



The Secret to Happiness is Improvement | An Interview with Riley Jensen

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In modern times, one of the most difficult issues leaders are faced with is helping those who struggle with mental health. No longer can we simply encourage a good measure of scripture study and prayer and expect everyone's life to stabilize. This is why leading saints felt it was so important to organize the mentally healthy saints library. There, one can find 25 plus presentations all about ministering to those who struggle with mental health. We cover topics like depression, anxiety, scrupulosity, or OCD, we even cover how to effectively refer individuals to professional therapists and make sure they are getting the help they need. This and so much more. If you'd like to review all of these sessions, we would love to have you do so at no cost. You can visit [leading saints dot org slash 14](https://leading-saints.org/14) and get access to the full library for 14 days. You'll also receive access to all our virtual libraries where we cover additional leadership related topics. So click the link in the show notes or simply visit [leading saints dot org slash 14](https://leading-saints.org/14). Before we jump into the content of this episode, I kind of feel it's important that I introduce myself. Now, many of you have been around a long time, you're well familiar with my voice and with leading saints as an organization, but if you're not, well, my name is Kurt Francom, and I am the executive director of leading saints and the podcast host. Now leading saints is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Latter day Saints be better prepared to lead. And we do that through content creation like this podcast and many other resources at [leading saints dot org](https://leading-saints.org) and we don't act like we have all the answers or know exactly what a leader should do or not do, but we like to explore the concepts of leadership, the science of leadership, what people are researching about leadership and see how we can apply them to a latter day saint world. So

here we go. All right, let's slide into this week's episode. I am always excited when we have a former athlete on the podcast. This is Riley Jensen, a former Utah state university, starting quarterback back in the 90s, and it's fun to see where his career has guided him so far as a mental performance coach. And he works with athletes, coaches, you know, sports coaches and then CEOs. He's got a unique approach to leadership success. And I love this approach from a mental performance standpoint, right? It's not a skill set or a strength or it's a mental capacity. And a mental approach and perspective and mindset in these things. I think this can this interview can really help a lot of leaders, you know, who feel like they're in a rut or they don't know what to do or they feel anxious. He talks a lot about anxiety when a leader experiences anxiety, it's simply means he or she cares. I love that framing of that and what do you do with that anxiety to approach a difficult calling where you feel like you're an impostor? You know, the old syndrome that creeps up from time to time. Also listen for the concept of how he talks about confidence, the importance of confidence and also the not so important parts of confidence and then he gives a near the end this concept of motivational interviewing, which is gold for church leaders to especially those who find themselves in, interview settings of speaking one to one with individuals with men, women, youth, be so helpful, this simple tactic of motivational interviewing. So let's jump into it. Here's my interview with a Riley Jensen. All right, rightly Jensen, welcome to leading saints podcast. Yeah, thank you so much for letting me be part of such a well designed and well executed podcast. I was looking through some of the names. I'm not sure that maybe you didn't get the wrong person here, but I'm happy to be here and I love what you're doing with leading saints and the content has been super powerful and impactful and yeah, well I appreciate that a lot. Now people may recognize your name in different contexts. You may be the first one was you have at a collegiate career at University of Utah state university, right? As the quarterback there. You have to play quarterback. It feels like lifetimes ago. And some concussions ago. So it's been a wonderful that was a wonderful journey that seems to seep back into a lot of conversations. I love sports. I still love sports and I really enjoyed my experience playing at Utah state and it's got me in a lot of doors. So hopefully once I get in those stories, I'm still doing a good job rather than rather than working. And what years were you at Utah state? I played one year at snow college before my mission one year after in 96 and then in 97 and so 96, I started at snow college in the 97 and 98 with 98 being I was the starting quarterback and you tested.

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Awesome. And we're just sort of your mission. So I served my mission in Marseille, France. Oh, great. I learned a great deal about resilience and adversity and I learned some grit and some moxie by serving wonderful saints of the South of France. So are you saying you don't have too many pictures from your mission and where you're wearing all white? Not very many. I do have, I can't remember the name of the story that we could talk offline about, but you remember the story about Vincenzo de Francesca. It was like he kind of found a book of Mormon. Yes. On the trash, but it didn't have the sheet, yeah. I have one story from a companion of mine. You ended

up baptizing something like that and then I went back and baptized a wonderful woman by the name of Lily Perrier like the water right after my senior year of football. So she had stayed in contact with the missionaries for almost three years. She'd been a wonderful, it even given her a calling as the greeter and the person who sent a birthday card out to everybody. And then when she got baptized, she's like, I gotta have my missionary do it and she sent me, she sent me literally like cash French francs in an envelope to the United States and it got there and paid for my flight to come and baptize her. Oh my goodness, what a story. There were some great things. I think the thing that I loved about my mission is I absolutely agree was converted to the gospel and I feel certain amount of sorrow or a certain amount of like dang it. Not everybody's mission was like mine as far as like, you know, their experience. And I just wish that everybody's experience could have been like mine because it was just such wonderful companions and people. I really look at the people of France is like pioneers in their own right, right? And it's weird. I've had the opportunity to go back. I haven't been back in a long time. The last time it was 2004, I've had the opportunity to go back a few times. It doesn't feel quite as magical. And so what I realized is the missionaries that were there, my mission president, zone leaders, the assistants to the president that I had were just a huge influence on me and I just had I have this wonderful spiritual anchor from my mission that I referred to in the fiery darts of the adversary coming at me, right? And it's a really peaceful thing for me to have in my life. Well, that's awesome. The great way to start the interview for sure. So when people ask you what you do for work, how do you respond to that question? So I guess my official title is on a mental performance coach or sports psychology consultant. I went back to school at the age of 40, which is a whole story in and of itself, to go into sports psychology, but the unintended blessing or the unintended consequence of going into my field was I get asked to speak in a lot of different areas and a lot of different places that maybe I hadn't anticipated. And I thought I was going to work with individual athletes and teams and maybe some coaches that I find myself working with athletic directors, presidents of large professional teams, CEOs of large companies, helping them to establish culture, figuring out how to have a culture that is successful and thriving all the way down to helping a 9 year old athlete to be just a little bit less nervous or understand what it means to be nervous that it's not a death sentence type of thing if you feel a little bit nervous before a game. So the job has been super interesting. I think the part that's been really, really fun to learn about and think about is just how much people are starving for culture and for just empathy and how to treat people and I joke all the time that my job is to teach gospel principles I just don't close in the name of Jesus Christ in the public world. And I just feel like, man, if you want to be mentally tough or if you want to be resilient, if you want to be Gritty, like read the writings of the prophets, read the book of Mormon, read the Bible, read last conference. I mean, it's just loaded with adversity talks and moxie and grit and enthusiasm and I guess when I think about and I saw Steve Young speak a couple of days ago, he mentioned the word. When I think about Mormonism and I know that I've changed from being a Mormon to being LBS, remember The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Are we not a Gritty people? Are we not a people that are just full of moxie and resilience? Definitely part of our brand, right? Yeah, I mean, we all could look in our own stories of our parents or pioneers that are in our heritage or ancestors in our heritage that were incredibly resilient and incredibly just designed for what they were supposed to do and have delivered such a wonderful message

to us through their sacrifices and through their knowledge of, hey, this is important for my posterity.

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I think about my hands served a lot. I think about what they gave up, they think about what they went through and that's another spiritual writer. It's awesome what the church has done for people from the inside out. So when we talk about the concept of mental performance skills or mental performance, like this seems so nuanced at times, right? And what does that look like in real life? Because usually in leadership, we want give me the three step plan and I'll tell my people what to do and the way we go. So how do we even begin to understand and articulate what mental performance skills look like or what they are? So generally there's about 6 or 7 things that I end up talking about quite a bit, one is we talk about culture and about how to move teams or to move groups of people from what they call forming storming, norming and performing and typically on trying to move a team from one level to the other and we all we all kind of take a step backwards before we take a step forwards, but you form a team and then as people understand what their roles are, there's kind of some storming that goes on as you're competing for those roles or whatever and then there's, you know, accepting that role and kind of magnifying your calling type of thing, like really, really like doing the best you can to be the best player for your team. And then there's performing, which is kind of like the next level where everyone's kind of focused on their job and it's that synergy where the sum doesn't equal the parts. There's 8 people doing their jobs, but it's equal to the work of 64 people, right? And it just doesn't make any sense. And that's what every organization is working to controlling your mind so that you can control your body. And if you can control your mind and your body, you can control your performance. That's something that we end up talking about a lot that has to do with focus and concentration and controlling what you can control and figuring that out. The next part would be sport anxiety or just anxiety in general, right? We deal with that anxious feeling, you know? Like, and helping people to understand that anxiety is very, very normal. And it's not a predictor of results. It's actually just an indicator that you care is something that we talk about a lot. The third part and this one gets messy on how I explain it, but it's kind of, it's prayer, it's meditation, it's mindfulness, it's all of those things kind of combined. It's this relaxation or being able to put yourself into a soft focus so that you can improve your performance. The fourth part would be perfectionism and negative self talk. I deal with that a lot. And then the 5th part being using routine, not rituals or superstitions, but using routine to increase performance. And those all and then there's emotional regulation or like anger management that I do. And those are all under the umbrella of every single day I'm trying to make people more confident. And wow. Whatever I end up working on, you know, those 6 or 7 things that I just mentioned, those are all working towards confidence and building self confidence, self esteem, building resilient attitude of, you know what? I'm just smart enough and I'm just good enough and I just resilient enough to be able to handle this situation with the right coaching and with the right people around me and hopefully with the lord around you and supporting you, right? And so those become just

really, really empowering tools. There's also a piece to the work that, you know, when I'm working with athletes that we were stayed or Utah state, I have those two contracts. How do you handle a tough conversation with your professor because things aren't going well? How do I handle a tough conversation with my coach? How do I handle stress and the pressures of my parents? How do I handle the stress and the pressure of being a full-time athlete plus a full-time student? And so there's some kind of just like organization like life skills component to what I do as well. And so these are all just really, really fascinating to me and really interesting to me. The people that I work with find it really, really impactful and helpful and sometimes I have to pitch myself that I get paid every day to help people chase their dreams. I get paid every day to help a pro athlete for real Salt Lake or college athlete at Utah state or Weber state or BYU and Utah athletes come to me individually, right? I get to pay to help them get to where they want to go. I mean, I get paid for service. Robots in the church wish we got paid a little more for that, right? That's right.

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So as we do the leading saints podcast, I'd love to just sort of overlay this experience and these principles on the model that church leaders experience week to week day to day. And curious, like, obviously you work with a lot of sports teams, professional, collegiate coaches, and things like that, but also your work with corporations, CEOs, and whatnot. And I'm just thinking like approaching church leadership, it feels different. And maybe, I mean, obviously principles are sort of universal and the work really anywhere. But walking into an NFL locker room, all of those players seem to be on a level of engagement of going towards the Super Bowl, and they're engagement. It's a different level than maybe walking into a church where some people are like, hey man, you know, I'm just here, just got the kids here. We were lucky. The hair got combed. But the elders quorum presidents in this mindset of like, no, we want to shift the culture and the dynamic way and have a ministering culture. And do all these things where some of their quote unquote players and their locker room are just sort of like, hey man, I'm just here 'cause my wife has the keys to the minivan and I can't go home anyways. I'm just curious, how to begin to walk into that as a mental performance from a mental performance perspective to actually see change or deal with that dynamic. So there's a couple of things that I think are very, very common denominators to all of those situations we've talked about. And I had a wonderful singles word bishop that told me one time that the definition of happiness in this world was improvement. I'm like, wait, what are you talking about? And he goes, no, seriously. If you don't believe me after we get done with our meeting here, just go teach a 5 year old how to throw a spiral and watch his face light up. Right? And I was like, okay, okay, I can kind of get that. And he goes, or go teach someone a principal that you know to be true in the gospel and watch their face light up, right? And so to me, that's been a real recipe for success. Even with these pro athletes, it's like, okay, so what are you working on right now? I ask people all the time. What are you working on? Nothing. I'm a pro ass. Oh, okay. We got some things to talk about. I mean, I think whether you're in the church, whether you're the Ellis phone president,

where you're just going for the first time in 6 years or you've been going every single day for 60 years. A rival, you know, when you think you've arrived, that's when things start to slip out of your hands, right? That's when things start to become slippery and they're slippery slope. Like, oh, I've arrived spiritually. Oh, we got some things to talk about. Oh, I arrived as an athlete. We got some things to talk about. And then the other thing that I would say is, I don't care where you're at home president, it's the first time coming back to the church. You can go out for 60 years, your pro athlete, college athlete. We all from time to time, we struggle with confidence, whether that's confidence, spiritually, whether that's confidence, as an athlete, whether that's confidence is a dad, really, I mean, I'm I've been using some of my own tools on myself recently to help walk me through some dad guilt of not feeling like I'm spending the amount of time, but I want to spend with my kids, right? Because I'm working really hard and trying to, you know, I'm not typical member of the church who's spreading myself real thin. I'm doing my calling, I'm doing my job and providing for my family and trying to be a good husband and then my son asked me to play catch. I have to have this attitude adjustment about you need to spend time with your boy. Why would anything be more important than that, right? And so one of the answers that I talked to people all the time about, it's like, they asked me, you know, what's the number one way to build confidence in use or in your kids or in yourself? And that is to take small steps out of your comfort zone every single day. I'm actually, I'm not trying to promote a book, but I'm writing a book called pure Adele unadulterated guts right now. And so when I'm trying to help people to step out of their comfort zone, I ask for one minute a day to 60 seconds a day every day of stepping out of your comfort zone. Like start that podcast, start that business, tell your wife you're sorry. You know, apologize to your kid that you haven't been spending enough time with them. Like step outside of your comfort zone, then what happens is as you step outside of your comfort zone, your circle of like comfort grows and so you have to do even a little bit more to get outside of your comfort zone. And then all of a sudden you're this huge kind of like the analogy of a rough stone rolling, right? You're this huge polished stone that has this ability to do so much and do so much good and give so much to other people. And so I don't care whether you're a pro athlete that I've worked with or bishop or the state president or the person it's just like, let's just, hey, dude, congratulations on being here today. I know that probably took a lot of courage to come to church after 6 years of not being here. We're so glad you're here.

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How awesome is this that you're here? I don't think we do, and I don't know trying to judge the church. But I think as a whole, we could do a little bit better of just having a little bit of empathy for how hard that decision was for somebody that hasn't been to church a long time. It's scary. That's outside of your comfort zone. But that's going to build confidence for them. And man, if you can make that just a little bit easier on their path, how much more likely are they going to be to try something else, which, you know, coming back to church might be the least of all their problems. And so now we're building confidence for them to be able to try something else that's

even a bigger problem for them. So I want to go back to that I love the concept of that bishop taught you that was it the secret to happiness is improvement. Is that right? And I think a church leader may hear that and again, sort of using the elders quorum example, but you're like, oh great, as an elders quorum president, I will help them improve administering. Like we sort of insert our agenda in there, right? Right. So it's like maybe unpack that a little bit more. Like as a leader, what do I do with that in an elders core or at least cite context of how can I guide people to improvement without just inserting what I think they need to improve on? Right, right. So it's a little bit like president Nelson's talk in the last conference, right? Like you may be thinking of this car is really, really good for your wife or your significant other. But you got to start with you, right? So this has to be internally motivated. Okay, so first, if you're an artist from president, you're a bishop, your state president, you're listening to this, right? What can I do to improve? Now, this is not meant to be, this is not meant to be a guilt trip. And especially to our wonderful sisters, right? Like a relief society presidents are, you know, primary presidents and all these people who are doing wonderful things. The tendency is a member of the church is to go, yeah, I need to do more. Like I need to do more. And that's not what this is. What if you're doing enough? What if you are enough right now? But maybe just maybe the only thing that we need to do to be brave and courageous and actually step out of our comfort zone is to just be maybe just have a little bit more enthusiasm about it instead of saying, oh, I had to go to release Saturday night or me. Let's take me for example. Just take your men's presidency as way more than I thought it was going to be. Man, we got track this year. We got this and we got more conferences and I'm doing more meetings than I've ever done in my entire life. I thought this was going to be a little bit easier calling, right? So instead of having that attitude, maybe just maybe it's like, what a cool job. I get the opportunity to go to trek this year to plan a really, really meaningful spiritual activity that will impact youth ages 14 to 18 for the rest of their lives. I mean, we know the stories of track. We know how many people have decided to go on a mission and it was a great experience for them from track. We know that this can anchor people or give them a spiritual anchor in the gospel. Why wouldn't I be excited about going to that meeting? And so maybe just changing the way we look at the job, I mean, so many people in the church are doing so many things. Maybe we just do just a little bit more of a hop in our step instead of like, I got to go. I got to do that. I got called to do this. Oh, I don't want that calling, right? Like, oh, awesome. Great opportunity for me. And then start from the inside out. And then I would say this, I would say that enthusiasm and I'm married to a lovely Greek and Italian woman. So I kind of got into etymology of words because it feels like every word goes back to Greece for my character. But the root word of enthusiasm is in theos, which means gods within or God within you, right? And if you think about if you think about everybody that you know that is successful in one way or another, in the gospel, in their jobs, in their professions, in athletics, in theater, in we're all performing in some way, right? But if you think about the people that are successful in their lives, do they not have a unique enthusiasm about them? Do they not have a unique spirit or are you unique piece of heavenly father inside of them that kind of makes them different? I mean, look to your favorite person who represents the savior. Mine is my grandpa Clark. He was an amazing man, a World War II veteran. Never had a calling as a bishop or a stake president or anything. But he's a legend in our family for being so impactful and having so many christlike attributes. He had a unique enthusiasm about him. I only knew him until the age of 7 and I still have like really, really impactful memories of my grandpa Clark. And then of course all the

stories after finding out about him, that's the spirit, maybe just having maybe just changing our mindset a little bit about what we're already doing. And realizing that that's enough and maybe I can just do what I'm doing with a little bit different attitude or a little bit more enthusiasm having heavenly father's spirit to be with me like every week when we take the sacrament, right? Yeah.

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That's like when I hear that during the sacrament prayer, I'm like, this is my renewal of enthusiasm. It was a rough week. I went out to slave dragons all week. It was kind of hard, but I can do it again this week. And I've got his help and I want to take on his spirit to be with me so I can be a little bit more enthusiastic about the things that I'm approaching. So to me, leadership is about really embracing the gospel into ourselves and then using the spirit is within us to make help people with little steps and go, God, you know, I was just thinking about you the other day and I was thinking that it would be really cool if you took off this task. Do you think that would be too much for you or do you think that that would be a good that feels like it's pushing me a little bit? Okay, pushing you a little or pushing you too much because I don't want to give you too much. I want to give you something that you would feel good about if you accomplished it. And I think when we just have honest and empathetic conversation for people, we can really inspire the people that are in our circle to do better, including our family members, you know, but start inside, then start with your family members. I think there's a lot of wisdom and a lot of truth to just like start small, start with yourself, and then let's solve the world's problems a little bit later. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, I love that. And then just that you're taking the Greek root of that enthusiasm that got us in you. It means God within or God. God was in. Right. Yeah. And then putting that up against the sacrament prayer, which again, that's what we're doing, essentially, having his spirit be with us. It's a physical token of enthusiasm from God, right? As we take that, that's part of that renewal of the covenant is I will now be more enthusiastic because God is in me now. Hearing you say that just like gave me the chills, right? I'm like super motivated and like I feel like heavenly father's talking to me right now because I'm like I was looking at my schedule for today tomorrow and Friday and I'm like and now you got this, right? Who if heavenly father is with you and if you're doing everything you possibly can to like keep the commandments and be the best version of yourself that you can. How can I lose if I have his help? Like a can. Like even a bad week is a good week because he was helping me. And he was helping me to crawl through that week if I needed to. Right. Yeah and I just love that walking into you know he sort of it's easy to get, especially in these long leadership callings that are 5 years plus or whatever you can get sort of in a red of like here we go once again, right? But because normal reframe it. Yeah, because you're normal, right? Because you're absolutely human, you know? And to reframe it that way with that concept of enthusiasm, being like, I'm now going to step into this calling once again with God in me. And that really shifts the mindset. I feel like I feel like the lord is always talking to us and trying to help us to reframe things and understand like our divine nature, you know, when I introduce myself and I'm speaking to the youth right now a lot, I was introduced myself to so many fathers before. Because when we know who we are, right? Like

good things happen. And we made good decisions when we forget who we are that it's hard to make those good decisions and one of the analogies and I know this is like a little bit like, I don't want to say cheesy, but this is like in all the self help books, right? But knowing why you're doing what you're doing can help with enthusiasm, they always give the example of the bricklayers, right? Where this reporter's like walking by and says, hey, what are you working on there? And he goes, oh, I'm just, I'm just doing my job, stacking these bricks, right? And then you go to the next one and hey, what are you doing over there? Oh, you know what? This is actually a really good job. This could be a really good job for you too. They're paying me pretty good money and we're building this wonderful building, right? And then you go to the third person and you ask them, hey, what is it that you're doing? Are you talking to me? And they're like, yeah, I'm talking to you. And you're like, do you not know what we're doing here? And the reporter goes, no, what is it you do? We're building a cathedral to the work. Like, this is the most wonderful thing I've ever done in my entire life, right? All three people doing the exact same thing, the exact same job in the exact same place and their enthusiasm or knowing their purpose knowing why they're doing what they're doing can help change so that they have the spirit with them so they have that enthusiasm because which worker you want, which worker is the lord one. He wants the one that knows who he is and where he's from and what he's trying to build through the war and I think that's just a great example of like when we know our purpose and we've really absorbed the lord's teachings, we will have more enthusiasm. And I don't want the thing that I worry about when I present this kind of information is that for those of you that are downtrodden and that are just like trying to make it through today.

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That's the best thing that you can do. Just make it through the next hour. If you got to make it through the next minute, make it through the next minute. We'll worry about enthusiasm later with you. But I'm talking about to those people that are just like, oh, I'm in a rut, you know? It's groundhog's day. What am I doing? These are the kind of things that take an elders quorum president and a bishop, a professional athlete, a CEO out of their moving them forward into what they really can be. Yeah, and I really appreciate that you've highlighted that a few times because there is this temptation in leadership and motivation or what not that of the message coming across you're just not doing enough. So do a little bit more. And these are individuals who are exhausted. And I think that's the beauty about the industry you're in of mental performance is that it's not about, oh, yeah, you're doing that 5 step program. Do the ten step program because that will do. It's more of the shifting the mindset, the perspective. And that doesn't mean you're adding more to your to do list. You're just shifting now you're seeing the world. It's more about simplifying than it is about having. And recognizing maybe just taking it instead of me like looking at you here, just moving my angle a little bit, looking at some years and being a huge impact. Yeah. Like how I feel about what I'm doing. So I want to go back to this concept of confidence that you mentioned, it sounds like, I mean, out of all things of the greater principles that you address, I mean confidence is definitely a part of that. And so I would

one a leader at an elders quorum president walking in an elders quorum. How do you measure the confidence in that group of men before you? So I guess first of all, I would like to just dip into confidence a little bit. As much as I talk about confidence, I'm also the mental performance that comes back to people all the time girl, oh, by the way, did you know the confidence is overrated? So here I am. People ask me like, how do you build more comfortable? This is how you do it. And then oh, by the way, it's not that big of a deal. I kind of feel like it's like that talk by elder bednar where he's like, is this the spirit talking to me or is it me talking to me? And he's like, get over it. It doesn't matter. We all want to be happy. And we all want to be confident because it makes us feel better. But do you have to have confidence to execute the basic principles of the gospel, not necessarily? I mean, that's what faith is, right? We all have to take a little bit of a step towards like maybe something. But I think the way that you can measure confidence is I don't like this phrase in my fields because it's a little bit of an arrogant connotation to what I'm going to say here, so I'm going to try and walk it back from here. But when you sit with winners, the conversation is different. Now, that can lead to hubris that can lead to some arrogance and to like, so I don't want anybody listening to this, they're like, but I would say that when you're sitting with confident people, conversation is different. When you're sitting with faithful people, the conversation is different. And so when you're trying to measure as a leader in the church, the temperature of that room, conversations a little different. There's going to be inspiring stories of someone in your ward who had a baby that was born a 25 weeks and he has this wonderful testimony of the wonderful angels and doctors that took care of their child and also of the priesthood blessings that helped lead them through it or there's going to be wonderful stories of people that experienced tragedies and loss and their conversations are going to be impactful and powerful to the way. I think when you're trying to measure confidence, measure faith, right? The conversation is a little bit different. And then what I would say to leaders is catch them, first of all, meet them where they're at and catch them in the spirit as many times as you can because we can't overemphasize that enough. Like, wow, thank you so much for sharing that. Elders, sisters, to you feel the spirit that's in this room right now. Thank you so much for sharing that. That has edified me. That has made me think of things a little bit more different. A little bit different, right? And so that's what I would say. I would say that when you're in a good room, when you're in a good relief society room, when you're in a good primary, that conversation is different. And you can feel it. It's kind of measure that. I don't know that I can give you a quantitative measurement, right? But I can tell you that it feels different. Right. Yeah, it's almost easier. And just sort of what I'm taking away from this and maybe put me back on track where I need to be. But it's maybe difficult to pinpoint and find those who are low on confidence.

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But oftentimes you can get a sense from people who are high on confidence. And as a leader sort of asking yourself, how can we work them into the recipe more of what's happening in this room and this dynamic, right? Whether it's we're going to have a panel discussion. We're going

to have a group discussion. We're going to get some guys together and invite this group of high confidence individuals to sort of exude that confidence, right? And again, this is a bit nuanced and whatnot, but I just love the idea of that new framework of walking into an elders quorum or at least site or I'm going to say like, all right, where's the confidence in the room? Where am I feeling that pull? And then leaning in to figure out how can we work them into the culture? And one thing that I might add mostly because I think I'm feeling the spirit to add this is that the cool thing about the gospel and I really feel this emphasis from president Nelson and the apostles is the answer to all of our problems right now is talking more about Christ. Amen. I mean, whether you're meeting me who's feeling a little bit more confident about the gospel right now or that other person that you see in the room that's maybe not feeling as confident. The answer is, how can I help him feel the spirit of Jesus Christ in his life? How can I help him to feel the spirit more often? And you know what? For that person who's not feeling very confident, it might be like, hey, I'm going to get a Diet Coke. Or I'm going to get a swig. Do you want to come with me? Do you want me to bring you on? That might be the most that he's felt price influence in three weeks because somebody was actually thinking about him. And he wasn't having to think about everything else. You know what I mean? Or it might be that you're working with Riley Jensen and he's doing pretty well and you might need to challenge me like, hey Riley, are you really reading your scriptures every day? Because I personally have started to do that in the last two months and it's really made a difference. And I can answer yes or no. And then you can say, okay, let me just testify to you like some things that have happened to me in the last two months. And that might be motivational to me, right? So like I said, meet them where they're at, help them to feel the spirit. Yeah. I love the emphasis, obviously, on Christ. I mean, you talk about confidence. That is the Pinnacle. He is the Pinnacle. And that's really what we talk about. We have a strong tradition of authority and priesthood authority and obviously Christ had that. And sometimes because of that, we turn the turn Jesus sort of into the Harry Potter figure at some time. Like he was just magic. You know, he just pointed people and they'd be healed when in reality it was the confidence of his identity and of knowing who he truly was, that's where his power came from. It's not this mystical fairy dust in the air. It's that confidence. When I think about Christ and when I think about the stories of Christ, I mean, has there ever been an individual that has that even just by reading what he did that we feel more confident. Let alone being around him and part of the way that he built confidence and this is why I joke that I teach gospel principles every day and is by helping people to step out of their comfort zone a little bit. He wasn't, listen, this isn't a church of just like, you're okay the way you are. He's like, come follow me. There's a better way. Come stretch yourself with me, step out of your comfort zone with me. And I'll help you to do it. And he's constantly doing our conference. And he's constantly telling us that we can do it. And quietly and gently and prodding us and pushing us. And I think one of the great lies in this world right now is you're okay exactly the way you are. No, we're not. No, I'm not. If I had to go talk to myself at 20 years old and you came up to me and you told me Riley, you're just okay the way you are. Like you don't need to do anything better. Not only would it be damaging to the way that you're treating me, but it would be damaging to your credibility with me because I'd be like, no, this guy doesn't know what he's talking about. I know I need better. Yeah. Right? Yeah. That's the great lie right now, is that you're okay the way you are. Do I accept you the way you are? Yes, but are you okay the way you are? No. To be a whole lot better than what you are right now. Yeah, it's so easy to get that message off, right?

Right. I think it's, of course, it's the, you know, the master of lies is the one telling that lies that that lie to people, right? It's like. Oh, I am. I'm okay the way I am. I don't have to do anything. Well, that's when we're in trouble is when we stop growing and progressing and thinking about, you know, the lord's plan. I mean, this is not a church where you just get to sit. He's going to make you a little bit uncomfortable. That doesn't mean he's going to debilitate you or run you into the ground, typically that's us, does that to ourselves, because what we think he wants us to do. But he will push you a little. He will gently continue to prod, and I can't tell you how many times I hear his voice and I'm like, okay, I even joke with my wife. Like, have you prayed about it lately? She's like, no, I know we're just going to say if I pray. I don't need to pray about it. You know? You already know because the spirit's been working on us, right? But we get what she's saying, right? I don't need to pray about it.

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I already know what he's going to say, right? Because he's gently with us all the time. Come on, you can do this. You can bear testimony. You can talk about this with your non denominational friend. You can talk about this with your atheist friend. Come on, you got this. You're my girl. You're my boy. You've got the tools to do this. Yeah. It's powerful. So I want to go back to you mentioned anxiety early on. And in a sporting context, you know, I think about those players who, you know, there's ten seconds on the clock, and they have to walk to the line and sink two free throws. I'm like, man, how do you even dribble the ball at that point? But I know there's a lot of leaders out there. I'm sure there's bishops that wake up on Sunday morning, and they feel nothing but anxiety of like, how do I begin to step on that stage once again? I'd be that leader and I can't do it, especially those early those that have just been called and set apart in those callings. So I love how you articulate early as far as the anxiety is a sign that you care. And that is really helpful. Because it can be interpreted like, I think something's wrong with me, because everybody else doesn't seem to deal with this. But unpack anxiety in the context of leadership and how we can think through and handle it. There's a lot of things that can lead to anxiety, sport anxiety, regular anxiety, all that kind of stuff. One of them is impostor syndrome, which we all experience probably 85% of adults experience impostor syndrome. So the one thing that I tell people that are experiencing impostor syndrome or dealing with a version of impostor syndrome is congratulations, you're just like everybody else. We also a little bit out of sorts with a calling with a job with these different things that are going on. But the interesting thing about anxiety and this is what I'll walk athletes through or walk a CEO through that's nervous about speaking, for example, is if you think if we cut our heads out of the equation, I don't want to be gross. I don't want to do like John the Baptist like take her out for that. But if we took our thoughts and our racing thoughts out of the equation, how do we know that we're nervous and typically the answer is my heart racist, shortness of breath, butterflies in my stomach, sweaty hands, sweaty armpits, sweaty feet, maybe I get Jell-O legs and then I get a little bit shaky, right? Like that's a typical like these are typical physiological responses to being nervous or anxious about something. Well, the one that's a little bit more difficult for older people, but if we really think

about it, we can do this, but I'll ask them, okay, so now tell me about the last time you were excited, like really excited about something out of this. And if they really dig deep and it's a little bit harder for adults, we got to go back to high school or that new baseball bat or dad was going to give us for that trip we were going on or that date that was really, really like, you know, instrumental in our lives. When we start breaking that down as well, the exact same things happen to us. We get our heart races. We get shortness of breath. We get butterflies in our stomach. We get wobbly knees, and we shake them up and we get sweating. And so then I'll ask them, I'm like, okay, so wait a minute, are we talking about being nervous? Are we talking about being excited? I don't know. And I go, what determines whether you're nervous or whether you're excited? And really it's the 6 inches between our temples, right? It's how we choose to frame this experience. Right? And so if those physiological responses are exactly the same, then what we need to do is we need to choose a better frame for what's going on, right? And I tell the story to athletes a lot about I got married late in life. I had a couple of really, really tragic and disastrous relationships at like 30 and 33 years old. And I didn't get married until I was like 37. I was 37. It wasn't like I was 37. And at 36 years old or 35 years old before I'd met my wife, I can describe my life in two different fashions. I had my fourth job in four years, I was living with three other dudes in a house, right? I was in a job that was paying me well, but I wasn't really, really fulfilled, right? I had no prospects of getting married. Every single time I went to conference, there was some sort of talk about how guys need to get off the couch and ask people out and put sitting in their basements and I'm going to you have any idea what I've been through, right? So there's that story of writing.

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At 35 years old, there's also the story of Riley Jensen at 35 years old that had the best job that he'd ever had, he lived in a really, really nice house in a nice neighborhood and the three guys that lived with him were paying his mortgage. He was traveling all around the world with really, really good friends that were good influences on him. He had really supporting parents that said, hey, Riley, you're never going to regret getting late getting married late in life. The people who regret it is getting married early in life, and they were probably spinning that for me. But they were really, really helpful and supportive, right? And I was I was building up a little bit of a nest, right? Well, which one of those stories are true? They're both true. Which one is more helpful? Which one is the latter one, right? The power through and still keep going and be more resilient. It's the second story, right? And so one tool for anxiety or for stress or for pressure that you're feeling is to reframe or to practice gratitude so you can actually deduce what's going well right now, right? And then the other thing that I would say, and this is really interesting. Have you ever heard and I don't think years old is me, but you're a little bit older. Did you ever hear when you were growing up? Like, hey, if you're having a attempting thought or a bad thought, like singing him. Oh yeah. Absolutely. So we've all heard that. I don't know who came up with that. That might just be like church folklore, but they have no idea how psychologically healthy that is. Like they have no idea. And one of the reasons why is because we can only have one thought

in our head in any one time. So if you and I have been talking for the last 45 minutes, 23 minutes and 7 seconds ago, if I slip, if I slid open your brainwaves, you only have one thought of your head and if it was 14 minutes and ten seconds ago, one thought in your head. So we get geeked out about that as performance coaches because I'm thinking to myself if I can get the negative thought for the unhelpful thought or the sinful thought out of your head, well now we're cooking because that's already a win right there. We already got a bathtub. And if we can substitute with a neutral thought or a positive thought, we're now going in the right direction. So I'll tell you a funny story. I'm working with a Westminster basketball player, maybe like four years ago. And big tall dudes, like 6'11", unbelievable, unbelievably charismatic person to be around. Return to missionary, struggling like crazy to hit free throws. I always say he was at like 44% as coach told me recently he goes Riley. It was lower than that. And he was like 30% free throws. Well, one of the things that we do is we try and get people to neutral thinking to get rid of some of the anxious thinking that's going on. So if we focus on our senses, like when we can see where we can hear what we can smell, what we can taste and what we can feel, those become neutral thoughts may give us a break from anxious thinking. But what I do is I tell athletes to sing a song under their breaths when they're feeling pressure to hit a big free throw or when they're and they're like, what? And this guy that I'm talking about right now is like, I don't even know what you saw. And I'm like, you mean to tell me you're a returned missionary and you don't know one him and he goes, well, I mean, I guess I know as I have loved you, you know, I go, okay, so we got a one verse here that you know every word. Do you know every word? He goes, yeah, and I go, I want you to sing that under your breath. So that you can substitute thoughts of, I'm not good enough. I don't want to let my teammates down. I hope I don't let coach down. I hope I don't get benched. I don't know if I belong here so we can get all those thoughts out of your head and you just sing that song. And the power to this is we can only have one thought in our heads, so I substitute in as I have loved you. Now, and I focus on that song for the whole time, and I can't be thinking about all these things because I can only have one thought in my mind. He went from what I thought was 44% to like 76% on the end of the year. So he was like 9 out of ten for the rest of the year. He went on a terror. Well, I took a long time to explain the fact that if we can get focused on something that is neutral to positive, meaning if I just get focused on the tasks that I have to do this morning or if I can just get focused on Christ or if I can just get focused on, you know what, I'm not doing everything that I can do as a bishop, but you know what? One of my strengths is I have a really strong testimony in today's customer is fast and testimony meeting.

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I can leave a really, really good testimony with my congregation today and then move on to working on those things that I'm not as good at. So I could get focused on something that could be positive. And so we can reframe our thought or we can change our thought process to kick out some of those impostor syndrome anxious feelings by focusing sometimes just on a hymn. Like literally just on the words of him, maybe you read your favorite hymn and just read the

words, you know, when you're feeling particularly anxious because those words as you're reading, oh, and by the way, just rewinding to the example. The reason why I haven't picked a song that they know all the words to is because as soon as the song's over, guess what seeps back into our mind? All the negative thoughts. So we got to know all the words to the song. Can't just know the refrain. You can't just know the chorus. We got to know the whole song to give us enough time and a little bit of pause from the anxious feelings that we have. Now, here's where the magic happens for a leader, you read the scriptures, you read some of him, right? He read these wonderful words. Well, because we can only have one thought in our head, we just gave ourselves a wonderful pause and a wonderful break from all the stress and anxiety that we might be having. So it might be a two minute or three minute break, but isn't that just a wonderful feeling to just have two or three minutes to just like refocus, recalibrate and refresh so that maybe we can go and do all the things that are asked the rest today. Yeah, that is so good. I love that that's so principle based, but also so practical. I can do that. That's good. I can do that. It's not impossible, right? And then of course there's breathing techniques and you and I could go into like, but that's the most simple low hanging fruit to me. Like read something really inspirational, read something that you really love that's in the church, read a talk that you love. I mean, you know, and high priest of good things to come. When I'm having a bad day, I'll pull that thing out. And guess what? That gives me four or 5, ten minutes of repose and gets me in the right mindset to maybe go do whatever else I need to do. And it lowers my anxiety. Now, one thing that you do need to understand about anxiety is that it's inversely proportional with confidence. So anything that we can do to lower anxiety is strengthening confidence and motivation. Anything that allows anxiety and stress to go up is taking away from our confidence in our motivation. So we need to practice things that are getting our anxiety and stress levels down so that we can feel that confidence and feel that motivation that comes through lowering that temperature. Awesome. Before we wrap up, I want to ask you about this concept you put in your outline about motivational interviewing because motivation after as we've surveyed the leading saints audience, like with the biggest concerns or struggles are in their leadership experience, it always comes back to the number one ranked thing is, I don't know how to motivate people. And so I'm intrigued by this. What's this concept of motivational interviewing? So motivational interviewing or reflective listening or kind of the same thing, okay? And what it is is it really just allows people so that when you're in a one on one scenario or if you're in a meeting with a couple or with somebody, there's two things that are really power about this motivational interviewing. Number one is, is it allows you to extrapolate the most amount of information possible so that you can use the spirit in the case of a leader and your mind to now present effective principles or guidance that would be helpful, right? So it allows you to do that and also allows through motivational interviewing it allows people to express their feelings and sometimes come to conclusions on their own. That's huge. Without you having we all know that when we feel like it's our own idea, we're a little bit more motivating, right? Yep. And so motivational interviewing and this takes a little bit of practice, but we all can do it in our own language. But if you came into me and you're just like, man, I'm just, I'm just having a really, really hard time reading my scriptures and praying. I would respond to you by basically repeating back to you what you said. Hey, so you're having a hard time reading the scriptures and praying right now. Is there anything else that you want to add to that? Well, yeah, and

because I'm not reading my scriptures and I'm not praying, I feel like my temper is really, really short with my kids.

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Oh, so if I'm hearing me correctly, are you feeling upset about your relationship with your kids right now? And then they keep going. And then they keep going. And then they keep going, right? And now the original problem that you saw or could have thought was just he's not reading and praying, the real answer is I'm feeling really, really, really internally conflicted about my relationship with my kids. Yeah. Which one, which problem that you were going to solve is more important? Said definitely that relationship, right? Right. And your approach is the leader is going to be totally different because you were able to extrapolate more information to come, right? Now another really good tool and like I said, it takes practice to be able to repeat back to them like what they're saying and then allow them to tell more of a story. As they say it out loud, it helps them to organize their thoughts and he might, so a really good way in motivational memory in motivational interviewing with this person would be to say, okay, so what have you tried or what do you think would be a good way to build your relationship with your kids? Right. Yeah, and then it just opens up even more. It comes up with a solid idea and you know it's a solid idea and the spirit's telling you it's a solid idea to see the spirit is working on you and you've thought through this and you're doing amazing things. You get to be the hero in the interview instead of the lecturer in the interview. Yeah. Yeah, we want to be the hero. I mean, look, everything's not a hero and a villain, right? Doesn't that feel more empowering to come in? They're doing a really good job and that they've actually thought through it and have come up with a really good conclusion to this and I don't know, I don't know what we're going to do. Or actually not asking enough questions and going, well, here's a really good way to start tricking yourself into praying and reading the scriptures more. That wasn't really the answer that they were looking for. Does that make sense? And so yeah, that's really powerful. One other way to extrapolate more information is actually just to take the last four or 5 words of their sentence and raise your eyebrow and raise the level of your speech. So if you said to me, I'm just worried that I'm a little bit short tempered with my kids. I could go like this. Short tempered with your kids. Yeah. And then they'll take the next steps. To extrapolate more information. Yeah, I'm just working really, really hard. And I get home from work and I'm really, really exhausted. And my kids are asking me to do stuff. My wife's asking me to do stuff and sometimes I lose my temper. Lose your temper, instead of saying, well, how do you lose your temper? Well, then maybe he gives you some more credit for information. Maybe you find out critical information that something really, really tragic is going on in the house or not tragic at all, very, very normal, but you didn't do it by brow beating you. You just asked them to explain more. Right. And then at that point, and I talked to you about this before we started. I don't ever want to lecture anyone on how to be a bishop. I've never done that. I've never been a state president or issue. I love the gospel. I love the leaders that I've had the thing that I would say is when you can extrapolate more information, you can now use the spirit to guide you in a better and more loving and a

more price like way. And I think that's what we're all looking to do, right? That's what we're trying to do. I don't know. I mean, look, I know there's people that are listening to this podcast that have had bad experiences with issues. But I don't know if bishop or state president that I've been around that isn't doing the very best that they can with the tools that they have. But I would just say that grabbing more information can actually help you to come up with a solution that the lord wants and you can also now give them that love and that empathy and that's support that Christ would give them by telling them they're doing a really good job and that their ideas are correct and that what they're doing is right. Sometimes that's all we need, right? It's a little pat on the back or a little, a little compliment that says, too, you're doing great things, man. Take a little pressure off. Give yourself a little bit of grace. Give yourself a little bit of the lord's forgiveness today. That you do get tired. And that's why we have bodies, and that's why we're being tested is to be able to work through those scenarios and become more like you. And maybe this is just a small test for you to be able to drop closer to the lord and it sounds like you've got a good plan. I didn't do anything. He came up with the answer. Because the lord like we talked about earlier is constantly with us in constantly whispering to us what we need to do.

01:00:03 - 01:05:44

And if we can let go of that as leaders and let people come up with their solutions, the lord's talking to them all the time. And I think I don't want to say ego, I don't know. Sometimes in the want or the need to help. We think that we have to come up with the answers. Right. We like to come up with answers. We like to be problem solvers. A lot of people who are in leadership, whether they're relief society presidents, like they've been in business, they've taken pride in solving problems by using their brain, you know? And they've come up with great solutions, and I'm not saying that there won't be time for you to do that, but a lot of times, the lord's already given the solution to the person that's in the room talking to you. If you can help them find that by using motivational interviewing and business leaders and people talk about it all the time, like it's a lot better when you have ownership than if you have buy in and when we use motivational interviewing, it gives them ownership of the problem rather than, yeah, you're probably right. I should probably do. When it comes from them, it's like, yeah, you know, I just need to do this. And they take ownership of it. And they're more likely to read their scriptures. And they're more likely to pray and they're more likely to work on the relationship with their kids. For the sakes and purposes of our fake example here, right? And so it could just be really impactful and empowers people. It makes them when you ask questions if you're curious in those questions, it makes people feel loved and it helps people to feel the love of their savior. They feel appreciated and they feel heard and the unintended benefit or blessing of that is that they become more resolute in their decision to actually execute the solving of that problem. So that makes sense. I think that's the way the word wants us to do it. I mean, think about the way the lord parents you, it's quietly it's asking you questions, it's striving with you and staying with you. It's not lecturing you. You don't get lectures from the word every day. You don't get, I mean, how does the lord parent you? It's a cool thing to think about. Yeah, that's really that's the way we

should do it more as leaders, right? Long suffering, love, reflective listening, motivational interviewing that helps them to come to answers on their own. So they have ownership of that problem and then are more likely to solve that problem. Well, right, I have one more question for you, but if people do want to learn more about your day job, what you do, I know you have your own podcast, whatnot. Where would you send people to learn more about I have a website, RGP dot net? That's Riley Jensen performance group dot net. I work with businesses. I work with athletes, I work with CEOs, presidents of companies, you can find most of it. I think where I put most of my content is on Twitter at Riley Jensen. And so I'm trying to give every day I want to create something that uplifts and I don't want to say inspires, but I think information can be really, really inspiring. So try and give information that's helpful. And then like you said, I have a podcast called mindset matters that you can find on iTunes, credit on SoundCloud. My own podcast is designed to be 5 to 7 minutes of like, I just want to get my mind right today as I start the day. How can I do that? That's helpful. And it's really fun. What I do is really fun. I hope people can feel that I love what I do, that I love the gospel, and that I'm enthusiastic about it. And I hope I have the spirit with me as I'm doing it. So well, the last question I have for you, Riley, is as you reflect back on your time as an athlete as a mental performance coach, as a latter day saint and as a leader, how is being a leader helps you become a better follower of Jesus Christ? So that's a really good question. I really like that question. I would say, as a leader, one of the things that's most humbling in any leadership position that I've held in my life is I feel this overwhelming feeling of maybe they got the wrong guy. So what I feel in leadership is this overwhelming need or push to give back to the scriptures and to get back to prayer and so I would say that as I've become a leader and as I have been asked to do more and more things in the gospel, the push has been back to the basics or to the simplicity of the gospel, not like some overwhelming great thing that I need to know. It's been like, hey, you're going to be a great leader, not because of anything that you do, but because of what you are, right? And so that seems to be what whispers back to me over and over and over again is like continue to refine continue to grow and I'll give you an example of something that I think is maybe kind of wraps up some of the things that we've talked about today and I stole this from the first counselor in our state presence when I was on the high council's names Jason Soulier, but he took the fundamental principles of the gospel, which are faith, repentance, baptism by immersion, and the gift of the holy ghost, right? As we practice those four, those become over and over and over, the main principles of the gospel, right? Faith, penance, baptism, and the gift of the holy ghost, right? Well, what he did is he changed those into normal terms.

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And I think these are incredible impactful to our motivation and to our confidence. If you change faith to believe, right? Leaving others, believe in your leaders, believe in yourself, believe that there's a higher plan for yourself. That leads to repentance or change, so believe, belief can help lead to change, which is repentance, right? If I need to change, you know, the good lord can't steer a parked car, I got to keep moving, right? I got to keep shaking and he's going to help

me to change, right? As I change, that leads to baptism or commitment, so as I make changes in my life, I become more committed, right? And as I become more committed, we now move to the gift of the holy ghost, which is refinement or progression, right? So now we refine, we make that stone a little bit smoother, and as we do that, that builds our confidence, which leads to more belief, which leads to more change, which leads to deeper commitment, which leads to more progression. So it's this circular motivation that the lord has given us faith, repentance, baptism, and the laying out of hands for the gift of the holy ghost is another way to say believe change commits and grow and progress and believe and change and as we do that we use this circular motivational cycle to get to the top of the mountain and I think it's a beautiful analogy that president Julia shared with us that just really applied to the things that I work in. I'm like, oh, that's so motivational. I can have a little bit more faith than that's going to lead to more repentance that, you know, I don't know. The other thing that I think my favorite saying right now in the church is I ask people all the time, what's the most important ornaments in the gospel? And everybody raises their hand and they're like, baptism. The endowment. I'm like, no, it's the next one. The most important ordinance is the next one. And if you've done all the ordinances, and you've done all the things that you're supposed to do, your job as a leader and your job as a follower is to help other people to get to the next one. And that's where beauty and happiness and fulfillment and contentedness really happens is by focusing on the next meeting people where they are helping them, helping them feel a little bit more confident in themselves and they can do it. They can get to that next ordinance. And then we then we all become more Christlike because, you know, the people that are moving towards their warrants and you are now refining yourself and becoming more like him by helping them to get. That concludes this episode of the leading saints podcast. Hey, listen, would you do me a favor? You know, everybody's got that friend who listens to a ton of podcasts, and maybe they aren't aware of leading saints, so would you mind taking the link of this episode or another episode of leading saints and just texting it to that friend? You know who I'm talking about. The friend who always listens to podcasts and is always telling you about different podcasts or it's your turn to tell that friend about leading saints. So share it. We also love to hear from you if you have any perspective or thought on this episode, you can go to leading-saints.org and actually leave a comment on the episode page, or reach out to us at leading-saints.org/contact. And remember to review the mentally healthy saints library, click the link in the show notes or go to leading-saints.org/14. 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.

01:10:03 - 01:10:18

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