



Putting the Church on the Shoulders of the Next Generation | How I Lead as Stake President | An Interview with Mark Ogletree

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People are looking for help. When an individual struggles with pornography, they often turn to their church leader for that help. How does a leader help a person overcome the shame of this issue and start seeing positive progress? How can a leader help youth to open up about struggles with pornography? What are some lasting proven tactics that actually make a difference? In order to help leading saints has created the liberating saints library with more than 20 presentations featuring individuals who have a unique perspective or expertise around this topic. Three of those most popular sessions are available to watch now, simply text the word lead to four 747 four 7 to start watching now or visit leading saints dot org slash liberating. Leading saints is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Latter day Saints be better prepared to lead. And we do that through various ways, including this very podcast that you're listening to. I hope you subscribe. Maybe leave us a review while you're at it. And I think you'll enjoy the content you find on this podcast. And then jump on over to leading saints org and you'll find thousands of articles dedicated to leadership context as it relates to being a latter day saint. We have virtual summits that we've done. Tricks that on social media and also weekly newsletter goes out that has unique content, you won't find anywhere else. So a jump into the leading saints world. We're glad to have you. Today I'm in Provo Utah in a church house with mark ogletree. How are you, mark? Great. Kurt, how are you? Good. Now your last name's easy to remember because I'm a big BYU fan. And your son gave me a lot to cheer about for many years, right? He did. He gave us a lot to cheer about do we mis watching them. And he was a walk on, right? I mean, he wasn't highly recruited per se. But in fact, it's kind of a long story, but

yeah, he wasn't getting a lot of looks from BYU at the time. And that's where he wanted to go. That's where he wanted to go. He was recruited by some other schools, Texas tech and air force, and a few others. As soon as a lot of them found out that he wanted to serve a mission. He was committed to that. They kind of dropped their interest. So he was a last minute last scholarship kind of guy the Bronco gave and it turned out to be an awesome experience for him and for us. Nice. And now you're originally from Texas. We are. And you're converted to the church. I am. I mean, we could probably go hours about your story, but give us a synopsis of your conversion. Yeah, the synopsis was growing up in Texas. On my high school baseball team was a one other guy, maybe at that time, maybe the only LDS kid in the high school. And we played high school sports together, and I became super interested in the church because this family was just outstanding. He was outstanding and through that process met a few other just outstanding awesome people and there were three of us that all became interested in the church and two of them joined when they were in high school. Twin brothers had joined in high school. My parents wouldn't let me. They were quite opposed to it. A great Southern Baptist family. And so I waited until the summer before I was to start college and was able to join and then a year later go on a mission so it just timing wise worked out perfectly. Yeah. And now your day job is you're part of the religion faculty at BYU. Is that at what point did you feel like that's sort of where I want my career to end or was it did you meander for a while? I was definitely a meander. In fact, as I was finishing BYU as a student, I was one of those guys that still wasn't quite sure what they wanted to do. And I had some options and but anyway, I remember I'll never forget going through our commencement exercises and watching some of my professors that I really looked up to in that procession and I just had the thought I want to come back here and teach one day for sure. So that was always the plan. Went ahead and did a master's degree. Another master's degree, and then it ended up doing the doctor. And once I was done with that doctor, I knew that I wanted to end up back at BYU if I could. The typical classes that you teach. So I teach two classes. I teach the living prophets, which is awesome, super fun, and then we teach because of my background in marriage and family teach a class called the eternal family, which is now a required class in their religion department. And so every student who comes through BYU needs to take that class, so that's pretty exciting to see a lot of the student body come through. We do. Wow, we do. That's awesome. And you're currently serving as a state president here in Provo, and you were a COVID state of president call, right? Exactly. One year ago, this in fact, maybe even this week. Or next week we were called right in the right in the middle of COVID. Wow, sure. Wow. And you told me before just a handful of people were in the room when that was announced via Zoom I assume. Right. Most of our stake had to turn in via satellite or the broadcast system.

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And so it took us a while to start meeting members of our stake, but it's been awesome. And I'm just curious, like, over the last year, how did you get established in this call or find a routine or connect with people? I didn't go into mine. Yeah, we did. In fact, that was such a such a pressing thought for us as how are we going to do that? You know, with COVID, and so we did. We started to do some activities. We wanted to show our members that we COVID did not

mean that the church had to shut down. You know, what we had to do is find ways to work with it and to work around it. And so we just started engaging and planting a lot of activities with our youth. One of the things Kurt we decided to do is we wanted ward conferences to last for a month instead of a weekend or oh interesting. A few days. And so that was our way of getting to know each ward or each unit I should say and more of an in depth way was to spend an entire month with him going on visits. You know, meeting with the youth, meeting with other members, being in their homes. And I think that helped us out a lot too. Nice. So just really getting creative and a monthlong word conference. I mean, that's something that doesn't isn't in the handbook per se. But you have the liberty to create. Right. It's been wonderful. Nice. We don't know if we can keep that pace up for 9 years. A monthlong word conference, but for this first year it was incredible. Yeah. And how would you describe the demographics of your stake? Pretty typical Provo Utah county steak. I would say so. I mean, it's a well established steak. We've been here for quite a while. A lot of members that live in our steak have lived here for 20 or 30 years on the same homes. Those members are getting older and some are leaving and so some younger families are moving in. It's quite eclectic in the sense that you know we have a lot of professional people. We have BYU professors. We have educators. We have people that own their businesses. I would say it's quite a successful group of people in very faithful. I mean, these staff, the Provo temple, they work at the MTC. They help out with these BYU student wards in terms of Serbian bishoprics and high council, so it's a lot of great wonderful faithful people. And I'm curious to have the logistics of that work with so many student wards, why I say student wards, does the BYU stakes come to you and say we need ten guys or whatever is that how it works? Exactly. There's not necessarily a quota. But I am a really big believer in it. You know, even as a bishop, people will get mad at me sometimes because they feel like half of our ward was serving it. Oh yeah. But I always felt like that was a blessing to our war to have people go there and serve in those colleagues and then come back and be even stronger and have a greater perspective. And so as a steak presidency, we're quite committed to that. And so they come and ask, you know, they come in and they'll come and tell us we work with a couple of stakes and they will come and tell us here's what we need and we always try to find people to get there and the people who serve in those colleagues as you can guess absolutely love it. In fact, there's a neighbor on my street who has harassing for a year because they were there, got released, things like we have to go back. Anyway, so they're back there again. So yeah, that's interesting because everybody experiences sort of that human resource negotiation. I'd call it where an award it's usually this passive aggressive battle between the ward and the stake, right? The state needs a high councilman. Well, don't tell him about brother so and so or, you know, like or we need to get that and make sure we keep them, right? And I remember just as a bishop trying to get them mentality of saying, you know, whatever you need. We're here to support the stake. If you need somebody, what a blessing that they'll come back and be more trained, right? But this is maybe an additional dynamic to that. It is. It is, you know, just once again with the MTC with, I mean, there's so many different places that people can serve around here, but it's such a blessing too. You know, we came here from Texas, and they're just aren't those opportunities at all, you know? We thought it was a rough thing if the state called one of our people to be a early warning seminary teacher. It was like the end of the world. It's not uncommon for a lot of our units to have 30 to 40 people serving outside of their award. Yeah. That's awesome. So as we talked about just some different topics we could address. With your

background, your professional background and the work you do at BYU and the research you've done and whatnot. We landed on this concept of understanding and really implementing the role of a bishop or an elders court president or not, especially with this recent shift where there's been more of an emphasis for the bishop to focus on youth and then hopefully the release side president, the elder scorn president steps up and maybe addresses some of those other responsibilities that sometimes dominate the time of the bishop, right? And so where do we begin with understanding that the role of the bishop and really implementing that and effective way that the work gets done and there's not one man or one woman that's overwhelmed? You know, part of it, I think Kurt is and this is just my opinion, but it's really trying to break through some cultural what do you want to call that just some cultural bands that seem to restrict us in some ways? And traditional things too.

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I mean, in my entire life as a member of the church, it feels like we've heard the message getting the elders corn president involved, turning things over to the elders. Yeah, so the bishop can be with the youth. I mean, we've only heard that message. So for so long now and in present Nelson and our first presidency in the corps of the 12 are really, in my mind, finding a way to make that happen now by making it such a consistent message that we hear over and over again. But it's something in my mind that number one bishops have to embrace, bishoprics need to embrace. And that's difficult as a bishop, as you know, because you have people knocking on your door constantly. A lot of adults that need help are in a crisis. There's always something to do. Open that door and there's the lineup, right? Yeah. Exactly. And then as I was mentioning a little while ago, it's something that we have to train our members to buy into as well. Our members need to get used to going to visit their relief society president or the elders corn president and there's so many levels to this because it's not only that, but then it's as leaders, those people, when we put people in those positions now, we have to call an elders corn president, there really is a bishop. It's not someone who just manages home teaching and helps with moves anymore, but it's someone that could be the bishop right there on the spot, I think. And so there's a lot of there's a lot of issues I think that we need to engage in to make this work and run on all cylinders. The members, the leaders, everyone, but I think we're getting there. Yeah. So talk to me about as far as like getting the members on board. I think that's insightful because typically you may see the adjustments to the handbook and maybe hold a leadership meeting, right? Get the leaders in the room and train the leaders. But you know, they may be full aware of what's going on, but it's really a broader training effort of the members. So any suggestions on maybe how to go about getting the members on board. I love something that elder bednar said in a training meeting that I was in a few years ago. And I've always believed it. And it's so funny, but we put so much emphasis on what I'm about to say, we probably shouldn't do, but in my mind, every time there's a problem in the church, let's give a talk on it. We need to talk on that, right? The members come in late. We need to talk on that, right? Our youth aren't, showing up to mutual. Let's give a talk on that. You know, whatever the issue is, 5th Sunday presentation, whatever, and that's going to solve the problem, an elder bednar said, doesn't work. He said the only way that we can make things like this work is we

have to be in the homes of the members. We have to be working one on one with the members as the savior would to help to help change some of these paradigms and help them work through these challenges. And so in our mind, we're trying to do that as a state presidency and as a high council. And part of it, I don't want to say we're giving talks because what I'm about to say sounds like, so you're given to again, but we have spent probably every training meeting with our priesthood leaders the last year talking about this thing. This one issue of transitioning this over to the elder's corps and releases Heidi presidents. It's just been the drum that we have been consistently. And when we meet in their homes, we meet in meetings and their wards over the podium on ministry visits. It's the message that we're trying to convey. Yeah. Now we talked to training the members, but now from the perspective of the bishop. Because a lot of times, I don't know how to say no to these people lining up. I mean, a lot of them are dealing with really heavy problems that I feel like I need to address. I can't just tell them point them in a different direction. Everyone is so comfortable. Well, I shouldn't say everyone, but many people are very become very comfortable with their bishop, and they recognize the bishop has a mantle and they have keys. One of the ways one of the things we have to do is find a way to elevate an elder's president so that they could see those same keys. And see that same spiritual mantle that rests with them. I wish I knew what the answer was on how to exactly do that, you know? But anyway, I think that's part of the process. Kurt asked me that one more time. I had a second thought as you said that. So as far as with the helping the bishops better delegator or move things off with this constant focus on making sure that we're not overburdening the bishop. Has everyone wants to see the bishop, right? Yeah. And so in a part of it, for us, has been once again helping the bishop really embrace their role with the youth. You know? And helping them really understand you are the young men's president. You are part of the young women's group here.

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And that really is where you need to spend your time. And so as I as a bishop had to tell some members, look, I'm not, we are not turning you away. I mean, I would never want any member to feel that way. But we also want them to know of what the focus is because there's a lot of things that are members come to us with as a bishop that they probably may not need to. And I know that may sound a little bit harsh to say, but there have been times that I've met with members as a bishop, and I thought, I wonder if I would ever go to a bishop with this. I don't know if I would. So part of that teaching the concept of spiritual self sufficiency or there are certain times that we need to see a bishop, but maybe there are times that we don't. We know that I thought a lot about this, but you know, bishops get a lot of phone calls that say things like, hey, now what time is state conference? Or do you have so and so's number? Or, you know, you know, things along that lines. I can remember I've seen bishops making copies of programs for sacrament meeting. And picking people up to give them rights to church and we as members have to find a way to really sustain the bishop in a way that, you know, that he can get to where he needs to be with those youth, but I don't think he's going to turn too many of those adults away, but he may get to a point where he feels really comfortable with someone I remember meeting as a bishop with a family that just had some financial challenges. And I said, you know what? There is an

incredible brother in our ward who's a financial planner who would love to meet with you guys. And he is, he has so many more skills than I do in this area. Yeah. And they were they were happy to meet with him. And he was a blessing to their family, but I think we have to start thinking more that way about it instead of a bishop thinking I have to absorb everything that comes my direction. Yeah. And what would you say in terms of the repentance process? Obviously, is the keys the bishop holds? A lot of that falls on his plate. And maybe we sort of step out of this specific topic and speak more in general like as far as the bishop's role, like what they should consider because I remember as a bishop, you know, we're 16 weeks into this. And I don't know what else to tell him. I've shared all those scriptures I typically share and sometimes maybe there's opportunity to delegate at least some of that engagement or support elsewhere. But what are your thoughts as far as that transgression repentance process? I mean, the bishop is definitely the common judge, right? That's one of his key aspect of his calling. So he can't give that away. But there are things I think that he could do that would help him and the person that he's working with a little bit more. For example, in my world, I'm I think there's some great counselors out there that can really help people. And I recognize as a bishop so quickly, there is no possible way I can meet with 20 members this week or even ten and spend an hour with every one of them because there's 400 other things to do. And so I would meet with people initially and get the ball rolling for a little while and get some momentum with them. And then I would feel like, you know what? We can turn you over to this professional counselor that can really help you with that. And if it works the right way, that counselor is calling me every week and giving me a little report. That doesn't happen all the time as you know. There's also other members of the word that we can that could help in some ways, especially if it's not, once that transgressions cleared up and they moved on, but they need some support and help. I think great bishop counselors can help with some of that relief society sisters ministry brothers and sisters. They're outside of the transgression, the members can really support a bishop that way. Yeah, for sure. Anything else as far as the role of the bishop that we haven't mentioned yet, maybe in the context of serving youth or because maybe they do create that space, but now they don't know how to fill it with the youth other than just sort of trying to be president different activities. I think so many bishops, there are bishops that are very comfortable with the youth. It just comes natural to them. But then we know that there are those who don't feel that comfort at all. It's very challenging for them. But for me, you know, being with the youth was always like therapy. I mean, that was it was like you're with the adults for a while. You walk into the bishop's office where the priests kormas that day and it's like you could just sit down and just relax for a minute and be healed by the youth. But here's what I would say I think every bishop has been called of God. No question about that in my mind and has a mantle, and there's a reason they've been called. And they have gifts and talents and abilities. A lot of people don't have, at least the lord will magnify well magnify those. And so I think bishops need to engage for sure. And so in my mind, a bishop should speak to the youth as often as he can. Even if he's not well versed in speaking, the lord will elevate him, right? And so bishops youth discussions.

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I'm surprised sometimes when I talk to bishops and they're like, now what is that? And that's an opportunity on a monthly basis to be with the youth and to share what's on his mind, but also to have a discussion with the youth on what's on their mind and connect with them. I wanted to be as a bishop involved in the planning of all the activities because I wanted to be able to be there. And I knew if I wasn't in the room and they planned a high adventure or something that I couldn't be there. I didn't ever want that to happen. And so, you know, the bishop's youth council, you know, presidency meetings as a bishop or in a bishopric. We always were there. We wanted to be there for that. Every youth activity on Wednesday night. I remember one time years ago, we had a bishop and award that we lived in. They just didn't come to Wednesday night activities. And I remember we had an athletic type of activity with our pre quorum that night and the idea was if they had if they had done this 5 mile run that we would all get ice cream afterwards or whatever, but I remember taking the youth into this ice cream place and there was our bishop. And his family, you know, eating ice cream. But I remember thinking he's missed out on one of the most incredible blessings of being with a bishop. And that's connecting with our youth, you know? So any opportunity to be with those youth, I think that's where his influence is going to be the most profound and it's one of the I think it's one of the greatest blessings of the call for sure is being with those youth being energized by them feeling their strength and their power preparing them for missions and marriage and it's a highlight. And so I think for bishops who struggle with that, it's an opportunity to find out how the lord can elevate them and because he wants the lord wants them to do that. And he'll make him equal to that task, even if they feel they don't have gifts and talents in that area. He will elevate them in ways where they'll be able to find some way to connect and they'll make a difference. Did you think back to your time as a bishop, were there any routines or you have the typical youth interviews that are sort of you get in that schedule with those, but any other routines or habits or approaches that you did to engage with the youth or connect with them? One of the great blessings of our life, and I say, I count my wife in with this as well. But I was able to be the bishop when our kids were all teenagers. So that was four and a half years in Texas and then another 6 years I wanted to hear him Provo, two different two different times, but that was the span in our life where our kids were teenagers and so it was super cool in my mind. We wanted it to be so good because our own kids were in there. So we had some skin in the game, you know? But I would say routines for sure were we always we always had a bishop's use discussion every month. That was a great way to connect. We had an ironic priesthood committee meeting every month and training meeting with all of our youth leaders. I always, I always believed when I had the youth leaders in a room. And when I say youth leaders, the youth, that it was my opportunity to try to train and teach them. And so bye meeting consisted first of some doctrines of the gospel and let's talk about that and how it applied to them and always felt like we were training the future leaders of the church when we were with them. But yeah, that high adventures and girls camp. And a lot of things in the summer were just regular things that you could count on. And just time with them, just time with them in different ways to go to their games to go to their performances to be involved with their families and some of those things. But when there's a kid in your ward on the stage and they look out and there's their bishop and his family and they have no other reason to be there, but to watch them, I think that that sends a powerful message that we care about you. Yeah. And Kirsten digging as far as youth discussion, especially with your teaching background, what format would you recommend in that or how did you handle? Typically maybe you invite

him over to the bishop's house or and then you pick a topic or exactly. So a couple of things in our Texas ward, we had a lot of youth. It's surprising to say it this way, but we had probably three times of youth in that ward as we had in our ward here in Provo. And because of that, what we would do is we would alternate where we would have that bishop's use discussion among the bishopric and other leaders of our youth. And the topics were usually driven by things that came to my mind in my interviews with our youth. You know, I would be in those interviews and think, wow, we really need to address this or we should certainly talk about this. I remember in that Texas ward, we had a young boy kind of a sad story, but awesome family and their son at the age of 8 died of a brain tumor. Oh, wow. So that bishop's youth discussion that month was all about, you know, death and why bad things happen to good people and the plan of Salvation and of course there's interviews where you feel like we really need to talk about some of the church standards and some morality and in our ward here, we were able to do a lot of our bishop used discussions in our home.

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And sometimes we would just change it up a little bit. We did it here at the church a few times. We would do it at some of the counselors houses at different times and some of the euclides as well. But I think we had most of them at our home here. So as far as the format goes, and this is a, this is something heard I feel strongly about, but I have mentioned it to you, but we just have to prepare this generation to put the church on their shoulders. And they need to be the leaders. And so any youth meeting, the youth always conducted. And I would always say, let's not stick a youth up there that has no idea how to conduct a meeting. We don't need that. Let's teach them how to conduct a meeting and then let's put them in front of everybody. And so we really worked on that. So those youth would conduct that meeting. They would conduct the bye or the BYD anyway. Or both, sometimes. And then we always had a message, had some interaction had to some discussion. You always want to make it fun. And spiritual and doctrinal. And then always refreshments after and just a great tradition. Yeah, that's great. And you sort of alluded to there, as far as like youth empowerment, and that's interesting to sort of see through this discussion, you know, we empower bishops and hopefully they're empowering relief society presidents and eligible presidents and we have to empower members to allow these leaders to be empowered. And then youth need to be empowered, right? This isn't just some youth camp that we're just there to have fun, but there's some empowerment because like you said we need to put the church on their shoulders at some point. Anything else as far as youth empowerment goes. So here's a great parenting rule. I think and that is that a parent should never do anything for their child with that child can do for themselves. And I think the same should apply in our leadership as we train our youth to become leaders is that why are we doing things for our youth that they can do, you know? And so we do see too many adult leaders. I've been to several mutuals this summer. You know, Wednesday night activities with our youth in so many cases, you know, there's adults that are connecting the youth meeting and that should be a first assistant in the priests quorum or a girl from her leadership. And anyway, so yeah, we need to train them. We need to believe in them that they can be leaders and view them as leaders because they are the future that church and three months in some cases, they're going to be conducting immediate in

the mission field. You know, they may have never learned how to do that. And so I really believe that strongly that here it is right here that you have to have participation to have conversion. And if they want to get converted deeply to the gospel, they have to be participants. And so I know in our stake, we've talked about being a little bit worried about our young married couples. Whole too many of our young married couples don't have a lot to do in the church. We're not giving them enough to do. And so, you know, participation leads to conversion. Let's give him something to do, right? And help them buy into that and put some weight on their shoulders a little bit and let them grow and so yeah, so we're really big on that idea of let's let our youth lead. But we got to train them had to lead first. I have been in other places where we went to youth to lead, but they have no idea what they're doing. And so let's train them and let's teach them and let's stand beside him, but let's let them run with it. Yeah. I love the concept of participation and conversion because oftentimes you think, well, you know, and we do, I mean we need to create space to get him in the scriptures and teach them those doctrinal principles, but we sort of just keep pushing them that way, but maybe call a time out and say, you need to participate here, but in order for you to participate, we got to walk you through a few steps of how this works. And then that participation really works well with the instruction, right in the classes. Exactly. A few years I'm laughing because I'm thinking of an experience a few years ago where I was so big on this principle, right? We're going to have our youth lead and I was called into a teacher's quorum to be an adviser. And we said, okay, guys, we're going to plan the year out. Here we go. And they came up with basketball for every every night of the week, right? I was probably in that class. Every Wednesday night, yeah, you would have loved it. And that's when we had a real woman and say, okay, here's the deal. And let's read from the handbook. Here's what the program. This is not a club. This is actually a church. And there's a program for Wednesday night. So here's what it is. We taught him and trained him on it. Okay, now let's try it again. Let's plan out the year and with this knowledge now that you have, you know, so yes, that's going in, just making time for that and because it's easier to jump in and be like, well, let me just quickly do this for you. This is what good activities look like and we can't do all basketball, right? It's kind of like letting your son mow your lawn when he's 6, you know, and there's gonna be a little patches and strips everywhere, but you let him do it, right? And then when he goes in to get a drink, then you go back and mow it over again.

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But he's got to have that shot at mowing it. Awesome. Anything else principle or concept as far as this empowerment of different roles, anything we haven't touched on or maybe we've covered it all at this point. I think we can roll out a little bit with our youth, the significant role that they play in the church and I want all the youth in our stake to know that this church is there as much as it's ours, right? And that there is a history of some pretty incredible youth in Old Testament history. You know, in our church history, in the book of Mormon and to get them to have them connect with those Mormons and Joseph Smith and Samuels and Davids and to elevate them in a way to let them know that at this young age, you have this capacity. And there's no question that you have it, and we're here to help you understand it and to learn your identity and who you are right now. You don't have to wait until you're in the mission field or

once you're home, but right now you have this great capacity and ability at the age of 14 or 15 to lead a group of ten people. You can do this. You have it. Anyway, it's just helping them understand that that's true. That others have done it, and you can do it. And we're here to help you do it. Yeah. And I love that reflecting on some scriptural examples, or there's also a deep tradition even I think right now in the come follow me, we're in doctor covenant's 89 ish. And Joseph Smith is 29 30 years old and it's like today that such a young kid that's running this church and single adult, exactly. But he's married. Right, right, exactly. But just showing that that empowers them to see those examples of these were young prophets throughout the scriptures or in our modern days that did some remarkable things. And that you can do that too. Right. Yeah. Amen. So just some random things I always intrigued to ask a state president as far as the high council, for example. I remember being in a state presidency and there's this natural thing of like Hamburg says that we're supposed to meet these times and I don't know really what to do with this group. You know, like go to your awards and do your things, you know, one guy's making sure the keys are the physical keys are getting around all the building the bishoprics and whatnot. So what's your approach? How would you encourage a brand new steak present to utilize the high council? This is really interesting. When we recall, one of the things that I kept the term that I kept using is workhorses. We need workhorses, right? We need some and the high counsel that we had had been incredible and wonderful and some serious mentors in this stake for a long time. But we knew that we needed to get some younger men on the high council to have some experience so we can start to really shaping the leadership and some of the words and stakes. And so the first thing that I feel is a steak present is this is not a place to hide or retire, but to really work. And so we have a high council of some of the strongest men that I've ever met in my life and each one is so willing to work and to serve and to help. And fully engaged, you know? And so I think here's the analogy that I've always bought into is a bishop is and it came from Bronco mendenhall on his book running into the wind. But you talked about, you know, getting the right people on the bus, but then you gotta put the people on the bus and the right seats, you know? And so we really, we really have tried to do that. And number one, you know, I guess if there's an order to things, we have tried to make our court a member of our state presidency. President Blake, we've tried to make all of our meetings a revelatory experience. I mean, I mean, I feel more pressure in our high council meetings and almost anything I do because there's this expectation that it's going to be this outpouring of the spirit. We're going to get receive a lot of direction, which has been incredible to watch. It happened. And so anyway, so I know you're asking the question about how to utilize the high council, but we take the low level Edwards approach. If it's cool with him, but we call the best people we can and get out of their way and let them and let them run with it. We help them understand their duties and responsibilities. And they just rise up to it and it's been wonderful and incredible to watch. When I interview the bishops and the elders who are presidents, one of the things I'll ask the bishops is I'll say, tell me how the high councilman in your high counselor in your word is doing. And in every case, it's just they rave about how these men are blessing their award and they attend their meetings. They bring their families and attend meetings.

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I had one bishop say, yes, this high counsel helped me move. He found that I was moving and he just came over and he by himself helped me move anyway. So I'm not really sure exactly what the formula is, but I know, you know, when the expectation is, these men could potentially be bishops here someday or be called to serve somewhere outside of our stake to do something that's going to weigh heavy on them. We want to make sure that they're prepared for that. And so we give them a lot of responsibility and they have just it's been one of the great miracles I've been able to see as a state president is watching them. I was on a high council before. And it was a little bit different. There was about four people that did all the work and a lot of people, they had been kind of older in their age and they worked and they served. But it really rested on four or 5 people to kind of carry the load. And in this case, everyone has bought in and they're converted to the gospel and they love it and they're passionate about their callings and they are making a difference in the words they serve in. That's great. That's awesome. I'm curious to know, especially with your professional work as a doctor and religion department or church history and doctrine. I'm always intrigued on specific doctrines that may be leaders should really understand clearly or maybe focus on a little bit more during that period of time when they're serving in these roles, any doctrines or scriptural perspectives coming to mind. You know, one of the things that you always think of is the atonement. Because, you know, it's the enabling power. It's the redeeming power and when we talk about power and strength. I mean, that's where it comes from. And so in my mind, any scriptures that teach us about that or the restoration, because these are the things that we should be testifying of. And of all people who should know the gospel is true, it's the leaders of the stake, you know, and the bishops and the women who serve, so those kind of those kinds of things. Those kinds of doctrines I should say. But also, there are doctrinal teachings that help motivate us and inspire us to be committed, you know? And so I think those have been important to me to know. I mean, I've loved so much our church history this year as we've studied it. Just seeing the sacrifices that people, you know, people made this early early saints, you know? My wife and I were just on a tour going across the country doing some church history. And it was so incredible to get reconnected to just see how far people walked. To go to a meeting, you know, or Joseph Smith, going from Palmyra to harmony or fayette. So those are important. And then, you know, I would say there's also I'm so motivated by the conferences by the general conferences. It's such a time for a leader to have their bucket filled. But some of the teachings are so helpful and motivational. You know, one of the things Kurt I've had a great experience with is the enzyme. You know, now that Leo Honda, but as a bishop, every month as I would read that, I always receive some kind of inspiration of what our war need it to do. And then of course, you know, the conference message is. But even just learning the skills of just listening, you know, just hearing those messages of it's incredible. The lord will guide us and lead us to those to those messages that can really inspire, but I'm sure everyone's inspired by different things. I'm reading elder ropes, biography right now, that inspires me. I'm actually finished it today, so I just ordered ordered he Percy Kimball's life. I mean, just to keep being inspired by these faithful, dedicated people and just all that they did, it's so humbling because I feel like we pale in comparison to the sacrifices they made, but those are the teachings I think that motivate me. And then I guess I would have to say leadership wise, I'm just always motivated by loving leaders. You know, we've all had experiences in our life, I think, where we've had leaders in our life that maybe weren't so loving. And I know we've made excuses for that sometimes, you know, well, that's just how they are. They were in the

navy or whatever we say. But in my mind, you know, the greatest advice I was ever given as a bishop was from another bishop and I said, what do I do? I don't even know what to do. And he said, you just represent the savior to the people in your world. That's all you have to do. You know? And I think that to learn Christ like attributes and those christlike traits. I mean, that's always a motivation to me to realize that when I'm sitting at a desk with someone in my stake or my ward we represent the savior. And I know that's a humbling thing to think about, but that's what we're doing. Yeah. Yeah.

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So I'm curious you mentioned general conference and filling your bucket with general conference. Any unique approaches you take is mainly just, I mean, there are you a note taker during and you sit and sort of just absorb what you can or review later. But what works for you? Not that there's this formula that you figured out. But what works for you? My kids laugh at me if how serious I take general conference. First of all, as a bishop, but now it's a steak present is just an incredible weekend, as you know, to be with your family and to be immersed in the gospel, but they'll laugh because I'll have a table set up with a computer and another monitor over here. We're taking notes and I finally got a little bit away with that. Now we just have a little lap pad as I'm taking notes. Part of that is I teach a living profits class at BYU, and so I want to be able to walk in Monday morning and be prepared. But you know, I had a great teacher. When I joined the church, I was living in east Texas at a smaller university for my first year. And this was in 1980, one or two. But when we went to general to watch general conference in those days you went to the branch building and there was a radio sitting on the podium. You know, and I remember sitting for three sessions on Saturday, three sessions or two sessions on Sunday. Listening to this radio, and it was embedded in my mind of how my friend took me to be part of that and I thought, wow, I've never listened to a radio for this many hours in my life, but it really seemed in my mind how important conference was. And so from that time forward, we just have never missed a session. I mean, I think it's the most important thing that we can do in our lives. And so our approach is a family is to watch to watch it together to watch all the sessions together. This is going to sound really weird to say, but I'm just going to say it because I really believe it. I love it. But I've always believed that this Saturday is for the saints and Sundays for the world, you know? And I think there are messages on Saturday that we just have to hear, you know? And anyway, so and so general conference has been, I would say one of the most powerful influences on our family. You know, for a long time. And so we continue to love it and there's great revelation. You know, as you know, there's great revelation that comes to us as a result. You know, I've never really thought about it, but when you say Saturday for the saints and Sunday for the world, and it does I wouldn't be surprised if that was intentional. Maybe it is. I don't know, but I know. Those messages can really be church focused on Saturday, and then you get a talk about the U.S. Constitution on a Sunday, right? Exactly. Yeah. That's awesome. Well, Mark, this has been awesome. Any other point principle that we haven't hit on before we wrap up here? You know, one of the things that has formed my leadership style, I would say is just being around great leaders and having that opportunity, you know? And I had a mission president that was one of the greatest leaders I've ever met in my life. And I would describe him

as a man of velvet and steel. You know? And then just having great bishops in our life and I've always just paid attention, you know, you just pay attention to these great leaders and learn enough that you think one day I'm going to be a bishop or a stake president, I've never had those, you know, you never want to think that way, but to be surrounded by great leaders. I mean, this is a church that develops leaders. And I love something president Kay said years ago that the real test of any church or religion is the kind of men that it makes. And of course we could say in the kind of women that it makes as well. But this church makes incredible leaders we learn by watching. We learn by observing and we see Christ like leadership all around us, you know? And I would say that I'm really grateful for that. And my experience as a leader has been forged and developed, I would say by being around some incredible leaders in my life, but also being around some leaders that weren't so incredible. And I know we don't talk about things like that in church, but we've all experienced that we know it with that's like to be with to be with someone that's not fully engaged or doesn't seem to care as much or as little rough around the edges, but sometimes you learn how to be a great leader by watching the mistakes of others too. You know? And we're just observant. But I would say that to overall it has been an incredible experience just watching the Christ like nature of our leaders, and that has been probably one of the highlights of my life as to watch even our general authorities are members of the 12 of the first presidency. How Christ like and how kind they are. It's incredible. Yeah. Lots of perfect segue to my final question. As you've had so many opportunities to serve in leadership roles, how is being a leader helped you become a better follower of Jesus Christ? I love that. You know, it's to emulate the savior in my mind or in other words to be the leader that we want to be.

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All we have to do is look at the savior and study his life. And watch how he interacted with others. Watch how he edified. We don't talk enough about the savior's hope in his optimism. And but I've learned so much from watching him, you know, as we read about his life in the scriptures, and as we have others share their testimonies of him, we have been given the most incredible model of leadership. And as we follow him as our leader, then great blessings empower and strength flow into our lives. And so I would answer that question by saying that the more I try to follow the savior and emulate the things that he would do and how he would how he would lead this stake, the more power I feel, the more strength I feel, the more happiness and hope that I feel as I follow him. And that concludes this how I lead interview, I hope you enjoyed it and I would ask you, could you take a minute and drop this link in an email on social media in a text? Wherever it makes most sense and share it with somebody who could relate to this experience and this is how we develop as leaders just hearing what the other guys doing, trying something out testing, adjusting for your area and that's where great leadership's discovered, right? So we would love to have you, share this with somebody in this calling or a related calling, and that would be great and also if you know somebody any type of leader who would be a fantastic guest on how I lead segment, reach out to us go to leading saint dot org slash contact, maybe send this individual an email letting them know that you're going to be suggesting their name for this interview will reach out to them and see if we can line them up.

So again, go to leading-saints.org/contact, and there you can submit all the information and let us know. And maybe they will be on a feature how I lead segment on the leading-saints podcast. And remember, text the word lead to four 747 four 7 in order to access the three most popular sessions of the liberating-saints library. It came as a result of the position of leadership, which was imposed upon us by the God of heaven who brought forth a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And when the declaration was made, concerning the all and only true and living church upon the face of the earth. We were immediately put in a position of loneliness. The loneliness of leadership from which we can not shrink nor run away. And to which we must face up with boldness and courage and ability.