

LEADING SAINTS

How I Lead as a Bishop in Luxembourg | An Interview with Lewis Howarth

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We live in a world plagued by pornography and people are looking for help. When an individual struggles with pornography they often turn to their church leader for that help. How does a leader help a person overcome the shame of this issue and start seeing positive progress? How can a leader help youth to open up about struggles with pornography? What are some lasting proven tactics that actually make a difference? In order to help leading saints has created the liberating saints library with more than 20 presentations featuring individuals who have a unique perspective or expertise around this topic. Three of those most popular sessions are available to watch now simply text the word lead to four 747 four 7 to start watching now or visit leading saints dot org slash liberating. Leading saints is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Latter day Saints be better prepared to lead. And we do that through various ways including this very podcast that you're listening to. I hope you subscribe. Maybe you 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 org and you'll find thousands of articles dedicated to leadership context as it relates to being a latter day saint. We have virtual summer so we've done tricks out on social media and also 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 yet. Today I have the opportunity to sit down with Lewis haworth. I say that right Louis. Yeah well done. Well done. Nice. There's all sorts of tongue twisters in your background here because you're from Luxembourg in the Nancy Nancy steak not say that. You're basically a local at this point. That's great. Yeah. Yeah. Well and tell us for us ignorant Americans. Where is Luxembourg? Yeah so first off Luxembourg is a real country. I promise you all that. It's in the heart of Europe nestled between France Germany and Belgium. So it's very small country part of the EU the European Union. And interestingly enough there are three official languages of Luxembourg. So you have luxembourgish which again I promise you as a real language and then French and German. On

behalf of Luxembourg I'll say moyan bonjour and guten tag so everybody is included in that. That's awesome. That's awesome. And so Luxembourg isn't just a city in fantasy novels. It's a real thing with real people. And real language. So. A little fact for everybody. The capital of Luxembourg is Luxembourg city. So that's an easy one to remember. Oh nice. I can do that. That I can do. And we were talking before we hit record that it takes about an hour or so to drive across from north and south right? And a little bit. Exactly about an hour and a half north to south about an hour east to west. So that's a pretty small country. That's great. And you are currently serving as the bishop of the Luxembourg first ward. Yeah correct correct. Nice. And how many how many wards are in Luxembourg and then how many are in your steak? How many groups or branches or whatever? Yeah so since the 80s there has been a branch in Luxembourg. My uncle actually moved to Luxembourg and set up the first branch here when he was working for the European Parliament and then my family came after and I was born in Luxembourg in the late 80s. So there's been a branch in Luxembourg for all of my young life. And then when I went on my mission around 2000 and ten ish 2008 2009 2010 there was awards that was greatest the branch was transformed into award. And then last year we're actually able to establish a second branch in Luxembourg focused on Portuguese and Spanish speaking community. Nice. And so what language do you speak in your ward? Like officially. Bilingual so it's a mix of French and English. There's a pretty large expat community in Luxembourg because of different international companies who set their headquarters in Luxembourg. So we have a lot of native English speakers and then a lot of native French speakers. So between the two we cope and we get along. Nice. So this is going to sound. Just stupid but my limited European history knowledge like how come Luxembourg has never got gobbled up at some point by one of the surrounding countries. By multiple countries actually that the city of Luxembourg is built around a gorge. So there's a really big valley that kind of protects most of the city of Luxembourg. So during the medieval ages it was always a very good kingdom and a very well protected kingdom and fortress that not many could penetrate. So as always somewhat independent throughout the years the Netherlands has owned Luxembourg Belgium did in World War II the Nazis invaded Luxembourg in about ten minutes and took over the country.

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So it has been taken over by a different countries and different countries have taken pieces of Luxembourg used to be a little bit bigger. But yeah after the Second World War Luxembourg actually became really important for the creation of the European Union. And the European Parliament court to justice the European investment bank all have different headquarters in Luxembourg. So now it's a relatively important country for a geopolitical perspective which is pretty cool. That's awesome. And what do you do for work there? I work for technology company who have based in Luxembourg. I work for Amazon. They have a pretty substantial headquarters in Luxembourg with thousands of employees. So I've worked for them for the last 7 and a half years. So do you have two day shipping there? We don't believe it or not there's no fulfillment center in Luxembourg. We do a lot of the work behind the scenes but we have to go to Amazon DE for Germany FR for France or B for Belgium. So we're kind of scoping around to

get anything which is a shame. But also patriotic. Anyways so and then you say you were born there born and raised there? Yeah born and raised in Luxembourg to an English speaking family so my family are from England and Ireland originally my dad worked for the European Parliament which is why my family moved to Luxembourg. But yeah I grew up in Luxembourg live there till I was 17 when I went over to BYU to go study. Okay. To be what you Provo? BYU Provo yeah. I lived in the complete opposite of what I imagined the Utah Mormon lifestyle to be living in Luxembourg. So I wanted to experience the complete polar opposite to my childhood and see what that gave me. And it was a cool experience. And we think Luxembourg strange and you think Utah strange. So. Nice. And sort of mission? I served a mission in Germany. I was originally called to the Germany Hamburg mission. And about halfway through my mission that mission was merged with the Berlin mission and the Frankfurt mission. So I ended up in the Berlin mission for the second half of my mission. And so what was your language capacity like? What do you want on a mission? Did you already speak German? Was your English as good as it is now? Or yeah so I grew up speaking English. So English is my native language. I learned French from the age of 6. And I speak fluent French. I started to learn German from the age of 11. But being brought up English there was always a patriotism towards England versus Germany. So I was kind of reluctant to learn German. I didn't do great in school when I submitted my mission papers. I wrote down that I learned German for four years because that was the truth. And I guess the brethren were inspired to send me to Germany. And to not send me to the program to see but to send me to the press to empty C which was a ten day crash course in a German speaking district. So I went in not really speaking much German that could get me through. But I promise you if anyone is about to leave on a mission the gift of tongues is real and I am a witness of that. So I went to Germany after ten days and was able to teach from the first day. And then you also grew up just learning French just because of the culture right? And school. So I went to a pretty unique school system that's set up for children of people who work for the European institutions. So every grade had 25 different nationalities sections. So you had a Danish section a Swedish and Italian section. You know so you had all the different sections where you did classes like literature or maths in your native language. And then for classes like history or geography or economics you would do that in your second language which in my case was French with other children who had the same second language. So they taught you the language but then immersed you in the language to do other courses which sped up obviously your ability to speak. Yeah. Yeah that's cool. And we're seeing more and more at least and you tell more of these immersion programs where kids are learning different languages and it's pretty cool. You know it's kind of a way to learn language because as an adult I don't I don't want to learn another language. I'm good. So it's very much synchronous when that's for sure. And so. The Luxembourg is that the name is like luxembourgish. So is that just like some fun traditional language or is there actually is actually used in day to today life? Yeah it's definitely used. It used to be more of a dialect and then it was turned into an official language. If you go to the local school system which I did not that my children have done it. They learned luxembourger. So it's very much from a young age and typically the first few years of school being luxembourgish and then you'll learn German and French on top of that. Most people in Luxembourg come from a Portuguese or Spanish background as well. There's about 30 40% of the population who come from either Portugal or Spain. So they'll speak Italian Spanish or Portuguese on top of that and then English is always learned. So I joke that to work

at McDonald's and Luxembourg you need to learn at least 6 or 7 languages. And that's not even false literally most people in Luxembourg will speak three or four languages and no one even beds an eyelid.

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Yeah. So I just wonder like how does your brain work like as far as thinking like I've learned Spanish from my mission so I sort of understand that dual language the dichotomy but I mean are you only thinking in English or do you just sort of just think of for myself I speak in English when I was in Germany on my mission I called myself dreaming in German and thinking in German so I had to quickly repent and change that back to English but yeah when I speak in French I think in French when I speak German I think in German. But when I'm just by myself I'm thinking in English. It's just crazy. That's awesome. That's awesome. All right anything else like just tell us about the church give us a crash course on what the church is like in Luxembourg. Yeah anything you haven't mentioned. It's changed a bunch. So Luxembourg is a little unique because the ward boundaries actually go into three different countries. So you have the whole country of Luxembourg. You then have about the same geographic size of the country of Luxembourg in Belgium that belongs to the ward boundaries. And then a piece of France as well because we're part of the French Nancy stake. So Luxembourg as award it goes into three countries which is pretty unique. I'm not sure if there's any other word that goes into three countries or not. But it means that especially in COVID when borders were shot across Europe it meant that we physically couldn't go to members and we couldn't help them and they couldn't come to church and stuff like that. So probably for the first time we saw the reality of what that actually looked like. But membership in Luxembourg has been relatively small for the first couple of decades when the church was being built up in the 80s and the 90s convert baptisms maybe one or two a year if you were lucky. And then as I mentioned over the past 15 years or so a lot of expats have started to come in. We've had tremendous success especially within the Portuguese and Spanish speaking communities in Luxembourg hence the creation of the branch recently. So yeah there's been a ton of changes over the past ten or 15 years which has been really really cool to see and to be part of. Nice. Is Frankfurt the closest temple? It is to Luxembourg gas so that the nausea front steak belongs to the Paris temple but we got an exception and we belong to the Frankfurt temple. So we always like to do things a bit different in Luxembourg so yeah. Nice. Well the way president Nelson has gone we want to be shocked if a Luxembourg temple was announced right? Pretty cool. You heard it here first. We're praying for that. That's cool. So just tell me about your being called as a bishop. I mean is there a story behind that? Interesting actually. So I travel a lot for work. And I remember being in Las Vegas in February of the year that I was called to be bishop. And I was called. I think it was in May or June. So a few months after that. And I remember I set a goal that year whenever I traveled to a major city that I would make an effort to go to the temple because typically that's where the temples are. And I remember being in Vegas for a convention with my work and there was another colleague who was also a member of the church. So we worked together to wake up early one morning and take an Uber and to go to the local temple. And I remember sitting in the temple doing an endowment session. I remember all of a sudden a face came into my head.

And I remember thinking okay. That's an interesting person to be thinking about. And then a second face came into my head and again I accepted it but I was questioning you know what this was. And then a third phase came into my head. So three different men in my ward came to my head in the middle of the session and the template. I found that a bit peculiar but I remember the feeling being very strong that these were three men that I was going to be working with. And I remember nodding that somewhere in my head as you know this is something I shouldn't be forgetting. And a few months later at stake president invites me for an interview at the church in Luxembourg. And he extends the calling of a bishop and you know as soon as the words came out of his mouth these three brothers faces came to my head again. And the stake president said you know look I'm going to give you a couple of minutes go and pray and decide to your counselor should be. And it was one of those moments where I already knew. And the interesting thing for me was I had three names right? And obviously you have two counselors in the bishopric. So the first two are the ones that I felt prompted to share. But a couple of years into being bishop we created the second branch in Luxembourg and that counselor was then called as branch president. So his replacement was a very easy pick because it was the third face that had come into my mind those years earlier. So you know I've listened to several podcasts that you've done with leading saints recently about aspiring and those types of topics right? And one of the guests that you had on the podcast talked about the lord preparing you and how as long as we're aspiring to be worthy to serve God that's the right type of aspiring that we should be having.

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That was one of those experiences for me where the lord was teaching me trust and he was also preparing me so that in the moment I didn't need to worry or fear I was ready with the information that I needed. Yeah that's awesome. That's awesome. And then. Outside of you know some of the just the church in general that you've talked about how would you describe the demographics of your ward? Like you said there's maybe some languages some expats and whatnot so yeah I think before the split before the creation of the branch the demographics were crazy varied. So you had the top executives coming over from a very very wealthy prominent background in the U.S. to Luxembourg all the way down to the humble cleaning lady immigrant who had just come to Luxembourg and is trying to find any Euro that they could find. So it was a very vast demographic in terms of the ward. The last time I counted we had 19 different languages in the world on a regular basis 19 different languages from Swedish to Spanish to Swahili. We have a family that that's native languages Swahili. So you know obviously we try and find the common languages and we translate where we can but one of our goals was very much to have a church where the gospel is taught and native tongue where you can experience the gospel in your native language. And that's part of the reason why we split the ward and created the branch in order to enable that to happen. But yeah it's very difficult. I remember the ward council that we had before the branch was created. I literally felt like we were in the UN because we had people from Australia the UK Canada U.S. Columbia Dominican Republic basically every calling in ward council represented not just a different country but a different continent as well. So you know trying to bring those cultures together to come to a consensus

and making a decision the spirit is great but culture certainly blocks that sometimes right? And to the point where we would need to have some form of simultaneous translation during war council. You know so you're trying to have a conversation translation is probably going to be 5 ten 15 seconds delayed. It creates a lot of difficulties. So that type of structure it's a great experience and you learn a lot about empathy and working with people at different levels different backgrounds. But it's hard. And it's something that has shaped what the world looks like today. But it's something that you need to work for. Yeah. Wow. And you know it's one thing you know you see these when maybe an apostle comes and there needs to be an interpreter that's standing there and maybe makes her talk a longer. And that's a very like I'm speaking to a congregation. But when it's a council setting where you want a lot of dialog going because that's where you know the revelation is hidden. Yeah man what a complex situation. It's hard. And we went through lots of different things right? Because growing up in the branch of Luxembourg they would always translate at the pulpit. So you would say something in one language and the translator would translate the right kind of as you're mentioning with apostles visiting different places. It's a pretty poor experience for the speaker to have to stop after every sentence. Right. When they're trying to build up momentum and get to the climax of a story in all honesty it detracts a little bit from the spirit. So part of my goal when I was called as bishop was to allow people to speak especially give talks or lessons in their native language. So a lot of Sundays we would have headsets and we would have either French Spanish Portuguese English three of those four depending on who the speaker was would be translated simultaneously into headsets for people sitting down. So you know it felt like general conference where you had to have all of that in place you need amazing skills and just because you speak another language it doesn't mean you're a good translator in that language right? Because to translate it's a skill to listen and to speak at the same time. And that's a hard skill. It takes a lot of practice to get. So yeah there have been amazing members who have had many gifts brought to them through the spirit in order to enable people to hear the gospel and their native language and what a blessing that has been. Yeah. And this I assume is they're calling to be a translator. Yeah we did actually set people apart for that because of how difficult it was. It probably wasn't their only calling just the nature of the war people need to have a couple of callings but it was definitely one that we set people apart for you. Yeah. And then what are the general numbers of your board and as far as showing up to sacra meeting and whatnot? Yeah so it's been again amazing growth growing up. It was a branch of 1520 people where we had missionary serving as branch president sometimes just because there wasn't a brother locally who could do it. When it was turned into ward it was around a hundred 110 or so active on a Sunday.

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Before COVID and before we created the branch we were getting 220 people. We had in the two years prior to COVID we had around 50 baptisms which is just unheard of. It's unheard of for Europe in general but for a country that had had one or two baptisms a year for decades. It was it was a sign that the lord was preparing us for something. And we were in a position that he could trust us to do that. So before COVID we are about two 20 when the branch was created and the ward is now separate from the branch. We're seeing a good 150 people

depending on who's watching it online versus who's in person and the branch is somewhere between 60 and 80. So both healthy sizes that can show a lot of great growth moving forward. Yeah. What about with the ministry assignments? What's the I mean. How is that organized or any unique approaches you have to take with ministry? It's a very confusing matrix. So there's a logical aspect to it and a spiritual aspect to it. So you have geography you have languages and then you just have seniority or experience in the church right? Because there's a ton of new converts and first generation members in the ward. You can take the approach of let's group people together geographically. So those in Belgium those in France those in the north those in the south. But then you have to also cater to the language because having a Portuguese speaking brother visit someone who's English speaking and doesn't speak a language that's a hard person to minister to sometimes. So it's a mix of everything. It's not perfect. But it works sometimes right? I think as most places in the church it's not a perfect science. But for those who love they'll do. And I've seen amazing examples of people who don't speak a lick of another language but they just know how to show love. And you see very quickly what the true spirit of ministering is right? It's not needing to prepare an hour long lesson on the most complex gospel doctrines. But it's simply being there and showing the love and that's at the core of what ministering should be today with change. Yeah. Yeah that's great. I'm curious do you you know there's obviously various. Points that influence who we call to what positions. Obviously we want to do so under the inspiration and of the keys and the authority that we have. But do you kind of feel like as you're looking for an elders corn presidency or whatnot like are there certain language requirements that are like a must. Yeah I've seen different leaders take different approaches there. And of course logically it makes sense that you need people who can communicate with at least the majority of the people in their corn where their group right? I've learned. I've learned that the lord qualifies who he wants to call. And within a presidency generally you can have the right mix of languages. But we don't call people because of the language that they speak right? And it's important for me to separate that because otherwise it almost turns into a job interview. You know give me your CV. What's your skills? What's your language? And I think that detracts from what the lord is trying to do with his work. So it's a difficult one and sometimes the balance isn't right and you feel that and changes are made over time. And that's okay when we're not perfect. But you know I try not to have a prerequisite in my mind in terms of what I'm looking for in a leader. I try and trust the lord with that. And in particular the year leading up to the creation of the branch. Portuguese and Spanish speaking it was really clear to me that we needed to put a lot of these brothers and sisters who would most likely be called into this branch into leadership positions that they needed to be trained and learned how to be leaders because they're building a branch from scratch. So that was one moment where it was really clear the types of people the lord wanted us to call. And it was a lot of faith because at that time we didn't know the branch was getting created for sure it was in the planning and we were praying for it and thinking about it. But again the lord called exactly who he needed to prepare. And when that branch was created the vast majority of the people that we had been working with and training and learning together were called into leadership positions and could go from day one you know and that was that was a really cool moment to be able to see that that come to fruition. You don't usually get to see that in the church too often. But that was one moment where you could see the lord had planted seeds. He had orchestrated exactly what he wanted to and this was the end result that he was aiming for. Yeah that's

fascinating. All right so as we typically do with these how I lead interviews I had to prepare a few principles to discuss and tip gram getting close to wrapping up. But there's so many so many questions with your unique experience where you're at in the kingdom of God.

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So that's right though. So we'll just jump into these. The first one is the importance of setting up a structure. What do you mean by that? Yeah so again looking at the growth of the church in Luxembourg for a long time it was a branch. And anybody who's lived in a branch before. Being in a branch is a lot like being in a startup you get a bit bootstrap you trying to figure things out you have people wearing multiple hats. And it's more about getting it done versus getting it done the right way right? And when I was called as bishop the ward had existed for a little while but it was in a difficult state where the building that we had originally was meant for a very small group. And it got to the point where it was actually illegal for us to meet in this building just because we didn't meet fire and safety regulations. There were too many people and not enough exits. So the stake president at the time took the decision to not renew the lease in order to force the church to find as a better place because there was a bit of back and forth there. So we left that building. And we ended up being in a hotel for about two or three years. So every Sunday we would bring our portable church on wheels and we would we would rent out a few rooms. And if you conference rooms at the hotel and we would meet there each Sunday is a very interesting experience for all the guests of the hotel who would see you know a hundred members of the church trifling in and white shirts and ties and singing at 9 30 in the morning. I'm sure they didn't appreciate that too much. But you know in that type of setting how difficult would that have been for the bishop at the time the leaders of the time to do anything? You know activities and interviews all that kind of stuff that you take for granted just weren't really possible because there wasn't even a physical building to be meeting in. So. Moving from that we finally get a building and I'm cold as bishop within the next year of having that building again. So there was a ton of structure that just wasn't in place. And it was very much my focus for that first year to set up youth programs that worked and to make sure that we had primary activity days. And all of these things that if you're in a place like Utah California Idaho Arizona where the church has roots and it has people who have been there for a long time. Again I think we take those for granted in a place where there wasn't even a building where most of the members have joined the church in the last ten or 15 years. Most of them didn't grow up learning prime race songs. You need to create that space where they can then learn from. Otherwise it turns into chaos. The first job I had as a 17 year old kid finished high school I had a great boss who taught me probably the most important lesson of my life. He said Louis the three secrets to business are communication communication communication. So setting up that structure and trying to find out a way to work over communicating was really key for me. And I over indexed on that where Google Docs became the go to for every bishopric meeting for every ward council mutant guide and it was saved in a folder shared with everyone. So everyone had access to it. They knew what we were doing. They knew what the focus was. They knew what the agenda points were in the action items for the next time. So Google Docs has become really key to helping with that communication. We have award council WhatsApp

group and a bishopric WhatsApp group so that we can quickly communicate and talk with each other when we need to. We use Facebook pretty religiously as a way in order to make sure that things can be communicated quickly. In addition to the send a message tool which is an LCR as well that you can choose the group or quorum that you're sending a message to. So setting up that structure which for many members was very new. And then put in kind of as that first layer very open very transparent communication was really key in those early days. And maybe changing the mentality a little bit from being a branch to being a functional ward. And that is a mental shift. Even for members who have maybe been in Luxembourg for a long time you get used to a certain way of working. And when we try then and go to that next level and we put in a structure in order to allow more people to experience the gospel and to enjoy and to experience it may be in a different way. It can sometimes become a point of conflict because it's change and change is always difficult even if it's good change or change for the right reasons. But that was really important and that was a big focus for the first year. Yeah. So help us maybe give us an example as far as setting up the structure like what that actually looked like you said we take it for granted here that yeah there's just always this somebody somebody somewhere knows what to do and we just sort of fall on that mold. And that tradition. So what specifically is an example of how that looked setting up that structure? Yeah. So a couple of the basic ones were with the youth so having a weekly youth activity. And the Nazi stake has actually pretty rare. There's only one or two other units in the entire stake.

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There's 11 wards and branches and then also stake who have regular youth activities partly because of a lack of youth. So you don't necessarily have the numbers and partly because people grow up in a different way with different expectations. When I grew up in Luxembourg as a young man for many years I was the only active young man. And I remember when I was 12 years old leaving primary going to young men's there actually wasn't a young men's program at the time. So I went to elder's core. And I stayed there for a little while and then eventually they called the young men's president. But I remember having a young men's presence at one point who understood the principle of having a program for a youth like a whole youth is worth a hold program. And I remember going to the church the small church building at the time in the middle of the week and it would just be me and him and he would take me to McDonald's and we'd get a burger. And we would just have a good chat. And you know for me I didn't grow up with a dad who was present. My parents got separated and divorced when I was a kid and my dad's not an active member of the church. So I'm sure that brother maybe didn't realize the impact that he had in a young Lewis growing up and trying to figure out what I wanted to do in my life. But I tell you those McDonald's conversations or some of the most impactful ones as a young man trying to understand my relationship with God. So I loved that principle as a youth that I was worth somebody's time. And trying to mimic that in the ward today where we actually have quite a lot of youth which is amazing it's been part of the growth of Luxembourg. But making sure that each one of those youth understood their value and a part. Of the way that we can show that is by time commitment and by having programs that are worth it. And they can see we're putting the effort in. And again I lived in Utah for a while. I went to awards when I was married and I was

called into the young men's presidency in that ward. And I remember. As a presidency we would be kicking ourselves to try and make good activities every week and stuff like that. And I remember sometimes there was an attitude with some of the youth that was very expectant right? Like yeah sure whatever this is an activity. And there wasn't always a huge amount of gratitude. I remember thinking to myself holy smokes. If I had a tenth of this as a young man it would have been the greatest experience of my life you know? So it's the balance between making sure you have the right programs the right dedication the right time commit but you're still helping people stay humble and grateful for what they're doing. And that's the balance we're trying to fit. So the youth is one example of putting that culture putting that structure in place. Others have been with the changes recently right having elders come and release society take a much stronger role with missionary work and family history. That's a worldwide change and I'm sure that each board has tried to figure that out. I think part of the struggle for us has been teaching counselors to become leaders where historically the mentality was I'm second counselor. I'm all good. You know I can chill in the bag. But now we're saying no you're in charge of one of the most important organizations in the church. You know this is this is key to what God is trying to build in this country. So that's been that's been a learning experience that hasn't been easy and it's definitely still ongoing. But those are the things where putting structural expectations and putting an organization in place is what we have found to be the role of the bishopric. To kind of give that vision to then allow people to act within that vision. Instead of having to create everything themselves that's probably been the biggest value that we've felt as a bishopric. Yeah I love that. Next principle is different seasons for different focuses and goals. Yeah so I've touched on this right where the first year of being a bishop was very much about setting up the structure. The second year was very much around preparing leaders who were going to move into the branch. This third year that we're in right now has been very much around preparedness coming off the back of a COVID pandemic. Last week I'm not sure if you read but there were terrible floods in Germany Belgium and Luxembourg with really heavy rainfall hundreds of people have died. And several members of our ward experienced some pretty bad damage because of the flooding one member's families whole house was flooded on the ground floor. So that preparedness goal of this year has been really important. But two years ago it wasn't an important one you know? So as a leader it's about understanding where your ward is at and what will help them get to that next level. So some advice that my stake president gave me within a couple of months of being called as a bishop was Louis make sure that you're not expecting people to be a ten when there are three. You know? Understand where people are at. And if someone's at a three help them become a four. Don't force them to become a ten. And I love that principle. And it's something that has helped shape me and teach me more empathy in terms of helping somebody progress from where they're standing right to quote elder dwarf. And I think for us this year it's been about understanding where we can help people grow and help them get to the next level.

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So most of the year has been stuck in a zoom church and virtual meetings right? We're now back to being in live and we now have second hour which is amazing. But we made the decision

early this year to have monthly firesides around a preparedness theme. So we called a preparedness committee and they gave a 12 different themes that they were going to cover and they've planned different activities. And it's been a really cool way to bring people together even in a virtual sense for something other than just sacrament meeting to try and give people different outlets and opportunities to learn and to grow. So understanding what the needs are today is really really important. And to help people understand what that next step is in their lives. It's obviously different for each person. But as a leader there needs to be some type of focus that can drive a lot of the work that everybody is doing. So that for me has been a really good one. I really like that and appreciate that because when we contrast that to maybe our professional lives when we hire people to work for us or people we work we typically aim to hire maybe an 8 or 9 maybe we'll settle for a 7 depending on the position that's being filled and the skill set need and what not. And then we sort of expect them to give that level of service. And then we go to the church and we're just only have the people we can work with. And so if we expect a 7 8 or 9 person there's simply a three that just sits up for deep disappointment frustration. You know you violate trust and because you know you get there's this cognitive dissonance as far as who you think they are and what do you think they should be able to do and then it just turns into a mess right? And so see meet people where they're at. Yeah and it's hard to have the spirit when you're frustrated all the time you know? And as a bishop it's important that you're showing love and you're not showing bureaucracy or forcing a behavior pattern. You know the handbook is clear that the role of leaders is to help people feel the love of God. That's our role as a leader and you can't do that when every conversation is a conversation of disappointment where somebody didn't live up to expectations. Now it definitely can be warranted sometimes as a leader you do need to speak openly and transparently and say hey you agreed to doing this what happened? And those conversations are good and healthy. And we need to have those. But it shouldn't be the majority right? That shouldn't be the norm. And just maybe one more point along the different seasons call for different focuses. I've certainly gave a test that I've gained a testimony that God prepares you for what that next season looks like. And he puts in different planters to help you prepare for what that next season is. I remember a year and a half ago we had a relatively high number of welfare requests coming into Luxembourg with typically people not living in Luxembourg but living in Belgium and France where they are either refugees or asylum seekers or people who are just a little bit down and out and lost a job or something. And our welfare Bill are welfare budget was going pretty high. And I remember praying about this a lot and I made the decision to start a bishop storehouse. Now again for most people in North America that terminology is pretty common. In Europe that doesn't exist. You know that that notion doesn't even get translated into some languages because it just doesn't exist. And my interpretation of a bishop storehouse is in one of the rooms in my garage we have a bunch of shelves with food and clothes and appliances and stuff that has either been donated or have been funded by other people or some of it has been funded by church welfare. But it put us in a position where typically someone would have a welfare need maybe they need food. We would need to then work with eldest corn release society go and evaluate it. They would have to go and ask someone to buy a food. It would cost a lot of money. It would be delivered to them. It was a whole week long process where the need was pretty urgent. And we haven't been able to respond to that time where now with bishop storehouse we're able to do it within 24 hours you know? And my steak president jokes and

calls at the illegal bishop storehouse because it's not an official one from the church. But man has it been a blessing in terms of budget first of all but then in our ability to meet urgent needs it's been amazing. And even this past week with all the flooding we were able to donate bags tens of bags of clothes for children to families who suddenly find themselves without a home without clothes. And we were able to respond faster than most charitable organizations in the country of Luxembourg. So those are really cool opportunities for us to also show the power of the church. And these principles of being ready and being prepared and it's been really cool to see how the lord prepared that almost a year in advance of when we've actually needed it this year. So you know in the early 2000s president he created these small temples. Maybe we need to instigate small bishop storehouses and we can maybe make a difference there.

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So if I had a red phone that wouldn't to downtown Salt Lake in my office that one I would definitely pick up. That was my hope for today Karev disappointed. It's on Facebook so I'm sure they'll see it. Anyways let's move on here. The next principle is don't get in the way. Yeah this is one I've learned the hard way as a learning bishop. You know I was called to be bishop when I was in my late 20s and. The lord qualifies those who he calls and I think that's the journey of serving is to figure out what you're doing. And I'm somebody who likes things done the right way and kind of going into a leader who is you know a three we shouldn't be forcing them to be a ten. I've had to learn what it means when award officer is a part with priesthood power right? Where a release society president has hands placed on her head is given priest at power and stewardship for her organization. What's the balance between me as a bishop stepping in and me as a bishop stepping back in order to allow that person to run the organization that they feel the way that they feel they need to. And I haven't been perfect any of my former board council members can testify to that if they're listening to this. But it's been it's been really important for me to learn that and to learn when to step in and when to step back. People are given callings in The Church of Jesus Christ of lab today saints to change. We believe in the atonement of Jesus Christ being the ultimate and eternal change agent that people are able to progress and learn and grow and they're only able to do that if they're given the space to make the mistakes that then require change. So that's been part of my learning and at the same time making sure that there's some level of consistency at the board level in terms of the direction we're going and the goals that we have in creating that accountability within word council to follow up and to check and to report those principles that we learn in the temple as well. So not getting in the way has been a work in progress that I'm still working on today. And at the same time not assuming that someone who is called suddenly knows how to get all the answers. And especially in an emerging part of the church it Luxembourg where there's a ton of first generation members. Not everybody knows. And that's okay. And again not wanting to overstep sometimes a leader's reaction to that type of situation might be okay look let them figure it out and we'll see in a year how they're doing. And I remember many years ago before as bishop I remember sitting on a stool in a hotel because we're meeting at a hotel at that time. And speaking with the release society president at the time who was telling me that it's been months and she last had a catch up with her bishop and how difficult it was for her to have that dialog. So something that I

decided to put in place really early as bishop is monthly one on ones with your respective person and what counts if you look after. So for myself that would be really society present. Young women's presence my first counselor. It's eldest corn for my second counselor it's primary and Sunday school. And the monthly one on one is a chance to catch up. It's a chance to hear what's going on what the issues are. It's a chance for the ward officer to feel heard and to feel validated. But I tell you what having those monthly wanted ones have saved us so many hard takes because typically our reaction as members of the church is to suffer in silence. If somebody offends you rarely is our reaction. Okay let's talk to that person and figure out usually it's I'm going to take it. I'm going to hate that person silently. And then eventually hopefully I'll forget about it and we'll just move on. And what is monthly one on ones have forced is a behavior of accountability as well as just an openness and transparency. Of course it doesn't always work in some members still don't always feel comfortable. But it gives an opportunity to stop it in its tracks before it gets too far. And that's also in terms of the bishopric because sometimes the bishopric might say something that's misinterpreted taking the wrong way just not the best thing that they could have said at the time. And members might grab hold of that and it stops them for maybe trusting in the bishopric or whatever it might be. These are opportunities that we have to stop that before it festers and before we let Satan. Enough seeds to suddenly derail the work of the lord. So that's been one mechanism that we've put in place in order to force a more open dialog. And to stop people from avoiding the tough topics. We need to avoid avoiding the tough topics. And be okay with being a little bit uncomfortable sometimes to be okay with ambiguous situations.

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And more than anything to be okay with struggling in your calling. If you're struggling it usually means that you're going through a period of growth and that usually means that heavenly father is just waiting for you to reach out to him so that he can sustain you through the atonement of Jesus Christ. In other words it means you're doing it right. And a lot of the time our reaction is to avoid that struggling and to run back to our comfort zone and to want to stay there because that's where we feel best. It's where things are happy. So these types of mechanisms that we put in place to hold people a little bit more accountable but to give them a voice and to make sure that we're not missing the bigger problems have been really great. And it's allowed us to progress I think has award at a quicker rate than if we didn't have them in place. So much there. One follow-up I have is with these you know the monthly wonder ones with. Organizational leaders right? That's something I did and I had the same success. It was just awesome and I recommend that every leader especially bishops do this. The pitfall I see people fall into is they often make them dependent on whether they have something to talk about. And because oftentimes you meet once a month after a few months you sort of feel like well we kind of talk through the big issues. I think I'm okay this month and next one I think I'm okay with this month. But don't make it contingent on whether you have something to talk about just simply sit down. If it's a three minute meeting great. But what I found the moment you sit down and start talking maybe you start to shoot the breeze or you know in the beginning and then you find some things to talk with but most importantly you've connected one to one with that individual they feel

supportive supported. They feel heard and they're ready to return to battle on your team and do their part knowing that their leader always has a listening year on what they're struggling with or what they're experiencing. Yeah. And if the only thing you accomplish in that conversation is simply ministering to a person the war to is clearly sacrificing a lot to serve others. What a great blessing that moment is. You know I had a bishopric member a while ago say to me you know yeah so and so is doing great in their organization everything is good. They send me an email every month and they give a report. And I remember having a conversation saying okay that's great. But did you know that they were going through this this and this? And the bishopric member said no I'd actually didn't know that. And I said okay let's remember what the one on ones are actually for. It's not just about getting a report of the activities that were done or different people who had moved into their organization. It's about showing your love to them and giving them a place to speak and to feel heard and to have a bishopric member reach out and care. You know if we're looking at the church and any type of organizational structure if the bishopric can focus on youth and focus on making sure that each of the ward officers are okay that they're feeling heard and they're able to run their organization. It saves the bishopric a ton of the work that needs to then happen within those organizations. And the way that the brethren have restructured those organizations a few years ago is trying to teach us that right is trying to teach us to have autonomy within a release society presidency and within an eldest corn presidency. So that they run the adults of the war. They look after those types of needs. It's been a hard thing to learn. But that is where we as a bishopric need to be trying to force that that behavioral change. Yeah. So going back to this giving autonomy to the different organizations in award. I'm right on with you. I mean we're on the same page definitely there. The pushback I get. And this is a big problem. Like on paper it makes sense and every leader is like oh yeah I'd love to do that. But it's a big problem. I get the emails from. Especially primary presidents who are like I don't feel like I have any say in what's going on. And it's easy to default to that the bishoprics is just simply running the war. They're picking callings. They're picking they're making the final call on things and they may entertain feedback here and there. But at the end of the day. It can come across there and quite literally they're running the ward. And so what the pushback that I often get around that concept is when it comes to calling. So well what do you do if the primary presidency wants person a but then the relief society wants person a as well. And so I just we just need to make that decision and then before you know it you're making every calling right? So how do you handle that in the context of callings? Yeah it's a tough one. And I actually had a pretty difficult situation with that a few weeks ago. So it's good timing for the question Gary. Oh good. The reality is and I go back to the Hamburg again. I was rereading that section of the Hamburg a couple of weeks ago because of the situation I was in. Organizational heads make recommendations to the bishop after prayerfully pondering and reflecting on the names.

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Within the stewardship of a young women's president primary president I'll just call it well else corn is a slightly different. But within the stewardship of those presidents callings they have the right to receive inspiration to then give to the bishop. And that's awesome. And probably 8 if not

9 times out of ten that will be what the bishopric go with because it generally makes sense. The spirit generally works through different people in the same way. Every once in a while there will be additional context that a bishop or bishopric member will have because of the purview that a bishopric member has of the ward in its entirety. Sometimes it's worthiness but sometimes it's other things as well. And the bishop has the responsibility to receive the revelation on calling and thanking members for callings. And it's important that each ward officer each organizational head trusts in that process. And not just trusts the person who happens to be bishop at that time but trusts the mantle of the bishop that keys are bestowed in certain rights are given with that according to God's order not just according to pride or ego or whatever that might be then interpreted as. But it's what God is wanting to do. And there are times where member leaders organizational leaders might have an opinion and they might feel very passionately about that opinion. They may even say this is revelation that I've received. And it's important at that time to help correct where there might be falsehoods do it in a loving way obviously but to help teach what's stewardship means. That the lord has an order and an organization not to not to be little anyone or to make anybody feel less important but because that's the way God set it up. And if you're receiving revelation outside of your stewardship then there may be a misunderstanding somewhere. And it's okay because everyone isn't perfect and sometimes we do misunderstand things. And by the way maybe you giving that recommendation to the bishop about a certain person allowed for a conversation to happen that allowed for amazing ministering. And that was the only way that God could have allowed that to happen. And that's why he set that up. And that's great. You know recognize that for what it is and the role that you played in God doing his greater work and accept that is happiness right? And accept that as being a tool in the hands of the lord. It's when sometimes we let pride or ego dominate those types of approaches and those types of feelings that suddenly things become much more complicated than they ever needed to be. And then it doesn't become a question of listening to the spirit but more so what do I want versus what do you want? And that takes away from the spirit of God it takes away from what he's trying to build. And there are times where as a leader you have to help somebody recognize where they may need to change where they may need to repent in that thinking and it's hard. And it's very easy for people to get offended and sometimes you even have to use your counselors in a place where maybe it's a little bit too delicate for you as a bishop to do that. But that's okay because you can delegate certain keys and responsibilities to your counselors and the bishopric. That's the whole point of having counselors. But it's not easy but more than anything I've learned and I don't know if this is a bad thing to say. But I've learned to be okay. With people disagreeing with me right? Or maybe even being offended by something that I said very much out of love but it hurt because sometimes truth hurts you know? And I think first year bishop Lewis I had a hard time with that. And I've heard you say many times that as a member of the state presidency you would tell new bishops 20% of the world is going to hate you. There's nothing that you can do to stop that. That's just the reality. I wanted to prove you wrong right? But I've now repented and learned that that's probably a true principle. And as a leader you sometimes have to be okay knowing that you did the right thing but it's going to take a while and maybe even eternity for somebody else to recognize that. And to not let that keep you up at night. To be able to still get up the next day and focus and focus on your family when you need to and then try and love other people and not suddenly change the way that you work with people because you're scared of making someone else upset. It's a hard thing and it doesn't

come naturally to people until they're in a leadership position to actually learn how to do that. But it's so important. And that's where sometimes you know we need to show empathy as leaders but then also empathy two leaders and there's a two way street there you know? Yeah yeah. This has been fantastic. I've just looking to book a plane ticket to Luxembourg so I'm coming to visit hopefully that's okay.

00:55:05 - 00:59:29

You're welcome. You can give a talk as well I'll set you up. Okay. Just tell me what Sunday I'll be there. The last question I have for you is you reflect on your time serving as bishop or in any leadership capacity. How is being a leader helped you become a better follower of Jesus Christ? Yeah it's a question I've heard many times to other people on your podcast. I think to be a leader in the church means to try and walk the steps as Christ walk them. That's what we're trying to do. We're trying to replicate our master in that context. And I think every once in a while especially as a bishop you're put in a position where you very much represent Jesus Christ you know whether it's different counsels where you're helping members make changes in their lives or when you're doing temple recommend interviews or whatever it might be you're very much representing Jesus Christ. And for little glimpse his little moments you begin to understand Christ from a very real setting and what he must have felt or how he must have been when he was trying to help people come closer to his father. So for me being a leader and the church is one of those it's one of those life-changing opportunities where if you give yourself to the calling in terms of trying to be worthy trying to follow the spirit and trying to represent Jesus Christ it changes you forever. So I've learned who my brother is in a different context in this calling than my last calling and from that calling to the one before because every time I try and get a little bit closer to the source. And I think as a bishop it's one of those special callings where you're asked to represent him in different settings. And knowing knowing what it means to look at a member's eyes and to see them not as Lewis sees them but to see them how crises and to see them how heavenly father sees them there are certain keys I think where sometimes that's necessary in order to help somebody move forward. And those are moments that I will I will hang on to for the eternities. And for me that has been an absolute tender mercy as a bishop where you have all that stress all that frustration all of those difficult things every once in a while you have that celestial experience where Christ is at the core of it and you get that little bit closer to him. And that concludes this how I lead interview I hope you enjoyed it and I would ask you could you take a minute and drop this link in an email on social media in a text? Wherever it makes most sense and share it with somebody who could relate to this experience and this is how we develop as leaders just hearing what the other guys doing trying some things out testing adjusting for your area and that's where great leaderships discovered right? So we would love to have you share this with somebody in this calling or a related calling and that would be great and also if you know somebody any type of leader who would be a fantastic guest on how I lead segment reach out to us go to leading saints that org slash contact maybe send this individual an email letting them know that you're going to be suggesting their name for this interview will reach out to them and see if we can line them up. So again go to leading saints dot org slash contact and there you can submit all the information and let us know. And maybe they will be on

a feature how I lead segment on the leading saints podcast. And remember text the word lead to four 747 four 7 in order to access the three most popular sessions of the liberating saints library. It came as a result of the position of leadership which was imposed upon us by the God of heaven who brought forth a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and when the declaration was made concerning the all and only true and living church upon the face of the earth. We were immediately put in a position of loneliness. The loneliness of leadership from which we can not shrink or run away. And to which we must face up with boldness and courage and ability.