



What to do When the Bishop is an Accidental Diminisher | An Interview With Liz Wiseman

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Kurt Francom (LS): Liz, this is your third time on the Leading Saints podcast, and I welcome you back.

Liz Wiseman: It's good to be here. You know, I actually thought it might be my fourth time, but it might-

LS: It may be!

Liz Wiseman: It might be the third or the fourth, but I hope you're suspicious that I'm out for your job, that I actually want to be the host of the Leading Saints broadcast.

LS: There you are. Well, it's yours.

Liz Wiseman: Because I keep coming back.

LS: You speak the words, and you can be the host of Leading Saints. I think you're much more qualified than I will ever dream of being. Nonetheless, [00:03:25] I always mention how kind you've been to the Leading Saints organization, and the way we've interacted. I do name drop your name for various times. "Yeah, I actually know Liz Wiseman, you know, so, she's a pretty big deal." Right?

Liz Wiseman: We teach together.

LS: We do, we do. The reason why we got this interview together is, you have recently revised your world-renowned, best-selling book, I'll build it up as it should be, of "Multipliers". You done a revised edition, is that right?

Liz Wiseman: [00:01:00] We have. We've done a revised edition, it's really just started for me as just a little bit of a thorn that was in my side because there is this question that keeps coming up over and over. I've been trying to address it, and that led to this next edition. The question that had just come up for so many people, they say "I read your book. I very much want to be a multiplier, but I have to say, my biggest [00:01:30] angst is the fact that I'm stuck working for a diminisher. What do I do?" I wasn't hearing that question every now and then; I was hearing it constantly.

What I was finding is that there's a number of things that are barriers to people being able to lead like a multiplier. One of them is: how do I build other people who are leading this way? It's really hard to lead well alone. [00:02:00] We're finding that there's a number of barriers. It's more than just individual will. How do you build a community of people who are wanting to bring out the best in others and create an environment where people can be at their best work, do their best work, use their full intelligence, and grow their intelligence? Everything that's added to the book is probably because these were questions I was getting that I don't feel the original book addressed very well. [00:02:30] You know, when you feel like there's only so much I can do answering questions one-on-one that you decide to write it down.

LS: Yeah. That was one of my questions, is if a revision comes from a push from your publisher saying, "Hey, let's reassess the book and find some more information we can put in," or is it more like you said, that this was a thorn in your side thinking, "Man, this and that question just needs to be a little more clear in my publication?"

Liz Wiseman: Well, the publisher wanted to refresh the book at its [00:03:00] ten year anniversary, but that's seven years ... I'm sorry, it's been seven years, so that's three years from now, and I said, "Well, I can't really wait that long." I want to do that now, but I'm probably impatient by nature. It was trying to provide answers to some of the toughest questions.

LS: You've already sort of hit on the first one, and I get this type of email all the time, and I've heard it [00:03:30] in various interviews that you've done, that this question comes up. It's easy, when there's a problem in a workplace, to look outward and not inward. I think the first version of your book sort of challenged us to look inward.

I remember picking up the book, thinking, like, "Well, I'm a pretty good multiplier. I'm a good leader," and then, halfway through, thinking, "Oh boy, maybe I'm not as good at this as I can." Then we are also drawn to people like, "Well, I would love to work in this sort of situation or serve in this type of calling with this type of leader." You know what, [00:04:00] I get this e-mail all the time "My bishop just doesn't get it, my relief society president, I want her to understand this concept we've talked about on Leading Saints, or that concept, but they just don't get it.

We sort of shrug our shoulders and think "Well, this will never change and I'm just going to mail it in on Sundays and do my best to fulfill my calling the best I can. But we're not going to see change." You really address this problem of diminishers that we are following.

Liz Wiseman: I think the new edition addresses [00:04:30] this larger problem of what it's like when we ride the inspiration rollercoaster to nowhere. Where we're all built up, we're super excited, and we feel like we're watching something. I've done this with diets, I've done it with scripture study, I've done it with personal change, I've done it with leadership where I get really excited about something, but then either I don't fail to deliver, or I find, that actually, when it comes to leading, I have roommates.

[00:05:00] It's like in our home where one person gets jazzed up. It's me, it's my husband, it's one of the kids gets jazzed up that we're really going to have a strong discipline around scripture study or family prayer, and it usually takes more than just one person to make that happen. It takes collective agreement. There's a day when one parent is going to have a tough day and say "I just don't have the energy to corral [00:05:30] the kids today, or to get them to open their scriptures." It really is helpful to have another person say "You know what, today, I do have the energy." You could take a bye, and I'll make this happen today.

We're finding so many leaders who were super motivated, but then it begins to wane. How do you really build a culture of great leading? How do you do it across a presidency? How do you do it across a ward? [00:06:00] How do you do it across your company? How do you do it in the collective is one, how do you deal with inevitable diminishers. You can't really get rid of them. So many people come to me saying "Help, help me fix my boss." I have seen numbers of them and numbers of the church referring to their diminishing bosses in their ward.

LS: In the [00:06:30] preface, you talk about these new insights that are included in this revision. I love, number two, how you state, and this is perfect for when our bishop, or relief society president is a diminisher, because sometimes, the good guy is the bad guy, right? We see a leader in the church, the bishop, you can tell he's trying so hard. People just are frustrated, or they're diminished. They feel like they can't be the leader they really want to be until they move or find a different situation where they can be. Sometimes the good guy is the bad [00:07:00] guy.

Liz Wiseman: Yeah, I mean, this was one of the big findings, and one of the reasons for this new edition was when I started, I kind of saw it as good leaders and bad leaders and diminishers and multipliers, and I've come to see that most of the diminishing that's happening in our workplaces, in our schools, in our homes, in our wards, in our counsels, is coming not from the tyrannical, narcissistic bully. It's fun to study those people. Well, it's not really [00:07:30] fun to study those people, but it's fun to write about those people, it's fun for us to talk about it, lament, have therapeutic conversations about these kinds of diminishers, but most of the diminishers are really well-intended leaders.

They're people like me who really value good leadership, who want to be a good parent, who want to be a good auxiliary president, or currently serving as a seminary teacher, and [00:08:00]

find that sometimes, it's with the very best of intentions as a teacher, as a leader, as a parent, that we can end up doing the greatest damage. What I found is actually, the most prevalent form of diminishing is accidental diminishing and it's the hardest to treat. Because the tyrannical-type diminishers, we can see them, we can avoid them, we can ignore them, and all it takes is some basic survival strategies, which is mostly savvy. The well-intended [00:08:30] leader, it's really hard, because most of us can't see beyond our good intention.

There's that saying that William Wigglesworth who said "We tend to judge others by their actions, but we judge ourself by our very best intentions." This is invisible diminishing, and what's tricky is it's insidious because it actually is as, if not more diminishing than the bully variety. [00:09:00] This is really what I spent more time thinking about is how do you see the accidental diminisher in you, and how do you help someone who is diminishing you and others quite accidentally? How do you help them embrace a different way of operating and leading?

LS: Yeah, and I think a perfect example of this is myself. You know, serving as bishop. You have these different nicknames of individuals, or the type of people that diminish. [00:09:30] The idea-maker, or what's the one around the idea? I forget.

Liz Wiseman: Yeah, it's the idea guy.

LS: The idea guy, yeah, and that's totally me, right? I would be sitting in these ward councils and I would just say "You know, as the bishop, when I'm presiding the meeting, I'm running the meeting, I've got this great idea." I would constantly feed this meeting with these ideas that "I have a very creative mind." These ideas would come more and more to my mind than maybe somebody else, so I'd share them. Reading your book, I suddenly realized [00:10:00] my intention of bringing these great ideas to the counsel diminished the effectiveness of the counsel, and other individuals, because nobody wants to say "Bishop, that's a bad idea, actually, this is why it won't work."

Liz Wiseman: Right, and so when you become the fountain of ideas, other people don't actually ... First of all, it confuses people. Because it's like "Okay, did you want me to do that." People think you're kind of chasing ideas. "Okay, bishop has got me doing this. Now he's got me doing this. Now we're doing this." Eventually people say [00:10:30] "I give up, because I'm making a millimeter of progress in a million directions." People just stay put, and it actually builds apathy for those ideas.

Then, when someone else is idea-rich, other people get idea-lazy. Like "Hey, I don't need to come up with ideas, because the bishop is a fountain of ideas. It goes off every hour. It goes off once a week when we're in counsel or whatever."

LS: That's me.

Liz Wiseman: I'm going to get my ideas there. People end up [00:11:00] holding back. It's one of these silent killers of energy inside of organizations. I say this, I'm an idea guy. I have a work-around for this. My work-around is this. I have a work-around, I don't always follow my work-around.

LS: Right, I'm right there with you.

Liz Wiseman: You're different. My work-around is I just ask myself this one question, it's about a filter, and good executives have filters. The filter is [00:11:30] "Liz, do you want the people on your team to stop what they're doing, suspend everything and work on this?" If not, write it down. Put it on your big girl list. A piece of paper that I hold and I save that idea for when I'm ready for someone to entertain it and take action. That's a simple work-around. Do you want people to stop what they're doing and work on this [00:12:00] or label it as just a wild idea?

Like, I [inaudible 00:12:07] if my team will push back on me and they'll be like "Liz, you're in idea guy mode. Like, do you want us to work on this?" I'm like "No, no, not really." They're like "So, in other words, you just want to hear yourself talk?" I'm like "Yeah, yeah, I guess so. I guess I do." We have a good laugh, and I'm like "Okay, that was my idea, now I'm done, but for the most part, I learned to just hold back [00:12:30] and release that idea when people can hear it, process it, take action on it." Otherwise, I'm just "Let it be a journal moment. Write that down."

LS: Yeah, that's so true. Yeah, and I think, especially in my ward counsel, I felt like I sort of built this dynamic where individuals were coming to ward counsel, so this is a meeting where we go to hear the bishop's ideas and see how we can help him out to execute those, right? On the surface, that's not what I wanted. I remember making that shift after reading Multiplier to [00:13:00] really ... I remember several ward counsels, I pushed myself to take your challenge and say "I'm only going to ask questions. There is nothing else I'm going to do in this ward counsel but ask questions." I remember that.

I told my ward counsel, that's what I'm going to do. I remember just maybe taking five seconds sometimes before I talked and said "Okay, how can I turn this into a question?" But it made the meeting so much better and new ideas came to the top that other people had buy-in, too, that made for a better meeting. Let's [00:13:30] go back, then. Let's imagine you are talking to a discouraged primary president who just sort of rolls her eyes at the bishop. Though she sustains him, she has a testimony, she knows he's trying, but she just feels diminished because he's a diminisher, how do we start to approach that situation?

Liz Wiseman: Well, let me start with what tends not to work. When I did this research, I started with how are people responding to diminishers, and [00:14:00] does it work? If not, what works a lot better. Let me share with you, I think maybe I've got a list here somewhere. Here are the five most prevalent ways that we tend to deal with diminishers. Number one is confront them. Number two, avoid them. Number three, quit. Number four, comply, and lay low. Which, I like to refer to as quit and say. You know, you've given up, but you're still hanging around. You're just kind of holding back and playing it safe.

Number four is [00:14:30] ignore the diminishing behavior. Number five is ignore the diminishing behavior. We find that the least effective strategies, let me give you this list as well. Confront them, avoid them, comply and lay low, convince them you're right or take HR actions. Sort of report them to the authorities. In other words, the things that we're most inclined to do are the things that are least [00:15:00] effective.

To the [inaudible 00:15:02] of that primary president, tending to confront people about their diminishing behavior rarely works. I can tell you, there is a time when it has worked for me, and it's probably the only time I've ever yelled at anyone. I yelled.

LS: You don't seem like the yelling type, Liz?

Liz Wiseman: You know what, I am not the yelling type, but there was a time where I yelled. I've yelled at my relief society president. Strangely enough, it worked. This is the confront them strategy, [00:15:30] and we were sitting on my couch and we were going through the visiting ... I was working and serving as the visiting, teaching coordinator. My responsibility was to really understand the sisters, their needs, make assignments, and then make those recommendations to the relief society president.

The problem was that I was serving with the relief society president, who was just amazing, and who was kind of one of these [00:16:00] women who just gets it all done. Whenever we would make an appointment to work on this, I would kind of map it out, and I'd get my Post-its out and I'd start mapping out. I knew sisters of this. I'd map it all out, and when we would go to meet on this, I would find that she would have already done this mapping.

At one point, she comes over to my house, and we're [00:16:30] doing this. I lay out the mapping, I've got the Post-it notes on my coffee table, and she pulls out her list, and she's already done the mapping, and I lost it. I just "Judith!" I'm like "I need you to stop! I just need you to stop!" She's like "What?" I said "Do you want me to make the assignments?" She goes "Yes, I do." I said "Then I need you to not make the assignments, because if you make the assignments and I've already done it, see, I'm just going to toss away this work. [00:17:00] What it's teaching me is to just not step up and do my calling." I'm going to just recede here, and I'll send out the notes and fill in the forms, but I need you to decide what do you want me to do.

I really kind of yelled a little bit at her. I'm like "Judith!" She was very startled, but she did step back. She goes "No, I really would like you to." I said "Then I just need you to give me some space. If you don't do it, I will do it." She [00:17:30] stepped back, and it allowed me to step up, and we worked together great from there. We were working together fine in the beginning, but that's the confront them strategy, for the most part, that doesn't work very well, and it's not a strategy that's available to people.

LS: That's not always out of anger. That's not meaning that you shouldn't yell at people. Confronting should be "All right, let's sit down, I've got to tell you some things." Right? It doesn't necessarily need to come from a source of anger, but it does always come from a source of frustration, [00:18:00] right?

Liz Wiseman: Yeah, and I was frustrated, that's where the yelling ... My caveat should be it wasn't grand yelling. It really wasn't in anger, it was probably more conjured drama than anything else. Because I wanted her to hear this message, but here is the thing, here is what I've noticed, that not only do our most frequent strategies tend to be the least effective strategies, our natural reaction tends to exacerbate the problem.

Here is what happens. Let's say [00:18:30] Kurt, in this situation, do you want to be sort of the good guy or the bad boss. I need you to pick a role.

LS: I want to be the good guy, obviously.

Liz Wiseman: You want to be the good guy?

LS: Yeah.

Liz Wiseman: Can I be the bad boss, then?

LS: Yes. Yeah, let's do that.

Liz Wiseman: Okay.

LS: I wouldn't tag you as that title.

Liz Wiseman: No, no, no, I want to be the bad boss, because it's not entirely pretending, there's probably a little bit of method acting, because I probably have some bad boss moments that I can draw on. Let's say that I am [00:19:00] micromanaging and controlling and prone to dictate. Like I really have strong opinions about how things should be done, and I tell you exactly what you need to do. Let's say we're serving together. Maybe we're teaching seminary together, and you're serving along with his colleague who is micromanaging, controlling and dictating. Very natural reaction when working with someone who is micromanaging and controlling is [00:19:30] what?

LS: As the good guy?

Liz Wiseman: Yeah, what do you, as just a human, how do we tend to react to people who are micromanaging and controlling?

LS: Well, I think that generally, people want to avoid conflict, right? So they sort of step to the side and say "You know what? Whatever you want to do."

Liz Wiseman: Yeah, they just back away, but what's going inside of your head? Because, see, here is what I've noticed out there, researching this and teaching this for the last few years is that almost everyone, and this is pretty much universal around the world, they respond to diminishing [00:20:00] in the same way. Some moral compass, some meter, barometer, you might say the light of Christ that is in people, something in our moral sensibilities tells us it is wrong.

LS: Yeah.

Liz Wiseman: We judge it. We say "It's not right, it's not the way good leaders lead, it's not the pattern of leadership that the lord [00:20:30] has established for it." We judge it to be wrong, and it's fascinating that this isn't in the LDS Church, this is crosses, corporations and cultures. What happens when you judge my behavior to be wrong? Almost on a moral level, like "How dare you

sort of take away and usurp from me?" How do people naturally tend to respond? Even if they lay low and stay quiet.

LS: This is [00:21:00] somebody who is micromanaging, and so in their mind, they're thinking "This is wrong, you know? I've got ownership in this just as much as they do. I need to have some autonomy there." Right?

Liz Wiseman: Yeah, so they're going to want to pull away.

LS: Yeah, to pull away and minimize their role.

Liz Wiseman: Step aside, you're going to want to minimize me. How do I sort of maximize my own freedom, Kurt? How do I minimize Liz? How do I push her away? And you are criticizing. What do you think happens to a micromanager, [00:21:30] someone who is fairly controlling who has been minimized and pushed away?

LS: They are not going to respond well.

Liz Wiseman: They are not going to respond well. What exactly are they going to do?

LS: They're going to enhance their micromanaging, I would guess.

Liz Wiseman: Exactly, they're doubling down on the micromanaging.

LS: Yeah. Absolutely.

Liz Wiseman: It happens over and over, and it's what we tend to do. When we deem the diminisher's behavior to be wrong, unacceptable, either just not effective, or actually [00:22:00] almost morally unacceptable, we tend to push them away. They double down on the behavior, which of course means that we pull away. This diminishing spiral ensues. What has been so sad is I've really gone in to study this, is what it ends up yielding almost always is not one diminisher and one diminished person, it actually yields two diminishers. Because, as you judge me, as you push me away, as you stop [00:22:30] listening, and criticizing, you're actually bringing out the worst in me, and essentially, you become sort of a soft diminisher, an accidental diminisher.

Now, we have this standoff between two diminishers. What if, instead of responding to diminishing by pulling away, by evaluating, by criticizing, we responded with the hallmark of a multiplier with just curiosity. Let's say I'm all kind of in [00:23:00] your business, I'm scrutinizing what you're doing and you've responded like a multiplier, and you started asking questions, and you started wondering why, you might start wondering "Gee, I wonder why Liz is micromanaging. I wonder why this is so important to her. I wonder what she's concerned about. I wonder who, above her in the organization, I wonder who's pressing [00:23:30] on her."

Sometimes, in a corporate setting, when I've been working with some really abject diminishers, sometimes all the empathy that I can muster is the empathy to ask "Wow, I wonder who did this to them?" Like, "Who did a number on this person? Who did wrong by this person? Who caused

them to [00:24:00] be fearful? Who micromanaged them, and caused them to micromanage others? What happened in their world? Did they have a first bad boss?" Sometimes, just imagining what has caused them to be so controlling, so worrying, so dictating, allows me just to build the empathy I need to ... I might even say, Kurt, [00:24:30] to love them.

LS: Yeah, I was thinking the same thing, there's a lot that's coming out of this inner-questioning, because you're not looking at them as somebody that's aggressive, like this aggressive monster that's trying to take something over, but you're looking at them as in "You know, wow, something must have hurt them in the past. Like, how can I show more empathy towards that?"

Liz Wiseman: Yeah, you know, there's actually people who study empathy in organizations, and they find that upward empathy, having empathy for the people that we work under, under their [00:25:00] leadership really changes dynamics and actually does a lot for people's careers in the workplace, and I think it does a lot for people's effect. Let's say you respond with empathy, and you're just asking "Gee, I wonder why Liz has got a bee in her bonnet about this?" I'm sure someone has probably wondered that. Instead of excluding me, you start asking for my [00:25:30] opinion. "Hey, tell me what you're looking for. What's important to you here? What can I do that would cause you to not worry about this?" I say "Oh, I'll tell you what I'd do man, if I could see like a written agenda, I would know that this meeting is going to go well."

"Liz, you know what? Let's get this agenda written down." Now, how do I feel about you? The person I was previously micromanaging and telling what to do?

LS: You're trusting them more, because they see the problem that you see, because they're communicating [00:26:00] that, and you're able to communicate effectively to them that this is what I'm worried about. They say "Well, I can help with that."

Liz Wiseman: Right, because if you see the problem I see, you start to look like a genius to me, or you look like someone who's in control. I then feel trusted and heard by you. I then extend trust in return. Trust tends to be very reciprocal when someone's not showing trust for us. It's where this diminishing cycle starts. If I'm micromanaging you, it's saying "I don't trust you." You tend to respond [00:26:30] with "Well, then, I don't trust you, and I'm going to keep you away." Trust tends to be this positive, upward cycle, which means I give you more space, you get to do great work, which then, cements into me, the beginnings of a multiplier belief. That hey, you know what, Kurt can be trusted. He's smart, he's going to figure it out, I give you more space. It's not that you have changed me as a person, it's not like [00:27:00] I don't have my diminisher ways, but you've changed the nature of our relationship.

I think if I could sum up what I've learned about how to deal with diminishers is that you don't get to change other people. You can't turn a diminishing colleague into a multiplier, but you can change your response. When you change your response, it changes the relationship, and it changes the dynamic, and you can craft [00:27:30] for yourself an environment where you can actually do great work.

LS: Yeah, I love that, because this isn't about "Well, here's three tricks to hypnotize your boss, and then he suddenly a multiplier, he doesn't know that he is." It's really just a person that's more from the sampling of building a relationship with them. Of trust, of love, of empathy, and then if you're there, not that everything is going to go smooth or they'll suddenly trust you with every last task that they present for you, but it [00:28:00] gives you a starting point, then this can actually move towards an interaction, a calling that you do enjoy.

Liz Wiseman: Right, and really, what it is, is it's a choice to be the multiplier, yourself. That most brilliant work is done in the presence of this multiplier logic; this belief that people are smart and can figure it out and can grow through challenge and people deserve autonomy and ownership and the accountability that goes with it. That logic doesn't have to trickle [00:28:30] down from the top. It can radiate from the bottom of the organization. It can manifest itself in different forms, but it's essentially making a choice to lead like a multiplier, even to those who are diminishing to you. There are a set of strategies, I would hardly call them magic tricks. What did you call them?

LS: Hypnosis.

Liz Wiseman: Yeah. I lay out, in the chapter on this, I lay [00:29:00] out 13 different strategies, or tactics for doing this, but it fundamentally is about choosing to respond with love and there is quite a few scriptures that come to mind, but I will share something that Martin Luther King said that I think is often quoted, and I think it just really captures this, is talking about, of course, the downward cycle of violence, and how responding with violence really begets more [00:29:30] violence. Returning violence from violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Then he says "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that."

LS: Wow, that's powerful.

Liz Wiseman: I think it is very powerful, and it is only love that can drive out hate. It's sometimes [00:30:00] hard to respond to love when someone's breathing down your neck, but when we do, the right behavior can [inaudible 00:30:07] ... If you want, I can rattle off a number of these 13 strategies.

LS: Yeah, well, one thing that I want to underscore that you've said is, is this this concept of you don't have to be the boss to be the multiplier, right? I think some people, it's easy to read multipliers and think "Wow, these are great strategies and approaches that I'm looking forward to using when I'm the department [00:30:30] manager, or when I'm the bishop, or when I'm the relief society president. It's not about that, and many times, I'm looking forward to my next calling.

I spent the last decade in bishoprics and as bishop, and now with [inaudible 00:30:42] presidency. I'm looking for that calling, when I'm the assistant to the assistant scout leader, and to take on the challenge of how can I have the same impact that I had when I was bishop, because I think it's possible. You know, I really do think it's possible, and it's wearing that mantle. If I'm going to be a multiplier, regardless of where I'm called.

Liz Wiseman: I [00:31:00] think it's possible, and I actually think it's a healthier way of leading. More and more organizations out in the business world, which is where I do my research, a lot of my learning comes from being a member of our faith. Out in the business world, more and more organizations are adopting a model that I call fluid leadership and Google is one of them. It's one of Google's five hiring strategies. It's this notion [00:31:30] of we're not just looking for leaders. We're not just looking for "Oh, you know, I'm a leader, I'm willing to step up and take charge, and I like being in charge, I'm willing to take charge." They're looking for leaders who can step in to leadership roles and go big. If you assign me a leadership role, you know what? I'm going to make sure it gets done, and I will lead the team and I will take charge, and I will do it in a way where people feel good about it and contribute.

I don't have to permanently inherit that role. I'm willing to take charge, [00:32:00] but I'm as willing to follow. In other words, at two o'clock in the marketing meeting, I'm going to be in charge of that, and we're going to run it, and we're going to get the job done and people are going to be through, and feel good, but, at three o'clock, I'm going to walk down the hall and go in to another meeting. Sunir is leading that meeting and Sunir is in charge. He might be three levels below me, sort of a management, but he's in charge, and my job is to fall behind him and to follow [00:32:30] his lead. I was comfortable following as I am leading.

In some ways, this is a bit of a radical idea, that we should be as strong in our ability to follow, and as capable as followers as we are as leaders. Well, for members of the church, this is just a normal Sunday, isn't it?

LS: Yeah, right.

Liz Wiseman: This is our calling system. It's like, I'm willing, in your case, to be bishop, but I'm as willing [00:33:00] to be a counselor to someone else, or to be a teacher, and I can provide as much leadership in any of those callings. Because, I can set the tone for how we work together.

LS: Yeah, that's right, and leadership is everywhere. It doesn't have to be given to you, for sure. Just so I have this, you have a variety of tactics we can do, you mentioned these five. These are five ways to confront or approach a diminisher, one [00:33:30] of those being to confront them. Then, these are 15 ways to do it healthily, or what's the difference between those?

Liz Wiseman: Yeah, what I shared before, these were the things that people typically do. The top five things that people typically do. Most of which don't actually work. How about I share a few of my favorites?

LS: Yeah, let's do it.

Liz Wiseman: The first set are what I call defensive moves. They're things to basically just [00:34:00] keep that diminisher from consuming your life. I have titled this section, it's perhaps my favorite title in the book, now, but it's Defenses Against the Dark Arts of Diminishing Leaders.

LS: You have a picture of Darth Vader on the front of the chapter?

Liz Wiseman: Because that's all I could think of. It's like how do I just defend myself against people who are maybe using misinformed, ineffective models of leadership. Strangely, [00:34:30] one of the most important things is just turn the volume down. It's not avoid the person or ignore the person, but turn down the significance of the diminishing inside of your mind. One of my favorites was we had a bunch of people practice some of these experiment with these ideas, and this one guy, his boss was making him absolutely insane. He laid out the actions of his boss, it's classic diminishing, it was consuming all of his energy, to [00:35:00] the point where he couldn't think about anything else. He felt depressed, he was getting sick, he hated to go to work.

He decided, of all 13 strategies, this was the one he was going to take. He was just simply going to turn the volume down on this. He decided to just remind himself that this wasn't his entire life, and it wasn't his whole being. He decided, of all things, to take up cooking. Gourmet cooking. He said "I decided that I would come home from work, and I would make delicious meals for my wife and [00:35:30] children." He did this for just a two-week experiment. He said "Joy started to return back to me. Like, I began to feel joyful at work just by cooking for my family."

You can only imagine how his wife felt about this whole experiment. That's probably the simplest thing is to simply, you can't make it go away, but turn down the volume. Another one that I really like is the retreat [00:36:00] and regroup. What often happens is people want to go into a head-to-head confrontation with a diminisher. Often, they're know-it-alls who want to be right. It almost never works. One of the strategies, the strategy came from someone who worked at Apple who was working pretty closely with Steve Jobs. This executive ran a significant function. It's common knowledge that Steve Jobs had some diminishing ways.

He also had some incredible multiplier [00:36:30] sides to him, but he had some real strong diminishing behaviors. She said "I would go into a meeting with Steve, and I would present my work, and inevitably, at some point, he would disagree, and he would start to go on the attack with the ideas." She said "Most people would fight back, they would sort of go head-to-head with Steve." She said "I've watched people crash and burn trying to do it." She said "When it became clear to me that he wasn't listening and he wasn't open to this idea, what I did is I stopped, I acknowledged [00:37:00] what he was saying, and I asked for time."

I said "You know what? I hadn't thought about it that way, that's an interesting point of view. Let me give your thoughts some thoughts, and let me come back to you with a new proposal." She would walk out of the room, not victorious, but still in the battle, so to speak. She would schedule another appointment, and she would come back a week or two later. She hadn't given up on her ideas. She hadn't capitulated. [00:37:30] She hadn't just gone with what he had told her to do. She had simply considered his point of view, and come back with something that reflected that she had heard it, but also incorporated all of the good ideas that she and her colleagues brought. She said "Almost invariably, when I would go back, he would support the idea." It's not playing to win, it's looking for common wins.

LS: Yeah, and it's not that that leader wants his idea [00:38:00] to be used, he just wants to be heard. I think Steve Jobs just wanted to be heard in those interactions, and knowing that his point of view is being calculated into their ideas, right?

Liz Wiseman: Yeah, I think it's one of the fallacies that we make is that when people move into leadership positions, particularly senior leadership positions, that they no longer are human. That they don't have a child within them like all of us that wants to be told that they're smart, and doing a good job. That wants to be heard. One of these 13 strategies is also just listen to learn. You know, [00:38:30] listen. Be the multiplier, ask good questions of your boss, that person who is that seemingly oppressive leader and really listen to them. Not to humor them, but listening for what they can teach you. Because bosses want to be heard too.

Retreat and regroup. Maybe one of my favorites, I call it assert your capability. This is one my very colleague Ben Patterman taught me. [00:39:00] This is a really good one, particularly for the accidental diminisher. It's just reminding people that you got it. My colleague, Ben, he worked with me for 10 years at Oracle. Whenever I would get into a micromanaging mode, and it was usually when I was excited about something. I would start to get in and get a little too prescriptive, a little too idea guy, a little too all over it, he would give me the sign. This is what he would do, is he would wait until we got out of the meeting, [00:39:30] so the meeting is over, we'd get in the elevator, and he would always do this.

LS: Hanging himself, like?

Liz Wiseman: I'm choking to death, or he would, sometimes, just walk by my office. I had a glass front door. He'd walk by my office and just hold the choke chain around his neck and he's like "It's a little tight, I could use some more room to breathe." I would laugh, and that was his way. It was a very funny way of saying "You know what? You're choking me, you're killing me, I need some [00:40:00] breathing room." That was my sign that I just needed to back off and give him some space.

Some people might not have a relationship with their boss or their bishop or their primary president to be like "You're killing me." It's saying "Hey, you know what? You don't have to worry about this, I've got this. I'm going to get this across the finish line." Or just like "Hey, I need a little bit more space. Give me some space, and I will get this done." Usually, [00:40:30] like I said, most of the diminishing that's happening is coming from the accidental diminisher, not the one who's trying to choke you to death. The one who is just trying to get the job done and doesn't realize that "Hey, you know what, if I let Liz come up with the first pass of visiting teaching assignments, I don't have to do it." Like "Oh, if she's willing to step up, I can step away, and everyone's happier."

LS: Yeah, and so many leaders, I think the church, we're in an organization [00:41:00] where, often times, people are called to callings which are above their ability, right?

Liz Wiseman: Yeah.

LS: We've all experienced that. As a, maybe a bishop has tried to delegate, but everybody drops the ball because they don't have the skillset to do this. To hear that from those that maybe, you want to delegate to, but not [inaudible 00:41:22] to hear them say "Listen, I understand that you have been disappointed in the past with me or the others, but I really think I got this. I understand all your expectations, [00:41:30] I'm going to do this."

Liz Wiseman: Yeah, it's the "I got this" that is asserting our capability. Is remarkably effective. Particularly, when you speak the language they want to hear. If they are a real detail-oriented person and they come to meetings with agendas, and everything's buttoned down, if you say "I got this, here is my agenda, I'm good to go." You show them the things that are most important to them, most leaders back off and give people space.

LS: Yeah, I [00:42:00] think that's great. Well, Liz, there's not enough podcast episodes that we can consume the detail or that we could discuss the detail of this, because that's why people need to check it out. I do have one more question for you, but before you do that, is Amazon the best place to pick up this revised edition? When is it out and available and what information should we know about going in?

Liz Wiseman: Well, it's absolutely on Amazon. I think a lot of us default right to Amazon, without thinking that there are other places you can get books. There are other companies that sell books. [00:42:30] Barnes and Noble.com sells it, CEO Read, and it's in lots of bookstores. Yeah, of course, you can get it on Amazon.

LS: I think I've seen Multipliers in Deseret Book as well, they usually keep some copies on the shelf.

Liz Wiseman: Yeah, and I think they would be ... The BYU Bookstore has it there too, but I think they put it there just so I'll keep coming down and being guest faculty for free. I actually think there is a secret ploy to why they put the book there.

LS: Nice. Well, Liz, as you've revised this [00:43:00] edition of your book, and you've mentioned before, you look at your books as children in your life, you care for them so deeply, and you want to make sure that they do the job that you've set them out to do. What have you learned more deeply as far as about your discipleship of Jesus Christ as you've studied or revised these principles of Multipliers?

Liz Wiseman: I think the idea of [00:43:30] Multipliers, first of all, I don't think it is my idea. I think I just put words around an idea that already existed. A principle that was out there. I didn't try to do that on purpose, I think that just happened. I just happened. I think my faith put a certain interpretive lens on a set of data. I have found that that has been true across cultures, [00:44:00] across faith. That there is something in this idea of agency of what we've been given, and what we're supposed to do with our agency and our talent, and how we're supposed to account for our growth. That resonates with people all around the world. It has taught me that the gospel truly resonates with people around the world.

That's the minor thing that I've learned. I think [00:44:30] the thing that I have learned is I think it's out of Romans, is it Romans 1:18, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ." I have this opportunity to teach leadership all around the world. I was just in Turkey last week, sharing the ideas of Multipliers in an environment where there's a lot of really interesting things going on in Turkey right now. [00:45:00] What I've just made a simple practice is every time I teach, I share my faith. Whether I'm teaching to a predominantly Muslim group, whether I'm teaching to a very secular group, a group of atheists, that I find a way to let people know that I am a person of faith, and that these ideas ... Not that they come from my faith, but that they're compatible with my faith.

[00:45:30] I have found so much incredible joy in just living my faith, wholeheartedly. Sometimes, we worry that people will shy away from us because we are people of faith, but I think I have just not experienced that at all. I feel like people respect that, and it attracts other people of faith. Whether it is LBS or Christian, [00:46:00] or Muslim or more. I think that's what I've learned. Is just to lead with my faith.