



Church Doctrine, Policy, & Leadership | An Interview with Anthony Sweat

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We live in a world plagued by pornography and people are looking for help. When an individual struggles with pornography, they often turn to their church leader for that help. How does a leader help a person overcome the shame of this issue and start seeing positive progress? How can a leader help youth to open up about struggles with pornography? What are some lasting proven tactics that actually make a difference? In order to help leading saints has created the liberating saints library with more than 20 presentations featuring individuals who have a unique perspective or expertise around this topic. Three of those most popular sessions are available to watch now, simply text the word lead to four 747 four 7 to start watching now or visit leading-saints.org/liberating. The following episode is a throwback episode, one of the most published previously and was extremely popular. To see the details of when this was originally published, see the show notes. Enjoy this throwback episode. Hey everyone, this is Kurt. Now every bishop's been there and maybe even some release society presidents. You're sitting in a class or maybe in sacrament meeting and somebody says something and you think to yourself, I don't know if that's doctrine, or you may have somebody approach you after the class and say, I don't really like that instructor, because they teach false doctrine. And this is a concept part of our culture that obviously is important. There are certain doctrines and truths about the gospel that we need to learn about and obviously seek the principles that are contained in those doctrines and then obviously apply those principles in our life. The sometimes I think there is a general misunderstanding about what doctrine is, how it's defined, and then what the role of doctor is in our week to week Sunday organized experiences. And so I learned more about this concept of doctrine from professor Anthony swett, who's in the religion department down at BYU. And I experienced some of his teachings at the education week, BYU education week.

The last two years, and he talks about this concept of doctrine. And then this year, he also talked about ambiguity that is sometimes found in doctrine, which at first caught me off guard because I didn't think there should be any ambiguity in doctrine. But the way he articulates it and teaches, I think will be a help to all leaders out there striving to organize wards or corms or groups in a way where doctrine is consistently taught. But more importantly, doctrine is consistently understood. So I think you'll really benefit from this interview, you'll definitely want to take notes, maybe listen to it once through the information wash over you and then go back and maybe take some notes and see if you can better understand his teachings. So here is my interview with professor Anthony sweat. Today I have the opportunity to be on the Brigham young university campus in the office of Anthony sweat. How are you? Go ahead. I'm happy to be with you. No, I've been looking forward to this interview. I've been to education week last few years. You're one of one of your fanboys. Okay, I don't miss Anthony. So I like to tell my wife that she'll laugh to hear I have a fanboy. And they even put you in the Marriott center this year. So I didn't have to worry about elbowing old ladies. That's where they sent everybody who can talk while people eat lunch. Oh, nice. That's true. You can't have food there. So give us a background. What does the audience maybe if they're not familiar with you? What do they need to know about Anthony sweat? I am a system Professor of church history and doctrine here at BYU. I'm mainly center in teaching the course the foundations of the restoration doctrine covenants, Joseph Smith, church history. Published a few books, a handful of books that mainly centered around church doctrine and other devotional subjects.

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Published one like on the temple endowment, just recently. And a top four 7 reason Institutes of religion for 13 years while I got my graduate degrees and loved that. And after finish there came here to BYU and been here a number of years now. Nice. And you sort of have a unique journey to the religion department. I would say maybe not. But you a major in fine art, is that right? I did. My bachelor's degree was in fine art and painting and drawing my original plans were to be a full-time painter. And so I went to the university of Utah and was trained as a fine artist and the lord through a lot of different experiences. Let me know that was not his plans for my career. So I joke that he led me into the big money of religious education. Instead of the big money of fine art. And the fun thing about it though is I still get to use all things. It's interesting to see the lord work things in your life. When I left fine art to become a religious educator, a professional educator, I wasn't sure how my art would tie in, but now 20 years later, one of the things I do is I paint scenes of the restoration that have a third important that have never been painted before. They're kind of tied back together. That's cool. And there's a lot of scenes that I mean, we see a lot of church history scenes, but you found a lot of pivotal ones. They're surprising. There's more than people think that are pivotal important scenes that have never been visually shown before. So do you approach that from obviously, there's a business behind everything, so you think, well, if I point this scene, it'll show up in more world library. What's your approach of finding these scenes and what motivates you to my approach is I am a terrible businessman, business is not the motivation for me. Nor is even like, I'm not out to make a pretty mantelpiece or something that somebody is going to hang in their front room. I want my art is about people

learning. And so some of the paintings I do are kind of uncomfortable to be totally honest. I just did a painting of Joseph and Emma, arguing after Joseph Smith wrote the revelation, which is section 132 at auction covenants for plural marriage. Oh wow. And when Joseph brought it home, you know, by some accounts William Clayton said that Emma threw it in the fire. And for the next three or four days, they argue heavily. So I did a painting of Joseph and MS sitting in front of a burning fire symbolic there. While Joseph holds this revelation and the looks at him hurt and angry at the same time, that's not something someone is going to hang in their ward library. Or over their mantelpiece. But to me, it opens an important historical discussion. To help people learn. So that's my goal more than anything. Because that type of depiction, there's so much emotion that you're probably trying to communicate, that Joseph was feeling talk about a difficult position to be in as it has been, let alone as a prophet. Exactly. Wow, that's interesting. As you get opportunity to teach about the doctrines and then paint the doctrines as well. Yeah, I do. It's a fun, I get to teach my role here at bios on what's called a teaching professor. So I'm assigned to teach the larger classes I teach about 6 classes each semester of about 200 students each show. I get to teach over a thousand students every semester here. So as you were growing up in your teenage years, perfecting your craft of painting and art. It was teaching always in the back of your mind as a backup plan or did it come just out of nowhere? No, it was never in my mind. It was a providential turn where I happened to speak in a sacrament meeting. When I was in college and a man came up to me afterward and said, what are you thinking of doing for your career? And I told him that I was either going to go into be a full-time painter or something into business. And he said, well, have you thought about teaching for the church? And he said, I think you'd be really good. You should think about it. And for whatever reason, I dismissed it, but the lord didn't let me dismiss it. It stuck in my mind and dwell on my heart and I couldn't shake it and finally went and talked to him and looked in the seminary institute training program and the rest was history for me. And so did the shift really happening in graduate school when you moved towards these types of topics or in terms of what kind of topic as far as teaching the gospel and that your intent. So I was hired and I finished my bachelor's degree. I was hired by seminars and in case to teach full time for that. I started teaching. 700 Institutes were more generalists than specialists here at BYU were more specialists. I taught in San Francis every year, one year I'd teach the New Testament, then book a more in the docker and covenant center Old Testament. But I always found myself leaning towards Joseph Smith in church history in my own personal interests. And in church doctrine. So those were some of the topics that I wrote on early on and how we teach about our doctrine and our history has always been important to me.

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So that's what my graduate work led me into was my graduate work is all in education, religious education. How do we teach people, religiously, that is the most effective? Is what my dissertation really looked into. Nice. So there's a lot of good content needed and our culture for sure. Anything else about your background would be worth mentioning before we most important. My lovely wife been married for 21 years. Awesome. Her name is Cindy. I have known each other since we were 12 years old. We didn't date, but she didn't know me when I

had a mullet. I'll put that on record. She's still agreed to marry me. So have the days of miracles ceased, I say nay. Nice. And we hit it off after our mission. And then we've been fortunate enough to have 7 children. We have currently a daughter who's 20 here at BYU and a little guy named Truman, who's two years old. We're running the gamut. We've got college kids high school kids, junior high kids, grades, cool kids, and kids still at home. Wow, I'm sure they're fun. You need to be like on TLC on these reality shows. They're on there. Well, cool. So I wanted to really talk about the concept of doctrine. Let me set up a scenario for you that I'm sure you're familiar with a new bishop or someone serving as bishop is up on the stand sitting in the sacrament meeting and suddenly the speaker or maybe some standard bear testimony. States some things that aren't quote unquote, doctrinal. And there's sort of this, I don't know, I guess there's some verbiage in the handbook that addresses this. But obviously, as the presiding authority, it is that authorities role to correct false doctrine is the failing. And so there's always this feeling of how I have to stand up and awkwardly correct this and maybe make a person feel bad. I don't mean to make you feel bad. Or it's in a Sunday school class. From my experience in leadership and others, I sometimes hesitate because I think, well, is a doctor in, you know, do I really understand the doctor? And of course, the core foundations of a doctor are easy to defend in articulate. But sometimes I'll hear things in Sunday school that I don't think is doctor. But everybody's rolling with it. It's sort of culturally doctor. So where do we start with understanding what doctor is and what the leader's role in in promoting and facilitating doctrinal teaching in a church? Well, like every discussion, words, man, words, you have to define words. And the very first thing to do is define what is doctrine. And doctrine, the root word doctrine simply means a teaching. Something that is taught. And some others might say something that is authoritatively taught. That's a slightly different definition of doctrine than sometimes we hear in sometimes we hear that the doctrine is the eternal unchanging truths of the gospel, which that is doctrine, of course. But that's more called the doctrine of Christ or the core doctrines, or what we might call the gospel. Say through penance baptism holy ghost enduring in the faith. But everything that's authoritatively taught in the church is doctrine. So that's the first place to start. And then the second place to start is what establishes official doctrine for the church. I think it would be good for anybody to know both those things. So I kind of share with my students a model that defines different types of doctrine. And another model that helps people understand what could be considered authoritative church teachings. And maybe use some of those examples using that education week of where you stated just some common things that we think are doctor or maybe not doctor. And you sort of quiz the audience on. You got me a few times that's for sure. I thought, oh, I should know this stuff, but I was wrong. What are some examples of maybe where this example is let's say somebody's teaching a gospel to a friend class and they read in Moses, for example, that savior has created many worlds without number by my son, I have created them. It says that in Moses one. Well, let's say the teacher then says, well, we know that Jesus has created many worlds and he's the redeemer of many worlds. He saved more worlds than just this one. Is that true? I think number one, that's the first question. Before we even say is it doctrine? We should say, is it true? Because it's a good place to start. It's a good place to start as a church of truth. But secondly, if somebody says the savior's saved many worlds, if someone goes, yeah, yeah, he has. Well, how do you know that? How do you know that that's an authoritative church teaching or something that the church would stand behind? Is it? Yeah, I would say that is, I'd say it's doctrine. The Christ suffered for multiple

worlds. And so then the next thing is, I think most of your listeners right now if I throw that out, they would have a metric in their mind. They just ran through some sort of internal filter.

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Exactly. To try to determine whether something was doctrine. And what was your filter, you just ran through? I have I remember it being brought up in certain seminary institute classes. That's a dangerous filter right there. It comes through some of these Institutes. And I remember certain quotes, and that's where I think I remember someplace where there's this quote where a prophet mentioned that. It must be. So does if a prophet says that does that make it doctrine for the church? Well, since then, I've learned that not necessarily. There has to be that's what I want to get at. And so their metrics like this or another one that I threw out there was and your listeners right now have probably heard this that we should take the sacrament with our right hand. All the listeners right here, if you're not driving, raise your right hand if you think that's church doctrine. I said that was not church doctrine. Yeah. And there are many people who think it is. And there's many people who think it's not, and some people say it's cultural, other people say no, it's an ordinance, and you have to do ordinances the right way. You know, if somebody decided to baptize with an alternate method, we would stop them or if they didn't do it right. So and you can find some statements from church leaders saying that you should take the sacrament with the right hand. However, it's not found in the handbook of instructions today and handbook one or two. And so it's left with, is that a church doctrine, and how do we know? So that's another example. So how do we figure that out as leaders? Is there do we just stick with the handbooks and even the manual can sometimes have questions over? Particularly handbook too is excellent in teaching what I call core doctrine. The front part of handbook two is excellent. And preach my gospel has a lot of core basic doctrines true to the faith. These are all great resources the church has put out that have been reviewed by correlation and have been reviewed. My gospel was reviewed by all the brother and obviously Hamburg wanted to, as well. So those are some great places. But they're limited as well. So the model that I give. So if you want to know if something is an authorized church teaching, the best places to look, first of all, in the standard works in the scriptures. We call them our standard works for a reason. There are standard for doctrine is what BH Robert said. Or it's what president Nelson has said where we measure the correctness of doctrine. So when somebody teaches something, can we find it in the harmonized scriptures? And I use the word harmonized intentionally. Not just in the scriptures, but harmoniously, detailed Christopher and elder packer have both said that scriptures authenticate each other. There's multiple scriptural witnesses on the truth. It's dangerous to try to establish a doctrine on one versus scripture alone. So take, for example, John one 18 no man has seen God at any time. And the problem with that, you could say, well, right there, there it is. It's doctor. Nobody's ever seen God. But if you take the harmonious scriptures, there's multiple accounts of multiple people seeing God. And so it's kind of like in statistics where you're looking for, I don't want to bore you. I mentioned statistics and somebody just fell asleep. That's right. But if you look at a scatter plot like an XY scatter plot of some data, you're going to see data consistently grouped in an area. And then, occasionally, you'll see outliers. And you look for the consistently grouped data in the scriptures. You look for what it's

harmoniously teaching. And then you take the outliers individually and wrestle with them. But some doctors you may find a whole bunch of references towards that doctrine and stuff. Maybe just one or two. Some one or two, and some none. For example, is it church doctrine that we have a mother in heaven? I would say definitely. And yet you can not find any explicit mentions of mother and have an inscription. Right. So the second thing to look at is, can we find the second most? And I don't want to pitch them against each other. It's not like scriptures are the most authoritative. And then this is second most. Section one O 7 versus 27 of the doctor and covenants says that every decision made by the profits should be a unanimous voice. And if you pay attention, you will listen to the profits even some of the recent changes on ministering and the two hour church schedule. They will explicitly say we are united on this decision. One O 7 says that they should be united, and if they're united their decisions have power and validity is what those are the two words that stand out to me in sexual one O 7. I look for united statements from the first presidency in the quorum of the 12. It's the profit with his counselors in the 12. Their job is to establish doctrine for the church. That's what president hinckley said. So take something like the family proclamation to the world or take the 1909 statement that was repeated in 1926 and that was also published in the enzyme in 2002. They all say we have a mother in heaven. Family proclamation says we're the children of heavenly parents. So I can use that to say united voice of the first presidency on 12 power and validity.

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We have a mother in heaven. So that's the second thing I look for is unanimous statements. Yeah. Love that. Third thing to look at, sometimes there's not like a unanimous declaration like a letter from the first presidency, but sometimes there are cohesive statements from the church leaders acting in their official capacity. This is where general conference talks comes in or an article in the enzyme by a church leader or something in a worldwide leadership training broadcast or so what you look for is can I find a cumulative statement of the brethren and the sisters, the generally site president young women's president, general primary presidency, people acting in their official capacity as church leaders teaching this church doctrine. And you start to see things that are cohesively taught by them. So maybe there's not a signed document or a sign united statement. You can find consistent teachings from church leaders on the subject. And then the fourth thing I look at is can I find it in official church publications? Is it on LDS dot org, Mormon dot org, Joseph Smith papers? History LDS dot org. Any church website that has been reviewed by what's known as correlation or the curriculum departments who try to keep an eye to make sure that the doctrine of the church is teaching state consistent and cohesive. So if I can find it in church statements, church manuals, church websites that have been reviewed and approved, then you're on pretty good ground as well. So those are the four areas I look for. So quickly review those. First one is scriptural harmonized scripture. Second is united statements by the first presidency and or the 12. Third is cumulative teachings of church officers acting in their official capacity and then fourth one is can I find it in church reviewed materials that have been published? Awesome. And you also mentioned in your presentation education week that it's not a black or white thing. There's maybe different levels of doctrine like the core doctrine. Another one is what I call. I need to make sure you give a shout out to my

Friends, doctors, Michael McKay, and Garrett Dirk Mott. They're the ones who wrote this paper with me. And that helped develop some of these models. So I want to be sure to give them credit. So that's called sources of doctrine in the first one. Sources that established authoritative teachings in the church. The second thing is types of doctrine. And there are different types of doctrine. So in 2007, I would highly recommend every church leader who listens to this. Pulls up a statement called approaching Mormon doctrine. The LDS newsroom put it out in 2007 when Mitt Romney ran for president. And it's really important for a number of reasons. Because different commentators were out there saying, hey, do you know Mitt Romney's a marvel? Did you know that Mormons believe? And they would find one one off statement by someone in the journal of discourses, you know? Yeah, the white horse prophecy when they come to mind. So the church came out and said, let's clarify what is church doctrine. And by the way, with that, one of the sources of doctrine, I mentioned harmonized scriptures, the united voice, cumulative teachings, they said this important statement, a single statement made by a single leader on a single occasion often represents a well considered opinion that is not meant to be binding doctrine upon all church members. That's an important, because sometimes people will they'll play the I don't want to be too light with this, but they'll be like, well, did you know that? Fill in general theory name here. Said this, as though that one established his church doctrine forevermore. It doesn't. And then someone will say, well, I see your James detail talmage, and I'll raise you a Bruce armor conkey. And they'll want to lay down an opposite statement. Neither of those established doctrine for the church. They may very well be true, or they may not be. They may be the person's opinion. That's why we look for those authoritative sources of doctrine. But with that same statement, they also said, they hinted that there's different types of doctrine. Some in that statement they say some are more important than others, for example, the atonement of Jesus Christ is much more important than the location of the Garden of Eden. And they said some could be considered core doctrines. And so it opens up this idea that there are different types of doctrines in the church. And the model that we developed was the center are called core doctrines. These are the unchanging fundamental truth of Salvation. This is we have a loving father in heaven, his son Jesus Christ is already deemed. There's no way to Salvation, but through faith and repentance and covenants with him. Endure to the end marriage as eternal, the resurrection, these core basic parts of the gospel. Sometimes what we would just call the gospel of Christ. But then there's more supportive doctrines. That's the second ring is supportive doctrines.

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Supportive doctrines might not be necessary for Salvation, but they help us understand core doctrines better. So core, Jesus, atone for our sins, he is the Christ he is the messiah. A supportive doctrine. Well, he grew up in Nazareth. He held the sick. He bled from every pore in the garden. He suffered in the garden and on the cross. He felt all of our pains. I'm not sure I need to know that stuff to be saved. You know, our missionaries don't go out and say, do you believe that Jesus, blood from every single pore? And if you don't say, yes, we won't baptize you. They say, do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? And so like doctrines, there's core doctrines like atonement and Jesus is the savior, but then they're supportive doctrines like him

bleeding from every pore. Or let me give you another one that in the millennial rain, there will be a thousand years of peace or that Christ will come down and touch the amount of olives and it will split in two. That's not a core essential doctrine of Salvation, but it helps us understand the core doctrine of Christ as king better. Does that make sense? Yeah, and it doesn't mean that it's maybe isn't exactly going to transpire like that or I mean, I think there's some ambiguity in there. There is. And that's okay. Sometimes we want to state like, well, you know, it's doctrine that Christ blood forever poor. And consider that Christ actually suffered in the garden. And on the cross. And you're like, well, you know, there's been certain leaders that have said that, and we look very cohesive voice and I'm not sure you have to know that to be saved or believe that you could have a differing opinion and you're still a faithful Mormon. Right. I think that's important thing is that one member could have an opinion differently or say, ah, necessarily believe that. That doesn't mean that they don't believe in the doctrine of the church, especially the core doctor. We have a core doctrine of Salvation. It doesn't mean they don't believe in living profit. It's either, particularly if the doctrine hasn't been settled, particularly, and one of the examples I gave was some take the concept of eternal progression in the next life. Can people progress from tea less shelter to celestial? There are some of the brethren who have adamantly said no to that subject. There have been other of the brother who have said, yes, for every quote that says, no, there's an equal number of quotes to say yes that it's a possibility. And so right now, those who are listening to this podcast might go, oh, I believe that there is. And others might say no way. Well, the answer is the church has came out in 1965 and said, we have no declarative doctrine on this point. Some have said yes, and I've said no. And you're free to believe what you want on that subject. It doesn't mean you're not faithful to the church's doctrines. Nor does it mean you're not faithful to the church leaders and sustaining them as profits years in revil later. That's important concept. And we're touching on the ambiguity, which I want to dive into, but maybe let's finish the third doctrines. You have supportive doctrines and supportive doctrines elaborate on the core of the third ring that we give is called policy doctrines. And we do call them doctrines, by the way. And the reason why, and some people could disagree with that, and that's fine. But the reason why I like to call them policy doctrines is because they're authoritative teachings, which is what the word doctrine means. So for example, the word of wisdom. The word wisdom has not been taught in every dispensation. It has taken many shifts and turns in our dispensation. It took nearly a hundred years for it to become a binding commandment on temple going Latter day Saints, by the way. It wasn't until Hebrew J grant's ministry in the 1920s and 30s. That really became solidified. But today, you can't even get baptized unless you are willing to live the world of wisdom. You definitely can't have a temple recommend. And so it has become a binding teaching, but it policy doctrine is a timely teaching that is more centered towards application, because God foresaw evils and designs that would exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days. So he gives us this word of wisdom. It's unique to our time. But it's still authoritative, and it's still binding. Similarly, the reason why I want to maybe emphasize that, that people, sometimes people want to dismiss policies, all that. The phrase I use is they want to call it mere policy. Well, that's just a policy. It's not an eternal doctrine. It's still a binding doctrine that can affect Salvation. So if you and I lived in Abraham's time, every male would have to be circumcised to be part of the covenant. Well, circumcision was done away with during New Testament times with Peter and the Jerusalem council. That doesn't mean that I couldn't say to Abraham all Abraham. This is just a policy. I thought this up yourself. I don't have

to do this. And it even says, I think it's an off the top of my head, genesis 17, that if you won't be circumcised, you are not part of the covenant. So it wasn't just a mere policy. It was a covenant affecting timely cultural application of truths. And those can happen all the time.

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And the profits here's novel leaders have that authority to do that. And it's becoming more of almost like a buzzword or a buzz phrase of like, well, this difference between doctrine and policy and do not overlap. I don't like that person. That's why I don't like it, because people want to be dismissive of binding church policies that have been authoritatively put in place by key holding profits who have the authority to do so. You can't dismiss what key holding profits establish a standards for the church. And I looked this model that you create because it's almost like the policy doctrines push us towards the support of doctrine, which pushes us towards the core doctrine. If we dismiss those policy doctors, oh, that's just what this profit feels as important. Let's give it a decade, and I'm sure this will change. But then we sort of remove ourselves from this journey to the core doctor. But even if it does change, I want to just touch on that for a moment because that's a big thing. Well, what if this changes? Because doctrine doesn't change. Because doctrine never changes. Doctrine does change. If you're using doctrine as authoritative teaching now, the gospel of Jesus Christ does not change. But if you're using doctrine as authoritative teachings, it does change. It changes as new revelations come that give us further light and knowledge on a subject. If I had talked to Joseph Smith in 1820 and asked him if God had a body of flesh and bone, I'm not sure he'd say yes. Or if I had asked Joseph in 1830, do we have a mother in heaven? I'm not sure he would have said yes. But by nauvoo, Joseph is very clear that because he's received further revelation, God has a body, and we have a mother in heaven. If I had asked Joseph in 1830 when the church was organized, is there eternal marriage? I'm not sure what he would have said. But by the mid 1830s, there's evidence that Joseph is starting to understand that marriage is meant to be eternal. So doctrine can change as we get new light and knowledge. The example I give is to be hard for your viewers to imagine somebody holding up an object and saying, what is this? Well, they're looking at it from one perspective. And what they're describing is true. But then as that object turns in space, if it's a three dimensional object, they're going to see other sides. And they're going to see underneath, and they're going to see on top. And as they see those new things, doctrine will be amplified and augmented and clarified. But secondly, doctrine will change because policies change because cultural applications change, such as the word of wisdom. But the reason why I want to get back to is so important that people don't say, well, this is just going to change. Because you can never get ahead of profits. If you try to get ahead of profits, you're not in a good position. Yeah. Because if there's one thing I believe and then I think scripture authenticates is that God honors his profits. So take the story of Cora and dathan in the Old Testament. They come to Moses and their levites and they say, we want to have the high priest it also, like you and Aaron, God confirms that this should be Moses and Aaron that have it, not the levites. And Cora says something interesting. He says, well, aren't we all holy? Aren't we all just as good as you? And shouldn't we also have the privilege of high priesthood? And the answer was, yes, they are just as good. They're just as holy. They're just as capable. But that wasn't what the lord revealed or

approved or that his profits were giving at that time. And so because they tried to circumvent the profits, the earth opened up and swallowed them whole. Now the reason why I'm saying that is because dispensation later, other tribes of Israel would get the priesthood. And I can picture Cora in the spirit world going CI was right. He was right, but his timing was wrong and his approach was wrong. So I would just have everybody just ponder on that. Doctrine will yet change in the future. And we believe in a living church. And what is orthodox today might be heterodox tomorrow, and what might be considered heresy or heterodox today might become orthodox tomorrow. That's what happens in religions of revelation. But you can't ever get ahead of the revelators. I love that concept of from a leadership perspective. It's not just about like, oh, making sure you raise your hand and correcting something that said that's maybe a supportive that's not a supportive doctor or a policy doctor. But be mindful of those individuals. Maybe there's some individuals that are sort of feeling like they're trying to get ahead of the profits and saying, well, I'm not going to do that. I know where we're headed. I'm just going to wait this out, but to really recognize that and maybe have that dialog with them saying, well, let's talk about what doctor is. Though it's a policy, we should still embrace it as a binding doctrine. And I love when Brigham young also take the example of Brigham young when the revelation on section 76 came out of the 3rd of heaven. Brigham young said, I could not understand it. He called it a great trial to him. Because it was so contrary to his traditions. But then bringing young said, I said to myself, do not reject it. Wait a little. And he waited a little, and then until the lord taught him and helped him understand it. It's okay for your faithful members of your ward to say, I don't understand this.

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I don't even agree with this. I don't know why this is the case. That's fine. You can say that. But just don't don't try to get ahead of the revelators. Don't try to undercut the revelators. Don't try to oppose them. That's not how the kingdom functions. And the other oak said that as much. Right. We sometimes want to approach the kingdom of God as a democracy as we approach political doesn't sway things. So then the fourth ring sorry. I forgot about that four three. The fourth ring goes into what we just call esoteric doctrine. Esoteric is a big fancy word for it's only partially known, or it's obscured or it's ambiguous. And so is there kingdom progression in the next life? That's an esoteric doctrine. What role does mother in heaven play in our Salvation? That's esoteric. We don't know what's on the sealed portion of the book of Mormon. That's esoteric, is Jesus married. That's esoteric. Surely somebody knows those answers. But they're not openly and declaratively revealed in the church. They're open for discussion and interpretation. But there's nothing binding about them. There's nothing binding about them. So I want to kind of as we talked about this concept of policy and like we mentioned, this is sort of a hot topic. I mean, I guess it's a hot topic, every generation. Something you taught me about doctor and covenants one 28 versus 9 about the role of receiving revelation. I hear some people say, as far as policy doctor and saying that I don't think that was received through revelation. How would you respond to that? Well, if it's okay, I'll pull out the scripture. Section of 128 verse 9 teaches a really interesting concept. I call it the bold doctrine. And Joseph speaking of the ceiling power says this, it may be seen versus 9. It may seem to some to be a very bold doctrine that we talk

of, a power, which records or binds on earth and binds in heaven. Nevertheless, in all ages of the world, whenever the lord has given a dispensation of the priest to any man by actual revelation or any set of men, this power has always been given. Now here's the lesson. Hence, whatsoever, those men did in authority in the name of the lord, and did it truly and faithfully and kept a proper and faithful record of the same, it became a law on earth and in heaven and could not be an old. And then Joseph says, this is a faithful saying, who can hear it? It's almost like he's like, do you get what I'm saying here? Yeah, I love that. He's saying that when profits who hold ceiling keys when they act in their authority in the name of the lord, truly and faithfully, and they make a record of it, it becomes a law on earth and in heaven. And the lord honors that decision. And so it might not have come down as a voice of God from on high or an angel declaring or revealing it. But if the brother in acting in their keys as the lord's agents, meaning his representatives, if their united voice and keys make a decision, it becomes a law on earth and in heaven. And that's a faithful saying who can hear it. This may be a very bold doctrine we talk. That's such a powerful phrase. Right now, we're like, but if remember, also, like, I think it's in the book of Gila and the lord said to me, that he was giving him the ceiling power because he knew that he would not ask anything that was contrary to his will to God's will. And those are the kind of revelators that we've got. And I'm just going to reference that defy in the book of humans such a great example of this that he was given that's a great example of given the keys. And I think the doctrine of keys is so important to understand. It's not just an authority. It's an authority to direct. That gives a lot of autonomy to that leader, which from a bishop's point of view. Sometimes you're just thinking, am I doing the right thing? Is the lord sanctified every direction I'm giving, but to me it takes off so much pressure and being like, listen, we called you, you're a good guy. You have good common sense. You have the keys. Now move forward. There are times on a general level and a personal and local level where the lord gives clear revelation. But there's also times on the lord says I respect your decision and will honor what you decide. So long as you do it truly and faithfully in your authority and in the name of the lord. And he uses this example in your education week address of as far as it's very typical to be in a bishopric meeting and you need a second Sunday nursery leader every other November. You need this calling okay, who do we got? And a lot of members we romanticize about this idea that the angel descended upon my bishop and told him that this is exactly where I need to serve at this time.

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When a reality is sort of like, we're just trying to just move this word forward and we think you could position here, and that doesn't mean that revelation wasn't received. It's that revelation was created by the bishop directing it. The concept of an agent, sometimes in the church, we say agency. And we think all the power to choose. If I could give an alternate definition, it also means the power to represent if you or I became movie stars, we would likely have an agent if we were professional athletes would have an agent if we were a musician. We would hire an agent. And what our agent does is we let our agent know our general will. And then the agent goes out and makes specific decisions and represents us. And then comes back to us and says, this is what I decided is this okay. They're vested with power to represent. And the lord has agents on this earth on every level on small levels in a family and award. And he has agents on

the general level of the church as well. And I think there's several examples of an issue or a problem that may be a bishop or at least I present is really wrestling with and is taking it to the lord of the temple and really desiring that revelation. And there's others that just move forward and make a decision and that still sanctioned. And if it's wrong, the lord will let us know. Right. Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. I want to talk about going to the ambiguity of doctrine. Let's pivot back to where we started in the Sunday school class. There's sort of this feeling that we have to respect every doctrine of this level as if it's a core doctrine. Sometimes people think, well, I would make a comment, but I don't know if that's doctrine, right? But if we look at it as like, well, that's a supportive doctrine or a policy doctrine. And let's just talk about it. How do you see it? As far as advancing from one king to another, I really don't think that does happen. And someone else may say, well, I think it does. That type of scenario, we sort of avoid as a Sunday school pregnancy like we don't want that to happen because people feel uncomfortable and who knows which is doctor and so let's just avoid that altogether, which then waters down the teaching in general because we stick with, well, what is faith and what does it mean for you to parade? Does anybody have an experience where they pray, right? And we don't get a deeper discussion. So what do we need to understand about the ambiguity in the doctoral model that will help us maybe facilitate a better discussion and deeper discovery at church? Yeah. Well, I would say in the doctoral model, first of all, if it is a core doctrine or a supportive doctrine or a policy doctrine, if it's clear where the church is, if you have cumulative teachings of the brother and the united statements or cohesive scriptures, then we have a responsibility in our church classes to teach those things. And to uphold those as the church's doctrine. The esoteric level, the ambiguous level is where we should be a little more open to discussion. And sometimes people are like, well, I don't want to talk about those things. We just need to stick to the core. And that's your decision as a teacher or a leader, and that's great. And they may use a phrase like we've got to be really careful here that we don't venture off somewhere. In reality, we can still be in the world of doctrine and explore, right? Especially if it's ambiguous. If it's not defined, and frankly, sometimes in the church, we have a hard time with ambiguity. We have a hard time with things that aren't clearly defined or clearly known. So we like to avoid them. But sometimes it's in the very wrestling with ambiguous concepts that clarity does come. Yeah. So what would you do if you were a Sunday school president and working with creating a more fruitful experience in gospel doctrine? How would you manage that or instruct a teacher to find that balance of doctrine and so it's a richer experience? Well, one of the first things you have to do is you have to say I call it making a split decision. And by split decision, it means you write down or you make sure you teach what's known on the subject and declared what should we proclaim and sustain and what's unknown and undeclared on the subject? And when you split it that way, then you can say, okay, this is what is declared and known through revelation or through prophetic teachings. And these are the things that are unknown and undeclared. The stuff that is known, we should emphasize that people proclaim them and sustain them. And then the things that are unknown be free to talk about them. So whatever the subject it is, if that comes up, then let people talk. Let's say that we're studying the Old Testament and somebody has something come up about the theory of evolution in a class. Well, there might be some members of the church who really quick want to say evolution's false evolutions of the devil. And other people want to come out and say, no, no, no, no, no, evolution is scientific. It's proven, it's factual by every open minded person. And as though you have to pick one or the other, and you don't. And

so if I were approaching teaching the creation, for example, I would say, okay, what is known? Well, we know that the lord Jesus is the creator of this world.

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We know that God oversaw the creation. We know that men and women are created in their similitude in the similitude of God. We know that according to Moses, it started with lower order forms. It's interesting that the creation of the world goes from water to land to swimming things to creeping things to birds to animals than to people. I think Darwin would say, yeah, that follows my model. And so, okay, so this is what's known. This was the order of creation. So that's what the church proclaims and then say, all right, we've had some brother and say that evolution's false. We've had others who have been open to it. The church came out in 1909, and it was reaffirmed in 1926 and reprinted a 2002 that the church has no position on evolution other than God that man can evolve into a God. They use that play on words. But they say let how man came to be pursued by science. And so then you could open it up to maybe say all right, then if that's what's known, and this is what the church proclaims, then how can we balance some of these teachings and still sustain it but still be open to what science is teaching and revealing through their methods through the scientific method and be open to a discussion that way and not just try to shut everything down if somebody says, I think evolution is true and someone says, I think it's false. And you're like, I don't want to have this discussion. Because I think it's more like a managing the opinions in the room. I wonder if it would be beneficial for gospel doctor teachers identify these levels of doctrine and say, you know, yeah, that is a core doctrine. What that said, you know, that's a supportive part of doctor. This is a policy doctor. This is an unknown or an esoteric or only partial. I think it's helpful. And then also to say, how do we know it? Yeah. How do I know this is a doctrine? Is this coming out of the harmonized scriptures, united statements, cumulative teachings or church manuals? Because I've done a lot of writing and brought a lot of discourse to this as far as conflict in Sunday school class. There's some that feels like, well, I can't check off all these, I believe all these things. And so I don't feel like I can go to gospel doctrine and share my perspective because I just get shut down. Directly or passive aggressively. The gospel doctor has to manage that as far as how can we hear maybe some alternative supportive doctrines or an alternative perspective of support of doctors without offending this person or having the person raise your hand and say, well, we've got to be careful here that we don't talk about false doctrine. Uses these Trump cards. Well, I mean, that's an art. It really is. This is where it's a blessing and a curse to have a lay ministry. Because we're not trained professionals on this. If you're a trained discussion facilitator, you might be doing a little bit better. But everybody can begin by number one respecting everybody's opinion. Follow what section 88 says that every person's speech and Joseph Smith one time even said, I think it's in the council of 50 minutes. I'd have to go check, but I'm going to paraphrase him. He basically said, we have to agree to disagree longer. And he said, sometimes we try to come to agreement too quickly because we're trying to just diffuse any tension or weirdness. That's not his words. This is maybe the psychology behind it. We don't like there to be uncomfortable disagreement nuance. And Joseph is saying, we need to disagree longer and allow the disagreement to take place. Because it's in the very nature of the disagreement that we come to clarity on certain

subjects. So I would say number one don't think that if there's disagreement on the subject that you're doing wrong or that anybody in your ward or your Sunday school is like being unfaithful. Those are frankly judgmental positions to take unless they are directly trying to oppose and undermine established core fundamental teachings of the church. Then we do have a responsibility to say no. This is very clear. If somebody comes out and says, I just don't think that Jesus is the Christ. Well, you better say something about that. That's pretty established. But if it's not, let's open let people discuss and be okay with it. And it try to establish a tone where we're open to people's ideas. We're not going to shoot people down. We're not going to criticize, and then if people disagree with you, it doesn't mean that anybody is offending you. Let's not take offense so quickly. I've heard people say before, I don't say anything in gospel doctrine because nobody listens to me. What do they mean by that is nobody agrees with me. Listening to you and agreeing with you are two separate things. People can listen to you and I all day long.

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That doesn't mean they have to agree with us. People might be listening to this podcast or not agree with me. And I'm totally fine with that. And we need to be a moral K with that. And say, well, thanks for hearing me, even if you don't agree with me. Yeah. Anything else as far as ambiguity in doctrine that would be worth mentioning or just with you need to embrace ambiguity. There's less that's known than that's unknown. You know, there's just we have answers. I do believe that in the restoration, that's one of the reasons why I love it. We do have answers that others don't. But there's still so much we don't know. And there's still so much that's unclear. And I think my take on it is I think God wants it that way. If I can use an art analogy, I was with an artist more of an abstract artist who does installation art. And he was telling us that he did this installation piece of art and somebody said to him, you need to tell us what it means. You need to put up like a placard next to it explaining it. So I can get it. And he said, no, I refuse to do that. He said that would be the worst thing for me to do. I want you to wrestle with it. I want you to have to engage with it. I want you to have to think it through and analyze it, and he said, I'll drop hints, but I'm not going to explain the whole thing. Spoken like a true artist. So that you can come to your own conclusions. And he said, and if you're not willing to put in the price to wrestle with it and to engage with it, and you're going to walk on to another piece of art, then that's your call. And I think God operates kind of like an abstract artist sometimes. If God wanted to make everything extremely clear, he could make it really easy. He could manifest himself every Sunday afternoon at noon and say hi to everybody and yell from the rooftops that The Church of Jesus Christ a lot of these things is his authorized restored church and that we should all keep the commandments, but he doesn't do that. He places hints, he places drops. He puts the sculpture out there or the abstract art. And then he wants to see if you and I will wrestle and engage with it. And it's more unknown and undeclared than it is known and declared. And as we wrestle with things, the ambiguous the unknown, we hope that we come to more clarity. And I love that the way to think of that, correct me if I'm wrong, but maybe speaking from a teaching perspective in churches, as students leave that classroom, we want them to have some answers and these things we learn, but maybe a deeper desire to go

or wrestle with some of this information they've learned not in a negative way or doubtful way, but to really dig in and find a deeper understanding. God needs seekers. Yeah. He wants people who are willing to seek and find. And that requires things that aren't exactly clear. I got one more question for you, but before you do that, if people want to learn more about you about your art, I know you do a good Instagram, you're a good Instagram. Follow me on Instagram, brother, Anthony sweat, or I have a website, Anthony S.W.A.T. dot com where you can see some of my books and paintings and yeah, awesome. All right, last question I have for you is I typically ask leaders as I interview them like what is being a leader taught you about being a follower of Jesus Christ. But I'm curious as you have painted leaders and illustrated leaders and family stories, what is painting leaders, how is that influenced you as a follower of Jesus Christ? That's an interesting question. Well, I've mainly taught, sorry, I've mainly painted Joseph Smith, Emma Smith, early. I haven't painted any contemporary church leaders. So I could maybe speak of Joseph and Emma and Oliver Cowdrey and maybe some of those early church leaders. What I've discovered, I just did a painting of Joseph Smith called the rough stone. And sometimes in paintings of Joseph Smith, we like to polish him. We like using a metaphor. We like his skin to be flawless. Every brush stroke smooth over covering blemishes in my study of Joseph Smith as a scholar. He is a colorful man. He's a mortal man, and he's an inspired man. He's a revelatory man. I believe with my whole soul, he's a prophet. But I also know he's a man. And so I did this painting of Joseph I did it with my palette knife. It's really thick paint. It's really rough. And it's multicolored. It's deliberate like blues and greens and yellows and pinks and whites and reds. All mixed together that forms this portrait of Joseph. And so in painting things like that, I think my takeaway of it is, I'm grateful that Joseph was a prophet, but I'm also grateful that he was a man. Because in seeing his humanity, seeing Joseph's humanity doesn't lessen my faith in his prophetic mission. It actually increases it. And what it teaches me is that it actually makes me glad because I know my weaknesses. And I know my own humanity and my shortcomings.

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And I'm sure every person listening to this knows their own as well. And if we have this false dichotomy that God either works through flawless people or he doesn't work at all to quote the scholar Adam Miller, he's the one who said that. That's a false dichotomy. God will work through flawed people who are doing their best to seek to follow him. I've seen that in Joseph and Emma and Oliver and other early church figures. I see that in people today, I see it in myself. I'm grateful God's willing to work with me in my weakness to hopefully try to bring the past. His grace. That concludes my interview with professor Anthony sweat. I just so much enjoy speaking with him and I appreciate the model he puts together and the way he compartmentalizes what doctor is and how not all doctor and is necessarily equal. Not all doctors core doctor. Not all doctrine is a policy doctor, right? And that understanding between what doctor is or policy is and that they're not separate. There's a great overlapping there that is still binding even though it may be known as policy. It can still be policy doctrine. I would ask that you might forward this episode onto another leader that you know whether it's your bishop, your Sunday school president, your relief society, president, anybody you know, maybe even

just a close friend who you know is in a leadership role. For this episode onto him and share your thoughts of why you enjoyed it and encouraged them to listen. That's a great way of how you can help leading saints grow and impact the lives of more leaders. And that concludes this throwback episode of the leading saints podcast. And remember, text the word lead to four 747 four 7 in order to access the three most popular sessions of the liberating saints library. It came as a result of the position of leadership, which was imposed upon us by the God of heaven who brought forth a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And when the declaration was made, concerning the all and only true and living church upon the face of the earth, we were immediately put in a position of loneliness. The loneliness of leadership from which we can not shrink nor run away. And to which we must face up with boldness and courage and ability.