



## Can God Be Disappointed in You? | A Presentation by Kurt Francom

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**Kurt:** Everyone, this is Kurt Francom with Leading Saints, and this is another session of the Liberating Saints Virtual Summit. But this time, well, it's just with me. I hope that's okay. Hope my input throughout these sessions have been helpful. Sometimes I worry that I'm talking too much, or I didn't just let the presenter roll with it. But nonetheless, I'm grateful that you found value. You've got a lot of good feedback from this, and more information to come as far as what to expect as we conclude this virtual summit.

Today, I want to focus on some topics, and some points, some perspectives that will maybe, I pray that they'll help you as maybe a leader, as a parent or a loved one of an individual who's struggling with pornography. I want to approach from a doctrinal standpoint. This is always a healthy approach. Elder Bednar, he talks about in some of his books that when we teach the gospel, it's very easy to approach it from an application level. This is what you do. This is how you do the gospel. Then he talks about above that there's the principles - approaching and teaching the gospel from the level of principles. And then above that, there's approaching and teaching the gospel from the doctrinal level. He always encourages whenever you are teaching the gospel to always start from the doctrinal level, and allow each individual to figure out maybe the principles and the application on your level.

So that's what I'm going to do today is I want to talk about some doctrines. Again, sometimes we use that word "doctrine" and sort of saying these points cannot be argued with. These are doctrines have, from my perspective, how I understand them, how I interpret them. So you're free to disagree with these or you can interpret them a different way. But I hope that seeing these doctrines will maybe help you better in your journey, mentoring somebody through a difficult struggle with pornography.

Let me pull up my slides here, and we can jump into it here. I want to talk about behaviors versus doctrine or behaviors versus the heart because this is where it all begins. We often

approach these situations, thinking about behaviors, but that can sort of be a trap. As a leader, we may have somebody come into your bishop's office, and you maintain focus on the behavior. "What relapse did you have? What did you look at? How many times?" Those types of things now.

Those details are important, but when an overemphasis is there can actually lead to the detriment of not only that person trying to recover or overcome their struggle with pornography, but it also can really hurt your relationship with that individual. So let's go with a famous quote that most people are familiar with and know maybe too well. Elder Boyd K. Packer says, "The study of doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior." Now, this is a great quote, but we rarely finish the entire quote, which is "Preoccupation with unworthy behavior can lead to unworthy behavior. That is why we stress so forcefully the study of the doctrines of the gospel."

In your effort to mentor an individual or help an individual overcome pornography, my hope is that there's not an overemphasis on the behaviors, or else the preoccupation leads to more negative behavior. We'll go through some of these tactics and why that's the case and how we can avoid them. Really focusing on doctrines, presenting doctrines, teaching doctrines and let that individual interpret them and be led to the scripture to ponder and digest those doctrines in his or her own way.

Typically, here's the thing is we often think, "Well, if I emphasize good behaviors, that's going to lead to a change of heart. This individual will be able to overcome their addiction, they'll be able to overcome their struggle with pornography. So I'm going to encourage them to read the scriptures, to attend church, to avoid certain things that lead to good behavior." But I really think we have it backwards, where we try and change behavior, which leads to a change of heart. But I want to propose that we change heart, which will then lead to a change in [00:05:00] behaviors or lead to good behaviors.

Now, oftentimes, it's swapped. Sometimes we want to avoid bad behaviors because that will change their heart. Or we're afraid that if their heart changes, then that'll lead to bad behaviors. But I want you to focus on the changing heart truly does lead to good behaviors. We need to focus on the heart first before we can focus on behaviors. Well, we make the mistake often to focus on the heart so that the behaviors...I'm sorry. We make the mistake...You're getting this right. I make the mistake of focusing on behaviors and hopes to change the heart.

How does Satan tempt us? This is an interesting question. One question that was presented to me when I interviewed Rob Ferrell, who's a former Young Single Adult Stake president. If you have not listened to this episode on the Leading Saints podcast, it'd be worth maybe pausing the video and making a note to bookmark that episode. It's actually the most listened-to episode in the history of Leading Saints, and it's probably going to be tough to beat.

I always love showing this images when I do youth firesides - this image of the typical cartoon attempting...we've seen it with "Donald Duck," we've seen it in "The Emperor's New Groove" like this, where we envision the way that the Satan tempts us is, well, obviously, we have a good angel that's encouraging us to do good things over our shoulder, and then there's the bad angel or the devil angel that appears over our other shoulder that tempts us to go rob a bank or go do something bad, or go look at pornography.

And that's a bit too simplistic, I believe, because the adversary, Satan has a much more cunning plan. As we learned in Doctrine & Covenants 10:12, ...the devil has sought to lay a cunning

plan, that he may destroy this work. This isn't just some basic plan that, oh, he's just whispering temptations in our ear, and that's what's getting us to do bad things. No, no, no, it is much more intense, much more cunning, much more deceptive, much more complicated than that.

This would be a question to maybe sit with and let this question stir in your heart. How does Satan tempt us? How does he go about it? Here it is. Doctrine & Covenants 10:26 He causeth them to catch themselves in their own trap. He causeth them to catch themselves in their own trap. That sounds almost ridiculous. Why would we set our own trap that we would step in that the adversary would win?

It's sort of like if you were a football coach and you said, "Okay, team, here's our plan. Here's our game plan. Gather round, listen close. The way we're going to win today is we're going to let the other team score all the points." Now, that sounds ridiculous. But there are some teams that do that, and it breaks my heart. My beloved Zach Wilson here, it seemed like when he played Utah, he scored the points for the other team. Anyways, he totally redeemed himself in the games that followed. But anyways. I'm big BYU fan as many of you know and it broke my heart. And I know that maybe some new fans would appreciate this.

But this is the Satan's plan, right? What we're going to do is we're going to get the other team to just throw pick-sixes all game. Now that wouldn't be a great plan, because it's very hard to do that, but that is the adversaries plan. And it works so effectively.

Doctrine & Covenants 10:63 says, Satan doth stir up the hearts of the people to contention concerning the points of my doctrine; and then in these things they do err, for they do alter the scriptures and do not understand them. Now, there's two words that really stand out to me in that verse. "Part" and "doctrine." He stirs up the hearts of the people to contention concerning the points of my doctrine.

So he playing this game with our hearts, and he's playing it with our doctrine. He attacks our hearts through our doctrine, or by altering the doctrine. He causes contention in our mind. And it is this contention that causes us to sin, and to be tempted, and to do things that we could have never imagine ourselves ever doing. And that's what we faced with individuals who struggle with pornography. They never intended for this to happen. They never intended it for to get out of control to become almost to level of an addiction for them.

Let me give you a clear example of how this happens. These two words are probably the most two powerful words in the English language or in any language as translated directly. [00:10:00] "I am." Even in the Bible, this is a scriptural phrase. You do study about the words "I am" in the Scriptures and it's remarkable the things you can learn. In the Old Testament, "I Am Who I Am." He told Moses that tell them that "I Am Who I Am" sent you. So these words, they reflect godliness to some degree because the Great I Am, right? If someone's to tell me, "All right, boil down the adversary's plan to one concept, and this would be it; he is trying to attack the phrase, the two most powerful words of I am." Or in other words, he constantly strives to attack our identity.

Now think of in the Scriptures examples where a specific temptation is recorded in the scriptures. Now there's various of them, but I'm going to share a few of them here. About in the Garden of Eden, Moses 4:11, this is when the adversary is tempting Eve. "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and he shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." You see, he's coming to eat with the temptation of identity. If you partake of this

fruit, your identity will be different. Your identity will be as the gods, knowing good and evil. So powerful.

How about this temptation in Matthew 4 when Christ is fasting 40 days and 40 nights and the adversary, Satan is tempting Christ. He says, "And when the tempter came to him, he said: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." You see, he's tempting his identity. If you truly believe that you are the Savior of the world, the Son of God, the prove it. So he's always coming at an angle of identity, because that identity is directly connected to our heart and connected to our mind, and that causes contention. When these doctrines of "I am a child of God," "I am the Son of God," "I am a daughter of God," and he causes contention in that very doctrine, then it reflects in our mind our identity.

I love this quote by John Milton. "The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, and a hell of heaven." Our mind is so powerful. And if the adversary can impact our identity through our mind and our heart, he wins. That's how he tempts us. He can corrupt us so much with contention that we can't help but set our own trap, our own snare and step in it time after time, after time.

So I'm setting our own trap house. Let me give you an example of this. This comes from actually "The Lion King." The new live action Lion King. I mean, obviously, it's almost the exact same movie. This [unintelligible 00:13:13] got a movie as the animated movie. But let me show a clip, actually a trailer from this and I want you to pay attention to the voice that you hear throughout this trailer. There's two voices: The voice of the adversary, which is represented by Scar, and the voice of our Father in heaven, which is represented by Mufasa with James Earl Jones being the voice. So here is that clip.

"Scar: Life's not fair, is it? You see, I... well, I shall never be king. And you... shall never see the light of another day.

Mufasa: Everything you see exists together, in a delicate balance.

While others search for what they can take, a true king searches for what he can give.

Scar: Run. Run away, Simba. Run away, and never return! [00:15:00]

Mufasa: You must take your place in the circle of life."

I love that trailer, that clip because of the contrast between the two voices that are in there, the voice of the adversary and the voice of our father. The adversary is saying things like, "Life isn't fair. Run away." As we know, those of the scene of the movie, Scar convinces Simba that he actually killed his father. That is his fault. So, though he tells him to run away, Simba doesn't take much convincing, because he attacks Simba's identity of how he sees himself. And therefore Simba sets his own snare and just leaves. He solves the problem for the adversary by leaving, which in turn makes the adversary king.

I want to highlight the story of Steve. If you have been watching the summit, you've actually heard the whole interview with Steve. He has a remarkable story of his journey through addiction and overcoming that and being in recovery now. I learned so much from Steve when I talked with him. You actually can listen to Steve's full story through the Leading Saints podcast. It's actually in the resources section. If you scroll down, you'll see a picture of Steve and his wife, where they talk about their experience and his journey.

He basically goes to this life, where as a youth he came across pornography, became obsessed with it, it became a habit. Later on, even got to a point where he white knuckled it and served the mission, but even there was still having some problems of relapse. Finally came home from his mission, married, and during this time, he was creating two lifestyles. One of the perfect Latter Day Saint boy that is progressing through leadership and serving the bishopric and as an Elders Quorum president, doing those things. But behind the scenes, he living a life buried in shame and with a habit that was completely unbecoming of Latter Day Saint.

He talks about this dichotomy that the adversary had convinced him of his identity that he could stand behind a mask of, you know, the pure priesthood holder identity, and hide those wounds and scars that truly he was feeding through his addiction. I encourage you to check out Steve's story because I feel like it truly shows this example of how Satan not just doesn't tempt an individual saying, "You should go look at pornography." He doesn't even have to do that because when he attacks their identity and convinces them of a specific identity, they set their own snare, and it takes over and consumes that individual.

So the adversary has the goal of destroying the agency of man, as it talks about in Moses. I'll reference that scripture here in a minute. So that's the goal, to destroy the agency of man. And it has been from the beginning of time. When he put himself forward and in the councils of heaven as Lucifer, his plan was to remove the agency of man. And the game plan is to alter identity. And the tool he does that is shame. Shame, we've heard a lot about it in some of these sessions of the conference, but I want to delve into it from a doctrinal standpoint and talk about exactly what shame is and how Satan uses shame as a tool to alter identity. And if he can alter identity, he wins because he doesn't have to try anymore, the individual takes over and sets their own snare.

Let me give you an example, more innocent example maybe with eating. I love myself some good dessert, and I find myself going through this process many times. So you may think I'm inspired to eat healthy and maintain a clean diet. "I'm not going to eat sugar for at least a month." "I shouldn't have eaten that piece of cake." "I ate another piece." "Why do I keep messing up." "I can't seem to eat healthy." "There's something wrong with me." Do you see how it went [00:20:00] from behavior to identity?

That behavior was simply eating well, but by the time I will go through this mental game, the adversary causes contention in my mind, and by the end, I'm asking, "Is there something wrong with me? Why can't I do this?" And this is a process that many addicts or individuals struggling with pornography will go through. They get to a point where everything they try, every good behavior that they try to put in their life doesn't work, and so they begin to wonder, "Is there something wrong with me?" And that's where the shame sets in.

Now, Brene Brown, if you're not familiar with her, get her books, read them. They're fantastic. So helpful around this. She's a shame researcher. She says this: "As a shame researcher, I've learned that wherever perfectionism is driving us, shame is riding shotgun." I would even maybe adjust that. Whenever behaviors are driving us, shame is riding shotgun. Now in our culture, it's very easy to get into this behavior game because worthiness, temple recommends, a lot of them are based a lot on behaviors. Are you keeping the law of chastity? Are you keeping the word of wisdom? These are all behaviors. Now, obviously, beliefs are worked in there as well. But it's easy in our culture to think behaviors is what matters. If I get the behaviors right, then my heart will change. That's dangerous thinking.

Again, we must think that if I get my heart right, the good behaviors will follow. Because if we focus on behaviors, shame is always, always, always riding shotgun, constantly reminding us, "No, we are not doing good enough. Oh, you thought you're supposed to be perfect, then you're still not." And that causes contention and then messes with our identity.

I love the phrase that Sam Tielemans said in his session. "What does that say about you as a person?" This is a good exercise, whether with yourself or with others. If you're mentoring somebody who's struggling with pornography, and they come to you and say, "Another relapse. Man, another relapse. I thought I was on a good...you know, I was going three weeks strong, and then I had another relapse." You just ask them the simple question, what does that say about you as a person? And you can identify shame right away. This is the test.

If they say something like, "I don't know. I guess I just don't have what it takes." Or if it is an "I am" statement or something that's defining their identity, you know that the adversary is causing contention in their mind and linking it to their identity as a person, and so you know that you've got to get them out of that mode. We'll talk about how that's done.

Of course, we know that the work and glory of God is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. Moses 1:39. Have you ever wondered, like, what is the adversary's work and glory? Sure, there could be some discussion about what that really is, but I would contest that his work and glory is to destroy the agency of man. We talked about this. In the councils of heaven, that was his game plan numero uno, and I believe that truly is still his game plan. That's his goal anyways, and he's doing that through the game plan of altering identity.

If we can get all of us to alter identity, he's going to win. Because here's this cycle. He causes shame which alters identity, and that causes you to lack agency. When you are in an addictive state, do you have much agency? It sure doesn't feel like you do. Of course, everybody's got a choice. But in your mind, you're identifying it so much feels like you don't have a choice, therefore, your agency is gone. So the shame game is how he gets us to removing our agency. Hear me clear. That doesn't mean that you're not accountable for these sins or mistakes, but again, we lay our own snare. He doesn't have to tempt us to lay our snare if he gets us with shame which alters identity, which leads to lack of agency, which leads to shame, which leads to alter identity, which leads to lack of agency. Over and over and over, that is the trap that he gets us in. We'll talk about how to help people out of that.

But I want to talk about this phrase, "I'm an addict." Using the two powerful words "I am." I am an addict. Now, this has had much discussion. I was actually going to call this summit "Porn Addicted Saints." [00:25:01] I put that out there into the internets, and the feedback I got was all over the map. Some people really like that, like, "Yeah, we need to call it what it is, which is an addiction," and other people hated it. As if the word "addict" is giving permission to people to actually act out. I went back to the drawing board, and that's how we came with Liberating Saints, which I'm glad we did. It's I think a more fitting name. But I think it's important for leaders, for individuals who are mentoring those are coming as a struggle with pornography, how this phrase looks to different people. Because it's not all bad, it's not all good.

I heard a podcast with Brene Brown, the shame researcher again on a podcast with Whitney Johnson is actually a former guest on the Leading Saints podcast. She said this phrase that jumped out of the podcast and hit me right in the center of my brain. And I had to write it down because that is exactly what we need to keep in mind when using this phrase "I'm an addict." She said, "No one wants to be defined by their hardest struggle, and so we have to find this

really interesting space between owning it and identifying it but rejecting being labeled by it and reduced by it."

I would say that it's dangerous to be all-in on either camp to say calling yourself an addict is really bad or calling yourself an addict is really good. What we need to ask is, me using that phrase, or the individual I'm working with using that phrase, is it reducing them as an individual, reducing their identity, or is it expanding their identity and helping them move closer to Christ, to his identity?

Let me give you some examples of when it may be expanding your identity, and whether it's reducing your identity. First one. "I'm helpless without the saving grace of Jesus Christ." A lot of addicts who say "I am an addict," they are in the state of mind I'm an addict, therefore, I need the grace of Jesus Christ. That's a very healthy state to be in - to label yourself that you are broken, not because you are broken and helpless, you're broken and therefore need the atonement. That is a healthy progressive place to be in.

A reducing place. "I'm broken and beyond saving." They are buried in shame. And they may use this as "I'm an addict, identify with this, therefore, I am beyond saving, and broken." That is a reducing state of mind.

Another expanding state of mind. "There is hope because Christ has overcome all things." I'm an addict and there's hope because Christ is overcoming all things. Or "I'm just hopeless." I'm an addict, therefore, I'm helpless." That is not a good place to be.

"I'm an addict and it might take some time to overcome, but I'll get there." Do you feel the hope in that statement? They're not identifying. They're not altering their identity, but that is encouraging them establishing hope to reach out. Where "I'm an addict and I can't help but act this way." "If it's a label that's giving them excuse, that's damaging. That's not going to be helpful. What about "I have a disease and must never assume I'm healed." I remember being in a Stake Conference years ago, and the Stake President was speaking and he said, "You should never identify as an addict. You're not an addict." I appreciate what he was saying and the way he was saying it because he wanted us to identify it in an expanding fashion. But I would say sometimes is extremely helpful for an individual to identify as an addict.

Now, as we learn from Tim Hollingshead, it's not our job as leaders or loved ones to apply this label to other individuals. However, that individual may apply it to themselves or it can be a form of a diagnosis. So maybe a professional who has the right to apply is good way to do it. So from a third party leadership standpoint, I would never apply that label to somebody or tell them, "You are an addict." Even if in my mind I know, I'm thinking, "Yeah, there's a lot of science here, this person is an addict," I would not apply that label. But if they apply it, and they're doing it in an expanding way, I think that's very helpful other than the reducing manner of "I have a disease and I can't be healed." If they're in that state, you know that they're buried in shame, they're in that trap where they're setting their own snare, they're setting their own trap, and they can't get out of the shame cycle. [00:30:00] So, just know that this term can be identified in two ways. It can be a very expanding thing, it can be very reducing, as far as the identity is concerned. Hopefully, that makes sense.

Let me give you an example of some ways we kind of fall into this trap as mentors, whether a leader or a family member. Let's take Tom and Tim. These are two individuals that are struggling with pornography. Typically what happens, let me start with Tom, is Tom comes into the bishop's office, and what you do, you start with behaviors and accountability. "Well, how many times has

this happened? When does it happen? Where does it happen? Is it on your smartphone on your computer?" All right, we're all talking about behavior. So we jumped into, "Let's stop the behavior. We're going to get some internet filtering software, we're going to have you call me every night." Of course, we're going to encourage positive behavior. This makes sense. This is the type of Bishop I was. I was focused on behavior. This is sort of what followed.

The person themselves is thinking, "You know what? The bishops encouraged me, I can change this. I must change this." So they put the onus on themselves to change it. There's no surrender. There's no turning towards Christ per se, even though maybe they say that. But it's all in "I must change this through my behaviors." What happens is a setback or relapse, and then they think, "Ah, man, I must control my behaviors more." And so they do a devil time. "Bishop, I'm not going to call you every day, I'm going to call you three times a day, and I'm going to crank up my internet filtering software." Because we're only focused on the behaviors, we're not focused on the heart. Then they feel like this is not working. "I feel broken." That's the shame. Then, they may enter sobriety or they may give up.

So you see how they feel broken? This good intention approach of focusing on behaviors can actually stimulate more shame because it's all it focuses on behavior. It's not about them changing. We're trying to change them through the behaviors and doesn't work. This is how I approached it as a naive bishop myself is I was telling those I was working with, "Okay, you call me every night" or "you text me," or "you leave a message on my voicemail, you tell me if you relapse or whatever." And all that did was stimulate shame because what happened is they would relapse from time to time, and they wouldn't call me because they were so buried in shame. Of course, they want to call me and tell me that they're broken, that they relapsed again. So let me give you a better way that maybe help pull people out of this process, this trap of the shame cycle. Let's talk about Tim. When Tim goes in to see his Bishop, the bishop starts with love, grace, hope, and patience. "Hey, Tim, we love you. Yeah, this is hard but there's a lot of hope here. I've seen a lot of individuals overcome this. The Savior's right here with you. He's not frustrated with you or disappointed you," which we'll talk about in a minute. "There's hope here. I've seen so many people overcome. Here's some resources. This is part of the plan, Tim, repentance. That's part of the plan. Isn't it beautiful that God put a plan in place that you can do this."

You see how we're not even getting close to behaviors or things you should do to do that? They are things you should do to overcome this. We're just in a state of hope. Giving hope and grace and reassurance, patience. "However long this takes, Tim, we're going to be here. You're not discouraging me. I've seen people far worse than you overcome this."

Then that puts them into a state of, "Okay, there's some hope here." God is the only one that can change me. It's not about me changing myself. But God is the only one that can change me. And guess what is so helpful to tell the individual? "There is going to be setbacks and relapse. And you know what, that's okay. We'll figure it out."

Obviously, again, people mishear this thing. The bishop is not giving permission for them to relapse. But they say nine times out of 10 or more, people relapse. That's okay. That's what this office is here for, and that's why we have a plan of repentance to get through this. So it puts them in a state of a lot of hope. Then they want to surrender themselves more to the Savior, and say, "I am helpless." You go to a 12 Step meeting, and this is a huge part of that. Surrendering yourself to God. "I cannot change myself. God must change me. I cannot change myself

through my behaviors, God must change me through my heart," which will then lead to good behavior.

Then the individuals [00:35:00] are more open in seeking connection. If you listen to Steve Shields interview, again that was part of this, connection is so vital. Connection is so vital. And they'll enter recovery.

Just look at these two contrasting experiences. Oftentimes, the Tom situation happens when an individual may be goes to the bishop's office or an individual goes to their parent. They're just like, "Okay, well, we're going to get this buddy. We're going to monitor your behaviors to the tee. I'm going to become the police officer and we're going to get this." And then even near the bottom, I think we'll talk about this in a minute where they may enter sobriety. The bishop says, "Okay, just go get to seven days. If you can go seven days without viewing porn or masturbating, you can take the sacrament." So it becomes all about that behavior, and that shame game just completely takes over.

For the other individual who's saying, "You know what, as long as it takes them, there's, there's hope here, there's grace, I'm going to be here for you. You're doing fine. Oh, you read that two times a week. Hey, man, that's okay. That's okay. You're getting it. You're trying. You're getting there." And it leads to a state of mind where you're going to surrender and hand yourself over to God's grace. So you see the difference between good behaviors, that the danger of focusing on good behaviors, hopefully, will change their hearts, but instead, change their heart, which leads to good behaviors.

Let me dive into this a little bit further as far as what this looks like. Changing behaviors versus changing heart. When you are changing behaviors, which isn't going to work most of the time as far as long term relapse, you lead with accountability. Now, again, hear me clearly here, accountability is crucial in the process of overcoming a habit or compulsion or an addiction. Accountability is crucial, but we can't lead with accountability. Wouldn't we lead with accountability, it just becomes a policing relationship. "You come to me. How many times this week? Okay, well, don't do it anymore. How many times this week?" That's a policing relationship, which isn't going to be full of hope. There's so much shame in that. They don't want to come back to the bishop's office or talk to their parents again when it's all about accountability. It's important part, but it's not what we should lead with.

Oftentimes, when we're changing behaviors, we just tell them to pray more, read your scriptures more. If you do that, that's going to help you overcome this. Again, we're focusing on behaviors. We're trying to change their heart with good behaviors. It's not going to work. We got to change our heart first and then the behaviors will change.

Influence behaviors through restrictions, spiritual time outs, right? So this is a tough one. Again, you can disagree with me or take this any way you want. But I found myself as a bishop, oftentimes, using restrictions to motivate them to change. I'm using restrictions like no temple recommend or restrictions of the sacrament, and all those things, which are important and have a place. But in my opinion, restrictions like that are not meant to be used as a stick to beat them with so that they'll change. "Well, you can't take the sacrament until you get this right. You can't have your temple recommend back until you get this right. And your brother's wedding is coming up." Do you see how that's a very shameful place to be in? They're just buried in the shame of those behaviors.

Ask them not to share behaviors. This is reducing connection at times. Again, you don't need to tell them to go share behaviors, but don't create a situation where they feel like we need to keep this in the bishop's office. This is between me and you. We'll work this out. Let's not telling anybody. And we do this with good intention. But we need to say, "Who can you share this with? Who are your friends? What connection can we create? Do you mind if I tell the Elders Quorum president, and he can help you? We have two or three individuals who've gone through the same thing, can we loop them in on this and get their help?" That connection is going to come. It's going to be helpful.

Then the infamous "if you can make it seven days, or if you can make it three months, then we'll get you on your mission." We get them in a state of sobriety, not recovery, and then they relapse even on their mission. Everybody listening to this probably has heard of an instance where an individual came home early because they white knuckled it for three months in order to sign off on their mission papers, they got their call, they went out there, but they weren't in recovery, they were in sobriety. And the stresses. I mean, you want to talk about stresses of life, go on a mission and try that for a few months. Of course, they may relapse on their mission if they're white knuckling it.

So we want to shift from changing behaviors to changing hearts first [00:40:00] because that will then lead to positive behaviors and the behaviors will take care of themselves. Let me just pause and just point out the irony. You see, we're using the same plan that the adversary is using because the adversary knows it works. But we can fight fire with fire. We're not going to focus on the behaviors anymore, we're going to focus on the hearts and good behaviors will come from it just like the adversary focused on the heart and corrupts it and bad behavior comes from that. So we're always just offering hope, hope, hope, hope. "We're going to get through this." I've given several examples of that.

Explore doctrines, especially Mercy & Grace. A fantastic exercise for any leader, or parent, or an individual wrestling with addiction, or struggling with pornography to go to the scriptures and lookup mercy scripture - every Scripture with mercy in it. There are far more scriptures with mercy in there than there is condemnation. And so encouraging the individual to explore doctrines. This is the trap that I would get in as a bishop. The individual comes in, we're in a very police relationship. I'm policing you. You're here to tell me how many times you relapsed and confess those relapse because that's just what we do here is we confess bad behavior. So it was this negative relationship where I was just policing the individual.

And you can meet with the individual, and not even mention why you're there as far as the behaviors. "Okay, we both know, you struggle with pornography, we're not even going to talk about it. We're just going to explore doctrines. Let's talk about the temple this time. The next time we come back, you dive into the temple experience. Go to Moses, and read all of Moses, and you're going to tell me how those doctrines fit in with the doctrines you learned about in the temple." Again, you're not even talking about behavior, you're not talking about even the temptation or the struggle of sexual purity and all this, you're just talking about doctrines.

And what happens is doctrines influence behavior more than the study of behavior. We're now implementing Elder Packard's famous quote of focus on doctrine. Even doctrines aren't directly related to the problem. But what that's doing, it's awakening their identity, it's awakening those principles that connect them with God, and they feel hope. They're not dreading that experience of the bishop office, because we're going to the bishop, we're going to talk about the temple. I

feel so good when we talk about the temple. That's the power of focusing on the hearts through the doctrines.

Admit that you can't "fix" them. It's so easy for that person to assume that I'm walking in the bishop's office because he's going to fix me, the atonement is going to fix me. And of course, the atonement is going to fix you, but not necessarily because of the bishop. The bishop is just a representative there of that process. So it's very helpful for a bishop to say, "Listen, Tim, I want you to know I'm not here to fix you. I don't have a magical wand here. I'm not here to fix you. Christ will fix you. But can we go on that journey together? Can we learn about the doctrines together and figure out how he can help you overcome this and reach recovery and redemption?" That's the power of you communicating that you're not here to fix them.

Define the purpose of CPR, Church, Pray and Read Scriptures. I love this acronym that someone introduced me to. CPR. It's so easy to say, "Okay, we're here, we were going to focus on good behaviors now. So go to church, read your scriptures and pray." But define the purpose of CPR. I'm not saying you don't mention good behaviors, but you defined the purpose of the good behaviors. "These good behaviors cannot fix you, Tim. They're not here to fix you. But what they're here for is to connect your heart with God's heart, and to understand him more fully." And that leads us to a place of surrender, which then can help us overcome this problem through the atonement.

So define clearly why you want them to read, pray, and attend church. Because if you just say, "I need you to do these three things, they're thinking, "Oh, yeah, because if I do them more than that'll fix me." The behavior won't fix you. Only Christ will fix you. Why you do these things is they connect you with your God so you can further understand his redemptive powers. And that is what fixes you. So make sure you are clear and why you're asking them do those behaviors. Turn them towards their Father in heaven. You're there not with all the answers. You may just say, "Tim, you need to go home, and I want you to pray about this. Take these questions to your Maker, to your father and see what direction he has and then come back and let's talk about that. Let's talk about that."

Overwhelm them with [00:45:00] connection. Overwhelm them with connection. Again, go back to Steve Shields episode. It was individuals reaching out to him, even when he didn't want to be reached out to. That connection has so much power. If there are individuals in your ward who have struggled with something like this in the past, and now that's behind them, they don't need to talk about this, call them into repentance and say, "We need your help. There are individuals suffering like you suffered, and if they don't see where you're at now, they may lose hope. I can't show them as the bishop." Unless obviously, the bishop has been there.

But that's why you need to connect them with individuals. Invite them. Ask if you can share this with the Relief Society president, the Elders Quorum president, whoever is their leader, and say, "We need to get you some help and connection." Now it may take some time. They may be so buried in shame, they don't want to tell anybody. As you go through this process and soften their heart, they want to connect, and they'll see the power in there.

Let me tell you a story about James. Him and his lovely family here. James is a friend of mine. Someone I've met through this journey of understanding addiction, understanding recovery and those things. James was a good Latter Day Saint raised in sort of some rough circumstances at times. But nonetheless attended church, later went on a mission, served the mission and came home and sort of had this consistent relapse cycle, the shame cycles, he terms it. Every three

months, he'd do good for about three months, and then just completely relapse. Then do good for three months, white knuckling it, and then fall into that shame cycle.

He's a good example why this term "I'm an addict" can be so helpful for people. Once he was able to identify himself as an addict, that then let him know there was actually a plan, like other addicts that overcome this. So if I'm an addict, there's hope and a plan that I can figure this out. So with him labeling himself as an addict was very expanding, very helpful for him in his journey to overcome his addiction or his habit of viewing pornography. He's got a great story you can listen to on the Unashamed and Unafraid podcast. It's in the resources below this video. It's a powerful story to help you understand more why that term can be so helpful. That's one tactic as far as identity or one way that God impacts our identity.

I want to talk about disappointment. This is more powerful than you maybe realize. I bet you never really thought about disappointment in the context of doctrines or in the context of the gospel. Disappointment is just sort of a feeling we feel in this mortal experience. We kind of assume that it's a common feeling which it is, but I want to propose to you that it is a strong tactic the adversary is using through disappointment that is altering our identity, which again attacks our hearts and causes us shame which leads us to set our own trap of sinning.

I often show this image in youth firesides that I do. This image is obviously Norman Rockwell, the famous artists. He painted one in the principal's office and one in the dentist office. And I'll these youths, "Who's been to the principal's office before? Ever been in trouble?" And few raise their hands. And then I say, "Who's been to the dentist's office?" And all sorts of hands go up. Because everybody goes to the dentist's office. There's no shame in the dentist's office. Talks about this dynamic, this dichotomy between the principal's office and the dentist's office. That when you get called the principal's office it's sort of you're in trouble. It feels really shameful. You think, "Oh, no, I don't want my parents to find out about this." But if you get called into the dentist's office, or if you go to the dentist's office, there's no shame about that. Everybody goes. In fact, you want your parents to know you're going to the dentist's office. It's an interesting dichotomy to think about this when you think about the context of the bishop's office.

So if you're a bishop, or if you've been a bishop or leader, did your bishop's office feel more like the principal's office or more like the dentist's office? Did people see it as a place that they're going to because they were in trouble or they've done something wrong or did they feel like it was a place that they were going to because they're supposed to? They're going in for a checkup. Yeah, they didn't [00:50:01] spiritually floss very well, but they're going there to get that figured out.

I think all of us would agree that we want the bishop's office to feel more like a dentist's office than we do a principal's office. Now, of course, there's some negative things in a dentist's office, don't get me wrong. It's not like everybody's favorite thing to do, but there's no shame in going to the dentist's office. There's no shame and going to get a cavity filled. Most people have cavities. Most people have to go to the dentist office get cavities. No shame in that. And that's the feeling of the bishop's office.

So let me explain, as a youth, a story of my interaction with the bishop's office. So it is 1997, I am sitting on the sofa in my TV room, my mother is folding laundry, and she's watching some crime drama show. She's folding laundry, and I'm looking at the TV screen, but my mind is a million miles away from there because I feel so much shame about what I've done. I remember

forcing myself to tell my mom this phrase during the commercial break. I say, "Mom, I think there's something wrong with me." You see, the adversary worked with me to the point that it wasn't that I was doing bad things but now he had got my identity. He was altering how I saw myself, altering my identity, which was leading to shame.

I remember my mom sort of brushed it off. It was sort of a weird thing to say at a weird time. Few days later, I'm sitting in my parents' bedroom on the edge of their bedroom bed, by their nightstand because they had a phone on their nightstand. I'm calling the executive secretary because I know that I need to set up an appointment with my bishop, who sure felt like I was going into the principal's office. Nothing against that bishop. That's just how my mentality was thinking of that age as a 16-year-old.

I remember calling executive secretary, that "Oh, man, he's gonna ask me what I did. I'm going to have to tell this guy. I don't even know this guy. He's just some old guy in the ward. I'm going to have to tell him what I did." And then, sure enough, he answers the phone, and I say, "I need to set appoint with the bishop. He says, "Okay, how about Tuesday at 7?" I said, "Okay, that's fine." "Great. See you then, click," and he hang up. I don't need to, you know, divulge these details to this guy in the ward.

Then a few days pass, and it's Tuesday, I'm sitting on the sofa outside of the bishop's office, and I just wanted that building to fall down. I wanted it to catch on fire or explode. I wanted out of there. I just felt so bad. And I knew for sure that the bishop would be disappointed in me, I knew for sure that God was disappointed in me. I felt worthless. I felt broken. I felt without hope.

So my question is, how did Satan get me to feel like that? How did Satan get me to feel like that? How did he attack my identity? This is probably the most powerful way I would argue that the adversary attacks our identity is that he knows that God loves us. And you would think the adversary wants us to think that God doesn't love us, but he doesn't start there because we sort of own that doctrine. Ever since that time we started nursery to the present day, we've been learning that I am a child of God, and He loves me. God loves me. And so yes, God loves you. You see, the adversary is actually going to use this against us, cause contention in our mind with this doctrine that God loves you, which will then impact our identity. Because he says, "Yes, God loves you, but He sure is disappointed in you. Yes, God loves you, but He sure is disappointed in the most the time. In fact, the most. He's disappointed in you the most."

Because when I sat in that chair waiting to see the bishop, I truly believed I was the only youth in the history that would ever have to set up an appointment with the bishop. That's what the adversary had convinced me. That my identity was so messed up, I was the only youth that had to sit in that chair and go see the bishop. I felt alone. I'm the only one. I'm the only one. Now, can you see how easy that is? Through this idea of disappointment, he altered my identity so that I was setting my own snares.

What is disappointment? Let's just zone in on this. Because I think if we understand this, we can help a lot of people get out of the shame cycle. So what is disappointment? Well, you can look it up through Google. [00:55:00] Obviously, you have a certain expectation, and that expectation does not happen, therefore you are disappointed. Now let me ask you this. Can God be disappointed? Or can God be disappointed in you? Can God have an expectation and expect that expectation to follow through and then it doesn't follow through? Let me put it this way with this question, Can God be surprised?

Now I know there's maybe some debate around whether God knows the beginning, the present, and the future, or the past, present, and future. But I would say it's a pretty solid doctrine that God is all-knowing. Therefore, if someone's asked you, "can God be surprised?" I think most people would say no. And most people I've asked, say, "No, God can't be surprised?" So, therefore, can he be disappointed? Because if God can't be disappointed, the adversary you can't use this trick against us, saying, "Yeah, God loves you but He sure is disappointing you." Some people argue, well, Kurt, have you read the Scriptures lightly? I mean, there's a lot of examples of a disappointed God. I mean, there are a lot of people that He is disappointed in. Is it really though? Or is He just maybe upset and wanting to give them direction?

A good example is Doctrine & Covenants 3 where Joseph Smith has lost 116 pages, and God sounds super disappointed. "Did you read that?" If you have read that, it sounds like God is super disappointed. However, he starts the section with these verses. And this, I think, is so powerful. "The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught. For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he has said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round." And here is the kicker. "Remember, remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men;"

I mean, there are so many examples of God had a plan. God knew that Joseph Smith was going to lead lose those 116 pages. He had a plan, which was the book of Lehi. We didn't read the book of Lehi and the book of Nephi to help fill in those blanks and communicate all the doctrine we need in this dispensation. I love these three verses because the rest of the chapter, the rest of the section sure sounds like God is disappointed, but he's not. He still offers guidance. He's getting Joseph some pretty clear direction on how to change and how to adjust, but he's not disappointed, because he knew it was going to happen. You cannot be disappointed if you know that it's going to happen.

So God's not disappointed in you ever. God wasn't disappointed in me as a youth. He knew it was part of His plan. "Behold, this is my doctrine," he says. "This is the doctrine. Sum it down to one verse, this is God's doctrine. "Whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church." "If you repent and come to me, that's the plan here. That's what we're doing. That's the game we're playing is repentance. So I'm not disappointed in you when you trip up, when you falter. That's just the game. That's just what we're doing here. That's the plan is repentance." Of course, you're in the bishop's office again, just like of course you're in the dentist's office again. You got to learn how to floss better. You got to brush couple of times a day, at least daily, at least weekly. That's why we go to the dentist's office or otherwise known as the bishop's office and not to the principal's office. It's not a principal's office, because nobody's disappointed in you. It's part of the plan. We all knew that you'd have to repent. So get rid of the shame. You see how this message pulls people out of the shame cycle? God's not disappointed in you. He knew this would happen. Now let's move on, see how we can progress. He's justified you, now let's talk about how you can be sanctified. The atonement is there. You're good.

I love this quote by Elder Robbins. "Repentance isn't His backup plan in the event we might fall. Repentance is his plan, knowing that we will." It is His plan. So let me tell you about my sweet daughter, Devery. She is the epitome of a 7-year-old right now. She turns 8 in May, and she's so sweet. I mean, loves to troll in her dress. She loves to have dance parties in our kitchen. She loves mermaids. I mean, she is so sweet. [01:00:00] When she was one year old, she obviously

started to learn to walk. Now I'm home alone with Devery when she takes her first steps and I'm thinking, "Oh, my goodness, I can't believe my wife isn't here when this is happening." I mean, that's where we picture that the wife is there, I mean, the whole families witnessing this. I pull out my phone to turn on the recorder to capture this moment. I didn't realize in the moment what I was capturing, the analogy that I was recording in that. I want you to watch this video, this clip, and I want you to hear my voice, which represents the voice of our Father in heaven. And I want you to see Devery as our mortal experience that we are trying to become better but we're falling down.

I get emotional every time that I watch that clip. And obviously because is my daughter but more than fact what it speaks to me as a son of God as having a loving Heavenly Father. Just those terms I'm using and I'm not even trying to use them. I'm just acting as a father in that moment. "Here we go. Get up. Oh, you fell down. You're going to fall down or more another bazillion times, but it'll be worth it." I just love how I just feel the love of my father in heaven when I watch that clip. I've seen it so many times. That's the experience. That's the relationship we have with him. I was not one bit disappointed in my daughter when she fell down because I knew she was growing. I knew she was developing and progressing. And that's the love of God that comes from God.

Man, I got to share this quote. I love it so much - from Elder Dale G. Renlund. This shepherd, our Good Shepherd, finds joy in seeing His diseased sheep progress towards healing." I think Elder Renlund just called us all diseased sheep. I love that term because we truly are diseased sheep. We are messed up. We're broken. We need God to redeem us. We need God to fix us. We can't act like we're figuring out ourselves because of our good behaviors. We are all broken. We are all diseased sheep.

Here's a few other great quotes. C. S. Lewis: "A car is made to run on gasoline, and would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on himself. He himself is the fuel of our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other." God is our fuel. We do not move without him. We do not repent without him. We do not progress without him. Of course, we need repentance because of course, we need gasoline if we were a car.

So I want to tell the story. Back in March of 2019, I'm in my home office - it was a different office than I'm sitting in now - and my scriptures are open on my desk. Obviously, this is the standing desk. I have a desk over here where I do my more intense study. My scriptures are open and it's almost like my scriptures are mocking me. Like, "Hey, Kurt, you haven't done your scripture study yet today. Oh, it's been another day. It's been two days since you've done your scripture study." At this point, I couldn't figure it out. There was just a void in my heart [01:05:00] when it came to Scripture study. I'd even try and sit down and read and they were just words on a page. I don't know if you can relate if you've ever had similar experience.

So there I am just sort of conflicted with, "Man, I feel so bad because I'm supposed to read my scriptures every day. That's what good Latter Day Saints do. And I'm a good Latter Day Saint." Identity. Hear the adversary's voice? That's what good Latter Day Saints do. And if I'm going to be good Latter Day Saint, I better check that box or else man, if I go another day, I'm going to feel so bad that I'm not reading my scriptures.

But I later found out that God actually removed the joy of Scripture study from me for a time in order to teach me a lesson. Because a few weeks later after this experience, I'm sitting in a

Christian Leadership Conference, and they have some great Christian music going up before they start the session. And I'm just sitting there. This dynamic, this experience, this circumstance comes to my mind - why it's so hard for me to study my scriptures. And I feel the shame of that. I feel the guilt of it just like, "Oh, I know I got to do better with Scripture study. For some reason, I just can't get in the scriptures.

In the moment, something so precious happened to me, because I heard in my mind this phrase. "You could never read your scriptures again, and I'd still love you." Then it came a second time. "You could never read your scriptures again, and I'd still love you." Because here it was still in this shame cycle. And it happens to all of us. These lessons, these doctors aren't just for the addict, the person that can't handle life because he's so addicted to something or their marriage is falling apart or whatever is like this. This happens to all of us, this shame cycle. And I was in that shame cycle.

I thought God was so like, "Yeah, I'm a good boy, I've got my temple recommend, I'm doing these things and I'm doing my best, but God's disappointed in me that I'm not reading my scriptures and that really hurt.

But in that moment, He connected with me. He said, "Kurt, I'm not disappointed in you. You could never read your scriptures that again, and I'd still love you. I actually want you to read your scriptures, but not so that you can check a box and feel like you've earned my love. I want you to go to the Scriptures so that we can have a relationship together so that we can connect, so that our hearts can connect."

In the moment, God was teaching me that it's not about your behavior. I want your heart. And once I have your heart, you won't be able to do anything else but good behavior. You won't even have desire to sin like it talks about in Mosiah. And that's what I feel like it's been like now my scripture stays completely different world. I love my scripture study because it's not about studying the scriptures or checking the box, but it's about worshiping Him and connecting with Him.

This is a phrase that I want you to think about. You could fill in the blank, whatever it is. You could look at pornography the rest of your life, you could never go to church again, you could have a diet coke habit the rest of your life, you could never go to the temple again, or you could never want to go to the temple again, and I'd still love you. You see how that message touches the heart? That no matter what you do, He will still love you. And it's important you know that. As many times as it takes, I'm going to be right here. I'm going to be right here, encouraging you to take those steps. I'm going to be right here changing your heart. And when you do that, the behaviors will come and it'll be okay.

Do you feel the hope? Like if that message came from a bishop or a loved one, that matter how many times you relapse, I'm still going to be here. I'm still going to love you. Sure, there's going to be some boundaries, sure, we're going to approach this a different way, but that doesn't change anything about how I feel about you, how I identify you in my mind and how you should identify yourself in your own mind.

I love this quote by C. S. Lewis. "The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us." The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but God will make us good because He loves us. That's the message of redemption of life, of returning to him, of sanctification. We don't have to justify our

behaviors so that we can be sanctified. Christ has already justified our behaviors so that we can be sanctified. That's the beauty of this doctrine.

In closing, I want to talk about this scripture. "If you love me, keep my commandments." John 14:16. [01:10:01] I mean, read incorrectly, I think this can be very shaming scripture. The adversary wants us to read this and say, "I thought you love God? But you keep messing up, don't you? I guess you don't love God, and I guess God knows that you don't love God because you don't keep His commandments." Well, I interpret this a different way.

There's a great movie, it's actually in the resources, great movie called Heart of Man." Here's a quick screenshot from it. It's basically the parable of the prodigal son that they go through, but they do with these characters. I love the actor they used to represent our Father in heaven. Here he is. So loving. In this parable, he puts together a violin. He constructs a violin, a beautiful violin that he makes with his own hands. I want to show you a clip from this video that again, I encourage you to go check out and rent it or, or you can buy it. I bought it. I would encourage you just to buy it as it's worth the cost. It's an awesome movie that I've watched many times and shared with others. But in this clip, I want you to pay attention to the violin, and in your mind, think of the violin as commandments and Covenants that God has given us and see how God gives these commandments and covenants with the violin to the one that he loves, which is all of us.

"John: Many of us are still trying to prove that we are enough by the very law that tried to prove to us that we're not enough. When he calls us a saint, he makes an incredible statement about us. We are no longer defined by being a sinner."

I love the imagery here. That God loves us so much that He gave us commandments and covenants, he handed it to him. And I love that the imagery of that God showed us how to hold them, how to position, and then he showed us how to play those commands and covenants so that we can return to Him. It's not about a list of rules that you got to keep or else you're going to hell. No, these are empowering parts of our mortal experience that God's given us to help us on this difficult journey. And when it is difficult, we play those even more loudly. I encourage you to watch the whole film because the way that the violin plays out throughout this where the son becomes a prodigal son right and leaves his father's presence and turns towards sin. The imagery of the violin in that moment is so good You got to watch it.

The way I see it is that it's not "If you love me, keep my commandments." It's "if you love me, hold on to my commandments." I've given you these tools in order to help you survive mortality and to become sanctified and connect with me. When you play your violin, I'm going to play my violin; when you keep your commandments, I'm going to keep the commandments too; when you go to the temple and renew covenants, I'm going to renew covenants. This relationship with the eternal maker, with the eternal God. He gave us commandments. Not so that he can beat this with them, that we can play them and connect with him on deeper level.

And even this word "keep," here's a great scripture as far as keep. "And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon, and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate, and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever." I just love the context in which this

word "keep" has. You already have it. The first [01:15:00] estate is already yours. Keep my commandments, hold on to my commandments so that it can be yours.

Here's another one. Doctrine & Covenants 78:18: "And ye shall bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours." You already have it. You already have the kingdom. It's yours. He's given it to us. Now, it's easy to say, "Well, I don't know about that. Kurt. I mean, we got to keep the commandments and do these good behaviors. I get what you're saying. In theory, it's cute and all but no, you got to keep the rules." Because that's how you get back to heaven."

I think this is a rebuking chapter or a rebuking verse. In Alma 33:16 For behold, he said: Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son. Think how frustrating it would be to send your son here to die and he suffer through the sins and crucified for all of us, and offers grace to us through that atoning sacrifice and we don't understand it. That would be very frustrating. It would make me angry, for sure. And this is what it's talking about in Alma. That thou art angry, O Lord, because we've missed it. We don't understand your mercies. We don't understand your grace. So if you love me, keep my commandments.

That scripture is so empowering and loving to me that it pulls me out of every shame cycle I fall into. When I'm in that shame cycle and the adversary starts to get me to identify myself differently through the shame he is constantly causing through contention, I think if you love me keep my commandments. I remember that God's given me commandments and covenants to become like him and to play those covenants, play that violin when I need Him most.

Of course, famous scripture in Romans 8:38-39. "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is Christ Jesus our Lord." He loves us so much. He will never ever, ever be disappointed in you. Ever.

My prayer is that when individuals go to the bishop's office, that's the message they feel. "Tim, John, Billy, Susie, Ann, Patricia, I know it hurts, God's not disappointed in you." He expects you to make these decisions from time to time, and that's why the plan is repentance. That is His gospel. That is His gospel.

I love the scripture that I've read completely different just a few days ago, Luke 15:20, of the prodigal son. Parable of the prodigal son. He says, "And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." That phrase I've underlined there, "he arose, and his father had compassion on him when he was yet a great way off. I remember, as a bishop, individuals come in, and in my mortal mind just thinking, "This guy is messed up. Why is he making these decisions? Doesn't he get it? I mean, come on, get your life together." Sometimes I punish them with spiritual timeouts for taking recommends or restricting sacrament. "Don't you understand?" That was the message I was sending.

But if we could show compassion, even when they are a great way off, even when they're so far away from the standards of the church, we still show compassion, we love them, and we say, "You're in the right place. This is the dentist office. This isn't the principal's office. This is the dentist's office, and this is where you're going to meet a loving Savior." And I hope for a moment

I can be that representative to use your Bishop, or as your parent, or your loved one. That he has saved you. He offers nothing but redemption. Yeah, you're going to figure out these behaviors, but let's first figure out your heart. Let's pull you out of the shame cycle through the doctrines that are true and bold that you can overcome this.

Once you get your heart right with the doctrines, the behaviors will come not because you feel like you're supposed to do them or should do them. But that you want to do nothing [01:20:00] else because it's how you connect with God. It's how you become like Him and strengthen those spiritual muscles so that you can be sanctified through His atonement. As I ask everybody as we end a session, I always ask the people that have been part of this, what encouragement would you have for leaders, for loved ones out there? And I just want to just encourage you that you bless your heart for looking for resources like this. I'm not saying this is a perfect resource, but man, we're trying as community to gather some information together.

You may agree with some of it, disagree with others, but I just your hope is making you think. And so bless your heart for reaching out and finding resources because I know how much you want to save that person. You want to help them. You want to figure out how to guide them down a path that's going to lead them to recovery. And I promise you that you can do it. The Savior can do it through you. But He is the Savior, you're not the Savior. He is the Savior. And it's going to happen. He's going to be there by their side playing that violin as long as it takes. He never loses hope. He's never disappointed with them. And hopefully, we can follow that pattern ourselves. Thanks for joining us.