



## **The History of the Sacrament | An Interview with Lee Van Dam**

October 8, 2022

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interesting. Why haven't I heard about this yet? And I chased you down through Facebook, sent you a Facebook message and you replied and sent me a book and long story short. Here we are. So how long, what's the genesis of this book? You told me a little bit about it, but tell the audience. Well, for many years, I've been interested in the sacrament and its history. And I've collected things put them in a file stories and examples and anecdotes. And finally, I thought, let's write a book about it. That is nice. And how long did it actually take you when you thought I'm going to do the book? I'm a slow writer. And I do it just as I have the desire to do it. So it takes a couple of years for me to write a book. And it was just fascinating. I feel like I have a general grasp on church history and things that happened and what not. But man, I learned so much from this book, just a little intricacies. I'm so glad you started collecting that information way back when. Thank you. But let's first start about your background a little bit. You've been a mission president in Hong Kong. Yes. And you served as a missionary as a young as a young man in Hong Kong. I did. And what do you remember from that story being called as a mission president? Well, I mean, what a privilege to go back to the same place where you served as a young missionary and to go back with your wife. See, there are not a lot of callings in the church that you can do with your wife. And so being a mission present where they come now mission leaders, leaders in life, that's a great privilege. I couldn't think of anything I'd rather do. Yeah. It was something that just came out of the blue. Yeah, you don't apply for those things and you get a phone call and they say, can you come in for a visit? Yeah. Before you know it, you're headed to Hong Kong. Yeah. And before that, did you have much leadership experience or in the church? I guess, yes, I've been a bishop and in a state presidency and high council and things like that. Yeah, nice. Nice. And what did you do for your career? I have a real estate background. I've been involved in real estate development with the firm and then I've had my own company that does management and consulting and sales and things like that. Nice. And were you working at the time of your call as a mission present? I was. Took a few years off to a few years off. Put everything on the shelf. Now this isn't your first book. What are some of the other books that you've written? First book was about cruising. We love to cruise, so I wrote a book about that. Then went about golf. I love the golf. Not very good at it, but I like to tell stories about golf. And then the third one is about Hong Kong. Nice. And then this one is the fourth one. As the Hong Kong connected to the church at all, or is it just for anybody who wants to go to Hong Kong? For anybody who wants to go to Hong Kong, it's not a true travel book. It's more of an experience book. If you were to go to Hong Kong, what should you do? And chapter about the minutes medicine in Hong Kong and about beliefs of Buddhists and people like that.

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And so there is a chapter that's very religious about religion in Hong Kong, but the book is broader than just religion. So let's just hit those three books real quick. What's the best Hong Kong tip if someone's going there tomorrow? What do they got to make sure they do? Well, don't try to do it in one day. I suggest two or three days and then there's the book suggests that itinerary of what you might want to do. Nice. What's the favorite food there? Something that you got to try. The cuisine number 33. Number 33. What does that mean? There's a chapter about that. Somebody was asked, well, what's your favorite Chinese food? And whatever number you

used was I really, really like number 33. I like sweet and sour pork. And I love Peking duck. Wow. That's a good dinner. Not a big fan of chicken feet. But they're popular. Really? Yeah. I've heard that. I can't imagine. What about golfing? What's your best golf tip that you share in the book? Again, I'm not trying to tell anybody how to golf because I don't do that, but it's a book about golf about the experience and about the whole idea of playing golf talks about golf balls and how interesting they are. You know, for instance, that at any given time. This has been studied scientifically. At any given time there is a golf ball in the air, somewhere in the world. Oh my goodness. That's probably true, but I remember that. Yeah. Interesting. Yeah. So right now, there's a golf. There's a golf ball in there right now. Nice. There's probably somebody that's not hitting it very straight. That's right. It's probably going to end up in the rough side. There's always a golf ball in the world in the Lake. That I know from personal experience. What about cruising? I went on my first cruise this past January going again this coming January at any cruise tip that maybe I totally missed. Charting remember that cruises are like automobiles. So there are fancy cruises and there are less fancy cruises. There are chevrolats in there are Porsches. So part of the idea is to pick the right itinerary, but also to get the ship that you'd be comfortable on. Some are very young oriented ships that party a lot. Others as they call them. Yeah. Others are for people like my wife and I where we just enjoy seeing things and going to ports and having nice food. Yeah. Yeah, ours was I think the demographic was a little bit older. So it wasn't there wasn't like water slides or all these things. But it was really nice the food was great. Beautiful views and man, the spa was great. The gym was awesome. But yeah, I've heard that they vary quite a bit. And you'll find it's a real bargain. If you were to try to do the same things, without being on a cruise ship, go to the same ports and do the same type of things. You'd spend more than you really cruise. So cruising is considered to be a pretty good bargain. Especially now, for two years, cruise ships couldn't sail. They couldn't pay people to walk on those. So now they're open again and there are some deals out there. Yeah. So when's your next cruise? We just got back from but you did, where'd you go? We cruised on the Danube river in Europe. Oh, wow. We had a fun thing. We went to the ober armor gal passion plate. Held every ten years in the little village of over armor gal over armor gal in Germany. And as part of that, we spent the first week traveling through Germany and Austria and we went on a riverboat on the Danube for the last part of it. Wow. Do you know about oberammergau? I can't even say I've heard of that before. I'm getting you off course, but let me tell you about it. Four or 500 years ago, there's this little village in Germany, and there's the black plague going through Europe and it's wiping out villages and just hundreds of thousands of people are dying. So these dear people in the city in the little village of ober army gal, prayed to heavenly father, they said, if you will save our village, we will present a play about Jesus Christ. And do that faithfully. Oh, wow. They were spared. So then they began putting on a passion play. At first they did it each year, then it became every ten years. And so ever since the start into its like 400 years now, they have put on this passion plate in this little village, so it was supposed to be in 2020, but COVID postponed in the two 22, 2000 22. So to the year 2000 or two ten, 2020, it'll be in 2030. Oh, wow. You're in the rules. There are about 2000 people involved in this passion play. It goes all day long, and they put it on successive days. But it's a long thing and it's in German. But in order to be in the play in the Caster to do the stage things or be the singers or the orchestra, you have to build born in over opera gal, low village. Wow. Or you need to live there for 20 years. So it was very particular. So it's kind of cool.

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You see hundreds of people on the stage acting out the triumphant entry into Jerusalem by Christ, all of them are over all people. Well, how? It's really good. So is it hard to get into? As far as buy a ticket and go, tough ticket. You have to, is there a waiting list or a lottery or we first applied to go to it in October of 2017? Oh wow. So that was three years before the play. We arranged to get tickets. Wow. So yeah. It's a tough ticket. Interesting. Little factoid. You should go. I do. It's on my bucket list now. Over armor is great little city. Just really neat. Cool. Awesome. So this is your first, the sacrament historic view. This is your first church related book. It is. And was that intimidating in all or make it more exciting? It is. And I should say, I'm not trying to create any kind of new doctrine in this. So I hope I didn't overstep my bounds. I think I read every word. And I think you think you're not trying to create any kind of new policies or anything. I'm just trying to tell you what I understand to be the historical evolution of the sacrament. Nice. Well, I want to jump into that. So maybe let's just hit on some high points of the history from, I guess, the first time the sacrament was passed as a formal church when the church was created. It was formalized, right? Right. Yeah, and the cover of the book shows that. It's the meeting on April 6th, 1830 in the Peter Whitmer home. And it's interesting. What day of the week was that? Kurt, oh, it wasn't a Sunday. No. It was a Tuesday. Okay, Tuesday. All right. So I'm going there in October. That'll be good. Okay, great. Yeah, immediately we're not on course with having sacrament meeting every Sunday. So there's an interesting look at how often sacrament meeting was held and it wasn't always consistent wasn't always on Sunday. The early days of the church it was held when it was convenient, and the churches had spread beyond just the kirtland area in the novel area and all of that became we had all these branches all over the place and they kind of held the meaning when they could. And there was persecution raging. You had to hide in order to meet. Yeah. So what are some other high points of the history? I bring us towards modern day that stand out for you. Well, okay, so that was obviously an important thing for those 2000 years. There was no sacrament. Authorized sacrament, then it was restored, and that's talked about in the scriptures. It was interesting that the sacrament was talked about and the offices in the priesthood were talked about, but there's nothing in the scriptures that tells you how to do this acronym. Okay? The only thing that tells you a little bit about how to do it is it says the pre should kneel with the congregation. So that was the practice in the church when the congregations were smaller, and eventually the church changed that policy to saying that just the person seeing the prayer couldn't. Yeah, that's interesting. I never realized that there was an time where everybody in the sacrament, and that scriptural. Doctor Kevin was 20 or what? Yeah. I guess I've never picked up on that. Here we go. I'll pay more attention. So that was interesting. How all that happened, a big, big change came not until 1911 when the common goblet was eliminated and individual sacrament cuts were used. And the Commonwealth, there was one goblet that was filled with water. And it got passed around and did. And another thing it makes sense once you frame it this way, but you think of the sacrament now, ten, 15 minutes, we got everybody covered with individual cups. But if it's one goblet, that's going to take a long time. So they would continue on with the sacrament. The talks. That's right. In the meeting, as this goblet was being passed around. Exactly. After the

saints arrived in the Salt Lake valley, before they had built their own meeting houses, they used to meet on temple square for the sacrament. In the old tabernacle and then in the building we called the tabernacle that the newer tabernacle. So they'd meet their on Sundays, thousands of them, and they'd have the sacrament and the leaders would preach, and because of so many people needing the sacrament. It was passed while Brigham young was speaking, and he was known for speaking at length sometimes. I always think back then there wasn't a whole lot to do. So it's like, you might as well listen to Brigham young talk more. Later when they started building their own meeting houses throughout the valley, then that was changed, but for many years the sacrament services were held on temple square. And when you mentioned that there was like one goblet, I should clarify that in a meeting like that, there was actually a set of goblets. Oh, okay. And pictures, so you'd bless the pictures of water and everything, and then you'd send out a group of goblets throughout the congregation. But they were just passed from person to person. And especially since we went through this recent pandemic, the reason the goblet, the communal goblet, ended, was because of the pandemic, but it actually sort of stopped about ten years before that, right? That's right.

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The pandemic was 1918. It started in the spring of 1918. So this was 7 years before that. People were uncomfortable with passing the goblet. Science had discovered. Science had discovered that there were problems with that. The hygiene wasn't good and they had scientific evidence that spread disease and germs. And picture the old sacrament meeting in the 1880s in the farmer just came in from the field and he would drink over and then pass it to the sweet young lady next to him and she's thinking, wait a minute. She really painted a pincher here. And the babies would drink trauma and maybe the babies had just eaten a cracker or something and then they would drink from the common goblet. So there was my three year old drink from a glass of mine before. It's not pretty, right? Yeah. So there's some resistance to that. And the church was a little bit slow in making the change for several reasons. Two of which were the goblet was how Christ did it. Right. So let's not change that. Yeah, and from a leadership standpoint, this is really fascinating to me. One that they just wanted to sort of this feeling of like, well, maybe the quote unquote handbook doesn't say it, but that's how Jesus did it. Why would we break away if it was good for good enough for Jesus? It's good enough for me. That's the pattern. And secondly, you know, besides that, the priesthood blessed the sacrament. So there's a priesthood blessing blessing the water, and many thought that that would eliminate the gears. That's why we blessed the food that we don't get sick of it. It's not that simple. Yeah, that was a change. And so the change was kind of interesting in the Salt Lake 18th ward up on the avenues near downtown Salt Lake City. In a sunny school class, this shows you the power of a Sunday school class. They got talking about all of this. This was in the 19 ten. They got talking about this and they decided to form a committee and go talk to their bishop and stake president with the suggestion that maybe we should do individual sacrament cups. So then we got brave. So many. We're going to run this up. There was a committee formed. I wish I could have been on the committee. That would have been a fascinating committee to be on. But they went to the bishop and the Sikh president who gave them permission to take it up to the next level, which

was to the present of the church. The bishop mistakes present said, I'm sorry, we do not have the authority to make such a sweeping change. But you're welcome to go talk to the brother in about it. So they got an appointment with the president of the church and they explained everything and laid up laid the background, and he said, I hear you. I know what you're saying. This is a big decision. I will take it to the corner of the 12th in the first. So they met, they all agreed it was a good idea and they authorized the Salt Lake 18th ward to experiment with it. On one condition. They said, dear Salt Lake 18th ward, you have our permissioned experiment with it at your own expense. Wow. Thanks a lot. Because you're making a change in things. You pay for it, right? Yeah. You have to invent these individual cups and some kind of trade to transport them and you have to be able to clean the cups afterwards and so it's a pretty big change. We just take that for granted. We go on Amazon and find some cups that would work and I think a lot of people did that during the pandemic when suddenly they needed to pass it at home, but then even creating you didn't just walk down the store and expect to find little cups that would work well for the sacrament. So you have to make them. That's right. And it started an industry. People started creating sacrament trays and cups for the Latter day Saints. That met the needs. And so there are various designs of in fact, if you go back to the church, magazines in that area, the 1910s and 20s and 30s. Those magazines had ads for various things. Some of the ads were for sacrament trees. Somebody would invent a new type of water tray and they would advertise it in the instructor magazine. The juvenile instructor. Wow. Yeah, nice. And little by little, Lee toward their own cups and started using them. And I appreciate just this because sometimes we feel like it changes put forward. You think administering. I think there's a lot of elder scoring presence out there scratching the head like, don't you guys get it? It's been years since I made this change with just do it. Do the thing, right? But just to see that even back then with the saints, it was just sort of this tough change. Moving the ship in a new direction and sometimes takes a little time for everybody to get on board and the spirit works through marvelous ways through various people. I can tell you stories about how it's worked through the wives of general fortune. Dear, what if we were to do this? And everything about that.

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And it seems like the 1920 pandemic really is what solidified. Like, okay, we are definitely all doing single cups at this point. Now to put this in perspective, you need to understand something about what we call the general handbook. We're used to it today. You were a bishop in a state presidency, and you lived by the handbook. It told you how to conduct a sacrament service, and how the sacrament was supposed to be taken care of. The very first general handbook wasn't even general so much as it was just a little handbook and it came out in 1898. So think about that for 68 years, the church went without a handbook. Letters were written to bishops and stake presidents, and there were things in some magazines and their bulletins, but it wasn't until almost the end of the 19th century before there was a general handbook which started defining things, but not the sacrament. The very first little handbook was just a few pages long. It was the size you could put it in your pocket. It talked about tithing and specifically it talked about what a bishop should do with tithing in kind. So your bishop and someone shows up with a pig and they say bishop here's my tidying. So I got a pig. How do you handle it? What

do you do with it? Do you sell the pig? Do you slaughter the pig? Where do you keep it? And it started to finding things like that. In fact, it's interesting that it talked about tithing settlement, how important that was. And we just changed the terminology just recently. Just in the last week or two, it's no longer called tithing settlement, but it's been an important principle for a long long time. Yeah. So the handbook start growing in size. It came out more regularly until we have today's handbook, which is interesting because it's now online. Yeah. The handbook used to be just for priesthood leaders and it was very carefully controlled. That's changed. Now for the first time just a few years ago, anybody in the world, latter day saint or non latter day saint can look up the handbook and know what we believe in and how we do it. And it's up to date, right? And it's up to date. Usually you'd have some notes or reference this letter or glue in that letter. There you go. It's up to date and it's in many languages. Yeah, it's awesome. Oh, and another part you talked about how everybody in the congregation would kneel during the blessing of the sacrament, but there were times where they'd even hold their hands up. You know, very similar to maybe some things we see in the temple, right? That type of ordinance and blessing. See, in the absence of a handbook that told you exactly how to do it, you were left to your own way of doing it. And the members of the church came from many other religions and many other countries and in the absence of direct directions, they would kind of do what they thought was best, and maybe what had been going on before, and if they had been to the temple. So there were these things that were never officially doctrine and never handbook items with the crept into the sacrament ordinance. Yeah, that's fascinating. Another thing I learned, there was a time that, and I think it was more recent where on a general conference weekend, people would gather at the chapel, maybe in an evening in particular the sacrament. How long ago was that? Well, and I have to study the dates on that. But general conference has changed over the years. Now we have general conference Saturday and Sunday. Four or 5 sessions, then it used to be that way. When I was young, there was a general conference session always held on the 6th of April. Even if it was a Thursday, or Wednesday we held general conference on that date how fascinating you'd have that and then you'd have this Saturday Sunday or you'd have a 70 Monday of the 6th was a Monday. And this sessions were different. They were different lengths and different speed kinds of speaking. Sometimes they'd have like a welfare session. Yeah, exactly. And general sunny school union would have their own little conference and the mutual would have their conference in June and all that. So anyway, you're here having sacrament meetings and sacraments very important. We want to have it as often as we can. And here comes general conference, so there was a period of time when after general conference was finished. You go over to the meeting house and have the sacrament again. And we used to do that for state conferences too. Conferences used to be quarterly. That's right. And every sacred parenthesis like thinking would have to do this quarterly. And it was the practice to go over to the meeting house afterwards and have this accurately. Short meeting, and then the sacrament. And back into this is probably before the block schedule. And so this is people who are used to going back to the church, maybe in the evening. That's right. Yeah, the block came out in 1980, and this was well before that. Tell me about the obviously before the block, the block schedule. These organizations or auxiliaries back then definitely felt more like independent at times. Like they were running on their own and type things. So how does the Sunday school, what's the story behind Sunday school and sacrament? Yeah, great story. So the sunny school was established by someone who wasn't doing it by assignment.

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He established it. After the saints arrived in the valley, he thought it was good to get the young people together and educate them better in the gospel. So sunny school was held first in just a small group and several small groups, and as it grew, the general authorities realized it was a good thing. So they said, let's adopt this. And they said, let's adopt this, make sure it's held regularly and let's have the sacraments served, each time we have sent in school. So in 1877, was when the sacrament began being served in sunny school. And the bishopric was encouraged to attend sunny school. Sunny's school began as just something for young people and then the adults got involved in pretty soon the bishopric is asked to attend and make sure it's done right. And the sacrament begins to serve. So from 1877 to 18 or to 1980, so for a 103 years, we had the sacrament in sunny score. And in Sacramento, meaning that we'd go twice each Sunday to have a sacrament. My grandkids don't believe mine tell them the truth on it because they don't know what that's all about. We used to get up in the morning on Sundays, go to pre meeting, go back home, pick up a family, go to sunny school. Go home, rest in the afternoon, come back in the evening, have a sacrament. And you'd have sacrament in both Sunday school and sacrament. We did. And as a deacon, I like that because I was able to serve the sacrament to pass the sacrament or be involved in the sacrament, at least twice each Sunday. Yeah, interesting. To us it sounds so foreign, but was there ever the question like, why are we double dipping today? Why are we doing this twice? But it was just the way it was done, right? Yeah. Yeah, that's what we did. Yeah. This is a new thing. I actually asked my dad about it. He remembered the sacrament gems. What were the sacrament gems? Sacrament gems were great. My very first talk at a pulpit in church was to give a sacrament gym. So I was probably, I might have been four or 5 years old and the church sent out to all the words and branches a specific sacrament gym. They sent it out by way of the church magazine, the instructor, and it would say this is this month's sacrament gym. It's a short statement about the savior and the sacrament that is to be repeated, said by a person and repeated by the congregation prior to the blessing the sacrament was called the Sacramento. Wow. And so these were short so that you would say it and then everybody would say they'd come up and say it right after. They repeat after you and then the sacrament would be blessed. Wow. And they're focused on the savior and scriptures and whatnot. They came from the sacrament hymns or from the scriptures, typically that's the source of the short little Sacramento. And if you had a junior sunny school in your ward, which our ward did, the senior study school would be upstairs meeting and having their own sacrament downstairs would be the young children, and we had a sacrament service for them, and their sacrament gym was very short, like Jesus wept. It might be all that it was. And during this time, they did primary during the week, right? Yes. So during Sunday school, you had a place for children, sort of the Sunday school for children and younger kids. That's right. We met our junior Sunday school met in the what we call the release society room, which was used by the release society on weekdays, but not on Sunday. Yeah. And then all the adults would be in a separate room. They would be chairs in the chapel. And the meeting was conducted by the Sunday school superintendency, not by the bishopric. Yeah. And then that eventually got changed. And it used to be a Sunday school superintendent. And



now it's the sunny school. President Nelson changed that, right? That's right. President Nelson's first general assignment in the church was to be the general sunny school president of the church. He had been the stake president of the bottom built stake, and then was called to be the general sunny school president. And you know president Nelson, he doesn't sit on things and he began making recommendations. He would need often with the president of the church and he'd say president, you know, we have a president for the primary and a president for the young women. But we have a superintendent for the sunny school. Where do you think about the idea of making all of us presidents in this present church says I like that idea and it's pretty soon they made the change. That's awesome. So there was that. And it was also called the deseret Sunday school union, and president Nelson suggested that the word deseret be dropped from it. And now today we have the general Sunday school presidency, right? That's right. That's interesting. And present Nelson was involved in that assignment for I'm thinking 8 years or something. And he made, he was the one and his super his assistants, and the Jones authorities brought into play during that period of time. The way we do sunny school now with kind of rotating through the topics and making sure all wards were coordinated and doing the same type of thing in Sunday school.

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That's fascinating. What about you mentioned what are some interesting places that the sacrament has been administered? Yeah. I love the chapter on that. If you were to talk to members of the church and say, tell me an interesting thing about where you may have been for the sacrament. You'll get a lot of interesting answers. It's not always in your meeting house. But the chapter talks about how, for instance, Don Lynn took the sacrament in space. Don Lynn was born in Murray, educated, became a scientist, and became an astronaut. And he was assigned to be one of the 7 member crew on the challenger that went up in 1985. You might remember the challenger because less than a year later it was the one that blew up. On the tragic. So Don Lin was on that and he realized that he'd been in space for a week and then it would include a Sunday. So he went to his bishop to gain permission to have the sacrament in bishops event defying. So dawn took up his scriptures and prepared for this and had the sacraments based. He was going thousands of miles an hour and he was many miles away. Orbiting the earth orbiting the earth when he did that. And he was asked to speak in general conference in the priesthood session of general conference in October 1985 right after he got back from his stint in space. He was asked by the first presidency to tell about it. And so you can read about that. You go to the October 1985 general conference. You'll read the entirety of the brother Lynn's talk, and he talked about how interesting it was because you're in weightlessness. Yeah. And you need a needle when he blesses aggregation. And you're in this space shuttle where only a tiny portion of it at the very front of it is where you live. Everything else is space stuff. So he went into his little place where he slept, and he tried to kneel on the ceiling and brace himself and bless the sacrament. And he says it was one of the most special experiences he's ever had. And the triple combination he took into space, he donated to the first pregnancy, and so that is now in the hands of the truth. Oh, wow. That's cool. All right, now on the other end of the spectrum, the depths of the sea. Yeah, there was a submarine commander who was latter day

saint. And he tells the story about how they had the sacrament. They were authorized to have the sacrament while they were underwater. And how interesting it was and how special it was to be able to do that. Yeah. And you took your reference, I don't know if they call it turbulence, but it was a pretty bumpy ride. One time, instead of being totally submerged, they were at, they were commanded to instructed be at the level of the ocean. So they're floating like a boat would float. So they're bouncing all over the place, trying to bless the sacrament. Awesome. And the book itself in that chapter you talk about different war experiences with the sacrament. That chapter alone is so fascinating. So all right, so let's get into as we venture into maybe more leadership adjacent. I mean, obviously the sacrament is something that has done under authority and priesthood and keys and whatnot. So it's obviously already leadership adjacent, but there's this concept of white shirts. And we have, I remember, I wouldn't even have a chance to leave my house as a young deacon teacher to go to church and pass the sacrament by did not have a white shirt on. I mean, it's just like the household I grew up in, right? No, it doesn't say in the handbooks. And so these are one of the things I always want to be careful not to perpetuate something that's not necessarily official policy, but it is tradition. And so what's the deal with white shirts and sacrament? Yeah, well, at first it didn't matter what the people involved in the sacrament ward, talking about the 1800s pioneer days in the land. The emphasis was on coming to church, period. And coming in a clean manner. And nobody was trying to tell you to wear a white shirt. They just wanted to have a clean clothes and be groomed. Well, eventually, as the young men got involved in segment first, it was the older men who were primarily doing all of the sacrament functions. As the young men got involved, different wards and stakes, it was kind of left up to them what they wanted to do with the what you wore. In some went in the direction of uniforms, there was a war that said, we want all of our young men to wear white shirts, long sleeve white shirts with boats, black bow ties, and when they pass the sacrament we want them to line up in order of heights. So that was done. And that caught on in some states, other stakes had different ideas and pretty soon the church said, no, we don't want to have it so uniform. We want to be less obtrusive. And so there was a time when the handbook did ask you to wear a white shirt when possible.

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And that's still kind of the thing. It's highly encouraged to wear white shirt, but it's not mandatory. And that's because we're such a worldwide church. I mentioned in the book that Holly and I were on a trip to Fiji. So one Sunday morning we went to the local meeting house in Fiji and there was a wonderful congregation of members singing a cappella with beautiful scene and they're at the sacrament table. The young men and some of them were in those skirts that they were in Fiji. You know? Which was proper dress for them. And it's their formal dress. And so here were these young men at the sacrament table. They weren't even wearing pants. They were wearing these dresses, but they were dressed nicely in white shirts, and as the prayers were finished, what are the young men as he stood up, we took his sandals off and left them there at the bench, and passed the sacrament without shoes. Oh, wow. So afterwards I went up and talked to him, and he couldn't speak English, but his dad could, and he said, John loves the sacrament and loves the savior. He wants to do all he can to honor the savior, and he did that

by removing his shoes. So if you think that it's necessary to wear shoes to pass the sacrament, here's an example of how maybe you didn't have to. Yeah, and he was doing that not because he was more comfortable, but out of a former respect, right? And what a great thing to do there. So it's gone through various things. It's very leadership driven. In some stakes and wars, there'll be very firm and they say, this is what we want you to do. But if you read the conference talks by people like elder hall and elder oaks, they'll say, try not to do anything that detracts from the sacraments. So take off your jewelry and dress appropriately so that you don't detract from the Sacramento. Yeah. My mom would never let me wear those cool Donald duck tights. I don't know, there's probably something to do. But yeah, for our family, that was sort of the encouragement, right? So all right, so what about the presiding authority taking the sacrament first? I would say that there's not like one clear obvious answer here it is. Maybe there is. But there's reference in 35 18, which talks about the sacrament and the savior gave the sacrament to his disciples first. And then to the congregation. And I've heard some people claim, no, this is simply a tradition, even though it says it in the handbook, it's not doctor Lee or scripturally connected. So how would you respond to this concept or unpack it first? Let's start with the day's handbook. Today's handbook clearly instructs the presiding authority should be served first. Sometimes that's confusing the beacons in our ward the other day. We happen to have a general authority living here in our ward. He can occasionally but not often come to sacrament. So the bishopric just loves that. Oh, yeah. So the bishop is conducting in the deacons know who the bishop is. And he normally gets the sacrament first. The state president is an attendance, and he's welcome and the general authorities in the tenants and he's welcomed and the bishop says, and he's presiding. So the poor deacon, he gets betrayed and he walks up on this pop quiz. Here we go. And he's thinking, no. Who's who? Yeah. And so the bishop points down there in the state prison whites down there and they find either able to give the sacrament to the right person. So it's very clear today how we do it. But there was a time in the church where it wasn't that well defined, and it just made sense to give it to whoever the leaders were. And at one time, the deacons too deacons were instructed, the walk upon the stand, stop, and stand in the middle of the stand, and then begin serving and moving towards the edge of the stand. So whoever was there got it next. But think about this. You mentioned the book of Mormon example. Okay, when Christ instituted the sacrament during the last supper, he prepared the sacrament, he blessed the segment. Who got it first? Did the presiding authority get it first? No. No, that would be Jesus Christ. We don't know for sure who got maybe he did, but nobody recorded it. I don't think he took it first. I think he passed it. He was passing the sack. He was passing it to others. When the church was restored in the Whitmer home on April 6th, 1830, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cadbury presided and did the sacrament. They blessed the sacrament, and then began passing it, and to my knowledge, there's no record of who got it first. I just don't think they passed it to themselves first. I'm not sure. Yeah. Wow. So for many years, it was just obvious we should go to the presiding authority. That made sense to us. But there was a time in the church, if I'm not mistaken, that a high counselor was considered to have authority. So if the height counselor was in your sacrament meeting, here's the bishop, his counselors, the high councillor, the high counselor would get the sacrament first. That's no longer the case. The high counselor does not preside. He does not have keys, and so if I counselor attend your meeting, he does not get past the sacrament first.

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So I assume this is the case, but if president pace shows up, the general Sunday school president, he's not, he's an auxiliary organizational leader. So he would not preside, right? Because he's a general authority, it's my understanding he would sit on the stand, and he would get the sacrament first. Out of courtesy. Okay. All right. And obviously, if he does come to reward, just do what he says. The general authorities are instructed that if they attend a meeting, they should sit on the stand. And identify themselves so that that can be taken care of. Yeah. Interesting. So I realized, again, there's not a clear scripture chapter verse per se. But why do you think we do that? Respect, recognizing authority. What would you speculate? It's respect. It would be awkward not to do it that way, I think. Yeah, it's respect and it teaches an important principle. There is someone at that meeting who presides. And he should be honored by starting the sacrament. Especially in the cadence of an ordinance that is according to this person's this person represents keys to some extent, whether he officially has them or not. And those keys are what are allowing this ordinance to move forward. But see, that wasn't defined even in the early handbooks until later on. The sunny school union used to get together for their annual conference. So this is in the late 1800s, and sometimes there were question and answer periods. And I can show you in some of their minutes how the question came up. In our Sunday school meetings, who should get the sacrament first, and they kind of, the one leading the conference as well, we'll have to look into that. I'm not sure. Probably the one who's the presiding authority. But it wasn't well defined. Yeah. And even I'm trying to think if a hammock says anything and obviously I can look up later, but even in the context of an elders quorum, when you're meeting as a quorum, you know, the elders court is sort of the stake at your keys of the stake president, per se. But the bishop's there. So who presides in the elders corps is there any do you know of any define that as far as who presides in that meeting? Well, okay, so the elders corn president, he already has the meeting plan. He's got the prayer planned and who's getting a lesson, but the minute the bishop shows up, he's in charge. And then elders corn presidents should probably say to the bishop, we're so glad to have you here, what would you like to have done in this meeting? And if the bishop wants to go a different direction, then that's what you do. You throw your agenda out and you do what the bishop wants. Same thing with the stake president when he comes to Sacramento. And a stake president probably say something like bishop, we love you and we trust you and we think you have a wonderful program brand. Please proceed. And I remember one sacrament in particular in the state presidency showed up. The speakers did not show up, and I was the presiding authority, so the bishop looked at me and said, what do you want to do? So I had to come up with the worked out great. And I should just mention too that there are different personalities involved. There are some general authorities who, when they come to a sacrament meeting, expect to have respect to have a different sacrament than what was planned. Others are happy to just let it happen. So over time there have been different personalities and different ways of doing that. Sometimes they come with an agenda. They come and they say, I'm here because I need to talk to you. Other times they just come as a nice visitor and a happy to let you. Fascinating concepts. And a lot of these things we don't think about them because they just sort of happen. But then something changes and we're like, oh no, what do we do now? So they're fun to talk about here

and there. Worthiness to partake the sacrament. I think even in recent years, it's been really a touchy subject of part of the role in the authority of the bishop that he can restrict ordinances, one of them being the sacrament. So from your standpoint and understanding what can you teach us about what's going on there? Why do we do that? Anything come to mind. Well, as I see it, there are two levels two types of worthiness. Worthiness to partake of the sacrament and the worthiness to participate in preparing blessing in passing the segments. Two different kinds of worthiness there. The scriptures, as I understand it, there are four places in the scriptures that talk about worthiness as it pertains to the sacrament. They all kind of say the same thing. You really should be worthy to partake of the sacrament. It's a very special thing. And if you partake of it unworthily, that's not good. So that scriptural. So the church is almost always said that that's what needs to be done. And so you'll find that the handbook says to a bishop if someone who's being involved in the in the sacrament is not worthy, you know of a transgression, you should ask him to repent and take care of that before he participates in the sacrament.

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Yeah. So that's the instruction. Now whether you can always carry that out. I'm not sure. It also says that members that the sacrament is for the members of the church, but bishops are instructed not to withhold the sacrament from others who attend the meeting. So that's gone back and forth in the history of the church. There were sometimes during the early history of the church where it was think of it as a closed church. Only sincere visitors were allowed to come in. And so the sacrament was normally a special thing for just the members and maybe special visitors. Now that's been opened up a bit more instruction is not to restrict it from the people who come. There may be a very sincere person who comes who's not a member of the church who wants to partake of the sacrament and it's okay for that person to participate. Yeah. What would you say to maybe someone investigating the church who comes to the first staggering? I think it's really kind to at least run the through, hey, they're going to come to you with the sacrament. You're welcome to partake or you shouldn't, or I think you've said it just right. When it comes to you, this is in remembrance of Christ, it's something that we as members of the church do to renew our baptismal covenants and to remember and honor Christ, you are welcome to partake of it, but you don't have to. You can just pass it by and nobody will think the difference. And some find this motivational, they'll say, okay, I'm not going to partake of it till I'm baptized. And it gives them an incentive to become a member of the church because they want to partake of the sacrament. And I realize I think there's some people out there who have really strong feelings about even to the point that they don't let their children for taking the Sacramento and tell their 8 and baptized and that's incorrect. Yeah. And I mean, my two year old looks forward to it every week. The thing comes up in the book, we talk about which hand should you use to partake of the sacrament. What's your answer to that? I know now they've updated the handbook the reference the right. Use the right hand when possible. Not everybody has the right hand, okay? So that's the preferred thing and their talks by general authorities that remind you of it when you're making covenants you're using the right hand and the sacrament of another covenant and that's when possible a right hand is a good thing. But then present Nelson when he was a

regional representative gave an interesting talk about that. When possible we should use the right hand and he said, it's good for parents, maybe in a family home evening or something, to teach this to their children. It's better to do it then than to do it during the sacrament when you're in the chapel. Slapping left hands. That's right. Do it in a way so they can understand it and they're not embarrassed by it. There's a gentle, nice way to teach that. And then just a gentle reminder during the sacrament would be all its necessary. So it hasn't been taught an awful lot lately in the church. I don't think, but it's in the handbook. Yeah, I was surprised to see that sort of really emphasized in the same book changes. And I'm left handed. So I really have to think about it. It's interesting. I've heard this concept discussed in several contexts and talks and whatnot. You referenced talked by elder delbert staple in October 1965 as far as he says for taking of the sacrament we renew all covenants entered into with the lord. Is that sound doctrine or what do you understand about that? You'll notice in the book, I have a chapter about the covenant how the baptism coming is renewed as you protect the sacrament. Then I pause and I say, by the way, there have been some who have taught and so I'm not trying to create new doctor here. But there have been a number of conference talks and other things where they've said very clearly that the sacrament, read news not only your baptismal covenant, but all covenants you've made with the lord. Yeah. So whether it's true or not, it's maybe a good state of mind to go into the south with. That's right. I'm recommitting to all things, all covenants. Have that in your mind. And then you take the Sacramento and you're not just thinking about baptism, but you're thinking weird you're priesthood covenants in your marriage covenants in your temple covenants. When I go to a temple session, I sort of take on that frame of mind thinking that, yeah, I'm here for this person's work that I'm in proxy for, but I see this as a renewal of my own temple covenants and some way. And when I leave here, I want to be just as committed as the first time that I went through. If you go back into the old improvement era, I think it was in the improvement era. There used to be a question and answer thing every month. Members could ask a question and then the church would assign somebody not always a general authority, but it might be an instructor in institute or seminary something to answer the question. And in the book, I talked about that. The question came up about does the sacrament renew all covenants are just the baptismal covenant. And this particular brother who answered the question used references and talks and all that.

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And he clearly said, it renews all covenants. And so that was printed in the church's magazine. But the magazine says in small print, the answers do not constitute doctrine. If a leader ever gets that question or teaching about the sacrament, maybe that's a concept you could introduce. But it's not that the church has a statement saying this is doctrine. I think we're in the habit of saying that renews the baptismal covenant, but it maybe does more than that. Yeah, sure. Let's see. So I had an experience as a bishop one Sunday. Moseying around waiting for the meeting to start and go make sure the sacraments being done. And we are in an area in the inner city Salt Lake where we didn't have a lot of youth. So we didn't have the typical teachers and priests that did it. So the elders were sort of stepped up there. And I walked into I walked into the sacrament preparation room and there's a good brother in my ward who was there and his

children were in the process of preparing the sacrament she was probably like 7 year old girl was putting the cups in the thing and I thought, hey, we should probably talk about this. What's going on here, right? There you go. But we think of sacrament preparation. We default to teachers. That's what the teachers do. And we think the deacons pass the sacrament teachers prepare this bless the sacrament. And of course, they can help as they do. But that's not always been the case, right? So where do we begin with that history? Yeah, well, the functions that the actual way you do the sacrament were not very well defined for many years. And so the concept of preparing the sacrament, it's not in the scriptures, and it was not in handbooks. And so we just kind of the custom. And it was not clear who should do it. And so a lot of people other than priesthood holders would do it. It just made sense. Your Peter Whitmer home in 1830, we don't have a record of it, but I don't think Joseph and Oliver got the bread out and got the water out for the sacrament. It may have been their wife. I don't know, or Joseph could have said it the last minute. Hey, why don't we do the staggering? Yeah. There are instances where the custodian used to do it. Back before you had sacrament preparation rooms and even kitchens in old meeting houses, the custodians responsibility sometimes was go down to the stream with a big bucket. Get a big bucket of water and do this early in the morning. Set the bucket in the church, let the stuff settle to the bottom and let the things flow to the top and then use a scoop, take the things off the top, and then ladle out the clean water for the sacrament. In the common goblet. So this was the custodian doing it. Not a young man who was a teacher. Yeah. Well, there was a time when women did it. They did it by assignment from a bishop. They did a good job. They would bake the bread and they launder the tablecloths, the sacrament cause and all that. And so they were doing it. And it wasn't until I think it's like 1933 or something that you see the first mention of the function called preparing the sacrament and that that was a priesthood responsibility and that it was a teacher in the priesthood who was to do that. Yeah. And you mentioned the book that even when obviously deacons used to be older men in the church, it was more formalized later on that 12, 13 and now 11 ish and 13 year old to 13 year olds are the deacons or whatnot. But even back then, people thought, this is disrespectful to have these hoodlums passing the sacrament. And now it's all we know. And the first presidency in Corona 12 in the early 1900s, it was a little concerned about the erotic priesthood young man. They said, how can we get them more involved in meaningful things? In one of the answers was, let's get them more involved in the sacrament. And so specific ordination ages came about, okay? That didn't just happen until, you know, at first it was in the 1900s when there was a systematic way of ordaining young men to be teacher priest. And over time, those ages have been modified occasionally. And we've all witnessed that. And recently, now it's 11 and a half or 11 plus. 13 plus 15 plus. Yeah. Yeah, that's cool. So what about this, will there be a sacrament meeting someday where Jesus Christ presides? What's the deal with that? All right, I'm going to open up the book because I don't want to say this incorrectly, but there are several scriptures that talk about how when Christ returns again. There will be a great meeting held, and the sacrament will be served so you can call it a sacrament meeting. In attendance, and this is from a dock and covens 27 will be Jesus Christ, Moroni, Elias, John the Baptist, Elijah, Joseph, Jacob, Isaac, Abraham Michael, who's Adam, Peter James and John, and others.

That's the sacrament meeting that Christ will preside at, and he talks in terms of this. But I say unto you, this is in Matthew, but I send to you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my father's kingdom. And he says for the outcome that I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you on the earth. That's in doctrine covenants 27, so this is, this is after the restoration of the church he's saying there will come a time when I will again drink of the fruit of the vine with you on earth. He's talking about a future Sacramento gotcha. Wow. Now, the question comes out, so do we have the sacrament in heaven? I had no idea. Yeah. And we don't necessarily know the location of that sacrament meeting. It's just going to happen somewhere. Yeah. And those people are going to be there and others. Yeah. Yeah, that's cool. Those are the fun things to think about. And I hope I'm on the guest list. I hope they can zoom the meeting. So that it gets broadcast to all the members, all the world could see it happen really cool. Well, this has been a fun conversation. Any point or concept you want to make sure we cover that we didn't already or did we do a good job? Did a great job. This is a pleasure to be with you. It's a wonderful topic and I'm grateful to be able to visit with you about it. Well, I'm so glad you wrote the book and I went into it sort of some history focus books. You're not sure where you're going to get. Is this sort of a dry event by event book or but I was surprised just from the first chapter to, wow, I'm really interested in you did a good job there. And I would say this is a great book for even with young children. I like reading a chapter on a Sunday and then talking about it, right? And introducing the history of the Sacramento. Yeah. You weren't looking for, this isn't a scholarly academic book that the only PhDs will really appreciate. This is a really universal text, right? Thank you. I appreciate that. And obviously you can get it on Amazon. You can. And hopefully through Brigham distributing or just send me an email and I don't like to sell the book because it's got the sandwich. If you contact me, I'll give you a couple of listen, we'll buy the book if you promise to keep writing. And if that motivates you enough, we'll do it. So any ideas for your next book or what's it going to be? I will have a next book. I never disclose the book until it's published. All right. I kind of keep my family and everybody guessing about that. Okay, well, please let us know that'll be awesome. Last question I have for you is that you reflect on your time in leadership. These opportunities you've had to lead in the restored gospel. How has being a leader helps you become a better follower of Jesus Christ? Oh, great question. I was a much better member of the church after I served as a bishop. I was an even better member of the church after I served as a mission president. I was a better member of the church after I served my first mission at a young man. Yeah. Leadership does wonderful things to strengthen you and to give you a perspective so that you're more in touch with what the gospel really means. It's a wonderful thing. Even if you're just like the chorus during primary, it helps you help you see what's going on and help you feel what's going on. It's wonderful. 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. Leading saints dot org or go to leading saints dot org slash contact and send us your perspective or questions. If there's other episodes or topics you'd like to hear on the leading saints podcast, go to leading saints dot org slash contact and share with us the information there. And we would love for you to share this with any individual you think this would apply to, especially maybe individuals in your ward council or other leaders that you may know who would really appreciate the perspectives that we discussed. Remember, solve the



burden of meetings by visiting [leading.saints.org/slash14](http://leading.saints.org/slash14) and getting 14 days access to the meetings with saints, virtual library. It came as a result of a 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 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