

LEADING SAINTS

When Church is a Burden | An Interview with Andrea Lystrup

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as latter day saint leaders. We face very difficult conversations that put us at risk of saying the wrong thing. They can do more harm than good. Many of these conversations relate to lgbt q. latter-day saints. Have you had a fellow or member come out to you about their lgbt identity. Have you had lgbt neighbors. And he just don't know what to say to them so you ignore them instead. Have you wrestled with balancing love for your fellow men while still respecting the doctrines of the restored docile. In order to help leading saints has put together the lgbt saints library with more than twenty presentations featuring individuals who have a unique perspective or expertise around this topic. Three of the most popular sessions are available now to watch simply text. The word lead to four seven. Four seven four seven to start watching now or visit leading saints dot org slash. Lgbt leading saints is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping latter-day saints be better prepared to lead. And we'll do that through various ways including this very podcast that you're listening to hope you subscribe. Maybe leave us a review. While you're at it and i think you'll enjoy the content. You find on this podcast and then jump on over to leading saints dot org and you'll find thousands of articles dedicated to leadership context says it relates to Being latter day saint. We have virtual summits that we've done tricks out on social media and also of a weekly newsletter goes out that has unique content. You won't find anywhere else so a jump into the leading saints world. We're glad to have you rate today. I'm in my home studio which is really just a bedroom with a few mike senate's with andrea lice. Strip are you. i'm doing great. How are you doing very good now. You're in town. You're visiting utah. I mean who visits utah anymore but you do clearly one of the minority that finds family people here in a few few latter-day saints folks here. That are possibly related to you. So you are from where. I'm originally from las vegas and now living in tucson arizona. Nice so you came up here for a little cool weather the you might get triple digits. But what do you do down there. I'm a licensed marriage and family therapist and they run in private school. That's awesome and you reach out to a few months ago. You had this trip planned. You're like i'm coming to town. I have an idea of. Maybe what would we could talk about. And i love the idea right. What's what

where did this idea come from. And maybe give you an opportunity to explain the topic. Yes so i in my practice. I work with a lot of people who describe themselves as feeling spiritually worn out and i think it has only exacerbated that further where they go to church and they don't feel like they're receiving the same uplifting of the spirit that other people are and so sometimes that's been through. Mental health challenges has made it hard for them to feel the spirit other times. It's because they have a faith crisis this going on and makes not connect with the material in the same way that they used to. And when you feel spiritually worn out it affects all areas of your life and you know we hope that the church experiences a place where people leave feeling like like. I'm so glad i did that. And it's not always that way right. Yeah i have a number of clients that will say that they go to church and they end up feeling like there's something wrong with them because they're not getting the same answers to prayers are experiences that seems like everyone else around them as getting and so they find themselves wondering is there something wrong with me or is there something wrong with everybody else and you don't want to leave church feeling like there's something wrong with anybody. No you want us feel community there. And i'm just thinking of specifically the leader. Sometimes i've talked with bishop. Su just quietly suffering they just they really hate. They're calling and they look forward to to end and they can't wait to just move on and experience. Different callings was like no. This is can be a remarkable thing. Be part of it broke my heart when it when it went away you know and so we want people to have that experience so we're gonna explore this. As far as i mean reengaging. The spiritually worn out right. Yeah and i was reading over your your outline with my wife last night. She's like well. It's not necessarily spiritually wore now as much as church worn out. Sometimes you think there's a difference there. Yeah i mean. I think it can be. I think sometimes we get over a lot of people talking about how it's not the it's not the doctrine it's the culture aspects of the culture that where people out but i also think with depression for example. I think it can really interrupts your ability to feel anything other than just neutral and so that includes spiritual experiences and if you are trying to participate in a community. And you're trying to do you're calling and you want to participate to the fullest extent that you can but you're not feeling spiritually uplifted. I think you do feel spiritually worn out. I forget what it feels like to feel about upliftment and hard to keep going right and i've seen examples where people begin to find that outside the traditions of our church you know where like man i went to this retreat and i finally felt it there and so what's wrong with you know can really kind of trigger may be that faith crisis or the kind of like.

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Well why did i feel there but not here and maybe there's something wrong with that or you know so it's interesting anything else. As far as what makes your perspective unique about obviously you have clients you meet with the bring up some of these concerns about anything else. Yeah so. I've always been kind of interested in this topic because i'm the youngest child of folder. Brothers that. I'm quite a bit younger than all of them. And so and i've watched three of the four of my brothers leave the church and so i've kind of witnessed from the background. My parents have dealt with some of these things and kind of seeing the effect. My brothers have had and i think right now with people coming back from church from kobe had a lot of friends. Reach out and say i've been struggling with this and that or just kinda throughout my life. I've kind of been the collecting ground of people that complain about the church. So i've heard a lot of stories. I've heard it professionally with friends of her two siblings and so i have a lot of collective gripes to share. This cova dynamic is is interesting because this week by wife was talking to a

neighbor who she said something. I we come to back to church yet. But we're coming. We'll do it but it's more of this feeling like okay here. We go again right sometimes. The things that have surprised me. It's been well respected members of the community that have served as bishops say presidents or in various capacities there even saying oh it's really comforting to just sit at home and watch it online. It's hard to want to put the effort to come back in and yet these are good standing members that have really been pillars of their community. Yeah and sometimes people interpret that as a form of laziness or apathy. People just wanna watch church in their pajamas. I sort of wince. When i hear that well no. It's like there's this spiritual exercises engagement that sometimes as over-burdening the where they could maybe have that under control more in the context of their home right right when i've talked to some young families in particular they say i feel like when i'm in church on sundays. I'm it's a w afc match or is that wwf fighting club where wrestling at least for me with my three boys. You're always kicking them under the bench telling sit down and required. And so it's sometimes it's nice to really focus on the messages. Not how people are perceiving. Your children or some people have hearing issues are a number of reasons why people would prefer the online experience to in ryerson admit. Sometimes during the watching church online was like. Yeah the kids were. I invited the kids and wanting them to sit down and watch church sometimes. They sneak away to their room. And my wife. And i enjoyed it and that was kinda nice right. And so that's not an option at nine the whole crew to church right. Well one of the things. Whenever i'm feeling spiritually disengaged feel really grateful that my grandfather before he passed away compiled hundreds of pages of his life. History and different talks that he'd given in church and a state. President done a lot of lot of lot of toxins life. So one he talked about was like why do we need religion like why do we need other people and that talk in particular was really helpful as i was like making the decision to come back to in person practice with like we need people like we need. That's how you get better is by learning from the examples of other people. And i think especially eh really liked. There's a talk in. General conference is called poor little ones. Were they talked about. How even like we especially need the people who feel the most is engaged in the most reminder like we need their spirits even more than perhaps the ones that we always hear has fantastic. So they'll show in this. As far as what makes people spiritually worn out. What can we learn there. So i think the one that i was aware of the first is mental illness so having depression anxiety can really interfere with your ability to sit in church and if you have social anxiety it can be really hard to reach out to to speak. And i think we weren't that you gain a lot of testimony through the burying of your testimony. And i've heard people say that they just physically can't and so that's an area where some people feel like. They're uplifted is by sharing their experience. If social anxiety gets in the way. You're not going to do that in your also not as comfortable engaging in the fellowship so you instead of participating in the church meetings you sit in the foyer and you read a book and try to avoid contact with people and so i think social anxiety has a huge component of your ability to feel relaxed and to kind of open to the spirit and then i think with depression a lot of times people incorrectly perceived as being really sad and miserable but for a lot of people. It's just flat affect. They don't feel sad they don't feel happy they don't feel angry. It's just nothing like in different right. And so if that's where you are then going to church where people are like sharing their souls or sharing these beautiful experiences.

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Not only you're not feeling it but then the other problem is that people will say things kind of trigger you. So for example have had clients that have talked about praying for something for years and specifically for a relief from their depression. That it's like they've tried therapy and medicine. Nothing is working. And then they hear other people talk about how they had this beautiful Spiritual experience in it cured them and they think will how can they get it and not mere like why is there something wrong with me and then some people can even take that to the further extreme and they feel like god is punishing them. There's something they've done wrong. And so this is them being punished for that and that can feel even harder to the than engage in church. If you feel like this is some curse. That god doesn't love you. That's and i think. Sometimes we don't realize how deep that level of despair can go and how triggering those kind of church experiences can be for them. Yeah so adding this sort of mental health dynamic to depression and things like that that it's again. It's not that the person's lazy or the person doesn't have testimony but there's some complexities happening in their mind that They really feed into this. Not only do. I have to go to church. Listen these stories but now they want me to serve in three different ways. They want us participate. I always get called on inside this or the guilt trips or what i perceive guilt trips can just sort of add on the net mental health gets inflamed right right and also i think sometimes we don't understand what it's like to be someone who's for example has experienced trauma or abuse. Because i really think a lot of times your ability to feel a relationship with your heavenly father is going to depend on your ability to felt loved by anybody. And so if you come from a family where you weren't feeling loved you experienced abuse or neglect. And then perhaps you never remarried. Or you've experience that same neglecting your marriage or your distant from your children. If you've never really had those loving bonding experiences it can feel foreign to think that you have a savior. That loves your heavenly father that loves you and that's one of the things when the going gets tough for a lot of people that they can say like. Okay i'm struggling with this aspect of the church. I'm struggling with my relationship with people in the ward or that sort of thing but at least have heavenly father. At least i have christ but i think these that at least of statement for people that feel like they don't even have that kind of well. Then what is there for me here. And how do i. How do i get that. And like you said. They're not lazy. And i've had clients that. Say that they have prayed for hours and they still don't get that reassurance in that can feel really isolating for them enough sometimes. There's i guess when on thing on like this idea of triggering like i wanna make sure that people are. It's not that it's not like on the bishop or everybody else that saying things that you can't say certain things because it may trigger people but i think it's just important to be aware of how people interpret things that are said with the best intentions right and i mean. Of course we want people to stand up and share faith promoting experiences absolution diminish. That are to say yeah. Let's not do that anymore. Just being aware of like oh like for some people because of their background their dna at tony overpay says all the dna their brain. They're all these things that happened in their life. They interpret that a certain way and maybe the person next to them on doesn't internally they may feel like i've found that incredibly inspiring as an expert. Like oh like this i think. That's where the power of empathy and vulnerability really come in is. I don't think there's anything wrong with sharing. Your faith filled experiences. I think that's why we go to. Church is to learn from other people into be inspired and think. Oh yeah haven't been thinking about. I haven't been looking upward. I've been more focused on myself. And that's why miserable so thanks for the reminder to incorporate more faith so i don't think we're trying to say at all that we need to eliminate that but i think some of the most powerful church experiences i've ever had is when someone shares of vulnerability or empathy as well and so. That's something when. I'm sharing faith experiences in church as i tried to have this mind. Say thinking okay so if this particular client was in the room and

how would they receive. What i what i'm saying. And is there something that i can say at least validates their experience or let's them know that they're not alone or the other people are thinking of them. Because i think part of it is you just. You need to belong and one easy way to do that is to show people that you're thinking of people like them. Yeah yeah and is doesn't example. Come to mind is how you do that or an approach like the next time. Somebody does wanna make a comment. I don't want people to feel like high. Shouldn't make that because i don't know how others will respond any any advice. You give and making a comment or yeah i think about. I went to a testimony meeting about a month ago. Where the counselor who's in. The bishop break opened up the meeting and he shared his testimony. And he's just said honestly. I have really wrestled with my testimony in a way they never had before. I really come to experience a lot of doubts in a way. That really surprised me and it kind of scared me.

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But i'm still working through it and one of the things that i find. Faith promoting is to bear my testimony. And so he boys testimony of the essentials like god in christ and The book of mormon and not sort of thing and he said. I encourage you the particularly those of you who are struggling to bury your testimony on whatever nugget is left and it was such a beautiful faith promoting experience to say we. Welcome you because you are struggling like we are a hospital for people that are struggling. And i think it was a wonderful example of opening the door and kind of giving people the invitation because i think a lot of times we hold back in the old people. Don't wanna hear my negative testimony. It's not good enough to see this sort of this processor. This cultural tradition of we often turn the gospel into call it gospel algebra. Like what i did is i was righteous. Did these righteous things. Plus i was consistent about it and therefore my problems went away anytime. we sort of. Put the gospel into this math equation of like good works. Plus consistency equals happy. No problem life for other people. It's like okay. listen. I did that. Math equation and my life didn't turn out that way now. What right rather than saying you know. I just suffer. They're suffering in life. There's pain and that's why we have the savers and beautiful right like sort of that redemptive flavor of some of these comments. I also think one of the problems is that we tend to share our struggle after the fact that we say i've been struggling with my testimony or i've been struggling with depression but now i've overcame it. And how did it. And i don't think we open up the door enough to say well. How are you struggling right now. How can we be. How can we validate you and support you right now. You don't have to be a finished product to feel worthy of standing up in front of everybody and sharing your experience. I think the president right now is what we have. This is what we have control over. And this is where we can provide the empathy and understanding. So you don't need to be a finished product. Yeah that's really good really good anything else as far as mental health. Depression that feeds into this disengagement of of spiritually Just a lot of it has been. I've seen it be exacerbated with cova did in that. I think it's been a reminder how much we need each other and depression and anxiety is fueled by loneliness and so i think as much as we can do as a church culture to be looking out for the lonely and the the one really when you think about the parable of the law sheep like i think all ninety nine of us are constantly looking out for the lonely i think it would make our congregations and much more inspiring place. Yeah because it is easy to just show to show up. I'm here that's sort of all you can do right but to be engaged in looking for the and i also think once you find the one i think sometimes we tend to shower them with here. Read the book and read the general conference talk like expect all of your problems to go away. And i think more than anything when you

look at the parable of the ninety nine in the one. What christ was doing at the time of the papal came about as he uses eating with sinners. And that's what prompted the over the parable. And so i think more than saying. Here's something that'll fix. Your problem is to stay here was go get lunch together. Let's eat a peanut butter and jelly sandwich on the porch. Something simple branca's wrench interview jenny. Spangler about this concept of service for solidarity and oftentimes default to service like well. You're going through. I'm going to bring you dinner this week. I'm going to do this for you. But instead of being i'm just gonna sit and be present with you and trying empathize with what you're experiencing and realized that the suffering has meaning and purpose. We don't know what it is. Yeah and and i recognize that it hurts prang. Yeah yeah definitely anything else with depression mental health or not. I mean it's a huge topic. But i think in general what we can do is just love. People don't treat them like a problem to be solved but a person to be loved that. What do the spiritually worn out. Actually say about going to church. So i mean how. Do people articulate this when they're in that state of just being worn out and churches still coming on sunday. I mean if anything. It feels like a sense of otherness like all of a sudden. You don't belong. you're perceiving this community as everybody else has it together. They understand what's going on but in it's working for them and so there's something wrong with me or you think about like that spiritual algebra equation that you're saying like what have i done wrong so if if everybody else's spears algebra works for them then god must hate me. I must be cursed like there must be something that i'm feeling punished for or i think sometimes there's also like the sense of paralysis where i think a lot of times depression or anxiety or just like faith. Crises in general can spur the sense of fear. This impending doom. If i if all of these spiritual algebra is working out for everybody else but me and you have this equation of this either something wrong with me or there's something wrong with everybody else.

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Sometimes you'll do that equation. People i really don't think there's something wrong with me. So maybe this isn't truly. Maybe the church is issue and model. It's broken exactly. And so. I think that can kind of start to make the ground fall out from under you and start questioning everything about the church we don't want to do. We don't want our communities to be the very thing that is keeping making people feel like they don't belong i think it's that belonging that is so essential and the interesting thing about that is how how that happens. Almost on a subconscious level like where then if people can see people leave the church maybe about historic issues or doctrinal issues. Which are you know. I validate and you can get messy there but we never perceived that yeah but months earlier they sort of subconsciously. Went to this process of like okay. Everybody else. has this figured out. This model's broken because they articulate that it's working a certain way but that doesn't work for me and wait a minute. Wait a minute. What smith do like okay now then it starts to sorta you can latch onto that right and then all of a sudden it feels like everybody else is drinking some kool-aid that you don't have access to and it can make everything and then when your shelf breaks your ground falls apart. Then everything kind of goes into free fall and then you are suspicious of everything and so then you're sitting in church and you're thinking that there's something wrong about this model and then someone saying something and you just are skeptical of everything and then like you'll hear comments about like don't rehearse your doubts with other doubters or you'll hear things like that and you will wear. Do i go because these people don't see things the same that i do. So what else is there for me. And i think we really need to do

a better job of opening up people wherever they are having space for them. I love how you kinda loop in the present. Nelson's recent because you know the talk was greater like on paper you read through it. Point-by-point love it right. Then you mix it into just the intricacies of human nature mental health and and then these one line phrases sometimes can be less helpful than maybe we perceive them as a exactly when you look at it as a whole it is a very faith promoting talk and of course the prophet is going to be wanting people to engage in a positive way in the church and look for the bright side and like hold to the foundations of the church. Like you wouldn't expect anything other anything else other than that. And but i think the key is you. Apply the talk to yourself then you also make room for others forever. They are right and when somebody comes for his what what president nelson said here. It was really hurtful to me and you want to say well come on. You're just seeing it wrong like problems with you and that's not helping perpetuating what they're already thinking is i think the problem is with me or with this model and so something's wrong here right when i i really liked to look at our relationship to the church as a marriage and so that we have gr- wonderful things in our marriage like there's a reason why we stay married in. There's a lot of things that make it. Wonderful and good in a wonderful thing to participate in. but then. I don't know if your marriage is perfect but i know mine has its moments where you have to really work through some things and you have to really kind of have some deep discussions that are painful and you work hard at raritan and so i think that's the same thing with churches inc if you expect it to be wonderful and uplifting and beautiful all the time and not ever have to work through some nitty-gritties you're setting yourself up. For disappointment we can often perceive the is sort of in the future interview coming up. But i had this discussion with the seminary teacher as far as like church pain and we often can put the church experience into a box of like no. It is the answer as if we sort of mixed up christ with the church at times like no no you engage in this experience here and it works and if it if you say it doesn't work there's something wrong with your testimony right but we have to step back and just realized this is messy here and there's just like a marriage like i would say the institution of marriage absolutely works but it is messy day to day week to week month month or their seasons where it's like and we are off and we really need to sit down and figure some things out or lists isn't gonna lead anywhere good right. Yeah exactly and i think sometimes applying almost like a trauma informed approach to understand how people respond to hurtful things. I think there's there's definitely degrees of trauma the sturdy student who gets there first be dots trauma for them. And there's major life earth shattering life changing traumas and and i think in marriage is the same thing there's like small hurts and big hurts and i think the same thing with church and if you would apply more of a trauma informed blends it helps you make a lot of sense of what people do and so i think of if you look eh trauma. There's the the three responses fight flight and freeze. And so i think if you look at how members the these worn out members engaged. There's three different options. There's the the freeze mentality. Which is the people who are attending church.

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for years. And years and years not really participating they feel like spiritually worn out and disengaged. And i think those are the types that you would kind of classifies the lazy learners. Because you're like oh you're not reading your scriptures enough you're participating enough really. They're frozen because they're afraid of something. They're afraid that if they discover that this models and working for them than the whole the whole foundation where they built their life will fall apart. So in that case. If you're

face to face at the lion it does make sense to just kind of hold still day. If i don't do anything that i can at least not make it worse. And so i think that's the way a lot of people are participating in our congregations. They're a little bit unsettled about things but they had this intense fear of making things worse and so they just don't really want to do anything. And then you have the fighters they're the people that flee and i think those are the ones that just leave like all of a sudden you just never see them again her or you re you try to reach out there on your roles and you kind of do they avoid your change the subject or that sort of thing so i think you have the leaders. I think you also have. There's two different types of fighters. I think there's the type that go on their social media. They publicly leave the church and go on their social media. Say all of the different things that they found wrong or they could also be the type that are still trying to meaningfully engaged in the church but they say kind of edgier hard to hear comments in sunday school that made people nervous and they don't know what to do with that. Yeah it was a loser three. What was the first one again. The there's freeze flight. Okay yeah interesting. That's a great way to sort of conceptualize it in. I appreciate you to bring up trauma and all this because back to the marriage example like you you take marriage in general and then you mix in some level of trauma so for example. Maybe the wife was sexually abused. As a child that will dramatically change the dynamics of that marriage even though the husband is not a was not doctoring. And so the same thing happened with church where i grew up in a very positive healthy relationship between the church and the experiences their their life changing going on a mission wasn't even a question and then you take someone who may be came from an abusive home in their dad was a monster home and then he seem church. He sort of put on this act dan. There's some trauma there's far as like. Why are you different here right. Your monster copyrighted dissonant and then that changes the dynamic of that person with the relationship with their church experience when it can also i've seen number of so many people both professionally and personally that have known that their family members are abusive and then also seen them hold high church callings which can then like really do a number on your testimony of the priest in the sense of divine callings. Like how do you make sense of that. Yeah if you know that someone is doing some horrific things at home right right and again. It's just changed the dynamic. It's not like it's not the church's fault. It's not that person's fault it's just mortality like it's tallies the imperfect the imperfect world life. We live in. Crises dynamics that make You know going to church and right that equation in that model to work. But i think we we expect a lot of the church. We have kind of a culture of perfection and we think that we have this divine access so that our church should. We shouldn't have these problems. But then that just reminds me of elder holland's talk several years ago. I forget what it was called but it was about doubt and he said like imperfect people as all heavenly father has ever had to work with. And i'm sure it's incredibly frustrating to him just as it is us. But if he's patient with us then we need to be patient with us. Yeah and i just love the realizing the nuance is there and sitting in that and appreciating it for what it is rather than saying no no like no this should be this model should work and sort of almost fight for it like i must convince myself that this works or else my testimonies in question or i'll start doubt right but just say now this is messy but at the end the day like christ. Is this beautiful redemption. Once we come into him and this is a model nick and bring us unto him absolutely. And i also think sometimes it'd be helpful for bishops to understand or anybody. That really is trying to minister someone who's struggling to understand the differences in how people grow up relating to the church. So i feel like in my family. I grew up very much with a. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater mentality. So if i came to my mom with questions or said like hey like this really bothered me or this bothers me. My mom would say. Oh actually that bothers me too. And that's just something that i don't worry about because i have a testimony and all these other things that i

find so beautiful that i would not cast the whole thing out but i think there's other people that of come for more scrupulous backgrounds where everything has to be perfect like all their rigid and rigid. Yeah and like all of their decisions have to culminate into like perfection so even if they make a mistake. It was a mistake towards learning about perfection. I think that can though when you come from that more rigid mentality. It's harder to be flexible and it's a lot harder to look at human imprint. The flaws of beget touching the gospel.

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I think it can be harder to forgive those imperfections. So when you just like when you see maybe have a client come in. And and you're perceiving their some rigidity that's word but they're very rigid scrupulous in their approach to their faith and sometimes i interact with people. I'm just like oh like you're sort ripe for faith crisis like we need to open up the to the ambiguity of the gospel in the end. The nuances here. Because you don't it's gonna hit you hard at some point. So how do we help. People you know inoculate themselves. Maybe a little bit too. That rigidness sometimes invites that black and white mentality. So are you thinking about how to open them up before they were hit the faith crisis or what to do when they are in the faith price it like before so you had a client come in and just sort of like wow i can see. You're trying to really tighten down the church algebra here in follow step. Abc because that leads to happiness and no problems right like is there. Did you just sort of wait around. Or i mean it's hard because i feel like it's threatening to people. I think those types of people are very much to say. There is no black and white. It's like there is no grey. Everything is black and white and so then to try and sable like but. Don't you see gray area here or how was haven't you seen gray area and other areas of your life it can be kind of like whoa. Are you trying to shatter my worldview. Like this isn't what i believe in. So i think part of it is meeting them where they are invalidating their experience and seeing the benefits of of their perspective i think helps loosen people. So i'm a big believer in the finger. Chinese finger trap analogy so whenever you're trying to move someone closer to a certain perspective you i to push forward take a step closer to them and then that helps them relax their stance and then follow you a little bit more so instead of coming to them and being like hey like. Here's all these gray areas. Welcome to the rainbow of like different perspectives. That's not going to go very far. I think they're going to be like oh like you're crazy. You might as well just like you don't understand me at all whereas if you say oh my goodness there's so much strength in your perspective i i look at you as like the backbone of the body of christ like you have so much strength and you can handle a lot of burden. I think a lot of times. Those rigid black and white thinkers are always the ones to show up to fleeing the chapels on on saturdays. And they're always bonded ring casseroles like they really are oftentimes the backbone of our church. I think validating that perspective can be really helpful and less threatening than saying. Let's try to make you different world. Yeah that's helpful and so forth and and a lot of therapists this code of conduct or this official. Do no harm right when you're meeting with somebody and so yeah you could go in there and sort of shatter their world. A little bit like okay. I'm glad i'm glad. I shattered world before the world. Did that for you mel. Let's put the pieces together. But they're like wait a minute. No you can't do this so you sort of just valley where they're at and say hey. I'm here to talk about anything. You know what i also think. In general in therapy people don't often come to you before their worldviews shattered. I'm more of the person that the picking up the pieces. So i feel like the pre work is not often done by me. I think that's more. The realm of friends and that sort of thing is just being supportive making space for them

and whatever. Yeah that's great anything else. As far as the what we can do better tells these saints anything about wanting to do better. There's that i think the finger tap analogies the first place to go you wanna meet people where they are and i think one of the ways that we try to help people is. I think we try to imprint our brain onto there's and say if you can just look at things my way then. You won't have a problem with this and instead of doing that. Say like tell me your story. Like what is it that you are experiencing and value my. Wow that sounds really hard. Like i can see why that would be a challenge for you to come to church and i think sometimes we're afraid to even say those words that it would be challenging to come to church. I think we're afraid of. Is that giving them the permissions. Oh you think it's challenging to we'll see. I'm not that this is broken isn't it but i. I think we're afraid of admitting that things can be hard for some people but it actually usually has the opposite effect and so there's a whole realm of therapy that talks about how the way that we try to fix. People ends up making the problem worse. It's called strategic therapy in the ideas that if you kind of prescribe the opposite or you kind of do the opposite of what you would normally do than that can kind of give them the release to to approach you then into come a little bit closer so i think yeah like this is really hard like instead of trying to nag you to come to in sacrament meeting like would you like us to have. Someone comes with you in the foyer or just tied to be creative with the things that we suggest. Oftentimes we double down on saying like we'll have you read your scriptures of you. Listen general conference or you come to church. Are you praying praying long enough or you're praying on your knees. Are you listening to music before you pray.

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And we're very prescriptive of what we want to fix the problem. And if sometimes just doing the radical opposite of just doing nothing into saying. I'm here like complain. I'm voice that can receive this. I won't judge you for it. I won't try to correct europeans. I won't do anything other than be here for you. And i think that's a really important for step. Yeah and this is the tricky part. Because as a church leader we never want to be perceived that were pushing somebody away from from the church or the church traditions. Our experiences or ordinances right. We always be bring them towards them. But i often use the. The bicycle analogy that talk about trauma. We talk about different life experiences that by the time they sit on the gospel bike. They're dressed up in scuba diving gear because of all of these life experiences and then we keep telling him. We'll just peddle faster. Peddle faster like who know the problem is is that they have flippers on their feet and they can't peddle faster and so sometimes there's a there's a process that obviously we have to make sure we have resources in place to help them do this but they have to step off the bike for a minute and be like okay. Let's get the flippers of you. Let's get you into some biking shorts and the helmet and and then when you get back on the bike you can zoom right and that's scary earlier but no they can't get off the bike but i remember as bishop seeing many people some individuals to step away from the church. And i'm thinking. I don't how else you're going to reconcile your life experiences right now unless you sort of take a breather from this day to day week to week grind absolutely and i have talked to a number of people where i have felt the level of anxiety that they feel in church or the level of anger that they feel in church or the level. Whatever negative feeling that is they're experiencing and it affects all of them. It start saturday night where they start out tomorrow. Sunday like the anger the at anxiety or whatever it is starts brewing inside of them and we expect them to heal in that environment. And i think like the strategic therapy thing to do and i've done this before in session. We're also like we'll have you thought about like taking a break and that sort of

thing and sometimes it's been really interesting like it's a scary move to say like like. Do you want to take a rest period. But oftentimes what people will say is like well. No because that's where my friends are. That's where my family is. I enjoy music. Or i do that sort of thing. And so when you talk about discovering what reinforces people's spirituality. It's oftentimes saying well. It can come across as a manipulative. Would you miss if you miss church. Because then you feel like you're kind of getting gotcha statement but if you do the opposite where you're like wool like why don't you just. You're clearly disturbed by this. Why don't you take a break for a few weeks and see how you feel then the reasons that they tell you. They're reinforcing it for themselves. So they don't feel like they're being pressured or manipulated by you know. I just genuinely have a lot of things about the church that i don't wanna lose and their reinforcing it for themselves which is extremely valuable like. That's what you want people to do. Rather than this. Every time i go to meet the bishop. He's trying to sort of manipulate mean to come to church. Focusing on you know what will get me in the building or whatever when in reality. I'm like suffering inside absolutely all right. Anything else in the section with we can do better to help these saints mentioned gordon. He three three ingredients anything. We haven't hit on different. We haven't really talked about an assignment. And i think sometimes we get so caught up in viewing these people as projects and so a lot of people say like. Oh as soon as i told the bishop that i was struggling. Then all of a sudden my ministers like showed up three times a month. And i haven't seen them in five years or i am seeing all these people that really have had no relationship with me and people do not want to feel like a project that can feel like any ministering efforts. You do our box checkers and not because they actually care about you. Don't wanna do that. And so i think sometimes when you giving them an assignment pumping them feel needed and finding purpose that they can serve in. That makes them feel good and comfortable. I think is a good place to start in that. Might i mean. I know for my brother. He when he was struggling with it he still loved the scouting organization and he would participate that way or someone else's like i i can handle the library like that's a safe place from nursery is really popular jack. I love children like that can be a good option. So i think finding ways that they can serve and if they can't handle calling that's respectful finding helping having them help plan cool service projects or whatever meaningful way that they are willing to engage in. I think is really important thing to do and just looking at them as a project. Yeah yeah that's helpful that instead of like again. Going bombarding them with service and casseroles her visits or whatever but saying And be open to your ideas or thoughts here but is it just simply making the invitation of like. How would you like to engage in our religious community or the gospel and then see what ideas you come to the surface. And i think it's two things like i said before you can't look at people like a problem to be solved so the purpose of having them participate isn't because you wanna like booster numbers like make them come back to church is because we genuinely loved them in need them.

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And that's what i loved about that. Poor little ones talk so much as talks about how much like we especially need those. That are struggling. They have this experience. That enriches our awards in ways that like those of us who have never struggled can't can't grasp and so i think really communicating like we value. You like you are essential part of the body of christ and if you like can't be right in the center like how can we. What can you be the softer hands. That can reach out to other people. Can you help other people feel like they belong and feel welcome. And so i think just finding a place for everybody in

the body of christ and really communicating that. You need them. This isn't that you just want them to feel good about yourself to validate. The church is true. And the i'm back. Then it makes you feel like better about yourself as i genuinely love. You want your company. yeah i remember. Oftentimes i would tell people you know if they were really struggling the do you know there's i know there's at least five other people and really sided till the same way as you do and i need you in that room to sit by them. I need to know that they're not alone. So i would love for you to join us. I know there might be tough week so over others but we need you here really expressing that need insincere way and and sometimes can off the rails of sort of like you know we really need someone to To set up chairs or like. It's like no you don't like you'll find somebody else but to really articulate why they're needed and if that doesn't come to mind if you can't think of it maybe something to ponder over and think about and then return to that discussion. I also just kinda back to the view of being a project. I really i like to look at faith development in the analogy of bougainville that i bought last year and almost killed a bougainvillaea. A bougainville at this. So it's a beautiful flower has its green When it blooms all of the leaves turn pink and so it's just like this. Beautiful punk majestic bush is and so last year. I bought a really expensive fully bloomed one because i wanted to skip the maturing process. Have a nice backyard. And then during the winter it can't handle a freezing frozen tucson and so all of the leaves fell off and my bougainville was the ugliest sticky looking branch ever and i looked at that house. I'm pretty sure that's dead. Like i don't think it's coming back and i was about to just rip out the whole thing and plant new plant but i decided to give it like one last chance and look on the internet to see what is supposed to do and they said just keep pruning until there's some sign of life and if you can't find any sign of life just cut it off to about an inch above soil and so i kept pruning and there's nothing nothing. Nothing nothing so. I went right down to the inch above the soil and went. Well okay. i hope this works. And then what they would says. Don't over water it because they don't have any leaves that can process this water. So if you pour in too much water than it's going to extremes rewa root rot and so i think that's something what happens is so there's people that are feeling disengaged in there barely hanging on their like debating whether they should just rip out the whole thing in finding new belief system or whether they hang in there. Hope that they're going to be girls back. And if you treat them like a project and over water them and say here's all these resources read this read that do this. That's watering whereas if you say like hey and here like i'm gonna tend to you every now and then show you that i care. Show you that. I wanna be a part of your life. I want to welcome you in my garden. But i'm not going to overwhelm you to the point. Reyes push you away. Then you're not getting experience root rot. And then miraculously maybe be back amazing and his beautiful now cool so i think and i think that pruning process for a lot of people as saying okay. So maybe you're struggling with church history your that sort of thing or maybe you're struggling feeling the spirit or depression or like you've had experiences of abuse in your family. That's making it hard to view the priesthood or in a positive way like whatever it is that you're struggling with pruned it off like you don't need it for now and then pruning until you find something and so. I think that you can survive. Spiritually like on a grain of a mustard seed. Really like you don't need this beautiful flowering testimony to show other people like it can grow back in you. Just treat it well. Yeah i love a good metaphor. I love that because we do. Sometimes we're like okay. It's dead but let's see. We reviving fertilizer water. You know more son. Like what else do we need to do. The person is like i am dying the more you try and help so stop trying. Yeah that's awesome has all you really need is time. And there's so many of those inspiring stories where it's like an individual stepped away from the church ten years twenty years and they just needed and maybe the in their mind they thought i'm done. I am dad as far as the testimony

goes and then over time. You know the savior continues to be with them and encourage them along in overtime that that green leaf sprout rains like okay.

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We have a starting place exactly. And i remember using this for a object lesson in my younger ones class and showing them the one point like this piddly. Little green leaf is like look. It's working and i had no idea that would turn it back into this beautiful thing. That's something to be proud of much later. So that's awesome root rot. That's a new term. I loved that. So what about what would you prescribe the opposite. Look like a talking about this concept with carl rogers. The curious paradoxes. That win i accept myself. Just as i am then i change. Yeah so the idea with that is. It's it's hard to be motivated to change when you feel like you aren't good enough as you are. It's kind of like if you're not gonna love me for who i am like. Why am i going to engage with you. And so i find this a lot in in marriages. You'll have a couple that comes to mean. Say having all these issues. Like how can i fix my husband and i'm like well don't try to fix him. Love him first and they're like oh well then i'm going to go see someone else because like i don't wanna do that. I can't love him until he changes. But the reality is it's very active. Showing unconditional love right then gives you the fertile soil and the sign and the water. And what you need in order to be able to make changes and grow because i think otherwise it just feels like pressure or manipulation or not everything. But when it's unconditional love. It's like what i actually do on a show up as my best self. I wanna be a part of this. And i wanna bring my best self do it. So if i accept who. I am then i can also make who i am better. Yeah yeah this is an interesting as you mentioned paradox with his concept of acceptance. Because i don't like i. I've talked a lot about this. I wrote a newsletter about in the context of its pride month were recording in june and this concept of like will we need to be. We need to be completely accepting of our lgbt brothers and sisters and people like no current. You don't understand if we do that. Then they'll think we're giving them permission to go. Sin and live this lifestyle when we're completely accepting. They know that it's a safe place. They engage with us. And you'll be surprised at some day. They may lean in and say so. Tell me about your jesus like interesting. There's again that's not the point of we don't be completely accepting so we can manipulate them in to catch them in the great. It can feel like this like what is it like. What is your game plan here. And then i see this a lot when i work with people are trying to overcome a pornography problem. Where i'll say like you need to accept yourself. You need to forgive yourself. You need to say who you are right now is good enough. You need to understand that. The savior loves you right now. Even five minutes from now you go and engage in a problem behavior. We will still love you you love is unchanged and it's interesting to like you would think that people would be like yeah like i wanna be loved and that sort of thing but i have so many clients that are resistant and they will. But but then how do i keep myself from like engaging ruining my life i don't wanna do. This is like you don't understand the shame cycle of feeling like you're worthless is the exactly the same perpetuating this problem. Yeah yeah. I think there's this this like this tweak that we need to make with how we communicate especially to youth because sometimes there's this overemphasis of like art missions great like. Oh look tommy down the street. He's an ecuadoran. Here's he's so happy. And i was mission. Like don't wanna be like tommy right and like And we gotta go to the temple. I'd be overpowering force these behaviors and we lose the opportunity of saying you know billy i couldn't care less if you've on a mission like i'm just glad you're here and you're my friend and i just accept you whether you're gonna mission or whether you have a private Whatever except you

hear. Be the difference of them saying. Oh maybe i'll hang around a little bit rather than these people don't like me. And if they knew who i was they would reject me and i feel like comes. We give too much credit to the cognitive distortion. That sin is enticing. And i think were afraid to say i will love you no matter what even if you're sending because i think we are afraid that that gives you the rest of approval go do it but i really believe that creating goodness in the world is more enticing than sin and i think we're afraid to accept that because what if we're wrong but i think people are inherently good. We want as you goodness in the world. And i think we need to trust ourselves more. Yeah and i've i've noticed in my relationship with my father in heaven. It's like when i've let go of the idea that i'm doing things 'cause i don't wanna make him mad but instead i do things because i've been just shocked. Overwhelmingly he loves me. And then it's like i beg for more commandments. Okay yeah you've given me this. Like what more can. I do like i. I don't drink coffee. I stopped eating carrots. How about that like what like what else. Cayenne for that one. Because wreck it. Uncovers the sanctifying nature of the loving god who wants to make us better not because we are good but because he wants to make us great you know and we are going to become more and more like heavenly father the more we grow and i think that is our dad is our natural tendency realize to become better and i think we need to trust that and ourselves awesome are andrea.

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I feel like. I've torn your outline of part. I jumped all around thoughts. What what else. Anything else that we need to touch on before we wrap up. I think just being mindful of the power of right now so. Don't think about prescriptions for the future. Think about how. Can i connect with you right now. In this moment how can if you have had struggles with abuse or feeling loved or whatever it is that makes it so that you have a hard time engaging like how can i show you a loving moment right now so that it's not that i'm saying like oh here go home and make a million friends that are gonna love you in the future. How can i love you right now. And i think that's that's where the beauty of transformation in healing comes is right now in the moment. Yeah that's that's such a liberating idea for a leader. Where and we've talked about this four like when you remove the responsibility of fixing other people's problems and actually your job is to connect with them like just to hear him just to listen as i do that like i don't know how to fix their pornography bomber. Why they hate george or whatever. But i love him. Yeah i can live with them and just accept them completely for where they're at and then you'll magically see the steps the savior step in and begin to change and that's remarkable right and there's this principle of healing my husband's a physician and when you do stitches on people. There's this principle called approximate. Don't strangulate the premise of it. Is that your body already knows how to heal so all you have to do. When you're doing stitches is just keep people. Keep the two edges of the wound close and your body will do its work and i think that's the same thing as you're trying to heal. People from their spiritual fatigue is just keep them close in whatever way they can tolerate and trust that the savior and the spirit already knows how to heal itself. It's not anybody's job to heal them. We already have the power within us to do it. Another metaphor bomb andrew. This is you've got brought some great metaphors it was worth the price of emission. Just for your this is great. I love that like proximity like you don't have to fix it but just bringing them in proximity them and watch the stand back and see god work. It's amazing exactly. all right. If people want to reach out to you if there in tucson and they need a great fifth sunday lesson. I mean whatever it is like what could people reach out to. My website is andrea. Lyster dot com.

Or you can find me on instagram. Ask andrea mft so by website would have all my contact information and be happy to help out in any way that can. I love doing this kind of thing. Perfect part of the last question for you is as you've had opportunity to lead or serve in in the way you do through your profession and through church and whatnot. How is being a leader helped you become a better disciple or follower of jesus. Christ 'i love taking the focus away from yourself. I think a lot of times. It's easy to get caught up in your own struggles and that keeps you from progressing but when you can love someone else then that brings you forward it helps you have a purpose sense of purpose and they think purposes what drives progress and. I think that's how tie become closer to heavenly. Father is just by helping other people and loving them. That concludes this episode of the leading saints. Podcasts we'd love to hear from you about your questions or thoughts or comments. You can either leave a comment on the post related to this episode at leading saints dot org or go to leading dot org slash contact and send us your perspective or questions. If there's other episodes topics you'd like to hear on the leading saints podcast leading saints dot org slash contact in sheriff's information there and we would love for you to share this with any individual. You think this would apply to especially maybe individuals in your world council or other leaders that you may know who would really appreciate the perspectives that we discussed and remember text. The word lead to four seven four seven four seven in order to access the three free sessions of the lgbt saints library who it came as a result of a position of leadership which was imposed upon us. Either god of heaven who brought for a restoration of the gospel of jesus christ when the declaration was made concerning the only true and living church upon the face of the earth immediately put in a position of loneliness loneliness of leadership from which we cannot shrink nor run away and a which we must face up with and courage and ability.