



## Leading People into the Abrahamic Covenant | An Interview with Kerry Muhlestein

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Hey a quick note before we jump into this episode. Here at Leading Saints we are trying to do more How I Lead interviews now. You've probably heard them before. It's where we find everyday leaders around the world who are serving in one capacity or another, maybe an elders quorum president, ward mission leader, High councilor, stake presidency, counselor, there are so many different callings of leadership that we have in our faith tradition. And we like to sit down with them one to one and just say, "How is it that you lead?" Give us a few principles. Put it into perspective. What's your area like?" and these turn into phenomenal resources of best practices, and it's always fun to hear what the other guy is doing. So if you know somebody who we could interview on a How I Lead segment, regardless of their calling, we would love to connect with them. Goto [leadingsaints.org/contact](http://leadingsaints.org/contact) and send us the information. Maybe hivem them a heads up. We'd love to reach out to them, connect, and see if we can get them on the Leading Saints Podcast for one of our How I Lead segments. Again, go to [leadingsaints.org/contact](http://leadingsaints.org/contact) and send us the information.

Hey hey welcome back to the Leading Saints Podcast. My name is Kurt Francom, your host, as always. I gotta, just, if you will allow me folks. I know many of you have been here a long time, but there's some newbies in the room. And I need to explain to them what Leading Saints is. We are a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Latter-day Saints be better prepared to lead, and we do that by creating content, helpful content I hope. Through this podcast—which you can subscribe and leave a review; that'd be great. We have online articles at [leading saints.org](http://leading saints.org). You can subscribe to a newsletter. They're wonderful. The newsletter comes out every week. That is quite popular. We have virtual summits and so many other ways than I can think of right now. So we welcome you. We hope you jump in and binge many podcasts. Starting from this point.

*Now, in this episode, I talked with Professor Kerry Muhlestein who is in the Ancient Scripture Department - Religion Department. I'm not sure how those departments work down there In Provo, but he's a smart guy and he recently came out with a book called God Will Prevail, Ancient Covenants, Modern Blessings*

and The Gathering of Israel and it is such a phenomenal read that I highly recommend; He recently reached out to me to jump on the podcast with me to talk about the concept of the Abrahamic Covenant or the New and Everlasting Covenant. What is it? How's does it work? What do we need to understand about it? Is it just celestial marriage or what? and I think this is an important doctrine to - you know we don't have to be PhD scholars around as leaders, but to have a good grasp on some of the components and definitions and ideas because we - many viewers out there listening or keyholders that have to facilitate covenants or ordinances that are related to covenants. And which is awesome. But sometimes I remember even as a bishop I didn't fully understand fully what we were doing with some of these - these ordinances and covenants and so we jump into it. We talk everything from the Sacrament to restricting the Sacrament that to what it means when somebody loses their membership in the Church and how that relates to the gift of the Holy Ghost in their communication with the Divine. We talk about divorce and temple cancellation - sealing cancellations and what that means for the kids and on and on -- just really dug into some great concepts. You're going to enjoy it. Let's get into it. So here's my interview with Professor Kerry Muhlestein, the author of God will Prevail.

*Everyone we are live. This is Kurt Francom with Leading Saints and joined here today, in power of the internet, with the Professor Kerry Muhlestein. How are you? I'm good, how are you? Very good.*

Well I'm excited to have this discussion. Thanks for having me on. You know, digging into some of these doctrines that we sometimes in the restored church we get into rhythms and we go through motions at times and sometimes we fail to step back and realize the phenomenal thing that's taking place in the eternities because of the restored keys and the authority that we have. And so we're going to jump into the Abrahamic Covenant which you've done a lot of research on and obviously teach it at BYU about - and all it's connected to your recent book called, God Will Prevail. Maybe just tell us the impetus of you writing it and putting this book together.

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Sure, I'm happy to. So, I started teaching Old Testament at BYU, almost 27 years ago. The first class I taught the first half of the Old Testament. So, you hit Abraham - the Abraham Covenant - right away and I found right away that most of my students really didn't – they knew, okay, this is important – I don't know – but they didn't fully get it. Right about that same time, President Nelson gave a talk here at BYU where he talked about being part of the Covenant. And I thought, you know, we've got a disconnect here. If course, he wasn't President then but he was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. We've got a disconnect. Most of my students don't have any idea what it is and we've got an Apostle who says this is important and we should know what it is. And he's not stopped that message since; he just keeps ramping it up and keeps talking about it more and more and more.

And so, for a long time, I've tried to figure out how to study and teach what that Covenant is and why it's relevant of and why it's important. I'd say it took kind of a step forward about seven years ago, now. When I was talking with – well I was on a committee that involved seminaries and institutes and the three BYU's and we're working on some curriculum changes and we talked about trying to incorporate elements of the New and Everlasting or the Abrahamic Covenant in some of the classes and as we worked with different teachers - and we figured out the majority of teachers at all of our institutions really kind of struggled with it themselves, and one of them just said, and I won't say who it was because

he didn't give me permission to use his name, but a fairly influential person in religious education circles in the church said, you know, we have some educating to do and I thought well I guess that's my next task. So I spent about six years really intensely trying to understand the Abrahamic Covenant or The New and Everlasting Covenant, they're really the same thing – and we can talk about that more if you want, but as I studied that as carefully and as intensely as I could and then I started writing some articles and I realized the articles they're limited to a group of a couple of weird academics who'll read these but not most people; but what's more they would have to piece together, like twenty articles to the bigger picture. I just needed to write a book. Because the Saints seemed to - and especially after President Nelson started talking about the Gathering of Israel is the most important cause on the earth today right? - and then I'd talk with youth or other adults about it and they'd say yeah, but I don't get it.

I thought, I just need to put this out there and make it available for everyone if this - this affects our exaltation - in fact, I've often said this in class; that I say, I'm gonna suggest if you're exalted it's going to be within the Abrahamic Covenant and I suspect we all want to be exalted right? It affects all the ordinances - every ordinance we do in the church is affected by this. These are, as you said we're going through these motions, and we need to stop and think what are the - what's the big picture in your – what's the exciting impact of this and so that's why tried to create the book so that, you know - the subtitle is "Ancient Covenants, Modern Blessings in the Gathering of Israel. I want us to see how those ancient covenants tie in with the blessings were receiving today and the cause that President Nelson has asked us to be involved in.

*Yeah, that's awesome - wonderful. Now, we're doing this via Facebook Live here, so there's a good amount of people watching on Facebook and so if individuals are out there watching we would love - give us your – we want to send Professor Muhlestein your toughest questions around the Abrahamic Covenant - the Gathering of Israel, the New and Everlasting Covenant - all those types of things especially in the leadership context and that's where I wanna go with some of our discussion. Maybe you can give us just sort of an introduction on how you approach these - these doctrines in your book. But then I want to sort of trend towards the discussion of what does the leader needed to know? A leader a stake president who's preparing a young missionary to go on a mission and obviously go through the temple in these types of things. Sometimes it's like you know you fill out the recommend. Yes, the questions. And you're on your way. We have our Temple Prep class and those types of things. So maybe give us just a foundation to start from with the beginning to understand these doctrines that you talk about in your book.*

I'm happy to do that. And I think it actually perfectly coincides with how it would work with a leader. So, I think we can do both at exactly the same time. So, again, I've - I've seen people struggle to know what is the New and Everlasting Covenant? What is the Abrahamic Covenant? I know I get baptized. I know that's a covenant. I know I renew that covenant at the Sacrament. I go to the temple. I make covenants and I get married. What do all of these have to do with each other? And we talk about the covenants. So I guess that just means making covenants, but what is that right? And so it's helpful if people know that the New and Everlasting Covenants - Joseph Smith teaches that that is a covenant that is first entered into before the world was even created by the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and that is their covenant that they will save mankind. And I don't know, and so here I am just speculating, but I suspect that the covenant was presented to us in pre-mortality in what we called, you know, the council

in heaven - in any case but we do know is that it is established with Adam and Eve when after they're cast out of the Garden of Eden that they're given that. At that point it may not be called New it might just be called the Everlasting Covenant, right? But every now and then it has to be renewed or reestablished so we call it New and it is reestablished with Abraham but at that point there's a slight change where Abraham's told that everyone who's part of that covenant will become part of the seed of Abraham. And so, every time it's reestablished it's - it's - maybe it's the way it's administered

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and some of the details may be tailored to specific dispensation, group and people, right? But because everyone will be a descendant of Abraham then we often - most often in the scriptures it is referred to as the Abrahamic Covenant and sometimes the New and Everlasting Covenant. So, what - what we want people to understand. I think when most members of the church hear the New and Everlasting Covenant, they think marriage. And that's true. I've got this in the book. You know, Elder Nash at one point says, that's A New and Everlasting Covenant, it's not THE New and Everlasting Covenant, and the same thing with baptism. It's A New and Everlasting Covenant. These are all stages or rungs - rungs in the ladder, we could say, or steps in the ladder in the Abrahamic or New and Everlasting Covenant.

So, for example, Brigham Young teaches we enter into the New and Everlasting Covenant at baptism. On multiple occasions, President Nelson's said we enter into the Abrahamic Covenant at baptism. Well, that's because they're essentially the same thing, but that's where, if we're going to talk about, especially for leaders, this is what we want people to know. When we get baptized, you're entering into, not just this - we think of baptismal covenant - okay, I'll be cleansed, I'll obey the commandments - you're entering into something pretty significant. Most eight year olds aren't going to be able to fully comprehend that, but I tell you, I think it's worthwhile, and I teach eight year olds at the interview, at the baptismal font, you're entering into something pretty magnificent here. And you ought to think about this. You're becoming part of the House of Israel. You're entering into the Abrahamic Covenant. And then we talk about, what is the Baptismal Covenant? What do you teach them? We go to Mosiah 18 and 2 Nephi 31...we don't really know much where else to go. But when we realize it's the Abrahamic Covenant, now, if we're willing to look through and find it, but that's still kind of difficult, so that's why I wrote a book, but you have a much larger set of things to teach them about when you say, you're entering into the baptismal covenant.

So, for example, I'll usually at both the interview and a little at the back of the font, I'll tell the eight year olds, okay, your primary obligation - you know, you can usually get them to say I know I'm supposed to keep the commandments - so what's the first commandment? What's the primary commandment? What's the most important obligation they have taken upon them? It is love God. And then, it's love your neighbor, which sounds a lot like Mosiah 18: "come into the fold of God and bear one another's burdens." It says the same but on a grander scale as we teach them as they enter into the baptismal covenant.

*So, I'm curious I guess, especially with eight year olds - how do you [I don't know if I mentioned it earlier but you're serving as a bishop], how do you help the eight year olds really experience on a deeper level the covenants that they're making, rather than just sort of making it fun and Grandma and Grandpa is here and you're in white, and here you go. Anything else you say that really helps that eight year old?*

You have to do some of both and I find I'm often educating their parents and grandparents as much as I'm educating them, right? And usually the parents are part of the interview, anyway. So, I do try and – but it's great to tie it into these things, so, look, you've got Grandma and Grandpa here, right now it might only be on you, but they're there in some way and this is great, because they're part of this covenant, too, and they're excited that you're joining in the covenant with them. But now I want you to think as much of Grandma and Grandpa or even great grandma and great grandpa. You're going back to great, great, great, great, great, great grandpa Abraham and great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandma Sarah. And now you're part of the story. And then there are some stories they're familiar with in the Old Testament and you can get them to start feeling like "oh, when I do this, I'm becoming part of that?" And they actually feel pretty cool about it. Wow! And when I do this, I hold up the bible if you have one somewhere near, but hold up the bible and I say, this is becoming your story right now. This is family history and you are in the bible now, and they actually feel like that's pretty cool.

*You're part of that epic story that we've learned about your whole life. That's an awesome story you've heard about all your life.*

So, but then I'll also try and teach them something – you know – you're trying to get this to them, but you're also trying to get it to their parents and maybe they can work with them to understand it a little bit more. And we often talk about the symbolism right at baptism. So you're being washed, you're being made clean but you're also being buried in the watery grave and coming back up a new person. And that has to do with – if I can get just one message across from my book it's that the covenant's primary purpose – the biggest thing it's trying to accomplish – is establishing a closer, higher relationship with God, which can only happen if a) we're willing to bind ourselves to Him but b) as with any relationship, you can't have a close relationship if you're on very unequal terms. My relationship with my children who are now either teenagers or young adults can be of a different nature than when they were two, right? It's a close relationship when they're two, but it's a different kind of and closer relationship when we can really understand each other. Well, that's true with God as well. He has to change us to become more like Him to have a closer relationship with him, and eventually, our closest communion with him will be when we're exalted, which is the end result of the plan and our role when we're exalted and made into Christ-like beings. Then we can have that close relationship, right? So the point of the covenant is to be changed so that we can have a closer relationship with God. Well, that happens at baptism as much as it happens anywhere, right? At baptism, the idea is – we're getting rid of the old person, that's being buried in the watery tomb, and when we come up, not only are we clean but then we receive the Holy Ghost and the Holy Ghost changes who we are. We really are becoming someone new. Now they're somewhat able to understand – you can explain that a little bit to an eight-year-old, but their parents are going "oh!" and then I tell the parents, now you need to teach them this as they get older. Help them understand this more and more, but the idea is that our nature's being changed so you can be even closer with God. And the scriptures are pretty clear. We're all children of God. But it talks about when you make this covenant then you become in a different way a son or a daughter of God because you're now begotten of God and that's when you have a different relationship and that's worth everyone in the room at the baptism's understanding, and frankly, let's remember again at the sacrament table we're renewing the baptism covenant. But it's not just the baptism covenant but it's all covenants. Well, that's because it's the Abrahamic and New and Everlasting Covenant. We're doing that

again, right? So, I want my entire congregation to understand that when we partake of the sacrament, we are becoming again children of God in a new way. We're having our nature changed again to be more like him so that we can have a closer communion with him and so on. And I think it's significant to understand those things. I think we can be edified or sanctified more when you are thinking about that as you're going through that covenant communal ceremony.

*Yeah. No that's really helpful because a lot of times it's easy you know, especially working with young children, it's easy to sort of oversimplify. There's nothing wrong with that but to sort of create the -explain the dynamic of your sort of - now you're in the club now you're a member of the church which is true but more focusing that no you're you have the opportunity to change now. You have the opportunity to develop and grow and become like your father in heaven. Like this is the first step on that path – that covenant path – to do that and I think that really puts it in a more exciting in a more appropriate light that way.*

I've recently started using a little phrase that I think does that even more, right? And I do find - I feel like in situations like baptism, that I've got a duel audience because I both want to teach the children but I want to help the parents better to teach it.

So, we're gonna talk about leadership positions, which I love the focus of this podcast on that. There is no more important leadership position than mother and father. That's the most important leadership position, right? So if we can help mother and father teach that child better, for a while, then that's great, but the phrase that the children get that kind of gets me excited, I just actually – a nephew of mine gave me the idea of using this phrase, I tell them "you're leveling up". This is a game idea that they get and maybe the older audience won't know what that is, but as you finish a certain level on a video game and you become bigger, stronger, faster – whatever you have – a greater ability to handle a bigger challenge in the next level, right? And they call that "leveling up". So, I say, when you make this covenant and God changes your nature, you're leveling up. And then the next time you make more covenants, you're going to level up again. And I hope you level up every Sunday when you partake of the sacrament, and that's a phrase that they get. It describes, I think, pretty well what we're really talking about.

*Yeah, I love that. Talk to me a little bit in the context of baptism as far as the gift of the holy ghost because oftentimes that I've seen, I think what is tradition is you know, maybe there's a member of the primary presidency there and or - or someone gives a talk about the holy ghost and it's all in the context of like you know you gain this special friend they'll be able to tell you what to do and not do, which is great and fine but I have to feel like we miss it that, you know, you now have the holy ghost which can sanctify you as you repent. It can cleanse your soul. I'm just curious on your approach like understanding the New and Everlasting Covenant, and what's taking place in a baptism and in a confirmation. Is there a better way to maybe understand the confirmation of the holy ghost?*

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Yeah, and again you kind of have to – baptism is a tough place if you're talking to an eight-year-old and an eighty year old at the same time. But yeah. I think it's worth noting again. I like to dive into the Abrahamic Covenant and I'll say, you know what? Some of the most important blessings of the Abrahamic covenant are that you will become a holy person so that you can have a close relationship

with God; another one – and this is specifically promised – that God will direct Abraham or give him instructions how to act. And so I say, the gift of the Holy Ghost is crucial for both of those.

So, first of all, when you have the gift of the Holy Ghost, as a fact of the matter, talking about a closer relationship with God, we could say a closer relationship with the Godhead. It is a closer relationship with the Father. I think also a closer relationship with the Son and that's going to begin with a much closer relationship with the Holy Ghost. Who then makes the relationship with the other two more possible. Alright, so, but, you immediately have a closer relationship with the Holy Ghost. So that's the friend part. And that's worth talking about. Yeah, but that friend is not just a friend who is your age, that you can throw snowballs with. This is a friend who can help you become something different. This is a friend who can change you. This is the friend who, if you want to dunk the basketball, can lift you up high enough so you can dunk it, because you can't do that on your own.

*Yeah, love that. Level up!*

That's right. That's what this friend can do. But what's more - this is a friend who gives you direction. This is a friend who tells you what you need to be doing and how to do it, which is again one who promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

*Yeah, so I want to shift this a little bit and it may seem like a big left turn but one thing that leaders deal with is when you know membership restrictions or even when somebody's membership is removed entirely. I'm getting better without using the Ex word.*

So, but all the terms have changed recently.

*We need the brackets here. So, and I've heard it some people like - I remember my time as bishop interacting with some people who said like, "well I was - you know – I lost my membership in the church and so my bishop or stake president, whoever, explained to me that that cut me off from any inspiration or communication with the spirit. So, I can't like - I can't hear the spirit." And that like just didn't sit well with me. For a God who's full of grace – you know – and so we sometimes categorize the gift of the Holy Ghost as sort of a super power that – that's the only way you can hear God – but how would you better explain this concept of the gift of the Holy Ghost in the context of maybe someone who loses it?*

Well, that's a great question. Maybe I'll do that by taking a little bit bigger step back, all right? So built into the covenant is a cycle or a mechanism, right? In fact, we'll talk about something that touches on some stuff that we won't go into, but so within the covenant God wants to change us, right? Part of the way he changes us that we talked about is the reception of the Holy Ghost which brings Christ into our lives to change our nature. Part of it is his teaching us how to act, not only through the Holy Ghost, but he's given us a set of instructions. We call them memes, right?

So, we have our part in changing our nature and becoming more holy so holy as far as the covenant – to become a holy nation – a peculiar people. It means more like God, less like this world. There's a longer discussion on that but that's the short of it.

*Yeah*

More like God, less like this world. Part of that comes from not acting like the way the world tells us to act but acting the way God tells us to act which is closer to the way God himself acts, right? And part of that is from being changed as we talked about before. But let's talk about that idea of keeping the commandments or knowing how to act, right? And remember this comes - stems from the first commandment: "If you love me, keep my commandments." Right?

So, when we love God then naturally, the next step is to keep all the rest of the commandments. We could have a whole conversation just on what the word "keep" means, but in short, it means you're going to carefully guard this. It's not something you'll - you're carefully guarding, protecting, these commandments or the way you act in keeping these commandments. But when you keep the commandments, for every time you think of a commandment, there is an associated blessing with it. We get this both in the Old Testament and the Doctrine and Covenants, right? The idea that there are blessings within the covenant – there are blessings that come when you keep the commandment.

What we often don't talk about, but it's a pretty prevalent thing in the Old Testament – is what the Old Testament would call – cursings. We don't like that word, so we don't say it much. In fact, scholars don't like it so they say benedictions and maledictions rather than blessings and cursings. But it's the same thing. Now it's not a cursing as in Harry Potter, for example, or something like that, but it is the word that's used – there are a couple words for cursings that are used – but the one used for this one is along the lines of a natural consequence. This is what naturally happens, but for every blessing there is a corresponding cursing. So, if the blessing is prosperity, when you break the covenant then instead you get destitution. You become desolate. So, there's no – no middle ground. I often say that once you've made a covenant you've left neutral ground forever. You can't ever be back on neutral ground. You're either going to get the blessings or the cursings. That's it. Those are your options. But the point of the cursing – it's not just – it is a reversal of the blessing and it is a natural consequence of it, but it's also God's mechanism for humbling us so that we will remember Him. Because the problem is that – let's put it this way – we should ask this question, in general. Why does God work in covenants at all? Why not just give us the blessings? I don't know all the answers for that but I think part of it is that if the – just like if you spoil the child, that doesn't work out so well for the child. If God just gives us the blessings without it somehow being associated with Him, pretty soon we start to think "hey, I'm pretty Sgood! Look at how cool I am!" Right? And this is all because of how great I am, so he does it in a covenant context so that we will associate those blessings with Him. The problem is, sometimes even in that covenant context we fail to do that and we think that it's because we're all great, right? And so, the solution to that is, then, I'll humble you. And then, you'll remember that you need me. We often in the scriptures call this, well at least in the Book of Mormon, we often call this the Pride Cycle, right? But I would say you see that cycle everywhere and in other scriptures it is more consciously connected with covenant and It is in the Book of Mormon, too, we just kinda have to look for it. So, I actually prefer the term "Covenant Corruption Cycle." Because what happens is that we corrupt the covenant. We don't keep the covenant and so God humbles us and then when we keep it we have covenant blessings and when we don't keep the covenants, cursings and we keep going through that, but it's built in there, that we will automatically be humbled. Here's the fantastic thing. So I said when we do make a covenant we leave neutral ground forever. Part of the covenant, part of this relationship with God is that there's a

special kind of love and mercy available to those of the covenant that is not available in any other way. Just like in a marriage, there's a special kind of love and willingness to work with each other that's available that's not available outside of that marriage covenant, right? The Hebrew word is "Chesed". So, once we experience God's "chesed", it will never go away, meaning, He will always give us another chance. So when you look at – so there are two places in the scripture where you get the most comprehensive list of covenant blessings: in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 where they just explain it. It all has to do with covenants administered at Mount Sinai and they just explain, here are all the blessings that can come. But after the blessings you get all the cursings. A long list of blessings/a long list of cursings. And you expect that that's where the whole thing ends, right? But no, after that, there's a section in chapter twenty-six in Deuteronomy in a couple chapters where it says, okay after you've experienced the cursings, I can give you another chance, and there's always a chance to come back and never stops working with you.

In fact, what we call that is the gathering of Israel. The gathering of Israel, as a nation, and the gathering of the Israelite individuals because God never stops working with Israel or Israelite individuals, even when if and it happens to be right now in the middle of a 2500 year humbling cycle with the scattered tribes, right? If it takes that long, it takes that long. God's going to do whatever it takes to bring Israel back. He's gonna do whatever it takes to bring his Israel and individuals back. So if someone has lost their full fellowship in the covenant, what they should remember is that we have a LONG history in the scriptures of Israelites losing covenant blessings and God's still working with them and giving them directions to come back. So, it may not mean that they have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost is still going to tell them to repent. He's still going to give them enough direction to get them back to him so that then, they can get the rest of the blessings. And that is consistent – very consistent with the promises in the scriptures and God's willingness. In fact, if you just studied – again if you study it in the Old Testament and you can see it in the Book of Mormon – you can see it all sorts of places – if you study the prophetic voice – they have tons of warnings of all the bad stuff that's going to happen when you don't keep the covenant – almost all of them end – not on that but on I'm going to work with you and bring you back at some point. That's a promise that we can all rely on.

*And that's a beautiful promise. I love that so much. So, what I'm learning here – piecing together – is that when we make covenants, we're off neutral ground, which I love that that framing of it, and then if we break those covenants, cursing may come in. These aren't necessarily, like you said, they're not like God's throne throwing lightning bolts at us as a curse, but they're natural consequences that may come to pass because the covenant is not being upheld...*

It's not withholding the blessing, it's the vacuum of blessedness. It's designed to humble you. It's not just punishment, it's punishment with a purpose and it's designed to humble you and remind you of God.

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*Right, but a leader could still say you know - somebody's maybe lost their membership or been – their fellowship in – I don't know the right words to use, but someone who's lost their membership. They can – a leader could still say you do understand, The Holy Ghost is still engaging with you. It's not like he has*

*left you hanging and you're on your own devices to figure life out like he will constantly be engaging with you to bring you back to the covenant.*

That's exactly what God is trying to do, and He'll use both the light of Christ and the Holy Ghost.

*Yeah, really good, really helpful. Anything about – this is the direction to go. Let's talk about the – again, back to the larger topic of the New and Everlasting Covenant. And the way I understand it - like you said, some people sort of misunderstand it. The New and Everlasting Covenant is celestial marriage but that is just A New and Everlasting Covenant but THE New and Everlasting Covenant is the total sum of all covenants that we make. Is that a good way to say it?*

You can say it's God' promise through his prophets, and everything else is a footnote.

*Great – awesome. So, let's talk in the context of sacrament and especially in - You can start wherever, but I'd like to go in the direction of the restriction of the sacrament cause I remember as a bishop, this was a heavy burden that I tried to figure out. And I don't know if I ever - if I always made the right decision with it. It can sort of feel like you're a probation officer, right? Say someone comes in, Hey, bishop, I looked at porn and it's happened a few times. All right....six weeks! Six weeks with no sacrament and you're like...maybe four. I don't know, like sometimes you feel like you're - I think you're supposed to be punished for what you did, so I'm going to restrict this ordinance from you but then at the same time I'm thinking, well wait a minute. Didn't Christ suffer for all our sins? So why am I punishing this person? So, you kind of get lost in the weeds with this with this concept the sacrament in restricting. So where do you want to begin with talking about the sacrament?*

I would say that the first place is to remember that it's a covenant renewal ceremony and it's - it's a communal covenant renewal ceremony, so we can come back to that in a minute – a communal nature covenant. But it's renewal, so one thing that is worth remembering is you probably don't want to renew that covenant when you're not keeping it. That just gets you in more trouble, right? And so in my mind, that's the primary reasons for the strict partaking of the sacrament. Because you can't – you don't want to be saying okay, I'm promising again that I'm keeping covenants that I'm not keeping.

*Let's go back to your – how you explained it, where you're – you've made a covenant so you're no longer on neutral ground, but then you broke the covenant, but then you're trying to go like sort of back in to that covenant when you're still sort of in the cursing, right?*

Yeah. And so, you have to get yourself right, believing again and this is going to come through the atoning power of Christ, right? And when he has cleansed you and again re-sanctified you enough to be at that "leveled up" spot, then we're ready for renewing the covenant again, and then you're going to have one of your more significant experiences with partaking of the sacrament that you've had. When you can say, you know what? I'm there again. Live and ready to really connect with keeping the covenant. I think God's really ready to sanctify me and change me to where I belong in that spot again.

*Yeah, so let's put it in the context of like a struggle with pornography. So maybe a - a returned missionary comes in and he's struggling with pornography. You know it was an issue before his mission, but he sort*

*of got it cleaned up and went on a mission. He came home and so it sounds like as your - as a bishop or someone who is engaging that person they're sort of saying seeing looking for some consistency in avoiding that thing. If it's like, yeah, it's every other day. Like I wish - I tried to stop but I just can't and it's really a struggle, that's maybe an indication they're not ready for the sacrament, but once they have sort of reengaged or put some things a place where they are consistently keeping, you know, that part of the covenant, then they can reengage in the sacrament. Or how would you describe that?*

I think that's a good description. Of course, we're going to have to be guided by the Spirit all the time. Right? I personally - I'm not the one who can say these things and make decisions. But I can personally see one person and another person who may be from outward appearances, it seems like they're at about the same spot but the Spirit says this person needs to wait; this person's ready, right? Because you don't know what's going on in their hearts. So I'm going to have to get that direction from the Spirit but I think it does always come down to the idea of covenant renewal and sanctification and whether you are really been keeping the covenant or not.

*Yeah, and so what role - obviously what you're talking about the sacrament is having this renewal of covenants, right? You're renewing those covenants, and repentance is - you know, it's the core of our doctrine. You know the - the Atonement. But, sometimes it can sort of feel like that in order to keep the covenant, that means you're not repenting because that means you figured it out so so maybe somebody is slipping up with pornography or whatever but so what role does that play in helping them keep - stay engaged with the with the covenant rather than a punishment?*

This is an important thing for those who are struggling with pornography or those who are struggling with something that's not so serious that really - the last section of the last chapter of my book addresses this. Because we've got a couple of issues here. We've got some people who are looking at, as you say, looking at pornography every other day, but they feel like they're ready to partake of the sacrament and then we have someone who didn't do something for their ministering sister as many times as they should have this month and so they're not going to let themselves partake of the sacrament. And we need to find that balance somewhere in there and again, each person is going to have to get some inspiration for themselves and in some cases your going to have the Bishop who also needs some inspiration.

But there's a there's an important element here we have - in the Doctrine and Covenants, when it's talking about gifts that are available through the Spirit, and again, I'll just say this: People struggle with recognizing that – President Nelson has asked us to look for the blessings promised to Israel. I just - October 2020 General Conference, he said spend the next six months – we're right in the middle of that right now, getting towards the end, looking for the blessings promised to Israel and talk about them with your friends and your neighbors and look for them in your life, right? But I found that a lot of people struggle recognizing when the scriptures are talking about those blessings. So, that's part of why this – I mean I've written a book, actually before that, but it came out after that, so that's part of what this book is for to help people with that.

I've had so many people say I'm struggling with this, that I put together – that's part of why I come on podcasts like this. Or, I put together a little brochure that I call "The Quick and Easy Guide to the

Abrahamic Covenant" just to help people recognize that language. You could get that at my website I created just to help people with this called outofthedust.org, So, that's outofthedust.org But once people start to see these are the different elements of the covenant, then they can start to recognize – I think they'll start to find that the scriptures talk about it far more often than - and that's one of the things I love as a teacher or lecturer is when people or students or others will say "wow! I didn't realize it, but I see the covenant everywhere now. Alright, so one of those places will be when you're reading about the gifts of the Spirit if you come to recognize covenant language you'll recognize it's actually talking about the covenant though and that these are blessings available for people who are keeping the covenant. But the interesting thing is that at the end of that, it says that these blessings are available for those who are keeping the commandments or the covenant and "him who seeketh so to do". Thank goodness for that line!

*Right?*

What it tells us is that the blessings of the covenant are not just for those who are perfectly keeping the covenant, which by the way is a sum total of zero. Christ is administering the covenant, so I guess he's keeping it, but in some ways he's ministering and sometimes it's called the covenant and sometimes the messenger.

I'm going to say, we'll put these into different categories. But for the rest of us that are covenanting with Christ - zero or none of us. But, there are a whole bunch who are seeking so to do, and so that's something that - you know, someone who's struggling with addiction, whether it's pornography or something else – that's something they're going to have to try and wrestle with them. Am I really seeking this or not? And someone who feels like they didn't visit their administering family as often as they should. That's the question they're going to have to ask themselves: Am I seeking to do so or not?

But if you're seeking - the way that I read this is this if you're going to miss a good shot, right? You give it a try. Then, Covenant blessings are still an option for you. Not just nothing. They're going to comfort you. You get the blessings of the covenant. If you are just doing your best to keep it and I think that's a really hopeful thing for people on every end of the spectrum whether we feel guilty or not and everyone should realize that – well, and Section 46 also makes it clear that this is because of the Atoning power of Christ. And so, in the end, what we need to do is say okay, I promised God that I would try. And he promised me that he'd make up the difference and exalt me. I am trying. Now I'm going to believe because I'm in - He has formerly bound himself to me that if I can climb ten feet up the mountain he'll take me the other ten thousand feet. We're bound together. I'm strapped on his back and he can climb the mountain. He'll take me there. That's the great imagery that comes with the covenant, right? This idea of being bound together and so if I'm seeking so to do I can trust that Christ's atoning power will do the rest.

*Yeah, that's helpful. So looking back to - with the sacrament that - or the restriction of the sacrament. It's good to think of it as I'm learning here. Is that the bishop or that priesthood leader is helping the individual keep the covenant not necessarily helping that individual be punished for what they've done or helping that individual avoid damnation, because you know, you think of 3 Nephi 18 where anybody who partakes of this unworthily, you know - and that sort of can be scary phrase that - what if they're not*

*ready and I let them take the sacrament. So, let's just default not letting them take the sacrament type of thing and then I really appreciated the emphasis of just following the Spirit. That there's not like a time period for each sin or – you know this is individual by individual, one by one that's how covenants typically work and - in order to help that individual keep the covenant, right?*

00:40:17 - 00:45:01

Yeah. And I would say it - we can maybe look at it this way. I believe that the primary role of the priesthood leader – and I'll just say when I say priesthood leader, I mean someone who has been set apart by the power of the priesthood. So, this would include - I'm basing this off of things President Nelson has said recently and President Oaks as well. I think that includes the Relief Society. She's set apart by the power of the priesthood, too. So, we don't always mean that when we say priesthood leader but that's what I mean when I say priesthood leader – someone who's supposed to represent the Lord's children, and so then I think, okay, what does the Lord do? The Lord is always trying to get them to keep the covenant.

Sometimes tough stuff has to happen, right? And it can be free tough, right? If people don't want to do it the easy way, He will do it the hard way. But the point is his goal is always to get people back in the covenant and keeping the covenant. And so that should be the role of the leader. Our goal is to get people back into covenant and keeping the covenant.

*Love that. Man, that is so helpful. All right, here's another left turn. But one that's railed that come to leaders a lot. Especially in the context of the New and Everlasting Covenant. Beautiful thing especially as it reaches sealing powers, you know and bonding us forever in these things but real life happens. Divorce happens, sealing cancellations happen. And that's when sometimes, the bishop or somebody gets the technicality questions like what - what does this mean, like, okay we're divorced but you know you get the distraught sister. We're divorced. And I just hate the guy and I want my - that sealing cancelled right away. So, let's do that or - or does this mean that I'm going to be forced to be with him because i'm divorced here but we're still sealed or what is - what about our kids and all those things. So where do you want to start with that. The jumble of questions?*

For all technicalities we see, yeah, we don't know. We really just don't know and I - I like to remind people if we end up being exalted – you know sealings are only really efficacious if we're exalted. And I don't know that they're going to be any exalted beings that we really can't stand. Everyone else is pretty godly, but that godly guy I really can't take. I think we just have to recognize that there are a lot of things we don't know about the hereafter, and we don't know how a lot of things will work out but we can be sure that if we're exalted, we're going to be pretty happy and we'll like being there.

But the question of I was - so it is absolutely true that as you enter into the marriage covenant you're entering more fully into the Abrahamic Covenant or the New and Everlasting Covenant, So it's difficult to know what to do when that is broken. I'll tell you this is hard stuff, right? This is where we live. This is what means a lot. And I – some people who are as close to me as you can imagine are going through this right now. It's a hard, hard thing. And I don't know how to answer those questions, but what I believe is that the marriage covenant is a covenant between two people and God, and even if, in some ways, some of those people aren't keeping it, anyone who is doing their best, and keeps at least that

part that is a covenant with God, they're still sort of binding with God and that's what we'll want to focus on.

You can't control what's happening with other people, but we can control our relationship with God. In fact, I often teach my students, there's really not anything in your life you can control. You may think that your native intelligence and your good looks, or your fun, bubbly personality is something you can control. One good accident will change any and all of that. It can change your personality, it can change everything. There's only one thing you can completely control because there is only one thing that is completely consistent and that is God. You can control your relationship with God. If you're going to revere God, he's going to be there, and so that's true with the covenant, especially. He's already said, as we've already talked about, that – there's a beautiful verse in Isaiah chapter 54. You may not recognize that word "chesed", that covenantal kindness, but what he says is that covenantal love and mercy – what he says is that is it more likely that a mountain will depart but that his "chesed" will not depart from us. What that means is, once you're in this covenant with God, including that higher stage of it that comes with a sealing covenant, it is more likely that the Mount Everest or Mount Timpanogos packs up and walks away than it is that God's going to pack up and walk away from you. He's there. He's waiting, you just have to come to him.

*Yeah, that's awesome - really good. So, what would you say as far as a context of - of children because obviously mentioned covenants are typically relational related and about relationship and binding relationships especially between us and God. But yeah, the divorced couple who has kids and they get sealed to mom and her new husband or the dad and his new wife or you know. Is it really that important? Do we just hope that they get sealed in the temple later on in life to their own spouse? Any thoughts around the concept of children being sealed?*

I would say that sometimes we look at too small of a picture here. If you go back and remember what I said, that sometimes you don't recognize covenant language until we learn enough about that covenant to start to recognize it. Which, again is part of what I'm trying to do is help that to happen. So, I'm going to tell you a verse that you've heard a whole bunch of times and probably didn't recognize it as a covenant verse although maybe because Elder Bednar and President Nelson have talked about them, but when we talk about Elijah coming to turn the hearts of the children to their father's the fathers to the children. Now, let's put ourselves - Malachi is the first one that gives prophecy. Christ is to the Nephites. When we say turn the hearts to the fathers to an Israelite or a Nephite Israelite, a Nephite or Lamanite; when they think Israelite they think Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. To them this is clearly a reference to the covenant. We may not recognize it that way, which is - in my personal opinion, I think that's why, when Moroni comes to Joseph Smith, because this is a new audience, not really a covenant audience like Israel or the Nephites, he changes it, and he says that Elijah will turn your hearts to the promises made to the fathers. That's harder to mistake, right? For this new audience he says, I don't want you to mis this. This is promises to the father. That's the covenant, right? So we usually think of this idea of the sealing keys that Elijah restores – turn the hearts of the fathers and so on, as temple work, and it is. But it's temple work in a larger context. It's the Abrahamic Covenant. So what it is, and this is what President Nelson keeps talking to us about gathering, we want to gather everyone in to Israel, or in other words, have them make covenants that seal them – not just to – it's certainly

important – that they're sealed to their spouse and children, but to the entire house of Israel. This is a big, grand, sweeping story. And the idea is that when you are doing your family history work, your family history work for great grandma Mildred and for great, great, great grandma Sarah, right? You're getting tied in to both of them. You want us all tied together and it is a big, big family that's being sealed together – that's being bound together in this covenant. That's what gathering Israel is and President Nelson keeps telling us.

Doing this work is on either side of the veil because that's how you gather Israel – giving them covenant, right? At this point we're talking about – children – what about these children who they sealed as well. I don't know who they're going to be sealed to in a little short way in the hereafter and I'm not sure that that will matter. I don't want to discount that, right? I am totally grateful to be sealed to my children. Supremely grateful to be sealed to my parents, that one of whom I've lost, and I am so glad that I have a link with him that I'll see him again, right? Right! But one way or the other, all of Israel is going to be bound together. So these are my children and whatever happens, the sealings here and there, I'm going to be sealed to them. If I'm part of the Abrahamic Covenant and they're part of the Abrahamic Covenant, we're going to have a connection. They are my children. I'm not too worried about how that works out. We'll be family together in the hereafter. And you're right, I don't – I don't care if it goes this way or this way to get us sealed together. We're going to be sealed together and they are my children, so we'll be family.

*These ceilings are important but the - the main goal is just to get everybody sealed into this Abrahamic covenant, not necessarily get everybody sealed to the mom they love or the dad they love. I mean, that's sort of secondary to it maybe.*

Yeah, yeah, and it will happen. That will work out but it's the right reason we can be sure of that is because of this larger framework, this larger story and thinking.

*Yeah, so talk about the New and Everlasting Covenant with Abrahamic Covenant in the context of the phrase that's almost become cliche in the church of families can be together forever. And I feel like we've used it so much that we've turned into a - a doctrine of geography rather a doctrine of exaltation. Where we – like, if you don't live right or my second son rebels and he goes and lives a wild life and doesn't engage in the covenant than there'll be this empty chair – this empty chair in heaven with our family and that just makes me so sad. Because I want to be with him. And I'm thinking like where does it say that if someone doesn't keep the covenant that they'll have to live really really far away and can't engage with -- with the family. So maybe I'm wrong. I don't know, but what do you have to say as far as this concept of families can be together forever in. What does that mean?*

00:50:06 - 00:55:02

I'll just say, I think we know so little of what the hereafter his like that it's hard for us to have any pictures that are accurate. And there's a part of me that loves that bunch of chairs. No empty chairs and a part of me hate it. The idea of having my family gathered around me like that and yet the image of the empty chairs is a specter that no one wants to think of or look at, right?

And then I started thinking. Well, I mean, if we're gonna talk about like travel or space or time in the hereafter, I don't think we know how any of that works. I personally – personally, I don't think we

experience time the same there as we do here. I get confused when I watch something like interstellar or flash or whatever else. They're confusing to me. But I think God doesn't experience time the way we do. I think he doesn't experience space the way we do. He's not the kind of being that we are able to fully conceive, ourselves. In the end, we'll just have to say, okay, I don't know what it means to be together because - or even community. I don't think you can really relate. It isn't any way that we are familiar with. Sometimes we get glimpses of it through the impressions of the Spirit, right? I suspect that there's something much better even than any of us experience with the ability to communicate there and it probably doesn't rely on space and time the way we do, right? So, I love being in person with my children but I have to say like in the last year we've learned that in person can sometimes be pretty good via zoom or facetime or whatever else, right? It's not as good as in person, but it's pretty good. But I suspect that whatever it is we do in heaven is better than even in person and it doesn't matter if you're in the same place as anyone else is, so in the end - First of all we have to say I don't know what it means together. It's better than anything we thought of or experienced. Second, we need to remember this idea that God isn't going to stop working with you. So, for example, I just finished teaching in my Old Testament class and my Pearl of Great Price class about Noah and the destruction in the days of Noah. And these are pretty bad buys. We go through and look at the verses that describe the situation and it's pretty bad stuff that happened, right? And yet we know that in the Spirit World, that's where Christ goes and where he organizes missionary work for those spirits that died in the flood, because they were so wicked. So, I have to think if God is going to give them another chance, that anyone who has in some way been involved with this covenant, is going to get some pretty decent chances.

And I would guess that God's probably pretty good at what he does, so I'm not saying that there's a blanket statement: everyone will be exalted. Clearly, that's not true and people have their agency. But I do think that everyone who's been part of a covenant that will – well, I'll just put it this way, the title of the guy's office that is right across from mine - Odds are you'll be exalted. I think odds are, you don't have to worry so much. Now, that doesn't mean give up. I don't want them to go through the misery. I don't want to take a chance. First of all, I don't want them to go through the misery that you go through when you're not keeping the covenants. Covenant blessings are better than covenant cursings. I want the blessings part for me and my family. But I also think it's worth remembering that God's going to work with them and this world and on the other side of the veil in ways that we don't know or understand and I'm just going to trust in him.

*Yeah that's good and really – that's such a hopeful, grace filled messages and hopefully doesn't leave much room for people to sort of, you know, mourn over those that maybe have stepped away from the gospel in their family but just realize, isn't it beautiful that God is still engaging with them in some way like he'll still show up for them and whether it's this life for the next He'll still be after their heart, you know, and inviting them back into the covenant path.*

There's always hope.

*Yep, there's always hope. I love that. So, one thing you know that sort of we - we just touched on is the concept of grace and covenants. You know, the law of justification and sanctification. And I had this holy envy at times for our evangelical brothers and sisters who just sometimes they just nail grace. I mean you just love it. You just want to be at their church. I just want to feel the love and so accepting right, and*

*sometimes they can misinterpret our covenant tradition. Like whoa like. Hey what's with all the hoops that you're jumping through, right? And at the same time, you've got to understand like this is remarkable stuff. It's not that we're earning it but we are trying to become sanctified to become more like God. It's beautiful, right? And so, how do we best - especially in the last few decades, where grace's sort of the doctrine sort of surged in our faith tradition a little bit, which is great. That's such a. I mean it's so helpful, at least in my personal journey of faith. So, how do we approach grace and covenants in the right light, cause sometimes we can say - you know sort of wink at grace – yeah, isn't grace wonderful? But hey, make sure you do these things because we've got a covenant path to follow here and then you sort of lose the grace. It sort of sucks the grace out of the room a little bit. Any thoughts on - on balancing grace and covenants?*

Yeah, that's a little bit like I said, when I was explaining about "him that seeks" and that idea that it is what I try to end in my book on – focuses on that. But maybe we can summarize it kind of quickly by saying grace is available to everyone but it cannot have its full effects with someone who does not choose to make - form a binding relationship with God. It just can't happen and so again well, it's - it's worth thinking about this. That God wants everyone to be part of the covenant. This is not an exclusive covenant. This is an inclusive covenant. He is doing everything he can and asks us to do everything we can to get people to join the covenant on this side of the veil and were doing every bit as much to get them to join on the other side of the veil, right? We want you dead or alive. We just want everyone to be part of this covenant.

There's only one way to be excluded from the covenant and it's for you to choose – to exclude yourself from the covenant. So, grace is available but it's available when you have bound yourself to Christ. So, let's just say that people who are not part of the covenant right now, never experienced grace. Let me just say exalting grace is available only to those who have bound themselves to God through his son, Jesus Christ, and that relationship that allows a kind of reliance and trust that then allows grace to fully enter us, and part of this is that grace can only have its fullest effect – did we say grace? I'll say it differently. The atoning power of Christ's sacrifice and that's the same thing. The atoning power of Christ's sacrifice can really only enter into me if I am willing to submit myself to it. I have to allow it, right? If I fight it – if I say I'm not changing, then I'm not changing no matter how much Christ has the ability to change me.

So, let's contrast two things. I often say to my students, you know the students will take things wrong. You don't have the ability to sin more than Christ has the ability to forgive. You can't overpower the atonement. You just don't have it in you, right? You're no match for the atonement. You can't sin more than he can take care of. But at the same time, you can say no. I'm not allowing you to change me. That's the agency that God has given, and in the end, that's where true agency is, right?

You can be put in prison so that you don't have the choice of whether I am tied up or in solitary confinement or whatever else. You don't have the choice of whether you're going to stand or sit. You don't have the chance of choice of what you're going to eat or anything. You may not have any of those choices but you still have the agency to say, I am letting God change me or I'm not. That's the ultimate form of agency, right? And so, you can choose to exclude yourself from that relationship that will change

you, or not. If you allow that relationship then eventually it will change you. If you're just seeking so to do.

*Love it. I've just got one more question for you, but before we ask that, where would you send people - they want to check out the book and read it more and dive into these concepts you've discussed?*

So, you can get it at Seagull bookstores. It's in bookstores. It's in Deseret Book, Seagull bookstores, or Seagull bookstore online; Deseret bookstores online. You can also get like the audio version. You can get a Kindle version on Amazon or the hardback. They didn't get them in for forever. But I think just yesterday, so it's been out for more than a month before they finally got it at Amazon. But you can get it at Amazon. Any of those places. I've got links and again if you want to go to my website outofthedust.org, you can get both that little brochure – that quick and easy pamphlet. Or, I've got links to all the different kinds of versions that you can get there but I have links to like this podcast as well as other things I have written or done to help people understand this, so, that's where you – you can go almost anywhere to get it.

*Perfect. Well, the last question I have is related to your personal experience as a leader in the church and as you reflect on your time as a leader in both as a bishop maybe other roles you've had how has being a leader helped you to become a better follower of Jesus Christ?*

That's a great and a profound question. So, I think it has to do with what I talked about earlier is to remember that a leader is supposed to represent Christ and the only way you can do that is if you want to better and better understand who He is and yield yourself to him and try and see things the way he does. So maybe I can just end on - on this and maybe and this ties back in with that. And so, we didn't spend a lot of time talking about this - the real nature of the covenant – we covenant to bear one another's burdens and to serve each other. It's not just a covenant with God, it's a covenant with each other and in essence, part of that covenant is – we've got to forget about ourselves and help each other. We've got to love our neighbors as self.

01:00:07 - 01:04:47

We've got to share the covenant. That's part of the covenant – share, spread the covenant of the gospel. And we have to quit thinking about ourselves and start thinking about each other. So, I actually had an experience - and this is a confessional. I'm embarrassed and ashamed that I didn't have this experience until about two weeks ago because I've taught what I just said for a long time. Forget about yourself. Think about others. You know if you're focusing on sanctifying yourself, that won't sanctify yourself as much as if you're focusing on trying to sanctify others because you have to get sanctified yourself. Just forget about yourself and do things for others. I've taught that for so long. But I'll tell you that every time I partake of the sacrament, besides a recent facet - always looking – It's a little harder actually to have a reverent sacrament experience when you're Bishop – making sure the sacrament prayers are said right. But I still try to make time to pray and I think about the prayers and think about being sanctified, right? So, I usually try to pray and repent and thank God for what His son has done, and for setting the example, for sacrificing himself and ask for that his atoning sacrifice can be applied to me, and so on. But the other Sunday was Ward Conference. And I'd been talking about how we need to really help sanctify each other. It's the first time I'd used this "leveled up phrase and so on. And

somehow, as I was taking the sacrament that time and I looked down and I was thinking of all the different people with all sorts of different challenges and the ward and this sometimes happens in thinking of the massiveness of the calling, my heart was just overcome with the desire for them to be sanctified. I'd just finished talking to them about this – we do the sacrament after conference, and I was overwhelmed with the desire and instead of praying for the Savior to sanctify me, I was praying for the Savior to sanctify them. There's part of me that said, why haven't you done this every week. Why haven't you been asking for others to be sanctified more than yourself every single week and I suddenly realized, of course, that's what Christ does. Christ is trying to sanctify everyone here, and if I want to be Christlike, that needs to be my concern, as well.

Well, that concludes my interview with Professor Kerry Muhlestein - really appreciate his willingness to come on and let me throw some questions at him.