washington d. c. And what. I what i like to call a mormon colony because you've got this county of twenty five thousand people and three very large family wards and one young single adult stake so it is super fine. Someday we're gonna have tumbler back. That's my goal to have a temple inns in lexington virginia. Before i die nice was temple now about three hours. Yeah on a good day three hours. Okay in dc temple which is going to be close wasp well in north carolina which i think is more like four hours away so we will be quite a distance from a template for years. Now the the audience of leading this makes some will definitely be familiar with you and your work but what do people need to know about your background about my background. So do you want to hear a little bit of my story with be helpful absolutely. Okay so i am. I grew up in california in san jose california pre silicon valley and Went to byu or came here to byu met my husband while we were still in college. Typical stories so typical of that. In fact we were in the same ward. We lived across the street from each other one sunday after he heard me playing the piano in room. Eating cold called me and asked me to what was then. A fourteen stake fireside not initially interested in him at all. Though i thought he was nice but over about nine months later. I cannot believe. I'm telling this on a podcast.

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Nine months later he comes back from maryland. He's been working on his family farm. He's lost thirty pounds is gone. I've gone to the airport with his best friend. On the way back. I stopped talking to his best friend. I talked to him. Four months later were engaged house superficial three that transformation. Yes he looked like he looks libero. Yeah he and. I always liked him but now he was attractive as well and so we got married about eight months later will. That's great doesn't matter how you get there and now i'm happy to say that we've been married for thirty one years thirty years next month. In how many kids to rice and to where the kids in our oldest son just got home from a mission in brazil income pinas and he is now utah state and freshman at twenty one years old. He studying business and studying languages spoiler

portuguese now. He's learning spanish really fun and then we have a daughter who's a junior in high school and getting ready to apply to colleges and as you were being raised i would you born into the church is yes no on my mom. Actually i am. My great grandfather was ebenezer. Bryce so bryce canyon's named after her family settled in stafford and thatcher arizona. She's a null and a bryce but my mother had been very inactive when she got married. My dad was not a member when i was about five years old. He was baptized. And so i remember getting my blessing. I remember my baby. Baby was also reflects in the temple. Yeah that's great. And the reason i say yes and no is because then as i graduated from college my both of my parents again became inactive. So so i guess. I was born in the church. You sort of so. Actually i have to tell you this story. So my mom's super inactive in the church and she sends us to preschool. We're living in san jose. California at the time she sends to preschool was called. I won't tell you the name of the school. We come home and we're singing these songs like hop corn popping on april. Kat tree ramones. Like i recognize that song turns out. They were challenged or preschools. So i credit primary songs reactivating my mother only because that's when we started going back to church now that she had two young children because she said she remembered how it felt to be a child and she didn't want to rehearse children outside of the church and so she reactivated well just from those those hymns meriem primary songs by and i have on several occasions been a primary pianos. 'cause i was a music major and i there's just nothing quite like primary songs interesting so and that was when you're preschool age. So from there on you had a pretty traditional go to church. Every sunday faith experience. Yes and no. So i went to. I went to church every sunday. I went on a mission for i was gonna say for my church. I went on a mission for our church to someone. And when i came home and then i got married in the temple to my husband who is now tan and now gorgeous gorgeous and after we got married. I had a bit of a crisis that i think. Maybe you have to have a crisis at some point. I remember i and again. I'm saying that out loud. Because i think it's important i think we need to de-stigmatising she had said to me that when you're in your twenties you have to make a decision to make a decision about whether you believe or not and listened. Lds therapist at byu and her name. Is leslie fine. Our shot at to her. She's now this is so cool. She's now in europe. She and her husband are missionaries fulltime missionaries therapists. And all they do all day long. You should interview them if they'll interview if they'll do it all day. Long talk to missionaries. Is that not the most fantastic are so hard and you to have someone to talk to the professional background. Yes exactly okay. I totally derailed. So you're in your twenties. And she kind of told you you need to make decisions couple years. Where like basically. I did not i think i went to sacramento barely and i think it was. I had you know my my parents had been at active. Got to and. I think it was like holding it together and reich. You know. I believed in the church and was my rock and my foundation. Now the sudden. I was married to this really good man and i had the luxury to rebel. And so i wish to this period of like do i want to go to church and you know and so my rebellion happened. When i was like twenty five and twenty six years old and to my husband's credit he fasted for two years sometimes. Two and three times a week that i would come back and be fully on board and it worked so i would imagine during that time with with your relationship with your marriage did that was that strain or he was sort of letting you well.

That's interesting so i hope all of this is helpful to your listeners interesting. Yeah so what's interesting. Is that when we were engaged to married because my parents marriage was so fraught and i was so convinced that he was going to leave me. I kept trying to push him away and pushed away. Like argument was not fun. And at one point and you. You're doing this sort of test him. Yeah of test. If you're gonna leave. I'm just gonna make you leave now. Yeah better now than later exactly. And so he so he at one point was like heavenly father. I am done. I am so done i am not doing this. I don't wanna marry her and then he said three very important words will not three. I don't know maybe more. I'm not gonna marry her unless you want me to well and heavenly father said i want you to so he married me and here you are and here. We are still in our first couple of years tough but when people sometimes talk about and it's so fun because my husband's bishop he's been bishop of a young single adult ward twice once a new york manhattan and now in impune vista and scu and people sometimes say we'll like what's your biggest accomplishment. And i oftentimes say the fact that i've been married for thirty one years and we liked each other. That's a huge accomplishment. Right doesn't just happen. No i mean sometimes from the outside people can think it just happens right. Oh they're just happy and you have to make a decision to like. I think. I mean i don't know maybe there are some people who like every single second of their life. They're totally in love. But i doubt. I think you have to make a decision and wanted a things. The real benefits and sometimes they're extreme circumstances like you know if someone is like really unfaithful or whatever whatever then that's a whole different kettle of fish but i'm saying sort of garden variety marriages. You have to make a decision and one of the things i think. That's so helpful. Is that when you made a covenant to god when you get married you take that much more seriously. I promised god that i would stick this out. And there's no extraneous things happening so we just have to work really hard to make this work. then we out that's great. That's sparring again. That's another area. Navy needs some eastern. Is that marriage. These is hard and he's be talked about and To go into that with your eyes wide open. I think so during the metric by this classified as a crisis of faith. Or you're just deciding what you believe in in your twenty s pulled out of that or or what happened from there. Probably my husband's fasting. I don't know for sure. I think i don't know honestly that it was entirely a crisis of faith because i've always believed in god. It was more of. I felt like i was kind of rebellious. I was gonna do it a teenager thing like you don't love god do really care about me. It was it was me. It was be testing though because again you know most kids. If you're developmentally things are working. They're going to test when they're young but for me because my parents because of my family situation i had the luxury of testing when i was young because i had to rely on god to hold it together so now now contest now time to test and i think everybody has to have their testing time. Some people are going to happen when they're five some fifteen. Maybe someone their forty. But i do think we have to have that period. Where we're like okay am i. Am i really good with got him i. Am i doing this because we all know that being a mormon is it's it's a commitment. Yeah right right. It's not a casual theo. Right not at all right well and with that our building off of that the. How would you with your back to that time. What interaction and influence did were your local leaders worried about. You was your bishop about your president. That's a really good question. Let's see. I don't remember so in my twenties. I don't remember any really. Pivotal interactions with my church leaders. In this way you one way or the other it was just now. Now i know i am not really and it sounds like there

wasn't like an event you didn't read a book or something they'll pull you out of it was it was the gradual. Your husband was asking for you and and it sounds like he's being very patient. It wasn't like listen. What where do you stand in this marriage. I know because i'm in and you're not we. Never actually it's interesting. Divorce was just didn't use that word but it was. It was just a gradual thing. I think probably what happened is is and i think. This is a testament to sort of a lot of our relationships is. When we're at our most level unlovable if we will just stick with people they will oftentimes just come around. And i think that's important story. I'm glad to share it for leaders to. Here's because i know you know being a bishop and seeing people sort of in this limbo of their faith you wanna run a step in and you wanna give them resources you wanna encourage them but sometimes it just stepping back and love them and fasting you know on the sidelines in goes back and just saying you know it's interesting because i'm laurel advisor now and the girls are really pivotal stage on some of them don't know if they believe or not.

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I mean it's very different for when i was in high school. It was you know which church do you believe in. are you lutheran. Are you catholic. are you jewish. Are you mormon right now. It's like do you believe in god or don't you. I mean these these girls. These kids are going through very different situations. And i remember when i first got called. I felt this need to fix it. Like how do i fix it. How do i make sure than get state. And i had a priesthood blessing from my husband. Not too long ago. And he said heavenly father said through my husband obviously he said your job is not to fix these girls and remember what it was like when you were younger. You didn't need people actually. I'm just now remembering this. You didn't need people to fix it for you. You just need people to the angels for you just need people to like you say hi to you to care about you to just be interested in where you're going to call it. You just need people to care about you as a person. You weren't a project. You weren't a statistic. Just a person they liked and they cared about and that really changed it for me in being loyal adviser because i thought i can do that i can care about them. I can see them. I can like them. I can enjoy them. But it's not my jaw to save them. And i think maybe that's also true for ecclesiastical leaders absolutely and that's such a powerful leadership principle that i learned through my experience in church leadership that you kind of feel like it's on my shoulder to save them but we forget no no no. That's on christ show done. Yeah and it's one of those principles that i think everyone listening would probably you know other head in agreement but the application of sometimes harder than than just stating that right and so. It's just a constant effort learning it. Thank you depending on your calling. You just like learning at again for sure. Let's make a little bit to your professional career. You said you were a music major. Byu i was. So how do you go from being a music major now. Writing business books. Yeah so so yeah. I studied a music major emphasis on piano. We two years later after getting married we moved to new york. My husband was getting his phd at columbia in microbiology and smart. Not just handsome. He's smart he's a really good guy. Actually i don't know yeah. He's a good guy he's gonna be so embarrassed when he hears this anyway. We'll give them a chance to rebut so we had to put food on the table and and he was in school so the person of food on the table was me and so i started working or i i had to go out and get a job here a music major and i am. I'm a female and it's the late eighties. And so the job

i get as a secretary because that's the job that will get still sometimes but certainly in the eighties. That was the case. And so i start working on wall street as a secretary and one of the things that happened is i just started having this epiphany of like okay my husband. He's getting this. Phd for seven years. Like it's probably gonna take a long time. And if i can earn ten x y when iron my mom had always worked so i had that model in my head and i. It was an exciting time. It'd be on wall street. You know it was liar's poker was working girl you know it was. It was fun. Bonfire of the vanities and so i started taking business. Corporate night had a boss who believed in me and allowed me to move up from being a secretary to invest banker. Then just really quickly. I'll give you the trajectory so we know onto these ideas step. Back from investment banker to equity research analysts where i was covering stocks. You know this is a by. This is a cell and disrupted myself. And i left wall street completely. We were in boston at this point. I'm doing public affairs for greater boston. Reporting into clayton christianson. Who's the area authority at the time and connected with him and worked with him on public affairs really closely and at the same time. He was doing some investing on the side of like buying netflix. Going short blockbuster. And those trades were working. And so i thought you know i should create a fund. Well he had never invested. His son was just out of business scored so i cofounded and investment firm with him and so. That's where that's the point in time where i really got steeped in the framework of the theory of disruption. And my work. I can talk to you about in. Just a minute builds on what i learned about the framework of disruption when i was doing investing with clayton. And what a remarkable opportunity to work with clamps richardson. I mean he's he's uncovers. Magazines of people don't know who i mean. He's a mind of our time.

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Another person on the podcast. But he's busy but get him on. I bet i bet you he would okay all right and so then when does that. And so you start this fund with nine christianson and that disaster reject you out to maybe writing book yea interesting so around about two thousand and six oh twelve years ago this is so i left wall street in two thousand and five dollars an equity analyst. I was working at merrill lynch and i literally disrupted myself and i was like i'm going to go do something else and i had all these sorts of entrepreneurial things i was gonna try but at about that same time i started to blog and i started the blog. I didn't know exactly what i wanted to blog about with leading. Les like you. You feel like you have something to say but y'all do because you wanna figure out what you have to say and in the process of doing it figure out. Though well this blog i started was really the idea of the importance of figuring out what are dreams were because i found that i had gone out. I had accomplished this really exciting dream in for a mormon women in particular. This was unusual. And so i was so excited i was like i did this dream. And it's amazing. And so i'll be talking to my friends because now i actually had time to talk. My friend was like what's your dream and a lot of would say. Well i don't have a dream. And or if i did i don't know how we do it and dream meaning. They had dreams to be moms but dreams for themselves too. 'cause like you have a dream to dad and you have a dream to have a career like you have a dream to do go and but there's always this hidden kind of like but i don't think it's my privilege dream. They've never say it. But it was this unwritten thing and so i started

this blog. In retrospect it was this idea of the importance of for every person is on this. Psychological journey to become whole like based on young in. Psychology are union psychology and every man and every woman has to learn how to be a ship and every man and woman has to learn how to be a harbor so the harbor is the nurturing peace. One of the things is so amazing to me is the priesthood teaches. Men how to be harbor. It's what the priesthood teaches. You how to do it teaches you how to love. It teaches you how to serve when you go out and do your work. You learn how to ship you go out and you figure out how to fend for yourself and so the better you are at being a ship the better you can be harbored because you know what it's like to be out being a ship you for how to be harbor but the better harbor. You are presumably. You can become a good ship as well and so. This book turned out to be me encouraging a lot of women to learn how to be a ship. Because i learned how to do that but it was also an homage or no mosh depending how you pronounce it to all these women who were on mazing harbors and i wasn't a very good harbor was like trying to figure out like how do i really do this whole homemaking thing i had children. I didn't feel like i knew how to do it very well. And i was paying homage to all of them of okay. So how like you've got seven children and you're amazing and i've tried to understand and learn how to do it so that book came about sort of i was blogging and then the book came out in two thousand and twelve so that came out when i had already started the fund so it was kind of project the head start in two thousand and six but the fun we started in two thousand and seven and then i left and sold my stay in the fund in two thousand and twelve. The book came out. Dare dream do came out that year and that gives you a taste of being an author. Assuming you liked it i did. It's have you written a book. Well no but i've tried okay. I'm trying okay. Good well so one of the things that great things about writing a book is that it will first of all it legitimises you. It gives you sort of platform like. Oh you've got a book you must have something to say. There's something about that physical piece of it. But i think the more important part of it is it requires you to codify what you actually think because you're committing something to paper and it's putting it out into the world so that intellectual rigor is really important. It's a it's a tough process. But it's important. I feel like it's easy to sort of blog online. You can go back and edit or change but a book is there's something final about putting it into print. Yeah there is also again it just sort of this body of work. I don't know there's something so yeah you should do it. I recommend it. Okay i dare you to. My first book is called dehradun in third. Okay now then your your second book. I think is sort of your your flagship work right now. That's a good description which is called Disrupt yourself putting the power of disruptive innovation to work and this concept of disruptive innovation comes from Mission's work right. And i mean you were probably at ground zero with. Yeah well not zero qasimi. He came out with the theory. Basically hit the scene in his innovators.

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Dilemma came out in nineteen ninety seven. So it's been out for years now. So let me give you the theory of disruption in a nutshell in talks about how i work builds on this difficult put in a nutshell. No i can do arc. So a disruptor is a silly little thing that takes over the world. What do i mean by that. Well you had the telephone. Take over the telegraph. You had the light bulb. Take over the gas lamp and the car. The horse and buggy more recently. You had some unlike toyota

disrupt general motors net flicks blockbuster in uber airbnb. So that's what a disruptor is. Now when you choose to disrupt yourself you consciously make the choice to become a silly little thing in some way loss of prestige loss of money etc. Because you believe that in doing that you'll be able to in some form or another take over the world at the very least takeover you're worth and so that's what the disruption is now where i took it is i said all right. This is really interesting to me. But at a very high level this framework of disruption is a framework for managing change and the change begins with the individual. So i've spent the last five six years codifying. That process researching codifying it. Creating a seven point framework of personal disruption so clean christianson. He his books. He talks in in in the business context of the netflix's than in others many many examples even netflix. You could say disrupting network television at this point right. Hopefully i remember seeing those envelopes of netflix's come in. I never thought going to produce. Some of the most watched the crown amazing. Have you seen absolutely but my wife. We watch it so to go and so and so i like this. The spin took with that. How can we 'cause nobody's really. I mean it's good for ceos and boards of directors and a lot of us aren't running a business that we're thinking how can i disrupt my competitors. Or how can. I released a statement. Make a statement in this industry but everybody as a world that they live in they do and they can be a force in that they did in sort of taking pivoting towards the context of the church. This is so interesting to me. Because i have to use the example. I remember i was in hawaii. Say ward. I was called azaleas corn. President and i went through the same process that every other eligible president had has his. Which is i'm gonna figure it out. I'm going to figure out teaching. And we're going to do the other passage presents they just haven't spent enough time with it and so i did the typical guilt trip lesson. You know agonized over the assignments and making sure. If i can just get these right you know. Then then they'll start doing it. And i remember my percentage from the first one month to that my second month went down a percentage. I'm like oh so devastated. I'm really trying to make a difference. And so in the indianapolis context. I think people they want to be disruptive they want to see change they want to be the force of that change. But i don't know what to do where i'll just do what the last guy did. Or what does the handbook tell me. Well amick tells me. Abc and so. I guess i'll just do. Abc and then up next week and do abc again right so if you were coaching. A brand new release society president for example on how she could be disruptive force in her ward. But we're start such a quick question or is that the place to start is the matter figure it out or one of the actual. So i'll i'll talk through the let me give you just a quick overview of the seven levers or yoga of change and then we can talk through them so the first one is to take the right kinds of risks which means to take on market risk rather than competitor risk because we tend to take on competitive risk to do exactly what other people are doing because it looks more certain and we like things that are certain and yet the theory of disruption will tell you is that your odds of being successful or higher when you take on market risk. So let's play that out for a second And we'll take a megyn. Turn the advice. I would give relief society president or actually a bishop even is Is you need to know what the handbook says. Because this is what god wants you to know. So those are the rules right right. This is the roles but you start to take on competitive risk when you try to do it exactly like the person who before you did it because then you're trying to be like them and that's they had their talents and you've got your talents and so you take on market risk by playing. Were no one else is playing and you go do it the way you would do it and i think it's always easier in award when the relief society president of the bishop is completely different

than the person before. 'cause it's a lot easier to do it because they won't even try because they know they can't be like that person on the very first ten it would be as you play. Were no announces plan. You take market risk and in the context of the church. I would say is you do it the way you would do it.

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So maybe one bishop. I'm fact i can. I can think of our last right now on the prior bishop. The emphasis was on I think it was on reclaiming people who had gone inactive or no it was on baptizing and in this fish said. No we need to focus on reclaiming so gotcha. Here's know during my ministry. My inspiration god has told me and called me. This is what we need to do. And so be willing and understand that you're going to get your own inspiration and revelation for how the world needs to be lead at this particular point in time. So that's how you would take market risk within a an ecclesiastic church context. I would guess a lot of people. They don't talk about market risk. I competitive risk and from my experience seems like leaders. Don't even pick one of the risks. They just sort of say well. I'm supposed to songs. There's a lesson on sunday or good or rather than planning their flag in something and saying this is the direction we're headed. Yeah you know what i mean. So yeah and i wonder why. Why do you think that is i mean. I've obviously never been a bishop and it's interesting that you're having we're having this conversation i it's always worked. I've never been a rubric society. President i never been a primary president. I've never so find some wood to knock on this and it's and it's all good cause the calling i'm to have it's good but why do you think that. Do you think that leaders don't plant a flag because they're just so overwhelmed by the ministry part of their you know or over owned by the administering part. I don't know i guess looking back. I would say that a lot of people. It is an overwhelming call that it can be so reactive that. There's no time to be proactive titan. So i remember the first day of being set apart as a bishop the executive sector said. Here's your appointments. And also and i'm just like oh this appointment next appointment and then you don't have unless you're intentionally taking you don't have time to step back and take a breather and say okay. What are we gonna do here. Suddenly wow that was fast. Five years in writing. Release 'cause so so reactive. Yeah i think this is. Where the idea of minna management strategy which is certainly beyond my purview. By this particular part of it is like thinking about. What am i going to accomplish before even in the door and having one thing you're gonna accomplish like can. We sometimes try to get anything done if i can get this one thing accomplished while i'm in this leadership role i'll consider you feel like from your business background. Do you feel like a lot of businesses. Make that same mistake for their their soul we just have to make payroll every week that they forget that they don't think a lot of managers that to instead of really thinking. Okay like what. Do i want to get done in this role. And what do i want the people who i just hired get done in this role because it you know in having a plan for they're going to be in this role they're going to be the bishop they're going to be the site president for two years for three years for four years. What do i want them to done during that time. And that's a great place for that leader s themselves. I question is. I want to come and i'm talking. I'm thinking wow have. I done that. Like i'm laurel adviser right now. I've been there for like nine months. Have i sat down and said ko's cobbler's children have no shoes. Have i

thought what will i consider a success. When released it gets a good exercise. In i think it some may do then. It's easy to default to use a gallows corner example. Oh well. I want to get in the ninety percent of home teaching. Like there's these answers that are sort of culturally out there that right. I'm just supposed to do that right. I'm supposed to be the teacher guy but sounds with taking a market risk. That's competitive risk. Right if you just totally ever just going to. We're going to be really good at home teaching. And i'm gonna. I mean out do the last president but really taking marcus stepping back and saying what if we didn't focus on teaching right. What else would it be focused. What if what. If heavenly father wants us to focus on making sure that families get the temple like i mean you just don't know you just don't know and that's what the market risk is being willing to take on that uncertainty and play where no one else is playing and go to heavenly father and say i mean remember. We're coming into these callings with a brain we're coming to these callings with all. This accumulated experience and heavenly father. It's not like you compartmentalize it and say says okay. We'll six days of the week. You're a chemical engineer. But under what you'd ever take any of that training that you've had on sunday like no right. He wants you to take everything that you've learned learned and bring it to bear on that problem that you need to stop right which actually goes to my second one. Let's play to your distinctive straits. It's not only what you do. It's what you do while the others around you don't an example of a distinctive strength or someone who has a distinctive strength is the koala so the qual- like this cuddly little animal six hours a day on. And so you're like well least twenty hours a day. how does a possibly well. It eat it survives because he eats eucalyptus leaves which are poisonous to pretty much every other animal in the animal kingdom including humans and so this is its distinctive strength. And so what i would say is for a new leader is.

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How do you go into that role into that calling and use your strengths. So i'll give you a great example on my call right. Now so we've got a young women's leader or the president young women's. She's in her mid thirties. She's a fulltime mom. She's got a daughter with down syndrome. She loves homemaking. She loves sewing. She loves sports. Like all these things. Then there's be who's in her fifties and i am. I love my career. My children are growing. I can barely cook. And so although i make really good chocolate chip cookies on noted and so i think i think to myself okay so if i go into this calling and try to be to these girls what are young women presence are doing and it's a huge fail but if i go into this calling and one of the things i felt pretty prompted to do is to be kind of on their case about college. Are you going to college. Have you gotten your applications into college like that's something that's a distinctive strength that i have because of my background because of what i've studied because i cared about and if you'll combine what you do all that other people don't with playing where no one else is playing and here's this flywheel effect of being able to move up learning curve really quickly and be very successful in your calling love that i mean every and that applies every step back and say what am i bringing to the table. That's going to be my thing right. Not just again going through the motions of doing with the last guy did or you know. Okay this lesson. i'm supposed to teach. I just teach it but even as a teacher could ask my thing. Well like okay. I'll give you another example. So i as i make a living doing speaking and consulting advising and so with our young

women you know how we just changed the curriculum. They want us to have these councils. Well i i do that naturally. When we're having these lessons like i do not do all the talking like these girls. What do you think what are your comments. There's no right answer. I want to hear what you're saying. But that's a strength. That i have of wanting to be able to really engage with them and so i need to make sure that i bring to the table. Not think well because the young women's president teaches the lesson this way. I should teach that way. No i should look at the lesson. I should get my inspiration. An i should teach these girls in the way that i feel. They need to be taught. Because heavenly father called me to this calling at this time for these young women or young men or or et cetera. What would you say do leaders just says i just. I just don't have strengths. I just you know. I'm just the the quality sleep. How do we find these pinpoint sort of at a loss to. Yeah so so. I would say a couple of things couple suggestions first of all. Let's hoppy cock right but once we get past that a couple of suggestions i would make his number one is thinking about. What makes you feel strong. You do a lotta things every single day and there's some things if you start making a note like a check barker an axe after you finish one activity like you're gonna finish this podcast. You'll finish your like. Do i feel energized. i feel depleted. If you feel energized put a check. you're gonna find that over time. There's this pattern of where you have your check marks and now it's going to point you in a direction of a strength another way you can figure out what exasperates you. What do you look at and use like. This is such common sense like why. Can't these people get this right. Guess what that's it. That's one of your strengths. Like whenever someone says. Oh anybody would do that. And i'm sure you've heard that people in your word all the time. Oh anybody would not do bingo. You've just hit on one of your strings and the third one is compliments. What compliments do you dismiss all the time and we're really good at deflecting. Compliments like oh no but yeah you'll start writing down the compliments you're getting that's gonna tell you okay. These are might. This is my genius. This is my superpower. And i need to make sure that whatever those things are i am bringing those two by calling and then the fourth thing that i would say to. You is patriarchal blessing anyone. Oh yeah absolutely right. Yeah i mean that's going to tell you what your spiritual gifts are. That's going to tell you. It might even tell you some other things and so i think oh and another tip is look at what your favourite callings and then because if you look if you go back and you catalog your favourite callings the ones that you were just like oh i was. This was so fun. I love his calling. It's going to give you really good information about what your strengths are. Well and i just think what a fantastic exercise do with maybe presidency in your princi-meeting is help. Identify ruined do that. Which makes it really easier is you can have instead of you can say to so the president can say okay. We want to talk to janelle right now. And i want everybody to write down on a piece of paper what john l. superpowers are because everybody the presidency knows what l. superpowers are now. Might not know. Yeah but the presidency does and they read them out loud and then you take the step further and say are you using these strengths deliberately on purpose in your calling to serve because we use our strengths like in this haphazard.

00:40:15 - 00:45:07

I'm in a desperate situation sort of way. Nice love that to move on one sharp okay. What's the third one. okay third. i'll go through the next couple pretty quickly. so number. Three is embraced constraints. We'd need constraints to climb curve. And i think in the church because it's a volunteer organization. We always have constraints. We've got a lack of time. We've got a lack of money. We've got a lack of everything. So the way i would think about that in your calling his. How do you turn those constraints into tool upgradation. How do you say okay. We don't have enough people to do x. How do we know how to flip that on. Its head something that just came into my mind. And i don't think this is actually an issue but i think about when we first had to start cleaning the chapel. Everybody's a janitor. Oh my goodness. I was so mad. I was so annoyed kidding me. Just hire people to clean a child now. It's probably not true that the church couldn't afford to hire someone to clean it but that to me is a great example of turning a constraint into to a a tool creation because i will tell you every time i come back from cleaning to chapel i feel so good i feel and so there's a sense of worship and a sense of ownership that i would never have felt if i were one of the janitors and so i'm sure there are many leaders out there can automatically point towards some constraints but you'd take sometimes to maybe create some constraints ashes your former group. Yes unique constraints. Because if you think about it you need friction and frictions constraint like you can't go remember that. Talk back the talk by elder bedar that he gave a few conferences about the man who was stuck in the snow and they had to put an with allow guns. No it was the load. Yeah it was the low that got them out. So yeah what i would say is. If you've got people in your in your ward that actually give you a great example of how you create constraints. I remember when we were manhattan. You have best and brightest kids. They're right they're all going to school. These amazing schools and divided our ward. And i was like. Why are they dividing award. I love our ward. This is so fun. And i had this really strong spiritual impression that they divided our ward. Because you had these kids here actually. We were one of those kids at that point that were here in our brains were being pushed and tested and we needed something. That was equally hard spiritually and by dividing award. That could happen. If they'd kept us one word it wouldn't happen so we needed something. It's a lot easier to him but coordinator than it is to be an elvis corn president. And you needed more people to have the opportunity to be present at the very time that their rain muscle was flexing their spiritual muscle flexing to that is an example of attorney a constraint into a tool creation. Yeah and it's an opportunity for you know sometimes in a council meeting someone will bring up an obvious constrain of the warden in for the bishop to say. Yeah that's that's yeah figures up now would blessing eh. Remember elder carmax talk. You probably don't because this is a long time ago. I do remember the priesthood. The power of the priesthood. And how like we in the church operate as the priesthood was a light bulb and we need to start turning on like. It's ten thousand light bulbs like figure something out. It's not don't just use your learning. Yes you're learning but use your power. What about in the context of you know calling certain people. I've been many meetings with the bishop. Breaker shake pregnancy. Where we're just sort of you know trying to figure out the right fit and it's easy to point towards their constraints a personal constraints that wouldn't work should be more open those constraints when calling people to positions. I think so. I think as leaders. We need to be really careful. We need to be aware of those constraints. We need to be prayerful. Because i think that if if that person really needs to be called up position god will insist that you call them and i also think that it's important to recognize that to allow the person to say here are my circumstances. I'm going to give you

another example from my life so we were living in new york. We had a young. Our son was like a year and a half. I was working seventy hours a week. My husband's the bishop of a young single dealt with like were were maxed out. But i'm also feeling very isolated because my husband's not going to church with me. I'm going to church every sunday. And everybody thinks. I'm i have no husband and i it's really hard and the bishopric comes to me and says we want to extend you in calling to be an extraction worker. Rose like okay. That's going to isolate even more. So i prayed about it and i went back to him. The council i think it was the counselor and i said i really because i didn't have a calling point time. I said i feel like you were inspired to extend me a calling. But i don't feel like this is the calling said we're you go back and pray about it and just find out.

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Just make sure. This is the calling that that i'm supposed to have right now. So comes back in for the first and only time in my life you can have any calling you want. You can be a relief society teacher you can be the spotlight coordinator you you tell us what you want. So of course my. I want to be there at least sites because like you all know that's telling you the church. I get the revelation of supposed to be the spotlight coordinator. Well sound like a made up calling but for a person who is feeling very isolated. Yeah this allowed me to once a week go out have lunch with someone interview them get to know them and spotlight them in church within a couple of months i didn't feel isolated anymore and women were being spotlighted so i think i know. We've kind of wound our way somewhere else. But i think a time constraint can turn so back to your original question yes i think. Sometimes we make assumptions about people constrain. And i think we need to sort of say. Okay let me pray about it. And then then say to them. This is how i'm feeling. This is my revelation. But can you just double check on your end you about it too. Because i don't think we sometimes let people pray about it and also i believe sometimes and people say no. We haven't said to them. Have you prayed about this. We just let him say no. No have you prayed about this. Are you sure that god doesn't want you to be doing this. Calling and really think there's this Cultural thing that's emerged that sort of the bishopric mesa decisions and lets us know what the decision is when we include everybody in that process of revelation. It usually comes out that it's better for everybody and we get deeper revelation. Because yeah yeah. That's great shoe. Move on the number. Four number four is battle entitlement. It's the belief that exists. Therefore i deserve and this is an interesting one. I would say that we in the church do this actually one pretty well and one of the reasons we do it well and this is why one thing i love about the churches that we get released. You get released. You're not like you know. I was even thinking so like your bishop. And then you're a nursery leader you know your gospel doctrine teacher. And then you're teaching the nine year olds that are kick in your butt right it primary. That's what happened to me. But i was even thinking about this the other day where we just had a new prophet present nelson announced. I thought you know. What was this. Like for elder Door right such a model example. What's happening because he yes. He still impossible. But i think the natural man would feel a little bit. Like you've been demoted. I think the natural man would and yet the church teaches us you battle entitlement and you get released when you die right so i think that the church is uniquely

uniquely. Set up for us to battle the sense of i exist therefore i deserve or an important because i have this calling. It still happens. And i think we do each other to when we say. Oh what's your calling now. Think we do is service. But i think more than probably any other organization on we do a really good job of having institutionalized for us to battle our own sense of self aggrandizement. And it's nice to see that this happened on much higher scale on the dynamic tune the first prince of the apostles and and for me. I think it's it's it needs to be said that sure. We would love assume that for door. it's not. He's hasn't even thought about this. This feeling slighted or anything. But i know in my experience i come from just moved from a stake where i was the bishop. I was in the stake presidency. And now in this ward where i'm teaching the youth and high priest wants a weekend and i'd be lying myself. I didn't have moments where. I just look at bishop like. Don't you see the experience. I bring the table here. Like give me something like i could really help out here. You know but it's such a going back to this principle. It is so healthy to just sort of reset. In rebuke reminded. It wasn't about you. You know it's it's you can serve elsewhere. And i think every single person goes through that every person dies and maybe elder didn't maybe he did we don't know but it's okay if you do feel that way why it's important to say that right it is and you just say okay but this this is of heavenly father. Just reminding me like you said it's not about you. It's about serving and and you are in this calling because you need is lawrence and things they needed to learn some things and now you're out of this calling because you need to learn some things need to learn as for sure number five okay yes number five is to give failure it's do and To recognize that every experience can be reframed as a failure or success. I think that what's interesting in the churches that on the one hand. We think we're really good with failure. Sort of in a long term. But i think in the short-term we really struggle with it. And i think what i like is this idea of mindset that we believe that our brains are plastic great research by carol duet called mindset.

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I think that oftentimes we struggle with this in general because we say we believe we can change. but we don't always actually behave like we believe at So that's something. I think that we could work on more and allow allow people to make mistakes like and have it be okay that make mistakes. I mean you know. You've heard many times where i well. I can't talk about this thing that happened early. Slide because everybody will judge me. So i actually i know i sometimes err on the side of talking about things that have been hard out loud just because i feel maybe because i'm getting older i've like how can i help de stigmatize like you know. Here's what happened when we didn't have any money. Here's what hap- you know in those experiences of how so. I think in the church the way this can be applied is just to be a little bit more willing to be open about things. That are hard for us. Not just the acceptable difficulties like illness or death or have young children. And i don't know how to do it but some of the less acceptable things that we're struggling with. And i think that. I see this creep up in a you know we. We all would agree. Yes we all sin but only the real broken people have to go and talk to the bishop and just by talking about that in an eligible setting whatever and saying i had a rough time and again not that we wanna parade around our our weaknesses but it does something. you've articulated. Perfect you give failure. It's do there was a purpose for that. It wasn't just a

horrible mistake. That should never be talked about. There's a purpose in that for us individually and we should articulate that so that others realized that whatever the failure they're going through the scholar you know one of the things. I think that. I has gotten so much easier for is that when something doesn't work well i think okay. How can i make meaning of this. And i think that's one of the beauties of the gospel and something certainly teaches us is that there's always a way to make meaning of something that doesn't work and so how can we make meaning of whatever hasn't in any other perspectives. As far as getting failure to is more like an internal thing or can a leader apply it to to whom they lead yeah. It's a really good question. I think the other thing. I would say and i'm not sure how this applies but what i i would say shame limits disruption not failure and so. I think that we need to really be aware of as were working with. People in our wards is too when they have made mistakes any kind of mistake to not shame them and i'll give you a getting example just recently so our girls In laurels we had an activity and all the girls said. Hey we're gonna go to this thing and then none of them showed up and so last week laurels. We sat down and said i wanna talk about this and said it's okay that you couldn't come i said but what's important is that you knew you can come and you need to learn how to say no so. We're gonna talk about how to say no because you need to practice saying no and so it was a way to call them on what had happened. But i'm pretty sure there was no message. Communicated that they were bad it was. Here's what happened. Here's how it felt. Here's the lesson. I think you need to learn that you need to say yes more and your bad. 'cause you didn't say yes more. It's you actually knew you could. You had too much on your place. I need you to learn how to say no. This is an important skill for you. So i think the practical application would be. Is you know like with the elders quorum in the home teaching. How do you help tease out. The difference between sham and just making mistakes. Yeah that's because you could've easily shown up d did you. Do you ladies know how much i prepared for this right man. You really hurt me. This unique and that wasn't the point because they didn't want to hurt you just didn't say now because they didn't want to hurt. Yeah exactly yeah and finding this you know. I've got a five year old and a three year old and just constantly. I'm pulling myself back saying no. Don't say it like that. But what what's the lesson they need to learn right. Not how can i make him feel bad enough that they'll never do it again right. What's the lesson they need to learn that they can apply extent of that. Okay so that's six and the number seven is five six. Six six is step back in order to grow and so step back in order to grow. I mean certainly. Oh my goodness i just reverse them. So five is step back to grow sixes failure. But that's okay step back to grow. Is this idea of think about whenever you jump. You crouch before you jump you. Bring your ski. Poles backed like race downhill. And you bring your fist back in order to punch like you always step back in order to to grow in and so on. I think the way that we apply this there. Lots of different ways to do this like you. Step back to think about the big picture within the church. I think you step back to grow. We've kind of touched on this already of you.

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Step back into a different calling. In order to grow the growth happens in different ways but stepping back can actually be a slingshot because if you think as a reminder to myself as we're talking about miss the whole point of the church is for us to grow up spiritually the whole point of

the churches for us to be like god and so you step back in order. She slingshot ford skirts lee in some form or fashion i think being released from a calling is oftentimes very much. Step back in order to grow in some way the awesome so now we're number seven so seven is driven by discovery so one of the things that we discovered is that as a disruptor you're in search of a yet to be defined market. You're always going to have this purpose but higher gonna get their as yet to be determined. So you're this explore like lewis and clark so remember that story of thomas. Jefferson makes the louisiana purchase. He sends lewis and clark out to figure out what he's acquired. They start in saint louis heading to the pacific ocean with keelboats which are use on rivers by the way. They think they have enough supplies. Well turns out mercer over peters out. They run out of supplies. They hunt and trade with the native americans and then when they get loss they hire a guide and with each new discovery. They just kept having to alter their plan. And it's the same for us. So one of the things. I thought was really interesting. Is it seventy percent of all successful. New businesses end up with a strategy. That's different than the strategy this started with and so just like our conversations a little bit today very discovered driven. Probably gonna director the funnest run for not expecting as a leader in any given calling be discovery driven. Say okay. here's my plan. But i'm going to get new information and i would say this especially applies with extending callings that you just brought up. You're going to have a plan. you prayed about it. You think this person's the right person then you say well okay gelernt. Can you come into my office. I can't say to john. Because i wouldn't be giving you to call into john. You can say whitney can you come into my office. I feel impressed to call you. This and then i say well did you know about xyz. Now you'd have to information so you're being discouragement. Okay i'm gonna pariahs more. Can you pray about some more than you make a decision. And so i think in the church it's important to allow ourselves to be discovery of an an. What's interesting is that korn ferry. The research firm executive search from did a study to come up with a leading predictors of c. suite success. I think this is true for me. And for the church the ability to deal with ambiguity to walk into the unknown to take a step forward together feedback and adapt. Because right. i mean you start day one. Is bishop things within two hours. three hours one day of interviews. Whoa totally different than what. I thought our award needed slayer discovery driven. Then you figure it out you alter your plan and ambiguity sometimes It's maybe gets a negative connotation in the church little bit that we want certainty and we want. This is the how principles layout and so wanting to being motivated step. 'ambiguities is an essential step. You know what you just made me. Think of something kai sheriff. Let's do it. Do you know how we battle. You know where we get entitled as members of the church or is that because we feel like we have it all figured out the sin of certainty. god lives. someday. I'm gonna go to the celestial kingdom. I know what's going to happen to me after i die. And i think we get a little smug and because we get smog in the sense that we don't feel this need to really we get a little comfortable sort of intellectually and we don't sometimes dig is deep as i think we could not always but i think sometimes we do absolutely absolutely and we fill sort of anointed and so it limits us to to discovery discovery right to have all the answers to the question so therefore we have no questions but the questions is what guides us. Yes oh that was so beautifully sad. I love that. That's a tweeter ball that needs to go and your dead now. Well loss raymond so good so those are the seven anything. We missing those. No i what i would say. Is we kind of try to kind of recap as so you've got those seven that move you along the learning curve and then what's super exciting and interesting to me and this is what my next book is about building a team as i

look at it and i say every organization. Every ward is a collection of learning curves. So every person's on one of these curves and you build an eighteen. You build a high functioning ward by optimizing those curves so you wanna have at any given time seventy percent of your people in their sweet spot. So they've been the calling two to three years. You want to fifteen percent of your people the low and their brand. They have no idea what they're doing. They're asking all sorts of questions. Like why can't we have. The laurels go into relief society once a week once a month. And then you've got fifteen percent of the people at the high end.

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Know what they're doing and so they can mentor other people but you don't want to leave them there too long because they'll get stale because we all do we've been in too long. We get tired. We just do because our neurons like to learn and we were not learning. We get bored. It's just the way nature works so one of the things that to me is so beautiful about the gospel and about the structure of the church. Is that heavenly. Father knows how our brains work and so he's built in so that every couple of years he pushes us to jump to a new learning curve. So we're always staying engaged. Were always engaged and so so. That's for the individual and then because the individual is always engaged. They're always thinking of ways that they can innovate and then as a bishop. You're able to. I guess they advice would be is try to you. Know at any given time. Have seventy sending your people sort of knowing what they're doing and then when you need to release people do but don't release too. Many people wants donors extend too many collins at once because it creates some disarray. See one how that could balance of of where people are. I went through that really fast. That makes sense no and so. That's the basic premise of your book. Okay and i think we may need to do another episode of our time. That's why i wanted to just recap it really quickly to meet out such a beautiful beautiful thing about the structure and the infrastructure of the turnover. And i'm intrigued by that and and And that's what as. I was preparing for this. I was sort of looking at both the premises of of your books. And i think maybe because on her new book and maybe the old book but we just gotta take one at a time but this is this has been so enlightening just understanding. I think it's important. Just give yourself permission to disrupt herself absolutely that. You don't have to look outside the box in and what the term you used of of You know as far as being market competitive just walk at risk market risk going living there and and being okay with that you don't have to be like the last guy playing a new area right absolutely absolutely. Yeah i mean maybe that's our big takeaway from this session is like when you get a new calling like figure out. Where does god want me to be playing in his calling. And what strains and what talents and native gifts do i have to bring to bear on this. Because that's the flywheel effect that's gonna make you super super effective in serving the people in your in your word all right last question. I have as you look back on your bill. The're time is a leader in in the secular world in church. How his leading made you better disciple. Or follower of jesus christ. So one of the things. I've been doing is i took elder. Nelson's president nelson's profit nelson's because it was he was president before injunction to memorize living christ's sake memorized. Oh that's great. I will not recite it for you now but what i will say is that one of the big aha that i've been having recently is. There are a lot of amazing ideas out in the world like amazing ideas and amazing thinkers and people who inspire us to do better and

be better and i realize that it would be super easy to just sort of espouse ideas i think by studying the living christ. It's reminding me that all of those things are valid. Like i read. Tim ferriss for our workweek. Some great stuff in there and he's a brilliant man with the foundation is still jesus christ like all of those things that he is doing and he thinks and all of this light that he has. He doesn't know it he doesn't realize it but like elder door sat in the in the priesthood session about the sunlight. He doesn't understand that. The sunlight is always jesus christ and so. That's something that i feel like. I am learning. I know that didn't answer your question. But that's what came into my mind. So that's what i'm sharing with you is. I'm really beginning to understand. I think in a different way or perhaps for the first time of what the prophets said when they say his foundation. It's not that everything out in the world is bad and crisis good crisis foundational and then all the good builds on that and so i need to just remember that and focus on that and build on that and not let anything supplant. That concludes my interview with whitney johnson. I feel so blessed when i get to interact with some of these Innovative thinkers of our time. And that happened. To be lds as well and obviously. I don't think that's a coincidence. But i'm so grateful for whitney and it was so fun to just see how down to earth she was. She was fun to talk to and You know this such an engaging discussion in i benefit from it. I hope you did as well if you want to. Follow whitney who check her out on twitter. And also at whitney johnson dot com twitter handle is at johnson whitney and she's quite active their follower there and go checkout or books at the amazon linked to all her books but definitely worth diving into and learn more about your personal leadership development by disrupting yourself.

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Also if you haven't done so yet be sure to head on over to leading ilias dot org and check out the two free leadership trainings. That are available there. One is our recent leadership webinar and the other is how to hold a one hour. Pregnancy meaning strings will definitely improve your leadership efficiency and also minimize the time meetings. Take everybody needs help there. My right so remember. Be a leader not calling. It came as a result of a position of leadership which was imposed upon us. Either auto heaven who brought forth a restoration of the gospel of jesus christ and when the declaration was made concerning the own and only true and living church upon the face of the earth we were immediately put in a position of loneliness loneliness of leadership from which we cannot shrink nor run away and which we must face up with boldness and courage and ability.