



## **Mentoring Relief Society Presidents Through Love | How I Lead: DeAnna Murphy**

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Kurt Francom (LS): In this episode we talk to a stake Relief Society president. Buckle up. She knows her stuff.

LS: In this episode we are going all the way to Minneapolis and talking to DeAnna Murphy. And this is so good. She is a stake Relief Society president. Really has a great perspective on how to approach this calling, and I think this is a calling that so many people get into, and they're not overly certain what it is they're supposed to do. And so she has a great framework and model that she followed and did and such inspiration that any leader will gain from this. If you know a Relief Society president - and don't act like you do, there's one in your ward, OK?- email this episode to them and they will be blessed by what DeAnna has to offer, and her perspective and how she approached her calling as a stake Relief Society president. It's a fantastic one.

LS: Today I have the opportunity to interview DeAnna Murphy. How are you DeAnna?

DeAnna: I am wonderful, Kurt. Thanks so much for the opportunity to be here today.

LS: Yeah, well, you know you were recommended that I reach out to you by Wendy Ulrich, and Wendy's episode, if any of you have not heard, would be one to definitely not miss. And it was great to go to her home and meet her, and when we were talking about other individuals that I could interview, you were probably the first name that came out of her mouth. And so I thought I've got to get in touch with DeAnna. And so I'm glad we could connect that. So how do you know Wendy?

DeAnna: Well, Wendy and I are connected because she happens to be in the same ward as Brent Israel's (?) son, who happens to be chairman of the business that I run in connection with my husband. It's a global organization, a development consulting organization. Wendy and I have become friends as we've had an opportunity to connect a couple of different times, and counsel together about some of the topics that...Her husband Dave is one of the leading HR consultants in the world, and we're in a similar field, so we've just had an opportunity to counsel together about how we can better serve and help the Lord's purposes outside of the church as well as inside the church, too.

LS: So your company works in that training and development consulting space. You're out there making companies better and with better leaders, right?

DeAnna ; Yeah, exactly. As well as individuals and so, like I say, we have three audiences and one is companies, organizations, and business leaders. We also work with coaches or individuals who are looking to influence other people, and the mode of operation that our biggest tool in our toolkit is strengths. And so we work with individuals, business leaders, coaches to better understand their own and others' strengths. We help them understand that strengths are not just about what you contribute to the world, but they also define the conditions under which you do your best work. They also frame, as well, Kurt, there are ways that our strengths and our weaknesses are two sides of the same coin. And when you're unaware of it, there are triggers that will trick your strength into a weakness. When you understand what those triggers are, you are more in a position of choice. So we really help people become conscious and more at choice in the application of strengths in service that really help bring about the kind of outcomes and relationships that they want in their life and in their relationships and in their work.

LS: Awesome. Well, I definitely want to get into that, and again, I love having this type of guest on the podcast because, you know, so many ...leading in the church, you're running a small organization. And there's a lot of principles that parallel to the secular world with people trying you know, to motivate this group of middle managers to do something. And that's really what we're doing, you know, as an Elder's Quorum Presidency or as a bishop or a Relief Society president. So, I think you bring a lot to that discussion. But let's just put you in context here, and talk about your background. Where were you raised?

DeAnna: So, I'm a BYU baby.

LS: Go Cougars, right?

DeAnna: That's right. So my mom and dad were going to school. I was the first child born. My dad worked for the church early in our years, so we were still in Utah. I call Canada home. I grew up in Alberta.

LS: Oh, wow.

DeAnna: Many of the years my parents ended up moving up there. My dad served mission in Western Canada, and it's what I call home. And, many of my family are still there. And I did marry an American boy and came back to the U.S., but Canada is home, and I'm goin' home for Canadian Thanksgiving in a couple weeks and can't wait.

LS: Oh, yeah, it comes pretty quick, then the US one. So did your father work in Canada for the church, or is there another reason?

DeAnna: He was the Director of LDS Social Services for Western Canada. He ran the unit from Victoria, British Columbia all the way to Winnipeg, Manitoba, so it was a very large area. I'm the oldest of ten children. He was on the road quite a bit, and he was a bishop, and so it meant for interesting living. But I really grew to love Canada, love the people there, and really got a great experience understanding the church from a very different perspective than living in Utah, which is where I was as a little girl.

LS: Interesting. So your father had a counseling background then.

DeAnna: Yeah, that's exactly what he did. He was a marriage counselor, oversaw adoptions, and then his travel would take him to teach bishops and stake presidents how to counsel, and then counsel with those individuals who were sometimes beyond the reach of the bishop or the stake president because some things are just really difficult for our ecclesiastical leaders.

LS: Yeah, you need a professional to step in a lot of the time. So, how was it having a father that was a counselor? Did you feel like he was always, you know, asking you those counselor questions?

DeAnna: From the time I was a very little girl I, you know, it's kind of funny. My background is I have a Master's Degree in Psychology from BYU but became a coach. And I really think that I learned it from my dad. I think by the time I was five, I mean I'm learning to ask questions the way he asked questions because he was just always curious. He was a good listener. He was very empathic, and a lot of those things I saw modeled from my earliest years and from my association with him. He was a great father.

LS: You know, my time as bishop, I never had somebody come to me and kind of explain how to counsel. I just sort of did my best to figure it out on my own, so I'm sure that was a blessing for many bishops to get that training from your father. So, a great service. So I imagine a pretty traditional LDS upbringing? You were baptized at eight?

DeAnna: Very much so, absolutely.

LS: Nice. And where did you meet your spouse?

DeAnna: Well, you know, Ricks College. So, I'd always wanted to go back. My vision was to go to BYU although the town that we lived in, my father worked in Calgary. It was a huge city, and

he was a farm boy who didn't want to live in the city, so we lived in a suburb called High River, a little tiny town. And I was a bit intimidated by BYU coming right out of high school, so I went to Ricks. And met my husband, and then, of course, we went on the BYU and both of us finished our Master's Degrees there.

LS: Going through the rapid fire questions here. So, have you ever met an Apostle?

DeAnna: Oh, yeah, uh, a few of them actually. President Benson, on Christmas Day, when I was 15 or 16, came and dedicated our chapel. When he was the president of the Quorum of the Twelve in High River. His daughter Barbara, her husband was our stake president, and he had come up for Christmas. And so he came and dedicated our chapel on Christmas Day. I had a chance to meet him. I met President Monson as a young girl. Because my dad worked for the church, I had a chance to meet Harold B. Lee and his counselors during the time that he was the prophet. Richard G. Scott was up in Duluth, a few years ago, and I had a chance to meet him when he was there. My husband was a bishop in the stake and branch president up there and that gave us an opportunity to meet him and I just love all of those brethren. I've met Neal A. Maxwell. Miss him greatly. So, yes, love the Apostles. Love the Brethren.

LS: So, in general, we're recording this, the week of General Conference coming up. We just had the women's meeting last Saturday, and then the other sessions are coming up this weekend. So, when you think of General Conference, what's the first talk, General Conference talk that comes to mind?

DeAnna: Well, of course there are so many that are impactful. I think that for me there were a couple of meaningful talks, but one that was particularly meaningful to me, and it was many, many years ago, and it was after Howard W. Hunter, Elder Hunter, Pres. Hunter had had the surgery that actually caused some paralysis. And you may remember when he showed up in a wheelchair and gave his first talk from a wheelchair and said, "I see that you are all enjoying the conference sitting down, I'm going to do the same". And he talked about the opening and closing of doors. What was special about that, I was 23 years old. We were BYU students and we had just given birth to our second child who had been born severely disabled. She had spina bifida and hydrocephalus. She was severely cognitively disabled. We were told that she would never walk and we had spent four and a half months in a room in the hospital when he gave that talk. And I came to conference spiritually starving, and aching. Just like, you know, aching. Aching for life, aching for truth, and I remember how it reached my soul. I remember him quoting Orson F. Whitney about the gift and the role of suffering in our lives, and how when God apparently seems to be closing a door that there is another one that is opening, and to always be looking forward to the one that is opening. And it left me leaning into the gifts that were possible because of her disability and to not be afraid. you know, to not resent it, but to look forward in hope to the gifts that would come. It changed my whole -

LS: Wow, that's an impactful story, and it's obvious why that stands out in your mind. So where is it that you live now? [00:11:00]

DeAnna: We are in Minneapolis, Minnesota and live in the Minneapolis, Minnesota stake in a suburb of Minneapolis.

LS: So you can't stay away from the Mall of America right? You just go whenever you can?

DeAnna: I'm never going to say that I have the shopping bug. Absolutely not true.

LS: Nice. I've been to Minneapolis few times, and I'm always asking about the mall, you know, people from there about the Mall of America and they always just sort of roll their eyes thinking, "Boy, if that thing went away. I don't think anybody would complain." So how many kids do you have?

DeAnna: We have three children, and they're all grown. Our disabled daughter is our second child, and we have two sons, one on either side.

LS: Wow.

DeAnna: Beautiful family. We love them very much.

LS: That's awesome.

DeAnna: Again, probably both of us came from large families, we probably would have had a larger family. Although the disability that our daughter has is in both of our families. We both have siblings with it and my mother had siblings with it. We had a 50% chance going forward. [00:12:00] And so, this wasn't in the cards for us to have a big family.

LS: Yeah, wow.

DeAnna: Although we've raised nieces and nephews and had opportunities in other ways.

LS: I bet. That's great. Well, I definitely want to...you mentioned before we hit record that you were recently released as the stake Relief Society president, right? How long ago were you released?

DeAnna: It's just been a few months ago. So it's still kind of acclimatizing to life without long, long, long Sundays that go from 6:30 am to 10 pm, and all kinds of things in between, and just kind of getting my legs back underneath me, catching my breath again.

LS: Awesome. Then before we jump into the details there, maybe talk about some of the key leadership principles that you'd focus on in that calling. But maybe just drawing from your professional experience with consulting with companies, if you were just to approach a Relief Society as if it was a typical organization that you deal with every day, what are some of the common [00:13:00] problems and things you see in just a company that sometimes manifest themselves in a Relief Society, for example? Anything come to mind?

DeAnna: Well, it's interesting because I actually have kind of a completely inverted way of looking. So my inclination is always to look about what is right, and how we capitalize on more of what is right. How do we get more of what is right in service of getting where we want to go? And so, to maybe reframe, if I can, actually, just because it's the way that I think...

LS: Please do.

DeAnna: ...I always find myself looking forward. And it might actually be the first leadership principle because part of what you're looking is what become the cornerstone, the foundational principles that begin to frame the way you want to be focusing and leading. Ironically, I believe, we are always stretching as a people to understand what does it mean to be one. "If you're not one, you are not mine." [00:14:00] What does that mean?

What does it mean when we talk about have our hearts knit together in unity, in love, looking forward with one eye, right? – To use Alma's words, that whole place, or John 17, "That they may be one as thou father art in me and I in thee." What is that, and how do we do it? What is one heart, one mind, one eye looking forward? How does that present?

That whole sense of Zion is about oneness. And so when I keep thinking about, and I believe it is the answer to the question you asked, because in every organization whether it's the church or outside, there is the challenge of how do we get people singing from the same piece of music so that we're singing in harmony with each other, trying to get to the same end?

That's really tricky, Kurt. It's tricky in the church and it's tricky out of church. It's tricky in our homes because we are fundamentally different human beings with completely different lenses. [00:15:01] And I don't get your lens and you don't get mine, so how on earth do we blend and get a 360-degree perspective when our view and our vision is so completely opposite? So I think it's the first and challenging place is for us to understand oneness because that's really where the Savior's point in this, and it's where we've got to get.

Right now we're in the heart of preparing the world for the second coming and we can't do that unless we can understand how to be more united in our hearts and minds with our eyes focused on the Savior.

LS: As you spend your time as a stake Relief Society president, what does a typical Relief Society group look like when it isn't one? What are some of the traits you see or what's happening there that would maybe be an evidence to you that you'd say as a stake Relief Society president, "This is one area you could focus on to really maybe see a difference"?

DeAnna: Well, it's an interesting question, Kurt, because it's actually not how my brain works. [00:16:00] So you're going to have to bear with me a little bit because it's actually, I never ever as a stake Relief Society president ever, ever, ever operated from a deficit place. It's never my

place to come in and say, “I am noticing this problem in your Relief Society and here are some things you might do to fix it.” Ever. So it’s interesting.

What I would actually be inclined to do is ask a Relief Society president to say to me, “What are you noticing that’s working well? What are you feeling good about? Where is Zion happening here now in ways that you feel good about? And if it’s six months or a year from today, and you’re closer to oneness, in your ward, what would it look like and how would it be different?”

Actually, I’m just going to name this, what I’m actually speaking to right here, this frame is one of the most powerful frames to shift the way we lead in the church. To stop looking at what’s wrong and to look at what is right and how can we get to more of what’s right. [00:17:01] Because what I found is, well, one, I never needed to judge. And most of the time, it is an interesting thing because we love the Savior in the church, right? We want to be like him. He’s the standard, and we always fall short. End of story, right?

And we often judge ourselves hard. We find it hard to grant ourselves grace and so the last thing we as leaders should in my mind ever do is create shoulds [00:17:25] for anybody. I want to empower people to see what is working and how the Spirit is serving them and to empower them to be able to find places where synergy is happening, and then to create more of it.

Now, if I were to answer your question using an appreciative approach, which is what I’ve been describing, and it’s very strengths oriented, by the way, I would have Relief Society president say, “Oh, I just hunger for sisters to feel more connected to one another. To not judge – that someone’s going to judge them before they have the chance to be judged. That they could actually just come to Relief Society. That’s kind of like living with their heart doors open. That they expect to be received, and they come with preparation to receive others. There is a hunger for sisters to understand how to do that.

Again, I don’t think it’s any more true in the church than it is in the world, but I think we tend to compare the best in others to the worst in us. And nowhere, I think, maybe do we do it more than in the church where we look at people and, you know, they look like perfect little Mormon families, and we think, “Oh, man, if people really knew what my family was like. I am so embarrassed.” And so it makes it very difficult for people to be authentic about their past, about the things they’re hurting, about where the struggle is, about, you know, the son that’s caught in a sexual addiction, or the struggles that are real in their family. Because if I say it, well, then I don’t look perfect anymore and then I don’t belong. [00:19:00]

We have to stop that because it’s just a big old facade. We’re all differently imperfect. And to own that. One of the things that I love, this is one of the things I most appreciated about Wendy, and I feel like, you know, Wendy Ulrich, as we were speaking earlier, her book “Weakness is Not Sin” really impacted me as a Relief Society president. I would often work with my presidents. And as I would come in, and often asked to speak in wards, to begin to say, “Listen, I guess the very first thing I want to ask for is that we choose right now to have a no judgment zone about our time together. I’m not going to judge you. I’m going to ask you to not judge me. Let’s just for

the time that we're together, whoever you are, and whatever I am, is going to be enough so we can put our walls down so the Spirit can come and be here."

You know, it's interesting, Kurt, one of the things I'm really aware of is the degree to which I judge myself and other people literally puts me in...I barricade myself from the Spirit and from other people. [00:20:01] And so to be able to relinquish judgment of self, which really says, "I trust the Savior and His grace enough that even though I am weak, I sin, I'm imperfect, I've screwed it up, and I know that I've hurt people in ways that I don't want to, He still loves me, and His grace is still enough." Because the moment you begin to accept that, when you accept yourself, it changes the way you accept everyone else.

What I actually share both in and out of the church, is that the pattern for every other relationship in your life is the one you have with you, and you create. Especially we who have covenant relationship with the Savior, the pattern we create for the relationship with our self is framed on the degree to which we receive His love.

That is a leadership principle. It's a leadership principle for leadership of self. If I can understand how to receive His grace, then I don't push Him away, then I'm enough, then I'm not judging that you're going to judge me before you judge me. [00:21:00] Then I'm going to come with an open heart and go, "Gosh, this encounter with Kurt is going to be amazing, and I'm going to receive whatever he is, as exactly what is needed and it's exactly what I needed, even if it's not something I want." And I'm not speaking of you personally now.

It's almost like my reality is sometimes we have people who bump into us and rub off a corner in our life, and it's good for us. And rather than judge them or be critical of them, I can go, "Awesome. Okay, Father, what is it that you're wanting me to see here? What's the lesson? What's the gift?" And to see the world that way changes everything.

LS: That's powerful. I want to dig into that a little bit because you're definitely teaching me something here. So, for example, I do want to put into context this. I love this idea of not operating from a deficit and then decide this...what you're meaning by judging. For example, if you're the stake Relief Society president and you walk into a Relief Society in your ward, [00:22:00] if I understand you right, you never want that Relief Society president to feel like, okay, she's here, or she's got her clipboard and she's looking around and checking things off. That's what you mean about you never want that to be a judgment scenario?

DeAnna: Yeah. So to take it one step further, I mean, there are a couple things to name. I don't know how relevant this is for the podcast, but the reality is, is that a ward Relief Society president does not have a direct line of stewardship with the stake Relief Society president. It's back to the bishop.

LS: Right.



DeAnna: So when the stake Relief Society president comes into work with a ward Relief Society president, it is literally to model what it looks like to minister like the Savior. And the Savior did not come in to judge. He didn't really come to judge about whether what I was doing right in that moment, was right or wrong, or good or bad. Now, I recognize He is the judge. I don't want to take that off the table.

I simply recognize that the very first thing that He always does is love. The very first thing that He does is to extend grace. [00:23:00] The first thing He does is to look into the soul of someone and see the intent of their heart. And so I always felt that the most important thing that I could do and I designed it with my presidents from the beginning, "Here's what you can count on me for. You need to know when I come, here is why I'm here. I am here to love you. I'm here to be with you. I'm here to hear you. I'm here for you and I to come together in the spirit of D&C 43:8-9," one of my favorite verses, I must have quoted it, I don't even know, a jillion times during my stake Relief Society tenure.

Because that's about when we're assembled together and we are to instruct and edify each other. It is not me, the stake Relief Society president coming to instruct and edify the ward Relief Society president or even the Relief Society sisters who are there. That it is for us to be instructed as verse 16 says in that same verse, "From on high", it is my job to be so close to the Savior so filled with charity, so invisible [00:24:00] that His light and His love is what is felt and seen, and everything else goes away.

And so if you create a space where love enters the space. And I would tell you as I speak of it, even thinking about it, I would do monthly one-on-ones with all of my Relief Society presidents, every one of them got a monthly one-on-one in our stake. And it is a PPI just like a stake president would have with a bishop, and it went something like this. We would pray together, and I would ask them about their personal family, about their lives, about what was working. I would design this so they would know the very first time this is why we have come to instruct and edify so we can be taught from on high, so you'll feel edified, and I'll feel edified.

And the promise there in D&C 43:8-9 is that we would be sanctified, that we would have a greater understanding of how to conduct the affairs that the Lord has asked us to take on. [00:25:01] I didn't know how to be a stake Relief Society president any more than they knew how to be a ward Relief Society president. But as we would come and we would sit one-on-one, I will just tell you, Kurt, and I will testify that there were times when I felt like I was at 3 Nephi 17, and it was a circle of fire around us, and angels were come meet, and that the Savior was the third member of that conversation. And it is the thing to this day that I still miss more than anything – to have the opportunity to meet in the name of Jesus Christ, to speak about what's happening.

So it was always praying together, listening to what was happening in their life. I memorized every one of their family member's names, I knew who they were, I knew which ones were active and which ones weren't. I would review it before I came again, so I could ask, "Hey, how's

Peter? I know you were really worried about him last time. What's going on?" And then I would ask them, "What has the Spirit taught you since we've met last?"

And I will tell you, I was astounded that I had counselors, [00:26:00] I had Relief Society presidents who were not studying the scriptures before we started doing one-on-ones. I will tell you that changed very rapidly because they knew every month I was going to ask them, "I know you've been studying the scriptures this month. I know the Spirit's teaching you. What are you learning?"

I had Relief Society presidents in those one-on-ones who said, "DeAnna, I'm really embarrassed to say this, but I haven't prayed for months because I don't know if God's going to answer my prayer, and I'm scared. And I don't know who to tell. Can I tell you? Can we talk about that?" I had presidents who've been married for 35 or 40 years, say, "Can I just tell you that I'm really unhappy in my marriage and I don't know what to do about it?"

Do you know that in those one-on-ones it's a ministry in time, and the last question I would always ask was what's working well, and what's keeping you up at night? And then I would ask them questions to help them find their own answers. I would almost never tell them what to do. And somewhere in the middle of that we would open up the scriptures because if I was reading my scriptures every day, the way I needed to, [00:27:00] almost every single time before the one-on-one would happen, the answer to something that would come up in the one-on-one would happen in my scripture study.

And then the Spirit would bring back to my mind what I'd already learned, and I could say, "Well, let's go to, I don't know, let's go to Mosiah 18, and let's go read that little verse about our hearts knit together. What does that mean in this context?" And I found that it became a time where sometimes she would teach me, and sometimes I would be sharing with her, and we would be studying and looking at the scriptures together in ways that were astounding. And I would never interpret what I thought it meant. I would always ask, "What do you see? What does that mean to you, and how does that apply to this situation?"

And I found that if I did that, the Spirit would start to teach her, and she would teach me what the Spirit was teaching her, and we would be astounded at what we learned together. And I still look back. It was some of the spiritual high points of the last few years came in those one-on-ones and those experiences. It changed completely my relationship with my children. [00:28:01] And I found myself encountering, and teaching, and working with them differently. Being with them, and they're adults now, but even how would I engage with them differently, it's given me a frame for visiting teaching differently. I visit teach different.

And every calling that I will ever do from this point forward, I will carry what I learned in that one-on-one experience forward because it created a way to be taught from on high and help me understand what it meant to be instructed and edified together, where we both had equal responsibility as Elder Eyring taught us in the last General Conference. That we both, both

listener as well as speaker, have the equal responsibility and obligation to create a space where we can be instructed and edified.

LS: Yeah. This is such a powerful principle. Let me maybe give you an example of kind of what I'm learning through this from my experience, and especially from stake leadership. Now, I'm the first counselor in the stake presidency, and so I have opportunity to [00:29:00] meet with a lot of Elders Quorum presidents, High Priest group leaders and sort of have those PPIs.

And even yesterday, with my stake president, we went to an Elders Quorum and reorganized an Elders Quorum presidency. And, you know, he set apart the Elders Quorum president, I'm the first counselor, we had a high councilman do the second counselor. We all had to leave for another meeting, so we excused ourselves at the beginning of that and sort of just turned it over to the new president, said, "All right, well, it's your meeting." And he, sort of, looked at us like, mm-hh, okay. Basically, I'm sure the next words out of his mouth were, "Well, who's got the lesson?" Right?

And so a lot of the time as I approached these new Elders Quorum presidents, it's not that they don't know what to do, but they don't even know what to do to find out what to do. And so they're looking at me, like...sometimes I ask them questions, and they sort of just shrug their shoulders like, "I don't know. I do the home teaching numbers because that's one thing we do." But as [00:30:00] far as receiving the inspiration and carrying out a focus, sometimes I feel like they don't have to do that.

So I'm afraid to admit this, but I approached these from a deficit point of views a lot of times saying, "Okay, well, let me tell you what you're missing and what you can work on. This is how I would do it. When I was the Elders Quorum president, this is how I did it." But this is such a very powerful process, but like you mentioned, you sort of, there was a process for you learning it as well, right? And so where would you say, where can one start with really approaching this more effectively, when you're training, whether it's on a stake level, or maybe a bishop, with an Elders Quorum president, with really encouraging them without just coming in and saying, "Well, you need to do A, B and C"?

DeAnna: Well, actually, Kurt, I think the part of my heart that has empathy wants to say to you, "it's okay," because this is the pattern that we learn in the world. We live in a deficit thinking world. And so [00:31:00] what often happens is the patterns that we learn outside of the church become carried into the cultural traditions of the church. It's not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It's the cultural traditions.

And so now you're a new bishop, or you're a new stake presidency member or a new Elders Quorum president, and what do you do? You do what you've seen. And if you don't know any different...it's interesting, one of the questions that you had suggested that you might ask me about was the experience of being called. So let me actually just go back to that because that actually answers your question.

LS: Yeah, okay.

DeAnna: Our stake president when he called me into his office, which came at a time that I was working 60 or 70 hours a week – I mean, you know, my family was all gone. And in the middle of trying to really follow what I felt was revelation about where I needed to be going, I got called into his office and said, “DeAnna, and my sweetheart with me, I feel impressed [00:32:00] to call you to be the stake Relief Society president.” I’m thinking, “Okay, wait a minute. Hang on. I’m not quite sure.”

But the next statement out of his mouth, he said, “As I prayed, the impression that has come to my mind is that what the Lord needs is He needs somebody who understands how to coach because our presidents need to find their own answers. They do not need to be told. They need to discover it through the Spirit and they need someone who will be with them patiently and hold space while they find their answers. And as I have prayed and sought direction, I have felt repeatedly that this is what the Lord wants right now in the Minneapolis, Minnesota stake. He needs you to bring this forward.”

It turned on its ear, the paradigm and the culture here for a couple of reasons, Kurt. Women typically do not conduct PPIs or if we do, we are not taught how. [00:33:00] We don’t know how. Okay?

LS: Yeah.

DeAnna: And so part of it was to seek from the spirit “What does it look like to lead a PPI where there is a shared responsibility?” Rather than me coming in a top down way, “I am the presiding authority (that’s the wrong word, if you’re a woman), but I am the stake person, you are the ward person. I’m up here, you’re down here.” I’m going to tell you I would never approach it that way.

From the very beginning, I would say, “Listen, I don’t know some things and I do know some things. You don’t know some things, and you do know some things. We’re going to come alongside as partners with the Savior, and we’re going to do a triangulation where we sit down and have these one-on-ones.” In fact, at the beginning when I was pretty scared – I’m going to be honest with you – what I actually did, I actually requested, “Would you mind if we pull up an extra empty chair? And that one is going to be for Him. [00:34:00] We’re going to ask the Savior to be here, because I don’t know what to do, and you don’t know what to do. So we’re going to figure it out together. And this is what I’d like to propose.”

And so the outline I gave you before is exactly what I proposed. “Let’s begin with prayer. Let’s ask Him to come. I want to know who you are because that’s the most important thing. I want to know what He’s teaching you outside of our time together because it gives you a chance to testify of truth to me, and it locks it in for you. Then I’m going to ask you about what’s working well, and where you’re hoping to grow, or what’s keeping you up at night. And if we get through all of that, then we’ll pray together at the end and let’s see what happens. And are you open to that?”

So I just turned the paradigm. It's like I just assumed that I am an equal partner, an equal different partner. I know different things, and I don't know some things. What I found was more [00:35:01] impactful than anything that was in my head, was that the more time that I spent drawing near to the Savior, developing a personal and tender, and intimate friendship with Him. The more that happened, the deeper and sweeter those one-on-ones became because it became less about what I did or said, and it was more of Him and less of me.

And by the time, I don't know, by the time we were done, I felt like I could say, "All right, Father, I've got a meeting today. It's the stake Relief Society president thing again. It's a little scary for me, but how about, I'm just going to ask that I could be invisible, not because I want to be invisible, but I want all of You. And You can have access to all of me. But this is Your work, and I'm just going to be the pawn on the chessboard. I recognize that it's my face they see and it's my voice they hear, but I want to be out of my way. I don't want there to be fear. I don't want to have any judgment of myself [00:36:00] or of them. My job is not to judge them. My job is to love them." I learned that if I loved them, they found their own way.

I'll just never forget that president who said (it's been four months) her husband had been diagnosed with cancer. She was in a part member family where she had joined the church, and he had not, and everything was kind of going downhill, and she'd been praying for help and she hadn't been getting answered so she quit praying, because she thought God wasn't listening, and on and on. She could tell me all the stories of what she had begun to believe.

And I will never forget the day when the Savior just scooped us up in his arms, and she began to understand. And she could see because the Spirit was teaching her the core belief she had come to, and she began to realize that what she was believing wasn't true. I ran into her at the General Women's Conference broadcast just over the weekend, and again, Kurt, I was dumbfounded to see a radiance in her face that was so big and a countenance that was so bright. [00:37:00].

I just watched people come back from their own deficits. I didn't have to tell them how to do it. They know the way. And the moment they declare their way, they own it. If I give it to them, it's mine. But if they declared, it's theirs. That was the big difference for me.

LS: That's so powerful. So powerful. I appreciate you kind of going into that. You mentioned a few things there, but where you start out with knowing who they are, you know, I think that's all. When we sit down and do these PPI or interact in church and these more formal callings, sometimes we miss that part, and we just look at it like, "Okay, you're a Relief Society president, and this is what you do." But we don't stop and say, like you said, "How's Peter doing?" or those types of things that really create that bond and leads into a better more humble interview.

DeAnna: Well, you've heard the old saying that they don't care how much you know [00:38:00] until they know how much you care. I mean, we quote those one-liners, but it's actually true. In the end, you know, I think part of it is, why are you here having this meeting with me? Is it

because you have to because you're the stake Relief Society president? And what part of you actually sees me? What part of you cares? What part of you cares what's happening in my life? What part of you cares that I've got this child at home who's breaking my heart? Can I really tell you that? Will you not judge me if I tell you that? Can I tell you that I'm struggling in my marriage and trust that you're not going to judge that?

The moment that someone knows that, and then they can declare the things that they've been hiding, those things are no longer hidden. And then, because they've been brought to light, they can have the light of the Savior to shine on them, and they see a new way forward. And so the reality is that I learned very quickly that the one-on-one experience was more about creating the relationship of love with them [00:39:00] so they could see how.

I recognized that the most important part of that one-on-one ministering was that I became a model. That I could become more and more like the Savior in the way that I did it. I wanted to make sure that when they left, two things had happened; They had felt the spirit of the Lord in an unmistakable way that had enlightened their mind and filled their soul with joy.

And then the second thing was that they left knowing that they were loved and lovable and worthy. Because I don't care how many ways you slice and dice it, Kurt. I think every one of us as Latter-Day Saints, because the standard is the Savior, we struggle to feel "am I worthy, am I good enough? Am I valuable? Have I done all the right things?" That we want to go down the checklist to prove to ourselves that we have, when that's not what it's about to the Savior. It's about the quality of our heart, the intention [00:40:00] of our heart, the alignment of our heart with Him. That's it. And if someone can come away going, "I am worthy, and I am loved, and I know it because of the way I felt."

I'll tell you what, I'm going to believe that years from now we will both, those interviewed and those who were interviewed in that interview experience, we will look back and go, "I know I was loved." I can say I know I was loved. I felt loved by the Savior in that. I felt loved by my presidents in that. I mean, I was as uplifted as they were, frankly.

LS: Yeah, that's remarkable. Then it seems like you almost played the role of their visiting teacher really, you know, unofficial visiting teacher because, even though they may have already had one as well, and not that you know you're assigned or anything, but nonetheless that. I remember as bishop having this feeling every once in while thinking, "I wish I had a bishop. I can't like talk to myself." And then the Spirit reminded me I have a stake president I can go to, and so I would do that.

But I think sometimes, the [00:41:00] leader at the top of that organization needs sort of that individual they can go to they know they're not judged, and they know that they're loved and they can kind of discuss those tough times, I mean, like that president you said that just hadn't been praying. I mean, that's so important to articulate that with somebody that won't judge you but can love you and help you kind of discover, "You know what is that about? Let's talk about that for a minute." So that's fantastic.

Just speaking broadly about your time as a stake Relief Society president, you know, being now serving in the stake presidency, I sort of look at some of these stakes calling a little bit closer and analyze them deeper than I did before. To me, the stake Relief Society president is sort of a unique spot where you weren't required to do these PPIs. There's not a lot necessarily required of you from the handbooks, but you want to be proactive, you want to help. So how did you approach that? How did you say, this is what we're going to accomplish [00:42:00] as a stake Relief Society presidency?

DeAnna: I really appreciate that question, Kurt because I think it's just like... So let me give you an analogy as I answer your question. I look back from my earliest recollections to Harold B. Lee's time, to... I don't know. I think I remember president Benson such a moving time for me, President Hunter, each of their presidencies it's there is a... while they have the threefold mission of the church. There is a way that God positions that leader at that time with those people in those conditions because they have strengths and experience that are needed. And you can see that each of them have their own mission.

I am so thankful for President Benson anchoring us in the Book of Mormon, so thankful for President Hunter anchoring us in the temple, and so on and so forth. Right? I think the place that becomes important is that each time a [00:43:01] presidency is called. I do not care what it is in the church. God has called those individuals with their unique strengths and life experience as a collective. So between the members of that presidency, they get a 360-degree view of what's happened. No one person has the 360-degree view. The president never does. That there is a 360-degree view in that presidency, and there is a reason for them to be there and a mission to accomplish during the time they're there.

In our early months as a stake Relief Society presidency, we began to pray, and fast, and attend the temple fervently. "Father, what is it that you want us to accomplish during our tenure?" And I will tell you that we emerged with an unspeakable, undoubtable, and undeniable alignment around two or three key things. We knew we have a very diverse stake, we've got an inner city ward with refugees, and we've got a Spanish unit from people [00:44:00] from South America and Central America that actually didn't even feel like they belonged to our stake.

We have rich, and we have poor in our stake, and we said, "Somehow this stake has to become one. We have to understand that we are all His. The differences and the distinction between us must go away." That was our first thing. The second thing is that every sister in the stake would come to have an intimate knowledge of the Savior's personal love for her, and an awareness of how to create a friendship with the Savior.

I am reluctant in some ways to say that because of who He is and how magnificent He is, and on the other hand, having experienced in a very personal intimate way His desire for us to intimately know Him, I recognize that He weeps when we hold Him at a distance. And so it was our desire that every one of them could find a gateway to personal and deeper faith in [00:45:00] hope in, and love for the Savior, and to feel His love for them. We then from that

point, literally built every single thing. We had three goals and everything we did aligned back to the mission of unity and intimacy with the Savior, building faith in Christ in an intimate and personal way.

I would say, the third, maybe the third element that it actually kind of fit, was that we recognized that gospel instruction was the gateway for many of the sisters to experience the Savior's love, and we wanted to raise the bar. We wanted to stop the talking head at the front of the room and to be able to teach people. Just like we were doing one-on-ones, Kurt, that we can actually shift the way we do lessons by engaging people in the same way that we engage in one-on-ones where the teacher is no better than the hearers, that there was a way of co-creating a lesson experience that instructs and edifies so that people can be taught from on high. And everything that we did was to that end, and [00:46:00] it was an amazing, amazing experience.

Every single week our presidency was out visiting. I was in two wards every single Sunday except Fast Sunday. Many Sundays I would start stake council at 6:30 am, and I would finish Relief Society conference committee meetings at nine o'clock at night, and I had been in meetings from 6:30 am until 9 pm. And it was just literally these one-on-ones, these visiting wards, these being present, creating love, to be able to break down barriers and help people feel the Savior's love and feel connected to those goals. I think they happen to come from on high, you know?

LS: Yeah. And being on the stake side, one thing that we as a stake presidency here are always trying to balance is we want to have a focus, and a direction, and some goals as a stake presidency. But nonetheless we don't necessarily want to diminish maybe the goals that the bishoprics are coming up with and saying, "It's great, you have those goals, but here's the goals we've received, and we want you to focus on these because we want them to, [00:47:00] you know, rely on their own priesthood keys or their own inspiration and those things." So how, how were you able to execute those goals without diminishing the goals in the ward that they may be coming up with?

DeAnna: I love where you're looking. So I'm actually going to add the rest of the story because this is really important. I love our stake president. His name is Jeff Kerr. Such an amazing man. He was so great in our stake Council meetings that he would bring with complete transparency, here is the Coordinating Council's goals. As the stake presidency has met, and fasted, and prayed, "Here are the goals we have created."

While he never mandated, he was showing us the model of here's the coordinating council, here's the stake presidency, here's how we're aligning with this. And it didn't take me very long to go, "Oh, wait a minute. As an auxiliary in this stake, I should make sure that the goals that we're setting align here, then aligns here." And then we begin to model because Ward Relief Society presidencies don't know this. And so [00:48:00] we began to teach them "Hey, listen, the stake is teaching us this, the coordinating council is doing this, we're doing this, your ward has goals, ward Relief Society presidents, what are your goals?"



We gave them a template that would allow them so they could see what had happened at the stake level, and then they would go back and talk to their ward council and say, "Hey, ward council, what are the things that we're trying to do that should be aligned with the stake goals?" And then our ward Relief Society presidencies begin to build out their ward Relief Society plans the way the we had done at the stake level. They fasted and they prayed and they came up with "Here's what God wants us as a presidency to do right now."

And I will tell you that when that began to happen, the level of engagement and energy just exploded for those presidencies who did it. They were so clear. "This is what God wants me to do. Here's how I'm helping the ward goals, and, oh, wow, look how it supports the stake goals." Everything was in alignment all the way back to the Coordinating Council and it was so cool. [00:49:00] So cool. I really am thankful for Jeff Kerr because he provided such a great model was such transparency as "here's what the coordinate counselor, here's what we're doing."

Then I would meet with him and say, "Okay, president Kerr, here's what the Relief Society presidency is thinking. How do you feel about this relative to this? Can we counsel together?" Then sometimes I take it back to my presidency and we tweak it a little bit, and then we'd reveal it to the presidents, and we'd say, "Here's what we're doing at the stake level, but you should be doing this with respect to your wards. It shouldn't necessarily align with us, but we want to be transparent with you. We want you to know what we're doing so you can see God's pattern."

We have leaders for a reason. The church has a plan, Coordinating Councils have a plan that aligns with the church's plan, stakes have a plan that aligns with Coordinating Council's plan, and so on. And then the stake auxiliaries align with the stake plan. The ward plan should align with the stake plan. The ward auxiliary should align with the ward plan. And we began to teach that spirit of alignment because it's part of oneness, Kurt.

One way that we all can get what it's going to look like at the Ward Relief Society [00:50:01] presidency level is going to look quite different than the Coordinating Council plan, but it's all aligned. We're still going back to what God is trying to get us to do.

LS: Was that model, just basically being transparent, like you said and showing what the goals are? But that wasn't to mean that you are mandating that "Okay, now you go come up with some goals, but just make sure they're aligned with this," but just say, "this is what we've come up with now. You need to go and do the same, whatever they are."

DeAnna: Yeah. We were very transparent about what we were trying to do. So, President Kerr, I love him that he never said, "DeAnna, go do this." But after I watched him do that a couple of times, I went, "Wait a minute. I think this is the priesthood pattern. Hello. I think it's what I'm supposed to be doing." And so as soon as I got it, we got so excited, it was like, that was the moment, our work became so clear. Because before I was trying to align with a handbook, and I wasn't quite sure. And the moment we got that, everything just fell into place. [00:51:00]

So when we presented the pattern at a stake auxiliary training meeting, we said, "Listen, we're not mandating, but we want you to notice we've had an epiphany here at the stake Relief Society level about there's a priesthood pattern here. And just in case you never knew what it is, I think this is what it is. And what would it look like for you to go back and talk with your bishops? "Bishop, what are the goals that you're working?" Theoretically, they should come out in the ward council, but what if they're not? What if there isn't that space?

And having a sister leader raise her hand and say, "Excuse me, Bishop, what are your goals as a bishop? What are your goals as a bishopric? How can we and the Relief Society be supporting what you're trying to do?" And then to be counseled with their presidency, and coming back to the bishop and saying, "Hey, this is what we're coming up with? How does this feel? Does this feel good?" Then we can be supporting in our one-on-ones. We're supporting that differently. Because our ward Relief Study president should be having [00:52:00] one-on-ones with her bishop every month too. Although I don't know that every ward does that, but they should be.

LS: Yeah, I know. It was a great, great experience, a great interaction. I felt that it was definitely a positive in that role. And as you mentioned these goals, I think it's one maybe pitfall that people run into as they're doing this is sometimes they're just trying to crank the big wheel of the handbook where we're saying, "Okay, we haven't established any goals but is everything that working as it should? Do we have the family history going? Do we have the home teaching program going? Do we have a Christmas party come out to the point that we're just focused on each paragraph in the handbook?" That the bishop has never stopped and said, "You know what? We're going to do those things but our number one absolute focus is, fill in the blank"? Right?

And I think that's the model that president Kerr was sort of displaying is that, you know, here's what the Coordinating Council's [00:53:00] focusing on, here's what we're focusing on. Now, go figure out what you're focusing on, and you'll be amazed how they sort of align." But that extra step of just saying, "We want to keep the handbook in focus here, but we also need a focus that comes through the inspiration that we've been given."

Well, this has been awesome discussion, but I want to ask you a little bit as we close down here. Is there anything we've missed as far as some principles you took away from that experience as stake Relief Society president that we maybe haven't touched on that we need to hit before we move on?

DeAnna: There's probably one more principle for me. That is the leadership principle. And it's kind of like it's an inside-out leadership principle. It comes from me. There are a couple of places that I really lean very heavily in terms of looking for doctrine from which I found myself often coming back with. [00:54:00] I would say there are two places.

I mentioned already D&C 43:8,9. That one was huge. John 17, the entire chapter of John 17 was huge for me. I was always struck by the fact that as the Savior is kneeling in

Gethsemane that the first thing that He did was to pray. So He's not praying for everyone in the world. He's praying for those who would believe on Their name that they would become one as He is. So again, I'm talking about oneness, but I so love and cherish the section about oneness and the principles there.

It's interesting that He actually teaches there that the reason He prays that we will become one as He is, is that we would then have His joy fulfilled in us by going out and doing exactly what He had done by helping others to experience oneness too. [00:55:00] There is something about that pattern that is so beautiful. And so I would underscore John 17.

I think the final thing that I haven't really spoken to for me is the principles found in Mosiah 4:11 and 12. And it is about, you know, as a leader, I think about the promises in verse 12 of Mosiah 4 – are that you would always rejoice, that you would be filled with the love of God, which I think of as a leader how desperately I need that, that I would grow in the knowledge of the glory of Him who created me, or the knowledge of that, which is just and true. And I'd always retain a remission of my sins.

I think those four things might be the most important promises in all of scripture, in part because they lead to every other important promise. If I come to know the Savior, this is life eternal, John 17, right? Three, that they might know the only true God and Jesus Christ. So if there is a way that I can come to know Him, if I could experience joy, if I could be filled with a pure love of Christ, if I could have remission of my sins, isn't that what I want? And so I spent [00:56:00] a lot of time teaching the simplicity found in verse 11.

And just as King Benjamin's put this little bracketed formula right in the middle of verse 11. That is, from a doctrinal perspective, one of the most powerful things ever, and he teaches that there are three things we must do in order to get these blessings that he promises in verse 12. And he says, "First, remember the greatness of God. It's remembering this is about his character. This is remembering His grace and His mercy, that when you come to Him, and you feel like you've made many mistakes and you're unworthy, and you're not doing it right, remember that you are a little child." I'm His little girl.

I have a four-year-old grandson, Kurt. I would never smack him upside the head and say, "What an idiot you are. You did it all wrong." I'd go, "Come here honey. Come and climb on Grandma's laps. What did you just learn? What worked well there? What is it that you hope not to do again? What would you like to do differently?" That's His approach with us. He loves us so much. When we remember His greatness, we just don't get caught in judgment of ourselves or others.

The third thing that He tells us or say, [00:57:00] the third thing first before I tell you the second thing is that He reminds us to remember His goodness and long-suffering toward us. It's like go back and remember the times when you felt His love because the instant that you do, you feel it again. I don't have to go more than about three seconds where I go back to the very first memory of my life that I felt the Savior's love and I started talking about it and I can feel it wash

over me like it was happening again for the first time. There is a reason why remembrance is so powerful.

But the thing that's in the middle, Kurt, we skip over it. We skip over it in our leadership because we're scared of it, we skip over in our personal lives because we're afraid of it, King Benjamin says, "Remember your own nothingness." And we want to go, "Wait, I'm not nothing. I'm everything." Oh. And you're nothing. There's a little scriptural trail. If you go do the scriptural trail, you'll find that the word equates to weakness. So King Benjamin says, "Remember the greatness of God, remember your weakness, and remember [00:58:00] His goodness and long-suffering."

And I have learned as a leader, that formula, that the better I got at it, the more I was able to be in the space of being filled with joy, being filled with love, feeling like I was worthy because whatever I had done wrong, I wasn't carrying it with me into my church work. I didn't have to be afraid. Nobody was judging me. I was judging that they were going to judge me before they would judge me. At the beginning, I did that because I was so scared of getting it wrong. And I began to realize the moment I understood the principle of remembrance that I had access to power that was mind-blowing.

It was interesting because we talk about the Aaronic priesthood has the key to Ministering of angels. And you say, "Well, women don't get the Aaronic Priesthood." And I would say, "Well, actually I do because I've made Aaronic Priesthood covenants in the temple. And the keys of ministering of angels are accessible to me." I've never seen them on my own, but I will tell you that I have felt angels many, many, many, many times [00:59:00] in the context of being on the Savior's business.

And so when we access the principles of remembrance, which are fundamental to our baptismal covenants, we awaken amazing power - power of the Priesthood that allows us access to light, to truth, to a transformation inside of us where we get out of His way, and we're able to then truly be an instrument in His hands. That's true whether you are doing it as a Relief Society president and it's true whether I'm doing it as a mother. I had the same experience working.

I have a son who's not active in the church and I have the same experience of light as I sit with him in a one-on-one like experience. That is not different than what I did with my Relief Society presidents and see the tears in his eyes and feel the emotion in his voice as he remembers again the Savior's love for him in that context, because it awakens inside of him. I don't have to tell him anything [01:00:00] the Spirit will tell him, and he will tell himself if I create a space and help him remember it.

So questions, my favorite questions when I would be teaching lessons, or when I would be working with Relief Society presidents would be, "Tell me a time, when did you feel the Savior's love? Tell me what had happened?" Every single time, boom, the Spirit is right here.

Every single time. I would often when I would go visit wards and I'd be asked to speak spontaneous, which happened all the time, I would have them grab a partner, take 90 seconds, tell your partner about a time when you felt the Savior's love and what happened. You want to talk about a testimony meeting of epic [01:00:42] proportions. And you get 90 seconds, and 90 seconds in three minutes everybody in the room will share their testimonies. Everyone. And it just awakes and evokes a powerful spiritual experience.

My other favorite thing to do is exactly what Alma did. He was so good at this. He would say, "Remember when this happened, and imagine this." And so [01:01:00] the other side of it was, "Imagine it's a year from today, and the faith that you long for is in your life, what would be different? How would you feel? What would your relationships look like? How would you experience the Savior differently?"

I found that the remember and imagine partnership, just like Alma did it, would evoke in one-on-ones and in lessons some of the most impactful and powerful spiritual experiences I ever remember because then all of a sudden, it's like the spirit paints a picture of what's possible. And now in my mind's eye, I'm looking forward with one eye to that moment when I feel the Savior's love and I start to move toward it. And when the room is doing it all at the same time, talk about creating oneness - like that. Powerful. Powerful, Kurt.

LS: Wow, that's awesome. Maybe let's shift gears a little bit here. I mean, we've really dug in here, and I so much appreciate what I've learned from this discussion. I hope those listening are gathering these same principles. You've mentioned your [01:02:00] schedule a little bit on Sundays and such. What was the typical week like as a stake Relief Society president, starting from Sunday morning to Saturday night?

DeAnna: Well, you know, my Sundays were my heavy days for the most part, right? And I'd share with you because if it wasn't a fast Sunday, I would go attend a ward at 9 am, I would conduct a one-on-one with a Relief Society president and then attend the Relief Society in that ward. Then I would try to get over and connect with ... because everywhere we have two wards in most of our buildings. So then I tried to get a next another one-on-one with another Ward Relief Society president and then attend their Relief Society as well.

Then if I had committee members that I had responsibility for, or presidency members in that building, I would try to set up a one-on-one on the other side of that. So most Sundays, I would have a minimum of six hours of meetings. Almost [01:03:00] every Sunday. And then on the Sundays, where there was stake council meetings, or we were putting together a stake Relief Society conference, and our committee would meet on Sunday evening, often, I mean, it literally was 14 or 15 hour days.

Because of the business that I own and because I'm an entrepreneur, we have a joke on entrepreneurs in that when you're an entrepreneur, you can choose which 18 hours a day you want to work. That is really not entirely a joke, but there is some truth to that. And so during the weekend was often very difficult. Most of my days began between 4 am and 5 am still. I would

try to reserve evenings, maybe once a week where I would be conducting a phone one-on-one which I would do or sometimes a virtual one-on-one using Zoom or Skype or whatever methods were available to me. So I would make sure that I would get the one-on-ones that I needed in. And so my weeks were crazy. I was, also, and still I'm a temple ordinance worker, so my Saturdays were always spent in the temple.

LS: Oh, great.

DeAnna: So my day, on Saturdays at least, start at [01:04:00] 4 a.m. in the morning. I would get up, and then I would get home from the temple about 2. So, 10 hours on Saturday I'm in the temple. It was a pretty intense time.

LS: Yeah. So how often does your stake have stake council meeting?

DeAnna: Once a quarter.

LS: Okay, okay.

DeAnna: And then we would have a monthly presidency meeting, and then I would have monthly one-on-ones with every member of my presidency. And then different times we had a couple of key committees where I had a leader that I would be doing a one-on-one with as well.

LS: And then what would you have your counselors be doing as you're doing those PPIs?

DeAnna: So, my counselors, we actually divided the wards amongst us. So my counselors had wards that they were primarily responsible for, and I had wards that I was primarily responsible for. However, because I was a stake Relief Society president, whenever I visited the wards I always would still meet one-on-one with a president, partly because I believe I cannot serve whom I do not know. And so [01:05:00] I was adamant about being in the wards. We were very, very visible.

And most of the time when I was in the wards, I was also asked to speak. Not always, but most of the time. And so I was creating a relationship with these sisters by going and being with them, and staying after and talking with them, and creating relationships because I wanted to know them. That matter to me, because I again, it's like you...I never learned all of their names, but I would see them. In fact, to this day, there are some of the sisters that I still see them and it's just, it's instantly emotional for me because I love them so much and miss them because I don't get to see them very often.

LS: That's great. So your counselors weren't necessarily doing PPI's but they were still visiting specific wards?

DeAnna: They were. No, they were.

LS: Oh, they were doing?

DeAnna: Yeah, they were. So, each of my counselors had two wards. I carried a little bit more because just I had counselors whose needs were...I was trying to lighten their loads. And so each of them had two presidents that they would meet with, and would do PPI's [01:06:00] once a month with those two presidents. And then as I would meet with them, they would kind of report back. And then I would see their presidents about every other month.

So I didn't meet with every single Relief Society president in my entire stake every single month. I would say that in a two-month period, I would see every Relief Society president in the stake. And I would see the ones that I had responsibility for. I saw them every single month.

LS: That was powerful. What about any words or thoughts when you think of the visiting teaching program? I know with a lot of Relief Society presidents and Elders Quorum presidents is sort of the default mode of like, "Well, I'm not sure what to do. But one thing I do know what to do is, I'm supposed to handle these assignments and then follow up with them." Anything that's worked well in your area, or approaches that you've tried that are worth mentioning?

DeAnna: Well, I think there are two things. I think there are some things that don't work and I think there are some things that we culturally do that are problematic that we have and [01:07:00] are still working to overcome in our stake. One is, I believe, handing out on a piece of paper an assignment and following up by email is maybe the most ineffective way of helping sisters understand the importance of their role and feel the purpose of what they're up to.

One of the things that we were initiating towards the end of my time as a presidency that has gotten some traction in a number of the wards that we're in, is that we started to teach our Relief Society presidents that it was as important for them to do one-on-ones with their counselors and their teachers and their visiting teachers in the same way they had been experiencing it with us. Again in our stake, Kurt, that was new information because our sisters had never seen PPI's.

And so we have a number of our wards now that designate one evening a week, often the same night as the youth activities where parents are there [01:08:00] already, and the Relief Society presidency, the president and two counselors will show up and the secretary actually will set up, you know, 20 or 30 minute meetings for them with two or three sisters during that time. So you can get 9 or 12 interviews out on a Wednesday night.

And we just teach Relief Society presidents this is the best and most impactful way of conducting one-on-ones, and you do it exactly like we do it. You pray, you ask them what they're learning, you ask them about their families, you invite them to share what's working in their visiting teaching, and what's keeping them up at night, and what you could be doing differently to support them. And you give them an opportunity to experience the same spiritual experience that you want them to create as visiting teachers. And you have an opportunity to help them understand the value, the purpose of it.

So we've tried to get away from the impersonal, efficient things that have crept into our culture to say, "Listen, this is always about the one. It will never stop being about the one." [01:09:00] I was very appreciative – when I got released, we were assigned to the inner city ward, and the ward that I still live in was the smallest ward in the stake. And so the ward where we have residence, that ward Relief society president called me up and said, "DeAnna, may I give you a visiting teaching assignment, even though you're attending this other ward? Where I'm a visiting teacher over there. And she said, "Here is the need, let me talk to you about it. Here's what we're hoping for. Would you please be willing to give me an occasional report because this sister matters?" That is a big deal.

I will tell you, I got off that call, and when I think I matter as a visiting teacher. She cared enough to call me up and tell me, "Here's what's important to you. This is why you're being called. This is what matters." And it changed. Not that I didn't have a testimony of visiting teaching before, but it certainly has changed the feeling I have and the experience I had as I began to meet with that sister. And it was just instantly as powerful as any of the one-on-ones [01:10:00] I've ever had as a stake Relief Society president in visiting teaching, which I had never experienced quite like that as a visiting teacher before. I think the Relief Society president helped create that for me. Interesting.

LS: Yeah, yeah. Well, so before we end, I got one more question for you. If individuals sort of want to be in touch – I know on your website, you have a place they can put an email address and kind of get some of these leadership principles and thoughts – what's the best place to kind of follow up with your work? And I know you're working on a book. Those things to just be aware of those?

DeAnna: Well, I mean, I guess a couple of things. The thing that I would say is that especially where Latter-Day Saints are concerned, Kurt, I have an enormous spirit of abundance. It's like I work a lot with BYU- Idaho, and BYU students, mentoring a number of them, have them come as interns. And if anybody has just got questions about anything we've talked about, just email me directly. And that would be at <a href="mailto:dmurphy@strengthsstrategy.com">dmurphy@strengthsstrategy.com</a>. Our website is [01:11:00] [www.strengthsstrategy.com](http://www.strengthsstrategy.com). And that's kind of more about what we're doing to help individuals, and organizations, and coaches, or those that want to influence people to be able to play and operate from strengths. That's where we do that.

Again, it's like my first heart is, you know, I love the Savior, and I would do anything to help His work. I believe that we are helping to prepare the way for the Second Coming. And I have an ache in my soul. I guess I have a personal reason because I have a daughter who's going to be healed when He comes again. And I look forward to that day. Right? And so I would do anything I could to help prepare the way. And so if there's anything that's been useful, and you want to know more about it, I would make time to have a conversation with anyone.



LS: That's great. And what you said just sort of leads in the last question is, as you've served as a stake Relief Society president, how has that leadership responsibility made you a better disciple of Jesus Christ? [01:12:00]

DeAnna: That's a loaded question. You know, I guess the answer is that I came to that calling believing that I didn't belong there, and felt that way for a lot of the time. And I left realizing how deeply the Lord loves us in spite of our weakness. And that when He says, "I will make your weak thing strong if you come unto me," He's not kidding.

And what I came away from is, I came away from knowing that all of the holes inside of me, His grace would fill up. And if my eyes were on Him, I had nothing to fear about anything, that I could go tackle anything. Could it be trying to build a crazy global organization or write a book, which I'd never done before, if my eyes are on Him, He would fill up all the holes and I would have what I needed. It would be enough. And if I didn't have it in me, then He would send someone to me to help me. And I've learned that that's true.

Well, I think I might have had an idea of that in my head before I started, I didn't know it in my heart, and I know it now. And I think [01:13:00] I've emerged with a love for Him that's deeper than anything I had before. And because I've sat in the seat of operating on His behalf, I have felt His love pass through me and I get how deep it is.

And I've had experiences that changed my life, including one time with a Relief Society president who is Spanish speaking. Our translator had to leave in the middle of our one-on-one, and I will never forget her looking at me, like, "Okay, now what?" I don't speak Spanish, and she doesn't speak English, but she began to speak in Spanish to me, and I understood her, and I spoke in English to her and she understood me. And I felt the Savior's love flow through like a river and translate her words in my head.

And we finished both of us with tears in our eyes, knowing of how much the Savior loves His children that He wants us to experience connection of heart and mind. And when we get out of our own way, which most of the time is to stop judging ourselves and just give all of it to Him, and the minute that happens miracles follow. And I know that's true and I want to just live that throughout my life the same way that we finished and just want to give the rest of it to Him.  
01:14:05.