



The Doctrine Related to Being Single or Married | An Interview with Michael Goodman

September 11, 2021

00:00:02 - 00:05:03

Did you know that over 50% of the church membership is single? That's why faith matters in leading saints are joining forces to produce the single saints virtual summit. This online event is focused on helping Latter day Saints more deeply understand the complexities of being a single adult in our faith community. In the summit you'll learn from ten to 15 percenters mostly single adults who share their unique perspectives on how we can better understand the single adult experience and feel more equipped to unite with them in our worship. For more information about the single saints virtual summit and how to register for free, text the word lead to four 747 four 7. Again, text the word LEAD to four 747 four 7, or visit leading saints dot org slash single adults. Leading saints is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Latter day Saints be better prepared to lead. And we do that through content creation, like this podcast, which we hope useful subscribe to. We also have a website at leading saints dot org with thousands of incredible articles all about leadership in the context of being a latter day saint. We host virtual summits, live events, and also have a weekly newsletter to keep you up to date on all things happening with leading saints. Is it leading saints dot org for more information? Today I'm in person with my guest, professor Michael Goodman, how are you? Wonderful thanks. How are you? Good. Now I feel like we've used an abused you at leading saint. So the various interviews and things, but you're back again for more happily. So and I'm glad you agreed to it. And what I wanted to do with this session is I wanted to get a BYU religion professor who spends his time studying researching oftentimes putting curriculum together all around the related doctrines for single adults in the church, whether that's eternal marriage. This life, the next life, ceiling, and all these things. That relates and fires some questions at and see what we can learn. Maybe for individuals who aren't familiar with you and your background, maybe just put yourself into

context with that. Okay, my PhD is emerging family and that was wonderful opportunity to formalize the passion that I've always had, which is to understand what makes marriage work. What makes family work? I'm a mutt. So I've got a, I've got an associates in business, a bachelor's in journalism, a master's in IT and a PhD in marriage and family and I teach her legend. So high quality mud or at least a mut one way or the other, but it's given me a background in a perspective academically that helps me to speak on different topics. I spend many wonderful opportunities to serve in the church. I've been to be where your bishop I've been a mission president, I've served on several general committees for the church currently. I'm doing that. So yeah, it's about in that show. It sounds like a well rounded individual. So that's good. That's great. So you chaired the committee of putting together the eternal family or the course called family. Kirk eternal families. And this is a religion course that every student BYU takes. Is that right? Exactly. So there's a there are four what we call cornerstone classes that every BYU student has to take from the religion apartment. One based around the Bible one based around the doctor covenants when based around the book of Mormon and the eternal family I was the chair of the group that put that together and also wrote the BYU online curriculum for that. Great. Great. So your go to here. If there is an answer, you probably have it. I'll give you an answer. You left a side of it right here. I've got a little bit of experience with this. Cool. Let's start there as far as how you handle teaching eternal families and marriage, especially in a group that you're hoping is moving towards maybe that ceiling ordinance, you know? We've got the interesting reality here is about 80% of our students are single, 20%, maybe a little less sometimes are married. So we're teaching a mixed status audience. But the class is meant to teach the doctrines and principles that God has revealed through profits regarding the eternal nature of family now, most of us who teach it, including myself have PhDs in the topic at our active social scientists. So we will add some of those things to the material, but the reality is that courses based on what have profit Sears and regulators taught, regarding the nature of marriage and family in the eternities and how to take those truths and some of the things we learned from day to day living and help people succeed in their marriage of family life. Yeah. And I would guess like, even in other religious institutions or colleges, I mean, there's no family type of curriculum that they're getting. This is a bit unique. There are family systems, more of a secular study of the family.

00:05:04 - 00:10:00

There are classes that are explicitly based on either people's best guess or the science behind how do you do marriage better and most of those are based in communication or some other thing. This class is quite unique in its focus on we understand to be eternal principles related to this. Now, eternal principles are crucial when you're trying to understand what's going to happen in the next life in the nature measurement family, but we also talk about Monday and we talk about sexuality and we talk about communication and we do all those things as well, but we put that into the context of the plan of Salvation. So where do we start building a foundation here as far as doctrine related to eternal family? And obviously, our hope is to help leaders or other individuals better understand this to be a better help to maybe those who haven't had that blessing in this life to some extent. It's an interesting challenge because all the other core

classes and what you think of as for instance seminary classes, they're all based around a volume of scripture. And so our children from the time they're in primary, are studying and restarting and restarting book Mormon doctrine covenants Bible, all that. And so by the time they hit BYU, they've got a pretty solid foundation. Though it's true in the church, we talk about the family a lot. It's often a lot of the family's great families wonderful, the family's eternal, you should like family, named Jesus Christ amen, and we move on. And so from primary on, we're not doing a lot of teaching of the foundations the doctrines, the realities, eternally behind it, and so when students come to BYU, we don't generally have to convince them that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints values marriage or family. But totally honestly, many of them could not explain why in detail. I don't want to be insulting in any way, but there's a lot of learning that goes on in that class. And so our classes is it's interesting. We were when this process was happening when we were trying to decide what the core classes and religion would be. There were a few of our beloved Friends, my fellow faculty members that weren't real comfortable with the family being there because it wasn't based on a scriptural text. This class is based in the teachings of living privates. Yes, we use scripture. Yes, we principals from that, but it's the only one of the four core classes that is actually a modern prophet's based class as much as it is anything else. And so we have an opportunity to try to help our students basically from it's not just first date to chosen mate. It's not just the concept of how to value it and get married, but to see where marriage and where family fit in the eternities. And so you ask the question, where do we start doctorly, interestingly, we start scripturally, and so for example, we'll bring students to doctor incumbents one 31 if I'd just read to smidge just for fun, right? And most students can almost quote this, right? In a celestial glory, there are three heavens or degrees. And in order to attain the highest a man must enter into this order, the priesthood, which, by the way, when the scripture was given, or when it was written down by Joseph scribe, the parenthetical statement, meaning the new and everlasting covenant marriage was not part of the text. That was added later by Brigham young. But in order to obtain the highest amount of entrance to the sort of the priesthood, and if he does not, he can not obtain it, obtain what obtain the highest degree in this letter kingdom. He may enter into the others, but that is the end of his increasing can not have an increased self. So before this, back in 1830, in the 1830s, late 1830s Joseph was already teaching the possibility of eternal family that you could be sealed to summon for attorney. So the earliest documents we have on that from they just went blank kind of not referred to WW Phelps. And probably be Pratt. Share in the journals are in the letters to their family, they hate this wonderful doctor. You could be sealed forever. But none of those said you had to be sealed. They didn't make your Salvation contingent on your marital status. This was the first one that did that. Doctor Cohn's one 31, which said, no, for our ultimate purpose in life, it requires a man and a woman to be sealed together. And then of course, if you're going to section one 32, it continues that people often get lost in one 32 because it deals with throw marriage, which we'll talk about today. Thank you a little bit. But they don't realize that the first whole beginning has nothing to throw in there. It has to do with eternal marriage. And so if you take one 31 and 32, that really gives you your doctrinal base. And then of course, in our class, we're going to go to the family proclamation. That's what the class is based off of. In fact, we have 14 units. They're based off of each of the paragraphs of the family proclamation with a little bit of a little bit of wiggle room in there.

00:10:01 - 00:15:00

But you have a statement like this. We are the first presence in the council of 12 apostles. Of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints solemnly proclaimed that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God, so yeah, God likes it. And that the family is central to the creator's plan for the eternal destiny of his children. So you're beginning to see this concept of family's not just nice, marriage isn't just sweet of it happens, but it's actually central to the creator's plan for eternal destiny. And so those provide what you'd say is foundational texts for it, but profits as you know have been teaching for a long time. Present oaks probably one of the more frequent speakers on this topic. And present Nelson, both of them, funny thing they're in the first brands you know? Yeah. President oaks, here's a couple of thoughts for you. Our theology begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them. So think of sexual one 31 in order to obtain the high degree of special keynote. You have to have a man and a woman seal together. You think your sexual one 32, which reiterates that and very graphic detail? Why? Because it's central to God's plan for our ultimate destiny. What is our ultimate destiny? That's where a statement like this from present oaks are theology begins with heavenly parents our highest aspiration is to be like them. And then statements like this, the Zelda oaks also. The purpose of mortal life and the mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints is to prepare the sun's and daughters of God for their eternal destiny. To become like our heavenly parents. A fairly straightforward declaration that heavenly father is not interested in turning us into kind of heavenly cheerleaders. But that the goal of our heavenly parents is to help us become like them, which shouldn't seem so strange because that's kind of the goal of we experience that that is mortals, right? Exactly. So I guess you'd say, when we're looking at the doctrine of marriage, the doctor marriage can not be understood outside of the plan of Salvation. It can't be understood outside of our destiny to become like I have any parents. Really love a statement by Ted our call story says this. It is this doctrine of identity that defines our potential destiny of godhood. If one does not correctly understand his divine identity, wish we could have his and hers in there. Understand it's there, then he will never correctly understand his divine destiny. They are in truth inseparable partners. And so we begin our understanding of the concept of eternal family truthfully not with marriage, but with our childhood to God that we are the children of God. And if children then airs airs to God to become like God, never is equal, never her equal, never have any mothers equal, but their goal for us is to help us become as they are and to receive all that they have. That's sexual one 32 in a nutshell. That's helpful. You know, just the other day I was listening to an interview between two evangelical Christians, and they got into the topic of marriage and I think outside of our faith tradition in the Christian world. You know, there's a belief that marriage does not continue after life or marrying nor does any of those type of relationships continue. And so this is such a remarkable doctrine that's been revealed. And we especially look at heavenly parents, it's easy to think, wow, you mean there's a feminine divine as well. That's so powerful that also means that there's an eternal divine marriage that's happening, which is just as weighty and exciting as realizing that we have a mother in heaven. It's huge. The doctrine of mother in heaven is not a fringe doctrine as the brethren have said on the very church website, the SN have the mother is that this is a cherished and important belief doctrine of ours. I teach, I've taught about 10,000 students at

BYU. I'm an old man. Given semester at three to 500 students, right? I wish you could look in the eyes of these bright, brilliant women as they come to begin to see the reality of a mother in heaven that they're not meant to grow up to be a kind of a different version of heavenly father. But that they have a mother in heaven as well and that that puts the plan of Salvation into a familial framework. Where we can begin to understand it's our identity as the children of God to receive all that they have. Yeah. So as you like lay that foundation, like it's so fun to listen to because you just realize how miraculous this is how these doctrines are so so miraculous.

00:15:01 - 00:20:03

And they're exciting and you feel that energy. And then I try and put myself into the shoes of a single adult and it's sort of like, wow, that esmer miraculous and I don't get any piece of that, right? Or and then you default, you know, leaders default to the oh well, we've been problems that someday he'll everybody will get the chance was like, well, what about now? Yeah, what about now? So after laying that foundation like just speaking to single adults, where do we go with that? Yeah, bad. I think it's crucial that we acknowledge the pain to start with. Not all experience that. Some are bushy and bushy tailed and bright eyed and just happy little clams, and they're just going through and they're happy, they're either happy 40. They have some are not affected, but others are beloved Friends of mine who have experienced just psyching pain because they felt like where am I where am I in this plan? They have a hard time seeing themselves, whether they're simply single and haven't had an opportunity or it hasn't worked or whether they experience same sex attraction or gender dysphoria or whatever the issue is that they're saying, where do I fit? And so I think it's crucial that we start by being honest and saying, yeah, I can understand how that could be painful. And that simply blowing it off. Yeah, yeah, yeah, and the next life it's all going to be good, which by the way, we believe. And then exact it all will be good. But you don't have to wait until the next life for that goodness to start, right? I love a statement by miele Maxwell. Oh nearly waxy. I just like Neil all Anderson. When he was teaching in general commerce, 2016, he said this. We will continue to teach the lord's pattern for families. But now with millions of members and the diversity we have in the children of the church. We need to be even more thoughtful and sensitive. Our church culture and vernacular are at times quite unique. It's a good way to put it. The primary children are not going to stop singing families can be together forever. But when they sing, I am so glad when daddy comes home, or with father and mother leading the way, not all children will be singing about their own family. And we have to realize that I was raised by two wonderful, wonderful alcoholic parents. My family did not match the picture of what we learned families are in theory intended to be in this life. But that did not make them me a second class citizen. As elder gong and several others that have extra guest statements, I'll share a little bit later have stated in general conference are status with God isn't based on our marital status. It's based off our heart. It's based off our covenant connection with God. And so I simply say as we, as we continue to teach the doctrines, we realize, there are some that have a hard time seeing themselves in there and acknowledge that pain, and live in that pain. Be willing to sit down with someone and let them share without doing what I'm infamous, I would say famous. This is the bad part. I've wanting to solve. Yeah, yeah, but yeah, please solve, but no one is going to care squad of what you say if

they don't thank you understand where they're coming from. I think that's really crucial. Just making space to acknowledge that pain because it's uncomfortable. I don't want to be in a room where somebody is feeling pain. I want to swoop in there and make it all better, you know? And so I think that's just great advice that it's not that there's some scripture theory to a certain way or a quote that nobody's heard of in the morning. Yeah, exactly. But it's more of like just sitting with them and then really the savior was the master that just sitting with them in the pain and saying, I bet that hurts. You know, I don't fully understand that. I haven't lived your life, but I bet that really hurts. I'm willing to sit with you and I know exactly. Where I think, I think we're getting better and better at that nowadays. I think that that our culture is such that that is the expected reaction and it's the right one. Without it, nothing else works. But I also think we forget that the savior never stopped there. Yeah, right? Like other Holland's fond of saying, you know, God will take you right where you are. He just won't leave you where you are, right? He's going to continue. And so yes, live with that person. But then, ultimately, not only yes, it'll work out the next lip and say, okay, what about now? What do we need to know now so that we can experience joy now can I share a few principles? I think these are kind of four overarching principles that help us to understand the ceiling ordinance that help us understand how this fits for a single or a divorced person both my parents divorced. And my family, what are the principles that can help us understand how God's going to make it all right? As long as we stay covenant connected teams are one. No one will be denied any blessing that have any father has promised all his children because of something outside of their control. I'm gonna share a couple statements from the prophets so it's not just from brother Goodman, because you're scary.

00:20:03 - 00:25:06

Did you guys brother Goodman said you should never believe it. But if profit said, then we're a little bit better. But God will not deny any blessing to his children because of something outside of their control. And so when we are doing all that we can in righteousness, no matter what our situation is, the lord will take that and turn it into gold and nobody will be denied. Pick your pick your challenge, pick your mental health challenge, pick your physical health challenge. Pick your geographic isolation challenge. Pick your social awkwardness challenge. You know, whatever it is, pick the reality that some people don't feel an attraction of some of the opposite gender, or they've just feel uncomfortable in their skin as far as their own gender. There are many reasons why people may not at this moment see themselves in the planet's ovation. I think it's absolutely crucial that we start by saying you're there. You're there. I can't promise you that this is there, that is there. Same sex attraction is there or some aspect of physical or mental health, whatever it is. I can't say that, but I can look you in the eye and say without a doubt you're in the plan of Salvation. How many fathers a plan for you and you will not be denied any blessing ultimately that got promises all of his children. In other words, until there's hope. Until there's hope that things will feel better than they sometimes do right now. There's no way to move forward. So we start with that two God will not or heavenly father will not abrogate agency. Aggregates a funky turn. You always teach me a word every time we do an interview. Hybrid, I learn a word. Basically means to stop or limit or take away God can not be God and take away

agency. Now agency doesn't mean you get to do whatever you want without any consequences. But you'll get what you want, as long as that thing that you want is righteous. And so if your desire is righteous is in line with heavenly father's will for his children. He's going to make it possible. You might say, I don't see how it's possible. Right now, and you go, I totally agree. Right now where you are thinking what you're thinking, it may not be possible, but to God it is. He does not limit agency. He does not make it impossible for us to receive all that he has given if we're simply willing to do what he's asked us to do. Number three, God loves us with a perfect love and will do everything in his power to exalt us. I had an interesting situation when I was a fairly new convert. Join the church, year later, went on a mission came back. I was off with my brother in law, good friend, and I was kind to be moaning the reality of my own family of origin. Mother and father alcoholics, drug abuse, jail time, just you name it, we were the poster child of dysfunctionality, right? And I was bemoaning the thought that I worried that I wouldn't be with my parents for eternity. And my brother in law is not a majorly Turkey guy in any way, but my brother in law, just a good man. Looked at me and said, my do you really think you love your parents more than God? That's not what I was saying. He said, yeah, that's exactly what you're saying. What would you do for your parents if it were within your control? Everything. Would you force them? No, I wouldn't force them because that's not love. There's this agency thing. Go back to principal too. But do you really think God won't give them all? That they are willing to receive and it was like, all of a sudden, massive weight, so for my shoulders. I know the goodness of my parents. Neither of them were up for the gospel. I tried. But I know the goodness of my parents. I know I couldn't force my no I can't normal God force them. But God kind of like some more than I do. And has a whole lot of more knowledge than I do. And so if I understand that, he loves the perfect love, and he's not giving up. He's going to do everything he can to help. That then can help. Us when we're faced with situations we don't understand. We don't have we can't figure out how in our own head it's going to work and it can work. And then last but not least. And this comes down to the concept of yeah cool. But what about now? Through the grace of Christ, heavenly father can provide solutions to temporary situations outside of control. Know our single friends don't have to wait till the next life to experience joy. That's pure nonsense. Adam fell that men might be men are that they might have joy is what the city of your time. Now, ultimately, none of us have that joy in fullness in this life. None of us were joking before we started. None of us are going to get out of this alive, none of us are challenge free. I think you're where I've just been diagnosed with my fourth case of cancer. I know that I have cancer. I didn't want my third or my second or my first. I don't want the treatments I'm about to start. Having said that, the grace of Christ can do for me in my situation what he can do for awe in their situation.

00:25:07 - 00:30:07

He can help us learn to live life joyously. Now, and that's what the profits we are trying to. They're trying to help us see yes, the next life is gonna be peachy. Stop worrying about that. Start worrying about what you can do right now. Can I share just a few statements? Just for the sheer fun of it. So a couple just so you know it's not my Goodman's. It's not that safe good, and that'd be so scary. President Kimball, we promise you that in as far as eternity is concerned no

soul will be deprived of rich and high and eternal blessings for anything which that person could not help that the lord never fails in his promises that every righteous person will receive eventually all to which the person is entitled. And this is interesting and which he or she has not forfeited through any fault of his or her own. So yeah, agencies real and consequences to actions are real. What the heater's desperately saying and what present Nelson is just pleading with us is stay covenant connected. If your state covenant connected to God, there's nothing you will lose. There is no no righteous desire that you could ever hope for that will not all be yours if you're simply stay with me. Present Nelson. How about that? Through no feeling of their own. They, some individuals in life they deal with the trial of trash of life alone. But we all minded that B we are reminded that in the lord's own man time, no blessing would be withheld from his faithful saints, the lord will judge and reward each individual according to heartfelt desires as well as deeds and so present. Nelson is saying listen don't fear. Don't live life economic innocent. I'll never have this for that. It's just not right. It's not accurate. I'm not going to read all these, but literally, Lorenzo, Harold B Lee, Spencer W kimber, Howard W hunter, Gordon bingley, Thomas Hassan, Russell, Nelson, how that for a few profits. Have all made the exact same statements. God will make all possible if we will simply do stay connected. Then we'll receive all that we can. All that we want, but what does it mean for now, right? Richard G Scott. Love other sky. He said this throughout your life on earth seek diligently to fulfill the fundamental purposes of this life through the ideal family. Sounds like a very typical thing to say, right? Then he says this, while you may not have yet reached that idea, do all you can through obedience and faith in the lord to consistently draws close to it as you're able. If for the present, that does not include ceiling in the temple to a righteous companion, lift. Pray for it. Exercise faith that you will obtain it. We can not say whether that blessing will be obtained on this side of the veil or beyond. We don't make promises God hasn't. God hasn't said when it's going to happen. But the lord will keep his promises in his infinite wisdom he will make possible all you qualify and worthiness to receive. So let me kind of sum that up. What do you what the profits are saying is listen the world would build into you and I fear anxiety that we're an insecurity that we're not enough or that or that we've been fed up unfair hand of cards, right? It's exactly better. And the realities, of course, this life, I mean, anyone with half of one I can look out and say, life is not fair, and that's correct. But God can not be unfair. God can not be unfair. And he promises compensatory blessings for all of us that will simply stay connected to him. And we don't have to wait for the joy to begin. One of the things I desperately try to teach my students at BYU is is learn to live relationally now. You are a part of a family. You're a son, you're a daughter. You're a brother, your sister, you're an aunt, you're an uncle. Learn to live relation what elder Scott said, if for the present, that's not ceiling? Well, get as close to it as you can. Live familiarly. Fancy term, which means value family, right? Value friendship, live relationally, as we do that, we realize, oh my goodness, God is a relational being, as we do that we begin to build a relationship not just horizontally, but vertically, with God. And then life becomes rich. Think about this. Was there ever gone in the last conference who said we crossed over a decade ago to where over half of the church is now either single or divorced, not married.

00:30:10 - 00:35:04

So are we really saying that that means that over 50% of the churches doomed to misery? Do we really believe that nonsense? Ask any single person who's actively living life and doing their very best. Are they miserable? No, are they married? No. Not yet. What I would point I want to make somewhere in what we do today is the concept of none of us are broken. We're in process. That's a totally different way of looking at my life. I'm not broken with all my imperfections, and I got oodles of imperfections, but I'm in process. And if I will live relationally, live relationally with God, buying myself to him, live relationally with those around me. Whether that includes a romantic one on one marriage at this point or not love live lose yourself in service to others and today will be a joyous day. Yeah. Yeah, that's so helpful. And a few things that I want to point out just in the context of leadership and whatnot is, you know, you referenced I think in principle one that God won't deny anybody anything, especially these righteous blessings, right? And so we could follow that example of saying, you know, I'm going to be an individual, especially a leader that doesn't deny them of certain opportunities, right? Now, you know, as far as in the context of callings, there's a handful of administrative callings that are very, very little, right? Very few. But from a recent general conference, that's been the encouragement. We need to not deny them of some of these beautiful opportunities in our board families and so I think to think that in the context that God's not denying them anything. So why do we sometimes deny them? And God more into what we do, right? Because he doesn't love his married children and like his single children. He loves us all. He wants our happiness. That's the whole purpose of our existence, right? The world is selling us a mess of pottage when it's trying to convince us that if you're not married, you can't have happiness. If you're not in a stereotypical latter day saint family, you're an outsider, you don't fit. Now mind you, I understand that people can treat others like that and when we do shame on us, let's get some more pens going on, right? But they're not outsiders to God. Yeah. They're not outsiders to those who truly know and understand the gospel. And do we have to do better? Yes, we do. And I'm not in any way wanting to guilt someone who's feeling like that, but I'm running them to understand you, but you belong in your right at this point you're the majority. Yeah. So you're not the minority, right? Yeah. And then another example that God loves us, obviously, that's primary level doctrine, but it's so true and so the more that we can reach out and love those single dots in our circles is helpful. And oftentimes we think, and as I've interviewed other single adults for this summit, that's been a strong message of stories of people who really loved them. And it's not like, oh, I sat next to you in the pew. That's good enough, right? But like, no, you're like coming over to our family dinner, you're like part of us, like really, you know, making them part of that relationship, whether it's in your family or in the local community can go a long way, you know? And then the covenant connected. As a leader, that's sort of the direction you can push them rather than, well, how many days you do this week or how many times you swipe right then laughter or whatever, right? It's more of like, how can you, as a single latter day saint, governor connector? What do you think, you know? And that's where the focus is that relationship with God and our savior rather than we've got to go find somebody. That's right. That's right, absolutely true. And then just along the same line, this live relationally now, because God made us that we are relationship creatures. Right. And there's no way around that. Even especially now it feels like we're connected more than we are in reality. We've really need people in our lives and lean into those relationships. And by the way, quick point that sometimes is misinterpreted. That need for relationships has nothing to do with personality

traits. It has nothing to do with introverted or extroverted. Oh, that's a great point. We all need relationships. We all need to feel understood and loved. And just so happens to save your taught us, the best way to do that, so it's kind of the paradox. How do you find yourself? You lose yourself. Yeah. So you can sit back and say, woe is me, no one's being nice to me. Or we can say, okay, who can I go and help this point? Quick story. Yeah. This is not part of what I was thinking, but I had this wonderful young lady when I was a bishop at BYU in my ward.

00:35:05 - 00:40:02

And she was she was a fantastic and always. She was graduated from BYU already, working already returned missionary just bright, but I had a hard time getting her to activities. She just never came. Did she come to church? And that was it. So one day I was poking her and just saying, hey, I want to oh, bishop, you know, it's just not my thing. I'm kind of shy and I said, I said, question for you. I just had this brainstorm I now know as inspiration but back then at that point. I said, on your mission, your turn machinery said, yeah. What'd you do in a, when you brought an investigator to church? Did you just let them be and see what happened? And she was not, you know, we slaughtered up one side and down the other. We attached them to this person and that person. And I said, can I give you an assignment? And she got that, you know, there. What are you gonna do right now? I said, I want you to come to word prayer. You know, we have all these dorky. Going to be with you. I want you to come to ward prayer. Bishop. And I can see her drive. I said, no, no, no, no. She said, I don't want you to socialize. I said, I want you to walk in the door and I want you to survey that room and find one person who you think feels more awkward than you do. And then once you go talk to that person, can you do that? She sat there for a second. Yeah, I could do that. She had gotten yourself stuck into the concept of, I have to socialize. I have to be the life of the party. Work the room, the room, and that is so not me. You put me in a group of people and I'm a people watch, I'll get in a corner just start watching I can do it all day long. But she did, she came to the next one and she looked around. I could see in her eyes. She's like, God, she found this young man. Who was a bit by himself and I could just see her canal, okay, here we go. So she put on her missionary she was walked over there and started chatting, just a little bit side to side and smile and she smiled a little bit and it was fine. And, you know, no sparks or anything. But we went home next week. She came back to work prayer and you want to guess who she sat next to and next week she came back and yes, they ended up getting sealed. Which is cool. I love that, but the reality is, I wasn't trying to get her sealed. Well, that's a lie. If you're bishop, you're always trying to help your folks find love. But my goal was to help her to connect to live relationally. You don't have to socialize, serve. Serving as much less threatening, right? And so if we can help our brothers and sisters who aren't married, stop sitting back and going, what was me, there's a reason for the words, me. I'm not. But it doesn't help to sit in what was me. Girt up our lines, fresh courage take. Go love someone. Yeah. As we love someone around light builds, our own life builds. And the spirit of God builds in her life. That's awesome. All right, so let's jump to this and we can jump around to some of these on our outline. But I think of those single sisters out there who maybe they know someday they'll have the opportunity of marriage, but then they also worry, but yeah, but what if it's in this eternal polygamous relationship or plural marriage relationship? The concerns

and questions. Where do we start to understand plural marriage in our doctrine? Yeah, so plural marriage was a marital practice that was not the doctrine, but the practice based around a specific set of circumstances in our history. And when I say our history, go back, your earliest plural marriages are recorded in the biblical era, you get Abraham. You've got Moses. You got a whole bunch of stuff going on there. But long story short, plural marriage is a system of mirrors at the Lord institutes on rare occasions when he sees the need and is almost always interestingly. It's almost always at the beginning of a dispensation. If you go back and you look at when plural marriage has been commanded or allowed, it's almost always as a Lord is starting. Yeah, dispensation. But one way or the other, that also means that there are those who are sealed for time and eternity to more than one person. And members of the church as a general rule know that that happens with a man in two women, but they don't realize doctrinally speaking, that also happens with the woman and more than one man. If you go to the general handbook, explains this, but this is just from the gospel. Essay on plural marriage says this okay, moreover members are permitted to perform ordinances on behalf of deceased men and women who married more than once on this earth, sealing them to all their spouses to whom they were legally married. If you're a man in your married to 5 women, you can be sealed to those 5 women.

00:40:02 - 00:45:19

If you're a woman and sealed the 5 men, you can be sealed of those 5 men. Then it passed away, right? Then this important statement, the precise nature of these relationships in the next life is not known. And many family relationships will be sorted out in the life to come. Latter day Saints are encouraged to trust in our wise heavenly father who loves his children and does all things for their growth. It reminds me I'm going to go back to the statement by President Oaks on this concept of trusting God. Okay, before I do that, okay. Back up just a little bit more. Sorry I gotta go back a little bit more. Do you remember one of the points that I brought up one of my four foundational points was God won't abrogate agency. Yeah. One of the things that means is you will never be stuck in a relationship you don't want to be in. Yeah. You will never be forced into a relationship you don't want to be. So let's assume for a moment that there's a man and a woman and the man, it doesn't matter. Man dies. Now, let's simplify this for right now. Woman dies, right? Man is lives for another two, three years, finds another person marries her. He's now sealed to both. Right? How's it going to work in the next life? You good answer. Good answer. I don't know. No. We simply know what will, and it'll be glorious, but will wife number one be stuck in a plural marriage? Definitely not. No. No, a couple statements for you here. Joseph E. Smith, the dead will have the privilege of making known the things they desire. And are entitled to receive. In this way, no soul will be neglected and the work of the Lord will be protected. As a gong, marriage covenants are binding by mutual choice of those making them. A reminder of God's and our respect for agency in the blessing of his help when we unitedly seek it, we come back to this concept of well, I don't want to be stuck in a relationship, I don't want to. Cool. You won't be God will not abrogate agency. Nobody will be forced into a plural or a singular marriage they don't want to be in. Because in order for that to be efficacious, the sealing to be efficacious, you have to desire it and have worthy of it, right? And so nobody's going to be stuck

in that situation now having said that, oh, baby. There's a history that helps us understand that there are situations of plurality of marriage plurality of spouses that were joyous and happy. And to the best of our understanding, those relationships will exist in the next life. But there has been not one statement by a prophet that says you had said to the church as a whole, you have to be willing to live polygamist me. To be exalted to have you turn life. There were specific people where private said this is you right now, but there's never been a statement by a private to the church as a whole, that said plural marriage is necessary for Salvation. Which is good because there's kind of not enough people for that to work out, right? Yeah. I'm just kind of this 50 50 mix business going on. And so no one worry that they're going to be stuck in a relationship they don't want to be no one need worry that plural marriage is a requirement in the eternities. C is possible that pleural marriage may actually not me according to the statements of profits will exist in the next life, but it will exist in ways where all those involved have exercised their agency and desire that relationship. Just smile and go. It's not part of our it shouldn't be part of our worry because it's never possible to be forced into that situation. As far as the evergreen agency heard that a lot in the context, when I was a bishop for individuals who would just get out of a divorce, they just hate this individual, and they come in and say bishop, let's cancel that ceiling. Let's go over what paperwork, right? And sort of slow them down and be like, yeah, but there's still an ordinance there that's intact. Anything you'd add to that? Yeah, absolutely. This is hugely important. I actually use an example. Oh, you know, I don't have a slide on. I do have a slide on this, but it's just not. We can edit it. You can add it. The reality, I use a silly analogy. I try and get as far out for my students as possible. So that doesn't affect anyone. We're not in a sense. So I say, okay, imagine there's salmon Susie. Sam's a return missionary saves the return missionary. They fall in love, they get married. They have two babies, and then Sam becomes an axe murder. And I was asking anyone to have family and sax murdering, okay. No offense. We're safe, right? At this point, okay, so we're safe. So sounds an axe murderer, and I'll show them what's happening to the ceiling covenant at that point. You know, we usually use the triangle constant to get God and Sam and Susie, right? So what happened to Sam and God's covenant connection? Severed, right? Right? What happened to salmon Suzy's connection? Severed the ordinance is in place, but in order for that the Holy Spirit of promise to bind that, it has to be based on righteousness and the desire both people.

00:45:19 - 00:50:02

Guess what? That's gone. It's gone. Susie is no longer sealed. Technically, she said, but she's no longer the ceiling is no longer efficacious to Sam. But Susie ceiling to God, which was part of the marital covenant is still intact. And many members don't realize that when you are married, you're making a covenant both to each other and to God. And so as a result of that, Sam is an axe murderer and he's got problems, right? Susie is not only not stuck with Sam, Susie is continuing to draw the blessings that come from her ceiling to God. And that ceiling can, I mean, it's up to Suzy and the first pregnancy how they want to deal with that. But then if susy wants to remarry, that ceiling will be officially cut, and then she'll be CO2 whoever she wants to be. Yeah. That triangle will be restored at some point. And that's why you say, well, why don't we just seal individuals to God? Do you know what? The other way, but there's power in that relational.

There is coordinates right? Well, and you raise a really important point, Kurt, which is that when Joseph taught the ceiling artists, this goes back to the concept of throw marriage and a bunch of other things. There's really two aspects to that that we are being sealed to God. And interestingly in the early church, baptism was often referred to as a ceiling to God. That we are baptized were binding ourselves to God. And you can think of it that way, right? Because you're making a covenant with God when your baptized. And so there's the covenant connection with God. Our spouse has no power to take that away. None, zero. That is between you and God. And that is ultimately going to be based on your integrity, your faith, your desires, right? But God doesn't just want to bind us to him. God wants to help us become as God is. Hence as elder oak says to become as our heavenly parents, well, that doesn't happen if you don't have a husband and a wife, where both are bound together and bound to God. And so you have the covenant not only from you and God, but from God to you too as a couple. Very important. In fact, that's something that we are going to talk about. Should we do it? Yeah. Let's jump into it. Let's do it. And I guess I'll just insert here that I love the concept of why we need another individual in that is sort of gives us an arena to practice that commitment to another person so that we're better at being committed to gun, right? That's absolutely true. Absolutely true. And ultimately, one of the things that we try to help our students understand at BYU is that the ceiling between a husband and wife is primary. The ceiling between husband and wife and children is very important. But let's not pretend that we're going to live in a 1950s family up in the next life. Our children aren't going to be living in our living room up in this lesser kingdom. They're hopefully going to be living with their spouses. So the primary relationship is always has been and wife. And mind you, I love my children. I want them bound to me and the good news is this my children have no power to break that binding tie. They can sync themselves to hell that quite a profit. I don't want them to do that. But they can, but they can not break the binding time between my sweetheart I and them. Because that's based on our faithfulness not there. Okay, see the coordinates. Four aspects. And this is not brother Gemma. This is a dear friend. Cre L colford. Have you ever heard that name? I have not. Creole culvert was a member of the 70. He is a different mind. He was my area present when I was a mission president. Oh, cool. Really awesome guy. Anyway, he wrote an article that was published in the enzyme in June 1998, which meant he wrote it the year before, because that's the way it works. Long story short, that's when he was my mission president and it came out. Your area, area. I was a mission president. And he taught that the ceiling ordinance has four specific elements. And if we want our young adults, our singles our marriage to understand this, they have to understand the different parts. You got one, individual covenants and blessings. So we talked about that a little bit earlier. When Sam and suzi are married, they're not only making a covenant with each other. They're making a come to God. And Sam's axe murdering does not impact Susie's connection. So an individual covenant that is based on our faithfulness to God not our spouse's faithfulness to God nor our spouse's faithfulness to us. In other words, no one can dam us. No one can dam us. So one, our individual covenants with God two, joint covenants.

00:50:03 - 00:55:04

These are the things that only are in place when two people are true to their covenant. Let me read what he says. The two of you jointly will make promises commitments and covenants with your heavenly father, and will make covenants to receive each other as husband and wife. You then will jointly receive promises of blessings condition upon your joint faithfulness notice the word joint all the time here. The continued faithful obedience of both of you is essential if the promise blessings are to be received jointly. This is because it promises are made to you as one that is as a single unit consisting of two halves. And so that joint coven and blessing when my axe murderer Sam did what he did. That blessing is actually taken from both Sam and Susie because that is only jointly wait a minute. So this is going to be okay. We're going to work this out, right? But that blessing is actually dependent or contingent on both people being true to it. Not only the blessing though, the commitment, hence when Sam decides to be an axe murderer, he breaks that commitment to his wife. And she is no longer stuck with him, right? Three, joining in celestial marriage. This is the part, as he said, this element qualifies you to live together as husband and wife under the laws of land. Here that you are united forever becoming one flesh before the lord forming a new family unit that if your faith alone beaten in the last 5 or so, when most people think about ceilings, they're thinking about the third part. Is where you're super glued. Yeah. And then four, the fourth part of the ceiling ordinance, blessing for children born in the covenant. Or, in my case, we're both my children are adopted, sealed after that after that. Our ceiling, right? Seal to us. All children born to the two of you are born in the blessings of the ceiling covenant thus common to say that your children are born in the covenant. They're entitled to the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant and any outlines those. And so we're talking about the ceiling ordinance. We're really talking about four specific elements. Individual promises we make with God, joint promises we make with God, the actual binding, the ceiling, the super glue, whatever you want to call it. And the blessings that then entail upon our children as a result of that. So four aspects of that ceiling covenant that are necessary for us to actually understand and that understanding those four elements then helps us begin to work through some of the contingencies that we see, divorce, death, remarriage, when you start to say, okay, let's think through not just a four elements of the ceiling ordinance, but remember what we talked about that God allows us he won't navigate agency. When you start to put this all together, you realize that no one's ever stuck in a relationship they don't want to be in. No one is ever going to be denied any blessing the God would give to all his children. We don't know the exact configuration of family units necessarily with all the complexity that goes with that in the next life. But as elder oaks said, let me all let me show this is a good stuff. This is what he said. For all questions about the spirit world. Now, he's not about to spare a lemon expand a little bit because it's true of the next phase after that. I suggest to answers. First, remember that God loves his children and will surely do it as best for each of us. Second, remember this familiar Bible teaching, which has been most helpful to me on a multitude of unanswered questions, trust in the lord with all thine heart, may not under that and understanding in all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall directly pass. This concept of trusting in the lord, trust in the lord is a familiar and true teaching of the churches Chris Larry saints, that same principle applies to unanswered questions about seedlings in the next life, or desired readjustments because of events or transgressions and mortality. What happens at my spouse? Walks with their cabinets, and we still love each other. What happens with that? There are so much we do not know that our only sure alliance is to trust in the lord and his love for his children. This concept that if we

can trust the lord, it's not that we have all the detailed answers because we don't. Anyone who says that, you know that they're blown smoking, right? But I love what present Irene said. Let me in this kind of ties this whole section together, plural marriage, the ceiling ordinance and the concept of the singles and how they can find peace. Present hiring. For some that eternal joy may seem a faint or even fading of the eternal joy of marriage and family and all that good stuff, right? Parents, children, brothers and sisters may have made choices that seem to disqualify them from eternal life. You may even wonder whether you have yet been qualified through the atonement of Jesus Christ. A prophet of God once offered me counsel that gives me peace. I was worried that a choices of others might make it impossible for our families to be together for every other the same experience I did. Probably before me. He, the prophet said you are worrying about the wrong problem.

00:55:05 - 01:00:00

You live worthy of the celestial kingdom stay covenant connected and the family arrangements will be more wonderful than you can imagine. I love that quote. That's such a good quote. Yeah, that's great. And for those of us who come from divorced families and all that goes with that and angelic mother who loved the church, but wouldn't join it and a father who didn't wasn't even close to being willing to do it. I can trust how many father loves my dad more than I do. That was my mom more than I do. Loves us and will give us every ounce that we're willing to receive. Love it. All right, so here's a curveball question just didn't warn you for. What's the whole concept of servants in the celestial kingdom? That's a, you know, the adults are single then they'll be servants in the celestial kingdom to those at the highest level. So I'm going to take it back to this concept of God will deny no person every blessing that that person not only is willing to receive but will live faithful of. There's no such thing as a servant in this celestial kingdom of anyone who doesn't want to be a certain in a slash kingdom. So in other words, the thought of, oh, my goodness, what if I just, I'm not good enough or whatever it is, you know, insecurities or anger or whatever it is, right? The lord is saying to us, listen, trust me, come to me, stay covenant connected with me and open your heart. Right now, you may not be able to receive everything that I want to give you. Okay, I did make me love you less. It just means that we're in for the long haul. Have any fathers not impatient, but we often are. And so does someone want to be any eternally binding relationship in the next life. It's theirs. Yeah. There's no ifs ands or buts. It's not if you're handsome or if you're socially suave or if you don't experience same sex attraction or if you pick your no ifs, do we want it? Are we willing to live faithful to the lord's covenants and commandments in the process of getting there? So there's no servants in this latter kingdom. Yeah. And I live just to the concept of if you want a relationship, there's always one there with God. You know, it's always there and that he hopes you take that one every time. And then he'll do with us what we couldn't otherwise do with ourself. And I come back to this concept because it's really so important. Hopelessness is death. This concept of I just don't see a possibility. I learned an interesting lesson is mission president. I back in my day back, you know, and you walked uphill both ways and snow. Back in my day, we had his own cameras every month. We got new missionaries every month. We interviewed every missionary every month. Oh wow. You're busy. I was busy. I mean, they're

already busy. I was on a plane twice a week for three years. And you're in Thailand, right? Right? I had probably about one person out of every group that came to me that tried to go home early. You know, I can't do this. I'm depressed. I'm sad. I'm lonely. I'm sick, whatever it was. Probably about 30 plus that I had in the whole mission. I learned some powerful lessons working with them. One of the very first things I learned was until I can help them realize that I wasn't asking them to live in the same psychic pain they were currently feeling for their permission. I could not help them. As long as they thought to themselves, I'm stuck I'm miserable. If I stay this, we just have to whiten our collection. It won't work. They couldn't do what they needed to to work the way out of the homesickness, the sadness, the depression, the anxiety, you know, and so my first task is a mission present besides love and them and just let them letting them know they're okay with to help them have hope, hope and a brighter future. That same principle applies when we're talking about marital relationships, whether you're married and it's not working well or you're not married and you want it to be, or whatever your issue is, right? Until we have hope, there's no getting to the next step. Once we have hope, then we can open our heart to the influence of the lord of the spirit and then God can begin to work magic that it's not Harry Potter. It's a race. It's the good stuff. The magic that we automatic ultimately can not get without his help. And so helping our single C that it'll be more wonderful than anything you can imagine. And no, you do not have to live white knuckled now in misery. In the next life, yay, you get happiness. Yeah, that's not going to motivate anyone. Live relationally now do everything we can to draw closer to God and to our brothers and sisters around us. If that doesn't include a eternal ceiling at this point, okay.

01:00:01 - 01:05:04

Go do what the majority of the church is doing. Live life meaningfully and passionately, and as you do that, that's where the door is so open up. Yeah. That's awesome. Anything we've missed or question or thought or I'm sure we've missed something. I'll get the emails. One important concept that I hinted at earlier that I would simply reiterate. And that's this concept that if you are right now in a situation where you're not where you want to be familiarly or merit or whatever it is, Satan would convince you and I that we are very remarkably broken that we're just damaged goods. God never sees his children as damaged guts. He just doesn't do that. If we can help each other, if we could put our arms around our brothers and sisters who are feeling lonely and sad and let sit with them, let them share that the difficulty and acknowledge the reality to that. Then get up and live. Love them. If I were talking to bishops and steak presents, do everything in your power to help those that are in your state that are not necessarily married or in a family situation or that are married and it's a bitter family situation. Or that were married and are divorced. Help them realize they're not broken. The situation may not be good. Don't whitewash the situation, but and they might be struggling. Welcome to mortality. All of us are, right? They're not broken. They're in process. As we realize that we're in process, that creates the concept of hope. In process means I'm going to live life every day relationally. I'm going to serve I'm going to grow. That is not a miserable life that doesn't deny the fact that someone still may feel lonely. That doesn't deny the reality that some may still feel the missing part that comes with, I want to eternal intimate relationship, and I'm not in one now. Again, don't deny that. Don't pretend it's

not a big deal. Just go be happy, right? That's not the way it works. Acknowledge that, but you don't help by saying, yeah, you are kind of hopeless, aren't you? There's not much you can do here. Well, you know, just grand and Barrett. Love that person. Sit with that person, pray with that person. Get off your knees and walk with that person, go serve, go love. Encourage that person to lose themselves because that's how we find herself. Don't minimize the pain, but don't wallow in it. Realize that if we're in process, and we all are. And by the way, find the happiest married person you can find they're in process too. Yeah. There ain't no such thing as a perfect being. There's only Christ and he's gone and you can't marry him. And so it's done. You are now an imperfect world man, right? And so as a result of that, all of us are in process. Yeah. So this lab each other and encourage each other live well now. Oh, go ahead. One more thought because you'd asked about the proclamation. Oh yeah, yeah. Remember that? Yeah, because that's something that can be there's going to be some friction there. Tension there that tension. Like, maybe I'll just ignore that until I'm married. Exactly. You actually asked me I wish we had like an hour we don't, and I know we gotta get quite here in a moment, but what can single adults learn from the proclamation is their comfort in the proclamation, my statement would be this is a very technical statement. Oodles and oodles and oodles. We choose what we're going to focus on. Do we Satan does not like us? Sorry, I don't think that's a revelation to anyone. He's always going to try and get us to focus on what we don't have. What we think will never have and what is out of our control. So if we read the proclamation thing about what don't I have, what don't I see a possible way of having and what do I have no control of getting? That's a depressing document. Right? What if we read it for what it contains that we can focus on? All of a sudden, that document is magic, married single divorce. It speaks of a God who's speaking to his prophets. It speaks to the fact that he is that we are his children. It speaks to the fact that we can be bound to him through sacred ordinances that he is desirous of living in us. It speaks to the worth of our very soul that speaks to the sacredness of individuals and relationships. There are so many beautiful truths don't let Satan pinnace in this little box, what can't I do? Or do I think I'll never have? And what's out of my control? Whatever you're asking about those three things, you're guaranteed misery. So if you look at this and say, yeah, the family program says I should be married and I write. You can't force anyone right now. So stop pretending and if you can't control that, stop going there.

01:05:05 - 01:09:20

Look at what he's just said about the worth of your soul. The hero beloved son or daughter of God that you're destiny is to become like God, and I can just go on and on and on. And it's rich and thick. It's worth engaging in for sure. No matter your marital status or exactly. Well, I think we hit the big points, right? Yeah. That was a great discussion. And I'm sure, like I said, I'll probably get an email to be like, oh, you missed this point in that point. You should have asked him that, but I think this is a good, you know, we can't build Rome in one episode. But this is great. And last question I have is if you're in a room full of bishops, relief study presidents, other leaders, and you sort of are done this to some extent. But what final encouragement would you give them? So where do the question? Present oaks, present Nelson. And many others have asked us to focus on two things that we often think are in tension with each other. Goes by a

bunch of different names, but the one that present Nelson is and present oaks have used most frequently is love and law. If I were speaking to recent leaders, relieved any leaders young men young women leaders. I would say the very first thing you have to do if you have any hope of being of help, you have to sincerely love those that you serve. This is not rocket science. They could care less what you think or want or know if they don't feel valued for where they are. If they don't feel loved for who they are, if they don't see that you care the old adage, they don't care what you know until they know how much you care is just true. And so it starts with, you want a right to try to bless someone, love. So it starts there, but if that's all we do, to be very Frank, we're leaving them helpless. Oh, they got a good friend in us. And I'm not, in any way, indicating that we should try to be their savior that we should take over for them. But once they know that they are loved, then we have the opportunity to say, did you know that God has something for you? Vastly better than you have for yourself. Then we can begin to draw them and invite them to come under the savior as they come under the savior, the other issues begin to come into perspective. And so if I were to try to help my own bishop my own state, president, which, by the way, are great men. It would be loved those that you have the sacred opportunity to serve and then bring them to Christ. You might think, bring them to Chris, yeah, because the commandments are how we are brought to the savior. Don't use the commandments as a weapon. Don't whack people with them, invite them to come to the savior because then the savior can do with and for them, which no bishop no steak present, no friend can ever do. That concludes this episode of the leading saints podcast. We'd love to hear from you about your questions or thoughts or comments. You can either leave a comment on the post related to this episode at leading saints dot org or go to leading saints dot org slash contact and send us your perspective or questions. If there's other episodes or topics you'd like to hear on the leading saints podcast, go to leading saints dot org slash contact and share with us the information there. And we would love for you to share this with any individual you think this would apply to especially maybe individuals in your word counsel or other leaders that you may know who would really appreciate the perspectives that we discussed. And for more information about the single saints virtual summit, text the word lead to four 747 four 7 or visit leading saints dot org slash single adults. It came as a result of the position of leadership, which was imposed upon us by the God of heaven who brought forth a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and when the declaration was made concerning the all and only true and living church upon the face of the earth. We were immediately put in a position of loneliness. The loneliness of leadership from which we can not shrink or run away. And to which we must face up with boldness and courage and ability.