



Covid-19, Masks, and Vaccines are Causing Friction in My Ward, Now What? | A Conversation

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As latter day saint leaders, we face very difficult conversations that put us at risk of saying the wrong thing that can do more harm than good. Many of these conversations relate to LGBTQ Latter day Saints. Have you had a fellow board member come out to you about their LGBT identity? Have you had LGBT neighbors? And you just don't know what to say to them. So you ignore them instead. Have you wrestled with balancing love for your fellow men while still respecting the doctrines of the restored gospel? In order to help, leading saints is put together the LGBT saints library with more than 20 presentations featuring individuals who have a unique perspective or expertise around this topic, three of the most popular sessions are available now to watch, simply text the word lead to four 747 four 7 to start watching now or visit leading saints dot org slash LGBT. So I want to just give a quick introduction about what you're about to hear. This is sort of a new segment that Dan Duckworth and I are playing around with this idea of approaching specific leadership situations. I'd love to get your feedback and ideas on what you think about this approach to maybe some segments on the leading saints podcast or we may just record a lot of these and put them up on our YouTube channel, the leading saints YouTube channel. Make sure you're subscribed there so you don't miss any interesting content where we just take a question, a situation because we hear from a lot of leaders around the world about different things and concepts, certain dynamics happening in their local wards or quorum or groups. And we just think, you know, how could we think about this from a principle centered leadership standpoint? How do we approach this? What's some things to consider, not consider? And then we'll probably bring some various guests to on with Dan and I for these

conversations and we'll see how it goes. So here's the first attempt at doing this type of a segment. Let us know what you think. We're at the studios. You've probably seen during our virtual summits, and I'm with Dan Duckworth, Dan, how you doing? Great, thank you. Awesome, good to be here. Yeah, you know, what happens? This is what led to this conversation. Dan and I go to lunch a lot, you're a board member of leading saints. I mean, you help out in more ways than the world will ever know. And so we go to lunch sometimes and we have these conversations that are podcasts worthy that the world will never hear. And so and typically they revolve around certain scenarios, experiences that we hear about through leading saints. And I send out, well, we leading saints. Everybody who joins the newsletter at some point will get an email that usually asks a simple question of what is your biggest leadership concern at the moment. And it's interesting just here sort of from the ground what it is that leaders are dealing with, the dynamics, the issues, and obviously we see themes or what not. And so I've shared those with you and we're going to talk through some of these things and just really this is more about leaving the audience with more questions than answers. I would feel much better that a person watching this or listening to this can walk away thinking, wow, you know, current Dan have given me more questions to consider through the appropriate channels to really go through. And hopefully you do that and receive inspiration. And then we'll give our thoughts and perspectives just from our own personal experience. And see what we can learn. Is that a good intro? I think that's great. So I think the way we can think about this is it's a pilot at this point, right? So we get together, we have these conversations. We're just two guys. You can think of two guys two gals, husband and wife. Counselors in a pregnancy who just get together and they like to talk about leadership. Right. And specifically to talk about leadership in the context of serving at the local level of the church. So many opportunities to think through the dynamics of human relations of culture and how does the doctrine and the policies fit into all these things.

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And we're all just trying to help people. And we're all trying to help the mission of the church to advance. And so if you just think about, if you could have a mic and record every one of those conversations, it's happening all over the world. That would be some fascinating content. But like you said, it would give us more to think about. It would help us push the boundaries of the sometimes narrow conversations that we have. Not because you and I are right, but because we happen to have an opportunity to record some of these conversations, we thought, hey, why don't we come in here? Let's try it out. Let's see if it's helpful. Yeah. So like say, this is a pilot. We're going to do a few sessions of these record them. And if it goes well, maybe we'll loop in a third person that maybe has an expertise and one area of leadership was written a book or I don't know just another Joe schmoe like us to talk about these things and see where it goes. So I think you take away anything from this you can take away that when you submit your responses to Kurt surveys or if you reply to his email, they actually get read. Yeah. We're actually processing these things and trying to come up with better ways to help out. So the way this work is, we'll take turns, maybe presenting a scenario. A lot of these are often related to a real life scenario that somebody's emailed in about. Sometimes we'll reach out to that individual or have a conversation with them in some form and just say, so talk me through this, what's going on, right? And then we'll say, wow, that's an interesting dynamic. We'll see what we can learn from it and share because most likely there's a hundred other awards or leaders that are

experiencing a similar situation. Right. All right. Should we jump into our scenario? Let's do it. Transition music. You're right on cue. Thank you. Thank you. So let's introduce the first scenario. So I had an opportunity yesterday just yesterday to reach out to one of these audience members from leading saints. She's a release society president in the United States. And we're recording this November of 2021 just to give you a time stamp. Right. That's good context. So I reached out to I said, your situation that you described in this email is very interesting. Can we talk? And we found some time to talk yesterday. And I think this is a very salient conversation because I think what she's experiencing is it's fraught with sociopolitical risk. And I think that it's happening all over the United States of America, not just in our words and branches, but in lots of aspects of life. So basically, here's what it comes down to. She said, we're in an area of the country where we're starting to be pretty open in terms of return to normalcy with the COVID-19 pandemic and the quarantines. So we should say we're all kind of coming back now and we're getting into full swing with activities during the weeks and churches pretty normal. And as far as as far as that goes, we're seeing that there are some sisters in the relief society who are still very hesitant to participate in either church on Sunday or coming to the activity. So there's this feeling this urge from this release society president that we're back. We're open. We should be pulling these sisters in. We should be doing things that bring them in and make them feel comfortable to come in. At the same time, there's this tension of, well, maybe they don't feel safe. And maybe they're holding back for legitimate health reasons. And it's the same time there's also this underlying feeling that she has that it isn't necessarily about the health. It's about the dynamics between two different political persuasions. That's causing this friction within their exactly. So then she says, for those who are coming, in her particular area, masks are not mandated at church or schools or things like that. Like politically or from the government from the government but also for the church, it's not mandated either. So it's optional for people to come to church with a mask or without. She said the majority of the people are not wearing a mask. There are some that are. But what she's noticing as an observer is those who are wearing masks are starting to group together. And those who are not wearing masks are starting to group together. And it's almost as if you can see two groups forming right before her eyes. And this is bothering her. She's saying there's something about this that doesn't feel right to me. And then on top of that, she said, one of the biggest issues is what's going on on social media. That's not what's happening in church so much. So there's been a few things where somebody will raise their hand in Sunday school and make an extremely politically biased statement. And usually this comes in the form of, this is the doctrine of the church, and yet here I am expounding one party's platform. And it's happening for the Republican side. It's happening for the democratic side, right? If we were to just think narrowly in terms of two parties. Right. And so that tension is real inside the Sunday school inside the relief society. She's seeing this in terms of the congregation. And then she said what's happening on social media is people are becoming incredibly passionate. In expressing their opinions and they're drawing lines on social media.

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Basically, you're either on my side or you're my enemy. Well, unfortunately, some of these people live in the same ward. They go to the church, they go to church together. And so what this is creating is, during the week, they're having all kinds of conflict and tension online. Maybe

not even directly. There may not be engaging each other, but they're reading each other's opinions. And so they're starting to form opinions about other people and about how those people are different from them. And it's reached the point where she's even had sisters reach out to her and ask that sister so and so no longer be my ministering sister. Sister so and so no longer be my companion. I only want to go ministering to certain types of families. So she's feeling this happening in a very real way. Now, if I step back and look at this, I go, I think this is not a church problem per se. It's a geopolitical problem that we're starting to feel in our church setting in a very real way. But it may be competing with our goals and objectives as a church community. What do you think? Are you seeing this other places? Is this an isolated incident? Or is this a trend? Oh yeah, I mean, I think in any word you go to. There's this feeling of just this tension that's in the room and like how you frame it as a geopolitical issue that's now sort of bleeding over into our church experience, right? It seems like maybe I was too young to this, but you know, in the 90s or in the 80s, you could easily keep those things separated without much, much effort where you could come to church and you sort of, these are my people. They understand me. And go about their way. And it really doesn't matter if they vote per se. And so now it's like, okay, this is now bleeding over into church. And so the sort of the laissez-faire approach of being like, oh, well, you know, this will go away or whatever. I don't think we can maybe default to that. Where my mind goes first is that the principle and I hear this a lot where I'll hear from people they're like articulate beautifully like this issue they're dealing with or what they're thinking and how they love these people, but they don't want this to happen or that. And oftentimes I just say, you know, if you just took what you told me right there and wouldn't talk to that person or that group, that quorum and just said the exact same thing, they would be so welcoming and open and refreshed by that. So what happens is there's this tension and we go to passivity where it's like, well, we'll handle it. Let's go to word counsel. We'll talk about reward counsel, but when we're facing the ward, let's just keep things cool and not rock the boat per se. But oftentimes, when there's this tension, all it really needs is sunlight. Like bringing it out and saying, wow, you know, as a leader, this is what I see. Like, what am I missing? What are you seeing from your perspective and creating a discussion like that's going to be so encouraging for individuals to just say like, you know, I see how people are seeing it. I was actually had a platform where I could be heard. There's this concept of as a leader we often think like, well, my role is to take these problems and we go to our councils and we solve the problem. But oftentimes your role is not to solve the problem, but to bring the problem to the community and say like through the keys I hold maybe or that the higher up perspective I have of just leading this group, I see this problem. And I've brought it to you. Now let's come together as a community and talk about it and see if we can figure it out. And that removes the passivity gives sunlight to the problem and suddenly people are like, oh, yeah, I want to engage in this discussion and be heard. And even if their ideas aren't embraced or applied, just the fact that you've given them a platform to be heard and talked about. So anyway, what comes to mind? I say all that. Yeah, let's keep going down this track because I think how many times have you heard recently that we've always had this conflict. We've always had these political parties. We've always had this tension that's existed, even in our words and branches. But this time it feels different. I mean, I hear that so often, even to the point where some of the older people in my life who maybe were alive during the 60s and 70s or during some of these hardcore political scandals that we used to learn about in elementary school in the history books is it just another

episode and to a person each one of them is said to be no. This is different. There's something else going on here and I'm really troubled by it for your generation for the generations to come. And I think I think that what's going on here that's different is that our identities are shifting. Our loyalties are shifting. So you said, it's used to be that we could just come to church and say, hey, these are my people.

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But that's not what people are saying anymore. And this is happening at the American level. People are no longer coming and saying, hey, we are all Americans. These are my people. And we might have some differences at a level up from that. But fundamentally at the base, we are all Americans, or within our church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints, we are all members of Christ church. These are my people. And yes, we might differ in terms of where we like to shop or who we vote for or things like that. But there's that fundamental commonality that identity, that core. And it seems like some of the works that I've been reading are around class shift and other things that's going on right now in the world, not just in America. It seems like people's identities are shifting away from those foundational large base communities and it's becoming more tribal. It's saying, no, I am first a political partisan, and then I am an American. I am first a political partisan, and then I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints. Now, of course, that would offend a lot of people. If I were to say, I think you've relegated your identity as a member of Christchurch to second class to your identity with a certain political party, they may not be able to see it articulate it, but the sociologists are starting to see that and to articulate it. So that's an interesting concept. And I think it goes back to another point that came to mind as often times and this is like the what makes leadership so different is that everybody is showing up with different with giving priority to different values. For example, there may be those individuals who think I can engage in this ward because they do not value safety as high as I value safety. So therefore, I'm going to stay home and shake my head at the bishop. Like, why aren't you forcing these people? Mandating these people to wear a mask to act like this to so that your prioritizing safety where that bishop is bringing the value of community, oftentimes saying we need, I know there's a pandemic. We want to keep people safe. But it's Paramount that we give a place for people to come and engage, right? So safety and community, there's not one of these is not the devil's advocate here. Like these are good values, but they're just ranked differently. And so you see this in different contexts where maybe a bishop has a certain goal of baptisms and award. And so he's bringing this vision to the ward of saying, in this ward, we're going to value missionary work, right? We're going to value retention or whatever it is. But then the other person saying, I don't come to my Sunday experience looking for that value. I sort of feel like I have it or it's not as important to me. And so then they feel sort of just diminished, right? And so going back to your you see these different tribes outside of the church forming and oftentimes those tribes are inserting these values that are well intentioned good values into their identity. I identify with this political group and they're really having this value high. So I'm going to take that value insert it into my discipleship and walk into church. And then the clash begins. And it's often a passive aggressive clash. Well, and we don't even know it's happening because we've just put a lens on, like literally put a pair of glasses on. We now see the world completely differently, including we see the gospel of Jesus Christ different than we saw it before. Because we're now seeing it through the lens of these

values, which have become predominant over what might be Christ values. Yeah. And that's the tricky thing is, you know, I Tony over bay and my interview, he pointed out a list that you can go online to a list of these values. And at the end of the day, you can't say, well, they're all good. Let's do all of those values because that just won't work in creating focus and a vision and a direction in an organization. So as a leader, you have to create direction and you have to pick a value that you're going to say this is where we're going or else it just your organization will be a mess, right? And so then it becomes a question of how do you mitigate and manage all of these different competing values and oftentimes it's the one just creating a platform where people can discuss. I'm seeing a conflict of values here. Let's talk about it, sister so and so is definitely afraid to walk in the church and brother so and so has a youth who is dealing with depression because he doesn't have a community to come to on a regular basis, right? And so talking about it, I think is on the first step of hearing the values so that people can come into church and say, well, I have this value in at least I'm heard, at least they know that's my value, and I'm more likely to engage in the group. So let's come back to that in a minute because I want to pull us back to what would be the normal response or the most likely response in a situation like this because it's actually very predictable. So I'm going to draw a different analogy here. So let's take it out of the church context and let's talk about a family because this is something that people are going through with their own families, right? Thanksgiving coming up.

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And along these lines, I'm actually coaching a lady who is having this conflict in her family. So they've shared Thanksgiving together with her parents or was rather her mother and her mother in law for 20 years. But they have always been on two different sides of the political spectrum. But it's now coming to a head over masks and vaccines and elections and arguments like that. It's come to such a head that they had a major blowout between the two of them. They walked away and weren't talking to each other. And the conclusion now, we don't know, but they've had Thanksgiving dinner together for 20 years. And the lady that I coach is saying, I don't think that they're coming over that the in laws are coming over for Thanksgiving this year. Now, when we were talking through, what do you do with this? Like as a leader, what's your first approach? And of course, her first approach was the natural approach. I'm going to do nothing. They're at peace, and maybe time will heal it, right? Right? And in politics, the geopolitics we call this a detente. A truce, an armistice. They're no longer firing shots at each other. They're not in the same room. And maybe it's just best. It's probably just best to let them kind of go their ways and drip apart. And now what happens is you've got a community that used to exist. Centered on this family with in laws together that now is breaking apart and we accept the truth the detente as the answer. So now let's apply that to award setting. We, as leaders in the church, without thinking about it, we want one thing usually above all of the things. And that is unity. Well, unity. But what we really want is no conflict. Oh yeah, yeah. Right. Which is not the same as unity. But it looks a lot. They can feel the same. Like, oh, good. Nobody's mad at each other. We must be unified. And we find ourselves walking away from church on Sunday and saying, nobody said anything. I think nobody took offense at that time. I think we're doing okay. We're okay. It was another week. And we start to tiptoe on eggshells from week to week, just trying to quote unquote, keep the peace. Thoughts on that. Is that true? Is that what leaders are doing? Yeah, absolutely. And the tricky thing is that you may take it to certain council meetings like word

counsel and mull it over and talk about it. And a lot of the times it's like, these are difficult scenarios. So let's just let's just, hey, that Christmas parties coming up. You know, let's just focus there. Let's do the Christmas party. Maybe what people need is a Christmas party. I don't know. You know, it's like we can get them all together outside of release society. And maybe it's the Thursday night activity or whatever. But the question that comes to my mind is I think about that normal approach is Zion is one heart and one mind. So is it possible to create Zion in award setting or relief society setting? Is it possible to create Zion when you've settled for detente? I would say not a chance. Why? Well, because it's in the wrestle where that's like, you have to earn that connection. It doesn't happen naturally, right? You have to sit down with somebody and engage with them and tell they feel understood. And when that mutual understanding is reached, then that unity begins. But that does not, that's not the gravity of it all pulls it apart. But as ward leaders aren't we supposed to be the peacemakers, aren't we supposed to be the ones that find the two kids who are fighting the room and say, hey, let's just calm down like everybody patch it up and let's keep going. Isn't that what our identity is? Is it to be the peacemakers? And you're saying we got to wrestle? That's right. You're saying we got to earn unity through sounds like through some kind of conflict. Yeah, this is why the conflict is so crucial. We've done several episodes about this and oftentimes our cultures and just our human nature. The good Christian culture makes it synonymous with conflict. This isn't about. Contention. Sorry, I'm mixing of the words already. So conflict does not mean contention. We can do this without going to place of contention, but oftentimes, and this is a skill set, right? This isn't just something you magically know how to do. It takes practice and oh boy, I messed that one up. I got to go back to that conversation and say, I sort of took it to contention, did not mean that, let me try again, right? So, but it is a wrestle, I'd say. Well, I love that because, you know, the terminology of the wrestle really comes from Jacob's experience where he was visited by an angel or is it God? He's having this wrestle before he receives a blessing and this idea that we believe we believe that peacemakers must always make peace.

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In other words, it must work for the absence of conflict. But peacemakers must sometimes be troublemakers for the sake of peace. And that's a key difference. It's becoming pretty not cliché but pretty popular right now to celebrate the troublemakers. And you see this in social media all the time, at least in the leadership stuff that I'm reading, right? Score one for the troublemakers. I don't resonate with that term troublemaker as much. I resonate with the term changemaker. Because to make trouble for the sake of trouble, is hardly I mean, there's no worthiness in that. There's no value in that. But sometimes to make peace or to make change, you do have to make trouble as a strategy. So it's not the endgame. It's not the goal in itself. It's a strategy towards making peace. And I think you can turn to the scriptures repeatedly and you can see how Christ oftentimes will make trouble. We all love the motif of the chosen. They really draw on that aspect of Christ leadership a lot, where he is making trouble for the sake of advancing the cause. And what's the ultimate cause, at least as far as the church on earth is concerned? It's unity. Right. Yeah, I mean, we like to turn some tables. Sometimes it takes like Christ said in terms of tables, right? So bring us back. Let's round us back into the situation again as far as like we sort of swam in the soup of these different principles and concepts and values and greater geopolitical thought and whatnot. So how do we get back to this principle and start

taking steps with it? Well, I think you're kind of getting to there already, where we started to talk about how do you approach this? How do you broach this? And that's a lot easier said than done. Because there are personalities involved. And primarily our biggest concern as leaders of the churches that we will scare people away that they will leave the church and it will be a blemish on us. Their blood will be on our hands at the Judgment Day because we're the ones that push them out. We have to come to grips with the fact that people are going to make their own choices. But that doesn't mean that we can sacrifice the good of the whole for the one. And we have to keep our perspective on our ultimate objective is to build a community that is welcoming that is inclusive and that is united, right? But we have to recognize individuals who make their own choices about whether or not they want to be in that community. So now you said values. What a great discussion, values. Let's go back to the identity. The values that a political party espouses are not the same as the values that Jesus Christ espouses. If we didn't need the gospel of Jesus Christ, he wouldn't have given it to us. He would have said, hey, you can get everything you need from your political parties. But those parties today, part of what is the biggest, I think, confusion for people today is the parties are adopting the language of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Terms like diversity, inclusion, independence, autonomy, that might be across the political spectrum, some would swing towards this and others would swing towards that. Those are all principles that you can find very easily in the gospel of Jesus Christ. So I think for us as leaders, we have to be very clear that we are not espousing a doctrine of man, so to speak, but we are relating everything back to the doctrines of Christ as taught in the scriptures and as taught through general conference. And that that's the foundation of the conversations and the conflict that we're going to need to have. We're going to bring everybody back to that, okay? Now what does this look like in principle? I see it looking like one of two things. The group level and the individual level. So at the group level, I think you need to have this conversation. If this is a real issue for you as a leader, if you're sensitive to this, if it's feeling like there's an issue here, you need to have this conversation with the group with the community. So this specific example, it's the relief society. And you need to be authentic, which means you need to share with them everything you really feel. But authenticity doesn't mean I'm right. It means this is the way I really feel. And I need to understand the way you really feel. And she and she and she and she really feels. So it's going to be a different kind of relief society meeting where we say, we're going to need to get some things out on the table. And it's probably going to make a few of us uncomfortable. But I'm asking you to hold the space in which we can have this conversation without jumping to judgment. Without jumping to conclusions, we've just need to listen and to understand each other. Yeah, and my mind goes to this concept of having the conversation.

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And this is where it's so crucial that it doesn't, I don't think we should wait for like this heavy issue or this really polarizing issue to then have a conversation. Like some of the best advice I got from a mentor church leader mentor was he told me never let an elders quorum or core meeting turn into just another Sunday school class. And I think president Nelson is comment on that and in recent years where this should be a place where we come together and we have conversations. We hear each other. We engage that way. And so whether it's this big polarizing issue or something smaller where it's like, okay, the elders core activities coming up. Like what

do you even want out of this? What can we do that's going to really unify us that's not just a pizza party or whatever it is. And having conversations and creating a stage for those conversations are more regular basis so that then when the heavy issues come, we're already practiced. We already love each other. We already know how to listen to listen to each other. I mean, I'll just give you a quick example. And I'm going to take exception to the wisdom you just shared. I would say because I'm a Sunday school teacher right now. Never let a Sunday school class turn into just another elders former release society meeting. Sunday schools where is that? I teach the older teenagers and this is just what I decided to do. First week back when president Nelson, the first presidency issued a statement about masks. And we knew that it was going to be interpreted differently by different people. And our bishopric actually issued a follow-up statement that said, we're going to allow people to choose. Please respect people's choices. And it was basically saying, we don't know how this is going to go. Everybody, but let's try this out. My personal teaching philosophy is to always lean into the topic of the day. Don't hide from it, don't run from it. What was on everybody's minds when they showed up to church that week? It was whether or not so and so I was wearing a mask. Should I be wearing a mask? What's the real situation, right? So we had that discussion with the 16 and 17 and 18 year olds in Sunday school. And it was an extremely uplifting supportive beneficial, mutually bringing us all together, kind of a conversation, but we just tackled it straight on. Yeah. And I'm just thinking of those people if you're thinking, well, Dan, that may have happened your word. If you did that in my ward, it would not go well. And I don't even want to go there. It's easier just to sort of be passive and let it be in any device. What if it does go bad? Well, again, so I'm not going to say you should go, I think I did start by saying start with the community. I just spent our conversation. Let's start with the community. That may or may not be the right answer to go right to the big group and say, we're going to have this big conversation because if the tensions are already really high, you don't necessarily want them to erupt into something that you can't contain at all. So you got to give up control, but you do have to sort of contain what's going on. So there's other options. And we teach leaders to do this all the time in the business setting, right? It's go to the individual. So if there are two or three individuals who are high risk for making comments that are incendiary that are stoking tension, that are making other people feel uncomfortable in the room. If there are high risk individuals, so to speak, go to them one on one. Be authentic. Don't beat around the bush. Hey, sister so and so I'm here because I'm here because and just tell her why you're there. And I need your help. We can do this together. Now, she may be extremely receptive to that and say, oh, I'm so sorry. I never wanted to do that. I never meant to be that way. She may be extremely belligerent and say, I don't see it the way you see it, and I don't think that you're right. And I'm going to share what I need to share because this is my church too. Well, she's right in that perspective. Right. She gets to come and she gets to participate. So in that situation, you know, maybe not on the first visit, but you might consider letting them know that you're going to set boundaries. Now this is something I always advise leaders to do. If you're going to set boundaries for someone who's a loose cannon in a group setting, make sure they know what the boundaries are before they get into the group setting. And it looks like this. Sister so and so I just want you to know that if there are politically motivated comments in class, I am going to interrupt those comments. And I'm going to say those comments don't belong here. Can we please return to the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ? And if you need to ask everybody to ground their statements in a scripture, if you need

to stop the meeting and say, we're going to say a prayer right in the middle of the meeting to invite the whole experience back. You decide what those boundaries and what those action steps are that you take. But number one, you let her know this is coming. Now she gets to decide, just like a child with a parent. She gets to decide whether or not she's going to test those boundaries. And if she tests those boundaries, then you do what you said you were going to do.

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So critical. If you don't do it, then they sense really boundary. And then just as important as all that is, you must go back to them. You must follow up with them and say, I told you I was going to do it. Now I've done it. Now I'm coming back to see how you feel. Yeah. And show forth an increase of love. Yeah. And this is like something I always encourage. Is this this consistent going back to like the ministering interviews? I am of the perspective that the elders court president only or the relief society president only should do every last ministering interview in their ward and people look at me like are you crazy? That's too much work. But clearly says you can divide it up amongst the counselors. But it's this point. As you do that, you're laying the groundwork for when these issues come up. The person sees the leader in the room and says, he knows me. He sat down with me multiple times and asked me about my life, how I'm doing. He's connected with me. And so then when an issue like this arises and you do need to sit down with them, you already have the report in place of, say, of having that, I mean, that's a tough conversation, right? But if you've already laid that groundwork of so many other one to one interactions perfect. Now, I think of a recently talked with a stake president who had this person insert themselves on social media about a situation going on in the stake. And well, then the state prison thinks, well, what, I can't go to every individual in the stake and have that report and that's why each individual must each individual leader must understand that principle. So then you can send them to connect with that person who has that established relationship. Well, and maybe even if you take that principle down to this relief society, president, who's dealing with this, maybe it's not even her that goes and has this conversation. Maybe it is a counselor who she knows has a great relationship. Maybe it's another sister in the ward who has the respect and trust of this sister. But the release society president holds her in high trust, right? So there are things you can do. And that's where we're just giving ideas. We're just having a conversation. I mean, ultimately, this all comes down to, you get down on your knees, and you ask the lord to open your mind. You say, I see a very narrow perspective. All I really want on Sundays is peace. I just want detente, but there's something about that that doesn't feel like unity. It doesn't feel like Zion to me. It doesn't feel like we can accomplish the big grandiose promises of the gospel for these sisters in their lives. If we're just at an armistice. So please open my mind and help me to see alternative strategies as a leader. What are we missing on this, Dan? What else do you got? One last thing I think we need to really hit is this can sound a lot like daytime. Going to the group and saying, we're going to shut down conflict. Going to the individuals and we're going to shut down the can feel a lot like Dayton because the person then feels like I've been censored or I've been canceled to use the term of the day, right? Yeah. And that's the question is, is that detente or is that Zion? It's not Zion yet. Because we're not one heart and one mind. And so I think the key here is when you meet with these individuals or when you're working with a group, you have to really focus them on the ultimate objective and you have to really focus yourself. And this is where love can not be faked. DNC one 21 says

love on vein. Un faked. You can't fake it. So when you show up in that room, what's your bias? Are you really neutral? Are you really unimpeded by their political persuasions? Does it really not affect you? Don't fool yourself. It does. The chances are you wouldn't even be talking to them if it didn't. So how can you be open? How can you be asking for feedback? How can you be having your counselors check you? Where do you feel me? Where do you experience me on this? Do you think that the sisters are experiencing me one way or the other? Those are critical self reflective questions. And then when you get into these situations with either the group or the individual, it's not just about shutting down their voice. It's about helping them to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. And what I mean by that is if a sister doesn't want to come because she's offended by another sister, then this first sister needs an opportunity to increase in love and charity and faith and compassion. So now you're in administering position in a true ministering opportunity to mentor someone to grow. And so you can say things like, I'd like to help you grow in charity towards sister XYZ. And if you're willing to let me help you, I will invest my time and my energy, right? The best example is when sherry due gave her talk called, will you engage in the wrestle? She's got these young people coming to her and saying, I've got these issues.

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Can you answer these questions for me? She says, I can't answer those questions for you. But I will be your mentor. I will study the scriptures with you. I will be on my knees with you. I will fast and pray with you. Well, if these people are, if they're discipleship and they're participation in the church is being affected by their feelings for other sisters in the war to the point where they're either not coming or where they're not participating. They're taking themselves out of the community. Yeah. What if we said, let me help you grow. Not because I have the answers, not because I'm going to try to change you and not because we're going to try to change her. But because both of us need to increase in love and charity together. Yeah. Now I want to make one caveat here that because people may hear this and I want to be clear of what you're not saying as far as people are like, great, I'm going to get in the wrestle where a 5th Sunday is coming up, let's say I'm going to get all the adults in a room and I'm going to talk this out and what typically happens is the leader, the bishop, whoever prepares these statements, I got quotes. I got a testimony and I'm going to throw in there and they're going to talk at this group for 40 or so minutes and bear testimony, maybe get emotional points and then say, you know, in the name of Jesus Christ and then we all go home and then that leader feels like, great, I did it. It wasn't perfect. I probably said it should have said this or that, but it's more you're not saying you just need to get in front of somebody a group of people and talk at them. But more of like inviting the group to step into this conversation. Right. Right. And I mean, everybody has to adapt these things to their own capacities into the way the spirits talking to them. If it was me, and I was standing up in front of a room and I already knew this was a tension in a situation I was worried about or we as a presidency or a council was worried about. I would certainly be on guard. I would hopefully have already prepped the group. Hey, we're going to try to avoid politically motivated statements. We're going to try to ground everything. We're going to try to come back to what brings us together, which is fundamentally the gospel and the doctrines of the Jesus Christ. But I want you to know that we can sometimes think we're talking about the gospel of Jesus Christ, but we're actually promoting a political ideology, just using similar words. So we're

going to work for that in this community. Then either in the middle of a lesson or at the end of a lesson, if something went wrong, that's the moment where I might stand up, but I might say, you know, something doesn't feel right here. I don't necessarily want to point fingers. I don't necessarily people out. You know, right there in the meeting. But to say something doesn't feel right in this room. I don't know if we fully invited the Holy Spirit in. Is anybody else feeling similar feelings? And now we're having what we call a council. We're having voices being shared and all can be edified of all. Now, there is risk inherent in that. I'm not going to decline that. Somebody could say, absolutely. Sister so and so said this, 20 minutes ago, and I've been sitting here just seething. I've already posted three times on Instagram about it. And I just can't believe this happening. And I'm just not sure I can be in this board anymore. That's going to keep being set. That's always a risk when you do this. But again, you have to decide what your goals are. If detente is what you want as a leader in the church, then go for daytime. And you've just capped the potential of your community. If Zion is what you want, then you're going to have to engage in conflict. And you're going to have to learn how to do this. And we can't necessarily give that to you and personally. I don't know that it's a skill per se that can be learned. It's really more about character. It's really more about your capacity to love people in spite of their opinions, in spite of their pointing fingers at you in spite of so and so. And what I do know from my own experiences is if you can be in a group of 30 to 60 women or men and women or men or whatever, if everybody feels loved by the leader in the room. If everybody feels that connection and it is unquestionably unconditional. They can put up with the conversation and their biases and judgments of the others because they know somebody in this room loves me. Somebody in this room has my back, especially that individual has some authority in the room, right? Then just like, okay, I can sit here longer because I know he knows me or she knows me, and again, the personal kick knit connection, relationship is Paramount. Well, I don't know how to wrap these things up. I usually have a question at the end, but how do we do that? I don't know. We didn't solve it. We promised that hopefully we created a lot of extra questions for people and the answer is always, you take these questions and you get in your counsels and you have these conversations and then you get on your knees and you ask for guidance. And when you have ideas, you get on your knees and you confirm the guidance. And while you're in the middle of doing them, you're in your heart praying and you're asking for continued guidance because these are all challenges in which you have to learn. There is no right answer. That's the one thing we need leaders across the world across the church to understand.

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When you get in these types of situations, there is no right answer. There's no right way. It's all about learning. That concludes this episode of the leading saints podcast. We'd love to hear from you about your questions or thoughts or comments. You can either leave a comment on the post related to this episode at leading-saints.org or go to leading-saints.org/contact and send us your perspective or questions. If there's other episodes or topics you'd like to hear on the leading saint's podcast, go to leading-saints.org/contact and share with us information there. And we would love for you to share this with any individual. You think this would apply to especially maybe individuals in your word counsel or other leaders that you may know who would really appreciate the perspectives that we discussed. And remember, text the word lead to four 747 four 7 in order to access the three free sessions of the LGBT 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.