

LEADING SAINTS

What Every Leader Should Consider About Community in Their Ward | An Interview with Ryan Gottfredson

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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. The following episode is a throwback episode one that was published previously and was extremely popular. To see the details of when this was originally published, see the show notes. Enjoy this throwback episode. Leading saints is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Latter day Saints be better prepared to lead. And we do that through content creation, like this podcast, which we hope useful subscribe to. We also have a website at leading saints dot org with thousands of incredible articles all about leadership in the context of being a latter day saint. We host virtual summits, live events, and also have a weekly newsletter to keep you up to date on all things happening with leading saints. Visit leading saints dot org for more information. Today, I have the opportunity to sit down through the powers of the Internet with Ryan got Fritz and how are you Ryan? I'm doing great. How are you doing Kurt? Awesome. Now what background does the audience need to know about you and what brings you here to this microphone? Yeah, for sure. Well, I mean, first of all, thank you Kurt for always letting me participate in whatever you're doing. I'm happy to support your cause. And I love to focus on leadership because that's what I focus on. I focus on leadership. So I'm a leadership

professor at Cal state Fullerton and I'm also a leadership consultant. And so yeah, I don't know. That's what comes to mind. What's up? What more do you need in life other than a PhD after your name and teaching into college? I mean, you are an expert. I try to be I mean, it's a passion of mine. In fact, I first got into leadership when I was in high school and I took a sports psychology class. And I fell in love with it. I read some great books. I remember them. I wrote a book by Mike chases a book by Rick mujeres and a book by Pat Riley all in one semester. And I thought, man, it would be sure it would be cool to have a job in which you could study leadership all the time. And at the time, I didn't know anything about organizational behavior. And then I went on my mission to Boston Massachusetts and happened to meet professor at Harvard Business school who taught organizational behavior. And I said, hey, what's organizational behavior? And he essentially described what I had covered in my sports psychology class and it kind of clicked. This is for me. So that's what I did. I did my PhD at Indiana University, landed here at Cal state Fullerton, was here for a couple of years. And then I did a year leave of absence where I worked a gallop for a year where I did employee engagement and customer engagement work for about 30 organizations over the course of that year. And then now I've been back at Cal state Fullerton for the last year or so where half of my job is research on leadership, half of my job is teaching leadership and then I guess the other half of my job is going out into the community and doing some consulting and speaking on leadership related topics. Yeah, so you're living the dream. I mean, you grew up at doing what you wanted to be when you were little. And still trying to make it happen. So. Yeah, that's cool. And you know, you mentioned organizational behavior. Man, you know, if I were to go back to school again, I think that's the direction I had to. I think that's what makes us experience and that's why we love elder Ben narc as he literally wrote the textbooks on organizational behavior. Yeah. For sure. That's awesome. Well, and the reason I wanted to bring you on the podcast, and I hope this isn't the last time the audience here's your voice on podcasts. But like I mentioned, you write variety of articles I encourage anybody to go check these out. You can just search your name, leading all the Atari. But there's one that you recently wrote on the topic of communities. And as you dove into this topic, it became apparent that one simple article wasn't going to cut it. So maybe tell us what led you to deciding to write on communities. Yeah, so I don't know how many articles I've written for leading LDS. My guess is somewhere around ten or so. And I had a friend who I go to church with and he really enjoys my articles. We went out to dinner one day and he said, hey , can I give you a challenge? I said, sure. He said, do you mind writing an article about community in the church? And I said, at first I was kind of like, no, I'm not a big fan of comedian.

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I mean, I'm an introvert. I don't necessarily go to church to socialize, although I surely enjoy doing that and that's an enjoyable part of going to church. But I was kind of the mindset like I don't think that it's that important of a topic when he first asked me. And so he kept pushing me on it and shared a little bit about his experience within our ward and other wars that he's been a part of. And he had just always felt like he didn't necessarily belong. And that he was really itching for a sense of community within his awards. And he hadn't been able to find that. And so

he was wanting me to write an article that might be able to help him. And so I said, you know, for you, I'll dive into it. I'll see what I come up with, but I really wasn't very hopeful. So I started to dive into it, start doing some reading, start doing some writing and very quickly I realized that there's a lot here. And this is a very important topic. And one that I think many people are how I was where they don't see necessarily see the value and importance of community, partly because they've always found community in the church. But there's a significant port proportion of members of our church that do not find community within our church. And hence they're not attending with us. You know, I don't know what the activity rate in the church is. It's always said to be about 50%. So we know that about 50% of people don't like attending church for whatever reason, but also for those that do attend church. There is a significant minority of people who attend church on a weekly basis, but they don't feel like they're part of a community within their awards. And that's a challenge for them. And so have we can help better help them, but also in more particular, better help leaders understand the role of community so that they could create communities within their world where everybody feels included and accepted, then we're going to be able to do a better job of making our words a place where everybody can grow closer to their savior in particular the gospel. Yeah. Well said, you know, because when you talk about community, and as you start to dive into this and your articles, you send your articles to me. I thought, oh, this will be great, you know? Because I think the church does a remarkable job at community. I mean, we have these wards and these auxiliary set up. The core is like synonymous with community, right? And I think this is important to really underscore here is that for a lot of individuals like myself and maybe even for you where you grew up in the church, you have a very traditional background like I love the community of the church. And part of my heart broke, when we retired the three hour block because that's one less hour that I get to spend with my with my people, you know, and but it's important to realize that we're not talking, we're not going to go into this because we're seeing the church does a bad job of this, or it needs to improve the point we're doing is if there is anybody, I think any leader would agree if there is anybody in their award who feels like they're not part of the community that they feel almost rejected from the community that I think most leaders would want to know why and how to fix that. So that's what we're looking at. For sure. Yeah, and I agree. And one of the things that, since writing these articles I've been reflecting on this topic. And in one of the things that I've seen and I'm sure every award sees something different. But I'm not so sure like when I look at my particular home ward, I can say that there's kind of there's been anybody who is left the church within our ward. Nobody that I'm aware of is just stopped coming in the last several years that I've been a part of the ward. But what I have recognized is I thought about a little bit more deeply, is that there have been families that have moved away and that now I've just, I've learned that they've stopped going to church. And they kind of used that moving away as a way to step away from the church. So I think it's award we kind of say, oh, we're doing a great job because nobody's left the church. But then we don't think about the people who moved away and use that as an opportunity to stop going to church. And there are several families that come to mind that I think about that who's moved away in the last several years that no longer attend church. And I wonder, what can we have done before they moved to help keep them or at least create a place that would be more likely for them to connect with other people in a healthier way than maybe what they were able to do? So let's dive in here. And again, as leaders are

listening, let's just we're just doing this. Let's just step back and analyze this from an academic perspective at times and not and don't pay too much emotion to it as we go through there.

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Because there's going to be moments where you're saying, hey, that's my community. Don't pick I'm like. But I promise it's worth it. So let's talk about you talk about in the article. These three basic these three community types one is basic involved and united. Would that be the best place to start in this discussion? Yeah, I think so. And I think the way one of the things that I wanted to help leaders do with these articles is not think about community from the perspective of the leader, but rather think about community from the perspective of the individual members. And how they could possibly see their particular ward as being different, that there's different ways that people can see the ward. And while I identify three, the way that I want us to think about this is largely on a continuum from being attached being strongly attached to the ward on the high end and then very little attachment on the bottom end. And so there at the bottom end, one of the labels that we could put for a type of community where there's little attachment is called a basic community. So if somebody feels like they're a part of a basic community, they share some similar characteristics with the other people within that community. But they have very little emotional connection to that community. And so an example of a basic community for me personally is I'm a BYU alumnus. But I really have no connection to BYU or it's alumni groups at the moment. So when I meet somebody who's a BYU alumni, then we're able to connect, and that's great. But outside of that, it really isn't adding a whole lot to my life. So there's some pros and cons here. So a pro is there's little demands on my time, being a part of this community, but a con is that there's very little connection that I have with other people within that community. So that's the basic level. We cover that okay? Yeah, and another part of that is on the lower end of that spectrum doesn't mean you've rejected that community. You haven't rejected being a part of BYU is just you just have a lower connection. Yeah, for sure. Yeah. Then about involved community. Yeah, so as we start to move up this continuum. And then we can classify this maybe as an involved community. So we're sharing more characteristics. We have with the community. We have some emotional connection with the community. But we're still independent from the community. We don't necessarily identify personally with that community, partly because we probably don't exhibit all of the same interest goals and belief that that community promotes or espouses. So again, when we see communities in this light, it has its pros and cons. So we can experience some of the benefits of the community, but at the same time we maintain independence and emotional objectivity to that community. But the cons are, we oftentimes feel pressure to conform. And we don't necessarily feel fully accepted within that community. So an example of this type of community for me is where I work at Cal state Fullerton. So Cal state Fullerton is a large university. It's 40,000 students. And it doesn't have a well, it has an athletics program, but it's not very strong. So while I'm a part of the community being a professor, I really am not involved very strongly with things going on on campus. I'm not going to play. I'm not going to athletic events. So I kind of have a little emotional connection, but at the same time, if somebody were to criticize Cal state Fullerton, I wouldn't be hurt if they criticized calcite Florida. Because I kind of see as this objective observer, calcite Fullerton, I see

its pros and cons. And I'm not necessarily attached in such a way that I would be offended if somebody criticized Cal state forward. Yeah. The next type is united community. And I think this will be the crux of much of our discussion. Yeah, for sure. And so a united community is when we share many of the same characteristics with the community, especially the interest goals and beliefs associated with the community. And then also we have this strong identification with the community, such that if the community hurts, then we hurt. Or at the community is happy then we're happy. If the community receives scrutiny, then we have a tendency to get defensive. So an example of this type of community for me personally is my family. So we share the same characteristics. We share the same culture largely the same beliefs and we identify with each other to such a degree that if somebody's hurting, then we all hurt. So a pro about a united community is that in these communities you find acceptance. If you're lucky enough to be a part of that community, your energized by the community, you receive support, you receive love. You also receive protection. But and we, I think that a norm within the church is that we should have these united communities because there's a lot of really great value within these communities.

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But one of the things that we don't talk about a whole lot is some of the cons associated with these communities. And there are some cons, but it's hard to see those when you're intertwined with all of the great aspects of this community. So it's hard to see when you're intertwined. But if you were able to step back a little bit and look at that united community, there are some drawbacks, which I think will probably get into. But before we do so, I want to see if you want to jump in with the integration. So it seems like, I think anybody listening this would say, you know, wow, the united community sounds great, you know? Everybody identifies really closely with being a latter day saint, you know, they want, they feel they feel a great sense of pride. They feel like they're engaged and they have a purpose there. And so that may seem to send the, yeah, that's our goal to get that united community. But at the same time, being the united community has some drawbacks. And many times, we don't see these drawbacks up front. And the only people seeing them are those on the outside of the community, and it confuses us on the inside community because we think, why don't they like us? So maybe go through what are some of these drawbacks that happen because of united community? Yeah. And maybe even before I do, let me just mention that our church and particularly from its founding up until really the last maybe 50 years, we've kind of continually secluded ourselves in a way from the rest of the world. So the church was formed. It obviously bumped around between Ohio, Illinois, Nebraska, out to Utah, and in many ways, we had this united community that was traveling and it was a form of protection for a lot of people. And so we've got to realize that community really is ingrained deep within our culture. And in addition to that, there's scriptures that attest to some of the importance of having a strong community. You know, one of those being related to our baptismal covenant or we're talking about being willing to bear one another's burdens. And to mourn with those and more and comfort those that need that stand in need of comfort. In the doctor and comment talks about B one. And if you're not one, you're not mine. And so the desires to have a strong community are doctrinally founded. But what we've got to pay attention to is some negative unintended side effects that occur within these strong united communities,

particularly when people strongly identify with those communities. So I think this is like a such a valuable point that you make is that the fact that we have done a very good job in the church and in our history of the church to create a united community. And for many years, it was like a protective mechanism. And it worked quite well for us. And I guess the problem we run into now is some of those traits carry over into these modern times where we're not being attacked. We're not being run out of town. We're trying to branch out and blend more into our surrounding communities. And so sometimes these united communities were there, but it's not being for our benefit a lot. And so I think that's a crucial point that recognizing that it has helped us quite a bit in the past, but now it's sort of becoming a detriment to our progress and success. Yeah. And so I mean, just to visualize this, if we imagine if we have a castle and we have this land and we build up this large wall around our castle to keep the negative influences on the outside out, then that wall is doing some really great things in terms of protecting us, but it's also preventing some things from occurring. Such as bringing in outside thought and ideas or in other words, cognitive diversity. And so that's the first negative unintended side effect of having a united community is we have a tendency to not think outside of what is our box. And so what ends up happening is oftentimes it creates this closed loop where essentially the same information is presented over and over again, not saying that information is not an important, but in some ways that information gets stagnant unless we bring in some outside or different perspectives. So on a cognitive level can I make it clear distinction here that because I have conversations with people about this concept and what we are not saying is that we're not saying open our doctrinal box to diversity of thought.

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We're saying open in our communities to diversity of size. Because many people are here this and think, well, no, no, no, no. Don't mess with our doctrine. Our doctrine is not to is non negotiable. And that comes from our profits and leaders and so I want to be clear that as saying this, he's talking about opening our communities to diversity of thought. Would you agree with how I'm saying that? Yeah, for sure. Yeah, so it's not necessarily we're wanting to change doctrine as you had mentioned. But there are some pieces of information like let's just take, because we're going to eventually come to this topic. Let's just take the idea of charity. Well, charities, a topic that I've spent a fair amount of time studying . And if we just stick to what is in the scriptures and even by a profits talks, one of the challenges about charity is either one it's never clearly defined or there's people that define it in very different ways. And so it's hard to understand what charity is, but there is a lot of people in academics that have been studying, essentially topics that are very similar to charity. And we can learn from them on the outside to better inform how we think about and develop charity within our community. So it's not changing any doctor. And it's just exposing ourselves to ideas that maybe we just haven't thought of before. Or even, I mean, we've had instances where we've had visitors come to our ward from out of the country and just hearing their perspectives of the church from what they experience is really eye opening. But we just naturally don't get that because we're kind of we meet with the same people all the time. So our cognitive diversity is a little bit limited in those ways. Perfect. And then this also plays into psychological safety. Is that where you're headed next? Well, yeah,

maybe just let me quickly identify. So a couple other unintended negative consequences of this united community is so we talked about cognitive diversity. Second is a lack of inclusivity. And so what happens is when we create these barriers that protect our castle, oftentimes these barriers make it very difficult for people to enter into that community. There's some barriers to entry. Or another part of this is if people within the community do things that aren't necessarily socially acceptable to people within that community, then they either get they have a tendency to be shunned or else feel like they are judged, you know, a classic example of this is an individual who has multiple piercings in their ear. And I think that most people I would like to think that most people don't treat them differently, but talking to people who have that oftentimes they feel like people look at them funny. Or I've heard instances of people who work at the temple and they have a tattoo and they're treated differently. And it's just because there's we've got some very strong morals and values. And so when people go against those, there's and we are mindless about it instead of mindful, then sometimes we have a tendency to an unintentionally maybe judge them or send people who are like that. So as a whole and a negative, unintentional side effect of a united community is lessons the inclusivity within that group or community. And I love that. It's not that whether that person is really being judged or not, the community experiences created this feeling that they should be judged. So they sort of project that on themselves, which is hard. For sure. And it's something that we I personally don't think we should undervalue. And just to give you a quick example and experience that I had is I used to be the Sunday school president my ward and when they Sunday school teachers out of town oftentimes I would step in and substitute for that class. And so one Sunday, I stepped in and substitute for a youth Sunday school class. It was about 16-17 year olds. And the class happened to be all girls. And so I invited my wife to come with me. So I wasn't the only one with these girls. And there was ended up being about if I remember correctly about 6 women in the room, including my wife. And one of the questions that I had them all write down the answer to, which was if you could change one thing about our ward, what would you change? Curious what the answers were. In fact, I had them, I allowed them to select three answers. And afterwards I had us all share what our answers were. And there was one answer that every woman in the room gave. And that one thing that they all shared in common that they would change about our ward was that it would be less judgmental. And I don't think that that's unique just to my particular ward. But I do think that women in the church maybe are a little bit more sensitive to men to that, but it also affects men as well. Is that there is there are people within our communities that feel like they can't be fully accepted within the community or another way of saying that they feel judged when they attend church.

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And it's not necessarily that people are doing that intentionally, or even that there's many people doing it. But it is something that leaders need to be sensitive to. And they need to have a pulse on whether or not members feel that way. I'm curious how much and I don't want to send the different road here, but because they're sort of this dichotomy within the church that obviously we set high standards and we talk about standards or he's also talked about doctrine. And that's like one hat that we wear. But then there's this other hat of love and acceptance and

unconditional love that we also try and wear. So balancing this sometimes we shift over to this love and acceptance, you know, we'll take you for who you are, where you are. But that individual sometimes still feels like you're in the standards. You're wearing the standards hat or the doctrine hat thinking, oh well, you're not living up to the standards. So it's sort of this mess that we get ourselves into, which means what Joe goes back to this topic of community where if we're aware of this, I think we're more likely to approach these situations better and make everybody feel less judged because we know how they feel judged. So another experience that I had that I wrote about this in one of the articles was I was in one of the classes at church and I was asked to read a passage of scripture. And so I got this little slip of paper at the being a class about the verses and the invited me to read them. And then maybe come up with some thoughts that I could share with the class as we came to that part of the lesson. And so I had read the verses. I was thinking about them. We got to the point where we started to cover that section in the scriptures. And so I commented about a couple of things related to that. And in this particular book a scripture came from the Old Testament and it was involving a dialog that was occurring between if I remember correctly Solomon in the lord. And one of the things that I mentioned is a part of my comment and this is partly because I had to teach a lesson a few weeks before from that same book a scripture. And one of the things that I learned is that particular book of scripture experts can believe that it was written 600 years after everything transpired. And so here I am left to try to interpret a conversation that occurred that apparently was written 600 years after that conversation occurred, and then who knows how many translations it had been through until it got to what we're reading now on Sunday school. And so what I just said in Sunday school was, you know, I'm not sure how much weight I'm gonna put on the word for word nature of this comment or this interaction. But here's some of the main points that I took away. And I expressed some of those main points. But it was very interesting to me because afterwards that the instructor opened up for other comments. And there was four people who commented and three of those people didn't talk about the scripture, rather they came kind of directed their comments back towards me and suggesting that it's really important that we take the scriptures literally. And what happened after the class was what really was interesting to me. And that was, after the class, a couple people came up to me and they were kind of joking around, wow, you got put through the ringer in there. And I didn't necessarily feel that way, but I could see why they would say that. And then after church, I'm walking out to my car and a gentleman comes out to me, he says, hey, I really appreciate your comment. I really struggle with the Old Testament, partly because of what you said. So I really appreciated your comments in there. And what then transpired is this understanding that because I said something that people in the room didn't necessarily agree with, they were quick to they kind of saw it as a fire, and they were quick to put it out. But then what ends up happening is and what they unintentionally don't realize is that if there are other people in the room that struggle with that same issue, how likely are they going to be in speaking up in that class moving forward in the future? And so this gets at what you were leaning towards earlier is this idea of psychological safety, which is when we have the strong united community we identify really strong with the church and something gets brought up that we don't necessarily agree with. Sometimes we react in a way that we want to very quickly dismiss whatever was brought up. But when we do that, we create an environment where people don't feel comfortable expressing their ideas and opinions. And when people don't feel comfortable expressing their ideas and

opinions, they don't feel like they're part of the community. And so as you mentioned, this is a balanced thing that's really tricky because we really value the idea of truth in the church, but we also value the idea of loving others.

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And so when somebody says something we don't agree with, you know, we usually have to we have a tendency to take a stand on one or the other. Do we put our truth foot down or do we put our loving and accepting foot down? And some people do a better job of one over the other in those instances. And we'll say, absolutely, because many times we can those classes become about being sometimes people feel like they need to be about being right or wrong, where you were just sharing a perspective. And so like you said that they're hurrying to put the fire out because they perceived a threat to and then became defensive as far as how you were defining the scriptures. When your reality you were just sharing a diverse thought and that's where the clash happens and the community wins over in the negative way. Yeah, so and it's tricky, you know, again, how do you balance this? But I think you're right is sometimes we have a stronger desire to be right than we do to love others. And if we're really, what these articles go on to talk about is if we're really mindful about how we handle ourselves within these communities, we should not emotionally react to things that we hear that we don't necessarily agree with. Because it's when we react to those types of things that we put on ourselves in a position that we make may make other people feel uncomfortable. And we may make it so that other people don't feel comfortable being vulnerable with their own doubts and fears and insecurities. But it's only when people feel comfortable to be vulnerable that they really do feel like they're part of the community. And so when we, when we have this strong desire to promote at least what we think is right, oftentimes what we're doing is we're preventing the community from building and strengthening. Yeah, so true. So I just want to recap here where we're at so far because we're spend a lot of time into the weeds here, which is good. I mean, this topic is in the weeds and we need to go there. So we've defined about the importance of community. You've defined different types of community, and we have come to the conclusion that typically the latter day say an experience in the church is a united community, which we've identified to a lot of positive things about a united community. And now we've just finished talking about some of the unintentional negative negative consequences of having a united community, right? In summary. Yeah. That's where we're at. Where do we go from here? Because obviously the question is, what are you supposed to do about it? You know what, what's the goal of the community and what form of community should be striving towards and what are some things we can do to get there? Yeah, a great question. So we need to create communities that have the benefits of the united community, but also not have those negative unintended consequences. And so what I call these communities that do that are intentional communities. And the reason being is we leaders in the church need to be very purposeful and deliberate about bringing in certain elements within the community that ensure that people feel accepted and safe within the communities, but also there's not this really strong emotional identification that when somebody says something we don't necessarily agree with, we don't get on our own little soapbox and tell them why we don't think that they're right. And so there's 6 elements that I think are necessary for an

intentional community. So let me just spot these off and we could dive into any of these Curt. So these 6 elements are charity, safety, or this ability to speak up without fear of negative repercussion, openness, which is this desire to seek truth regardless of the source and a willingness to hear new ideas and different perspectives, inclusiveness, which is this willingness to include many different types of people and treating them all fairly, being present within the community. And also having a clear purpose and a common cause that the community can rally behind and direct themselves toward. Because I think when we're in a period of safety, then sometimes we kind of start facing each other as opposed to facing in a certain direction that we can all head towards. So if we can have a purpose that everybody's rallying behind, then I think we're going to have less issues within our communities. So those are the 6 elements I'm happy to dive into any of those if you feel like you need to. Let me just touch on each one to see if I understand and then you can further clarify. So one being charity, the way I see this is that you start with love. Obviously, charity, the doctrinal purist definition is the pure love of Christ.

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We just start with charity in a certain tool class in our neighborhoods that we don't jump to judgment. We just try and love. Is that what you're trying to get across? Yeah, and even in a deeper level here is and I mentioned this earlier. I think charity is a tricky topic because we don't have a great definition of charity within the church. One of the definitions that I have heard comes from a source outside of the church, although they are members of the church that wrote this, and this is the arbing institute who wrote the book leadership in self deception and anatomy of peace. They talk about charity as seeing other people as who they truly are, which is as people and valuing them as such as opposed to treating them or seeing them like objects. And so that's maybe one way that we could think about this is within an intentional community that we see everybody as people and we value them as such. Yeah, and I think this is so crucial because it's easy, especially for leaders. I've been there that you sort of start with the doctrine and the truths of the gospel. And then you worry about the people, right? So when anybody in your experience brings up something that's maybe they don't agree with or isn't perfectly wrapped in this doctrinal box, we tend to try and defend that doctrine first. But if we all just start and say, all right, we're people here. Let's start with the people and start with love and knowing that the doctrine is there that they'll get to the doctor and that they'll benefit from the doctor, but we gotta start with people first. Yeah, for sure. And I think sometimes when leaders do maybe in some instances they'll take a stand more towards doctor and are more towards the handbook. And I'm not saying that they shouldn't, but when they do so, they're coming from a place where they don't want to do something that's wrong on behalf of the church. And so I understand, you know, I completely understand how bishops can be in a situation where they want to a protect the church and be protect themselves, which they should, but ultimately, at the end of the day, one of the core aspects of the gospel is having this charity and seeing other people as people and valuing them as such and again, there's going to be a balance thing that comes in, but if we can infuse charity where people see each other as people, that's going to be a core element of an intentional community. Next one is a safety. And this is just basically I would say a good limited test litmus test for this is if you're sitting in your gospel doctrine class. Ask yourself as a

leader. Do people feel safe here? Do I hear alternative perspectives and views, not that they're like false doctrine or way out there, but is there a mix of perspective or is it just an echo chamber? Is that a good way to explain it? Yeah, for sure. And this is one of the areas and we talked about this really early on in this interview where I think the leaders have a tendency to be a little out of touch or they can be a little out of touch with this. Because leaders within the church, bishops, elders, even presidents, released society presence, they feel really safe in the church. They feel really safe to express their ideas and opinions. And so they oftentimes presume that everybody else feels that way. And so but that's not necessarily the case. In fact, after we had an elders quorum meeting at church and it was about establishing greater unity within our quorum and afterwards, I went up to one of the counselors in our elders grand presidency. I said, do you think everybody in this room feels like this is a united group? And he's like, oh yeah, we're a great group. And I said, you know, I don't know about that. What if we were to collect some data on this? And so we've got some ideas in the works to actually survey the members of our elders quorum to see how safe they feel about speaking up during our elders core meeting. So we'll see if that happens. I love that idea. And there's nothing wrong with surveying your ward, right? Passing it can be anonymous. But nonetheless, there's a great value in collecting data, not just making assumptions about, you know, everybody seems to smile when we're here and everybody tells me I ask them how they're doing. They say, fine. They must be doing really good. But to just allow them an opportunity to survey your group and you'd be surprised maybe what the data shows. For sure, especially I mean, we've got a huge elders corp. So we've got about 50 people who show up every week. And so you just don't have time for everybody to even comment during an elders quorum lesson. So doing something like a survey allows people to express a voice in a different way than the typical commenting during church on Sunday. Perfect. The third thing you mentioned as far as creating an intentional community is having openness or a desire to seek truth. And the way I see this sometimes is we sort of hold onto the truth claims at the church, which are important.

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Which are doctrinal, which we need to talk about, but sometimes that causes us to talk about nothing else. And don't have any ideas outside of this box because we're living in this box right now, right? But creating some openness is important. So what does that look like for your perspective right? Yeah, so we and this is my experience within the church is that there's kind of a social pressure towards knowing things in the church. And towards certainty about certain principles in the church. And I'm not saying that's fully bad, but when we place value on knowing things above learning things, then we're not the knowing things is going to stand in the way of learning. And so it's really important that while we want to know things, it's more important that we seek after truth and as a part of that that we recognize for ourselves that we may not know everything. And we would be wise to embrace the idea that there are perspectives beyond our own that we can learn from. And so if we could carry around that mindset, then we're going to do a better job of creating an environment where cognitive diversity can come out and also inclusivity. And so we've got to recognize that maybe while we think or feel like we know things, we've still got a lot yet to learn and we've got other perspectives to hear from and that we would

greatly value from hearing different and oftentimes diverging perspectives because that will push us in our learning and obtaining of greater truth. Yeah. To me, this goes back to the principle of if you validate an idea that that doesn't mean you agree with that idea. And this is what I love reading, for example, I love reading books written by Christian pastors about their perspective and experience with Christianity. And though I go through it and yeah, I could probably circle big paragraphs saying, well, that's not doctrinal. That's not doctoral, but nonetheless hearing about the gospel from their perspective, it enriches my gospel experience and helps me gain a deeper faith and understanding of documents. Yeah. All right. The next one is inclusiveness. Just what does that look like? So the basic idea is that everyone should feel welcome. They don't have to meet any certain requirement to feel welcomed and loved when they come to church. So the same kind of goes, it's not our job to judge. It's our job to love. And so when we go to church, we shouldn't let little things maybe it's a tattoo, maybe it's their skirt is a little short, whatever it might be. We shouldn't let that get in the way of us loving them. And we probably all heard examples of some young man or young adult male who comes to church in his hairs all unkempt and people just joke around with this hair. Well, that type of a joking probably isn't going to get him to want to come to church the next week. It's actually loving them, carrying less about how they work. Look and more about how they're feeling and how they're doing. And so that's the idea is we don't let little things get in the way of us loving other people. That one example that recently came out of the leading LDS audience was a member of a bishopric was sitting in a sacrament meeting. And sacrament was being passed in. Members say pregnancy was sitting next to him and the state pregnancy member leaned over and said, do you realize one of your deacons is wearing shorts while he passes the sacrament? And he leaned over and said, yeah, we're aware, that's just where he's at right now, but we're encouraging him. And the state presidency member could totally go out and he's like, okay, that makes sense. You know, where rather than walking over before the sacraments passed and removing that young man from the group that's going to pass the sacrament. I mean, that's what I think you're saying about us knowing that we take people where they're at and continue to encourage them in love. For sure. That's a great example. The 5th one, as far as creating intentional communities that leaders can do is be present. This one I wasn't entirely sure what you mean. So one of the things that is important to recognize is that everybody has their own weight on their shoulders in terms of the amount of time that they can commit to their local church community. And so we shouldn't necessarily make other people feel bad for not being more involved because oftentimes we just aren't aware of what's going on in their lives at the moment. And so we part of this is we shouldn't put place any undue pressure to be engaged when they don't when they've got a lot going on outside of their outside of their church world. But at the same time, whenever people are a part of that community, whether it's going to church or at an activity, when they're there, it's really important for them to be present with the community.

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And I'm probably guilty as anybody when I'm a little bit bored and Sunday school or whatever it is, I just hop on my phone and start surfing the Internet or whatever, right? So that's the opposite

of what we want to have when people go to church. So if we want to have an intentional community, we've got to create an environment where people are engaged and they're present with everybody else who's a part of that community. This is where you mentioned sort of having having really really been intentional about the different activities or lessons like analyzing your meetings as a bishopric and saying as a word counsel is saying, let's talk about the Christmas party. Like, was that worth even getting out of out of bed for? We got a good amount of people there, but is it worth their time to come to that? Or what about Sunday school? You know, how's that going? Is that worth coming to? Is that yeah, I think one of the challenges of our day and age is particularly when it comes to, let's just say sacrament meeting is we could go online and in a couple of instances get some really awesome general conference talks or BYU speeches or whatever it might be. And those in many ways are going to be quite a bit better than the talks that we're going to hear at church on Sunday. And so what you're oftentimes talks about the great talks that we heard in general conference. And so one of the things that a leaders need to recognize is there's a lot of other sources that people can turn to more readily than what they could in the past. And particularly for the millennial generation now the gen Zeke generation coming up is if you're not providing value in our meetings for those people above and beyond what they can get elsewhere, then they're kind of like, why didn't I just stay home and watch a general conference talk? Is part of the part of what's going on. So it's really important that we create we intentionally create meetings worth attending. And that's going to help create this inclusive community for sure. And that's part of the fourth article you wrote. You gave the three things that leaders could do, and that was one of them. Plan meetings and activities worth attending. And maybe we'll end off with those, but we got to hit the last one. The 6th, what is this the 6 element for creating intentional communities is having purpose? And I guess that plays into what we were just talking about. Just making sure that it's so easy, I think in the church to get and go through the motions, just do what you do every week, right? But to really step back as a leader and say, how can I infuse each member of our communities experience with purpose? Yeah. And particularly for church leaders, bishops, Ellis Cohen released society presidents, they may be an introspective question that they could ask themselves is am I trying not to have problems or am I trying to create something? And there's a difference in those mindsets and how they operate. Because when a leader operates from a position of, I just want to avoid any problems and any hassles, then they're not going to create anything that's exciting that people want to get behind. And it's really important for leaders in the church to have a clear purpose, clear goals and clear objectives that they're shooting towards. And when they have those, that's when people want to get behind the leaders and support them and creating something that's great. And maybe one of those goals is creating an intentional community by infusing these 6 different elements. But that's the idea. We could get everybody headed towards an objective, then there's going to be less issues about people not feeling psychologically safe when they go to church. And because everybody's head in the same direction, we're all on the same team, and we need to help other people within that community feel that way. Awesome. Well, then I don't want to pack too much into this into this interview, but I encourage people to check out the four articles. And as we wrap up Brian, I mean, unless you have a better idea here as far as how to end this in the fourth article, you give three, three ideas or tips that a leader could do to be more intentional about their community. One being which we've just talked about, focus on intentional community elements, charity, safety, openness, inclusiveness,

engagement, or I guess being present and being purposeful. And then talk about planning meetings and activities worth attending. Nonetheless one, I think is really fascinating. I think maybe we can enter a discussion on this, creating smaller communities within the ward. And what I think is so fascinating about this one is that you'll hear often sometimes in words saying, oh, my word is so clicky. You know, there's all these little clicks. And it's awful. Or leaders will complain like, man, I can't understand why my words so clicky. I wish I wish I wouldn't be the case. But in reality, on the other side, I sort of looked at this, clicks, I mean, obviously there can be a negative tone to clicks and you know, people segregating others from their group. But sometimes you need these smaller group communities so that every individual in your community can find that sub community that they really fit into.

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Is that what you're going for? Yeah, exactly. I mean, nobody's calling the ward choir a click, right? And so there can be some clicks that develop and then they come with their own pros and cons for sure. But if we could create opportunities for people to connect with other people on a closer level, and particularly within these smaller groups, that's going to be beneficial. And that's, I think that that's a challenge right now for our ward. As I talked about our elders quorum is really big, our relief society is really big. How do you connect when you've got 50 other people in the room? And so you've got to be creative and I'm not sure the best ways that leaders can do this. But if leaders can think about ways of breaking up these groups into smaller subgroups and allowing people to self select into those groups, that's going to help them feel like they're more a part of the community. It's really daunting for some people to walk into relief society, and there's 50 or 60 other women in there. And they kind of just feel by themselves. It's going to be much more approachable for them if they feel like there's four or 5 people in there that they really connect with. Or so how do you create that? I'm not sure. But I think that that something that leaders need to be cognizant of. I think that there's also, as you say that there's kind of this idea of we need to avoid clicks. There's also on the other end of the spectrum, I've seen some church leaders said, well, we can't have a ward activity and not invite everybody to it. Type thing. And so but if church leaders can allow maybe even individuals within the ward to start their own informal groups, maybe it's a book club, for example, that largely polls for members within the congregation. That's going to help in strengthening the overall intentional community of the ward. And so I think leaders, particularly as we're moving going to be moving to two hour church, this is even going to become more tricky than what it currently is. Well, I was just going to say, in that context or to our church to me, I think this is a great opportunity because elder cook mentioned about this opportunity to create informal study groups. I don't know the exact language he used. But I think this is a great opportunity for leaders when we go to the two hour block to look at certain maybe they recognize there's a family that sort of seems on the outside of the community, right? And they really want to reach out to them and maybe they could go over to their neighbors or somebody else in the world and say, hey, would you mind inviting them over to your home for one of your home worship sessions, right? And just see if you can include them in that, right? So to me, I think we've been given some leverage here to try some new things with groups and on a more informal basis. Great. Well, Ryan, do we do it? Well, this

has been great discussion. I've learned from it. And I was afraid we'd get into the weeds too much. We were there for sure, but I think we've laid it out in a way that leaders can walk away and do something. Anything else we're missing? No, again, I think the reason why I wrote the articles and really the reason why we are having this conversation is, I think both of us you and I want leaders to better understand what community is and why it's important and that not everybody sees their ward as being the community that they think it is. And so it's really important for leaders to get the voice of the people about how they're feeling about their community. Do they see it as a basic community and involve community a united community or hopefully they're seeing as an intentional community? And so it's important for leaders to really be cognizant of how members are perceiving their local ward community. And again, some people are going to see across the world there's going to be some people to see it as united. Other people see it as basic. And we need, then that leads to us as leaders. When you think about how can we create this a better community for everybody, and that's where the key principles come in of charity safety, openness, inclusiveness, being present and being purposeful. Come in. And so ultimately, end of the day is leaders maybe need to be a little bit more mindful about how everybody feels about their local community and get more in touch with that. And then allow what they learn as they get more in touch with that to drive creating a more intentional community. 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 the most sense and share it with somebody who could relate to this experience.

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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. 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 saint Theodore slash contact, maybe send this individual email, letting them know that you're going to be suggesting their name for this interview. We'll 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 that concludes this throwback episode of 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 nor run away. And of which we must face up with boldness and courage and ability.

