



Figuring Out the Youth Program | A How I Lead Interview with John Walters

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Speaker 1 00:00:03 Does a youth leader ever feel like they have it figured out? This hasn't been my experience, however, I couldn't be an effective youth leader today without Dan Duckworth's presentation about going from youth worker to youth mentor. Mentorship is a key concept to understand when leading youth. In his presentation, Dan talks about ways to really turn the traditional approach to leading youth on its head. How can you better know your purpose? How can you find out their life goals? How can you build a relationship that is transformational rather than simply filling time during the weekly youth activity? You can watch Dan's presentation in the Young Saints Virtual Library by going to leading-saints.org/fourteen. You'll get free access for 14 days, and that will give you plenty of time to watch Dan's presentation a few times. Let's give youth the leadership they deserve.

Speaker 1 00:00:57 So my name is Kurt Francom, and I am the founder and executive director of Leading Saints, and obviously the host of the Leading Saints podcast. Now, I started Leading Saints back in 2010. It was just a hobby blog, and it grew from there. By the time, uh, 2014 came around, we started the podcast, and that's really when it got some, uh, traction and took off. Uh, 2016, we became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and we've been growing ever since. And now I get the opportunity of interviewing and talking with remarkable people all over the world. Now, this is a segment we do on the Leading Saints podcast called How I Lead, and we reach out to everyday leaders. They're not experts, gurus, authors, PhDs. They're just everyday leaders who've been asked to serve in a specific leadership calling. And we simply ask them, how is it that you lead? And they go through some remarkable principles that should be in a book that should be behind a PhD. They're usually that good. And, uh, we just talk about, uh, sharing what the other guy's doing. And I remember being a leader just simply

wanting to know, okay, I know what I'm trying to do, but what's the other guy doing? What's working for him? And so that's why every Wednesday or so we publish these How I leads segments to share.

Speaker 1 00:02:38 Today we're chatting with John Walters in Houston, Texas. How are you, John?

Speaker 2 00:02:42 Doing great.

Speaker 1 00:02:43 Now, you're, uh, you're Bishop Walters around that area, right?

Speaker 2 00:02:47 Yeah. Some, some people call me that <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:02:51 Very cool. Very cool. How long have you been Bishop now?

Speaker 2 00:02:54 Um, we're coming up on three years.

Speaker 1 00:02:58 Nice. Yeah. Very good. So you got some, you know, you've done done everything a few times and, uh, <laugh> the, the Christmas party, the chili, Cookoff, whatever it is, and, and hopefully you've found some, some rhythm to it. Do you feel that way? Exactly.

Speaker 2 00:03:09 Yeah. I mean, I feel like there's some rhythm, you know, I still feel like there's a lot of things that I don't have the answers to, but, um, um, but certainly it's better than those first six months, man.

Speaker 1 00:03:20 Yeah. <laugh>, that's for sure. So maybe just tell me what's the basic buildup of your ward? I know the church is pretty strong in Houston, and Houston just has so many people that, you know, any organization is probably is pretty strong in, in Houston. But

Speaker 2 00:03:32 Yeah. You know, we've got about 300 members, um, ages are kind of all across the board. Lot of young families, a lot of older, uh, people as well. Our youth program, we have about 50 youth. Um, about 40 of those are active. Um, primary probably has, uh, 60 ish, uh, children in it. So

Speaker 1 00:03:56 Yeah. Good, solid, stable award then. Yeah,

Speaker 2 00:03:58 That's good.

Speaker 1 00:03:59 Exactly. Cool. Yeah. Now you reached out to me. Uh, I don't know, I guess we've sort of talked on and off, uh, the last few years or or whatnot through messages, and I, I, for, I lose track of, you know, in the inbox of who, who sometimes, and so maybe we, we've talked longer than I, than I realized, but you brought up this, uh, sort of an approach, not, uh, anything as anything too specific of just how you're, uh, approaching the, leading the youth in, in your ward that, you know, there's this extra emphasis over the last few years that the bishop and the Bishop Rick is focused on the youth and, uh, especially during this, uh, the, the phase where we, we discontinued the young men's presidency, right. And sort of gave more of

that, uh, that, uh, responsibility, uh, to the bishops, even though, I guess it was sort of there before, but this is, they're now they're really serious about it, right? And there's, I get a lot of emails from bishops from wards or, uh, parents of youth around the world that they want to learn more about what other people are doing to really make this work. And not that you've cracked the code, but I think maybe there's some things that we can learn from your experience. And so where's a good place to start with, uh, just what you've done with leading the youth as the bishop.

Speaker 2 00:05:06 Yeah. Well, you know, um, listen, I, I've had to learn a lot myself, and you've had a lot of great episodes. I can't remember exactly what episode it was, but after one episode, you know, you kind of put out the plug and you said, Hey, if, if you're in the youth program, or, um, I, I don't know if you asked for Bishop specifically, but you said if you're in the youth youth program and you have any sort of approach to it, we'd love to hear from you. So that's, I kind of responded to your invitation.

Speaker 1 00:05:33 That's awesome.

Speaker 2 00:05:34 Um, but I wanted to maybe start with kind of our mindset. Um, and, you know, I have a, I've developed, and, and I'm always refining it, but I've developed a, a vision and a mindset that I have. I try to communicate it to the youth, to the youth leaders. And I think it's important to discuss, because as later in the conversation when maybe I get into more mechanics of a few examples of things that we're doing, I think your mindset manifests how you decide to implement the children and youth program. So if it's okay with you, we'll start Yeah. Talking a little bit about mindset,

Speaker 1 00:06:17 I'm intrigued. So <laugh>,

Speaker 2 00:06:20 Um, you know, I also, kind of, like you said, I don't have it all figured out. I kind of wanna reiterate that the, that this mindset is my own. And, um, you know, I want to talk you through it so you see where I'm coming from, but I'm not saying it's the right mindset or the only mindset. Um, I think the important thing is that a youth leader has a vision for what they're working toward, especially as we help usher the youth along in their own journey.

Speaker 1 00:06:47 Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:06:48 Um, you know, we often talk about the youth program or just kind of youth in general as this preparatory time and specifically, you know, we, we call the ERO priesthood, the preparatory priesthood. But if you don't mind me putting you on the spot, what, oh, boy. <laugh>, what is the ERO priesthood actually preparing people for?

Speaker 1 00:07:14 Oh, like, you want a doctrinal answer? Like a

Speaker 2 00:07:17 Just kind of, yeah. I mean, I think there's some pretty standard answers here, but just what comes to mind?

Speaker 1 00:07:23 Well, I, I think we're all, like anything we do in the church, right? That, uh, we're gathering Israel to another sort of broad term, but we're, we're ushering people towards the temple to make covenants and to become in relationship with God and, uh, and, you know, gain power, uh, that comes from those covenants. So, yeah. Exactly. Am I am in the ballpark <laugh>?

Speaker 2 00:07:46 Yeah. I mean, I think there's a lot of answers, but I think you were right along the lines of what I was thinking at least. Um, so we think about the erotic priesthood as preparatory. An answer I get a lot when I ask this question is, what is it preparing you for? Oh, it's preparing you for the Mel Kesner priesthood. It's like, yeah, that's, it was pretty obvious. But, um, what does that even mean? Um, and I think maybe just, if you don't mind, I'll take two minutes to kind of talk through some history of ironic and Mel priesthood. Yeah, I love it. There's just a bible story here. Everybody knows it. The Lord took Moses and Israel out of Egypt, and he had a purpose in Exodus chapter 19. He says, if ye will obey my voice deed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto, unto me, above all the people.

Speaker 2 00:08:41 Ye shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. So the Lord, he, his purpose in taking Israel out of, uh, Egypt was to lead them to the temple, which at the time was Mount Sinai, and have them enter into the Mel order and become a nation of kings and priests, queens and priestesses. But we all know the story. The people rejected it, and they weren't ready for it. So God took away that higher order, and he gave them a preparatory law. And that's, that's where the ironic law comes in. It prepares people to, to enter into that tic order, which we would just call that going to the temple, participating in temple ordinances by pointing them to Christ. So Jacob in the book, Mormon said, for this intent, we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him. And so our children and youth, both boys and girls, they're in this ironic order, this preparatory order.

Speaker 2 00:09:48 And this is a time to point them to Christ in all that they do, and prepare them to enter into his holy order. So in terms of mindset, one of the things that kind of an exercise that I like to do is imagine one of our youth could be 11 years old, could be 17 years old, but I try to imagine them when they're older. They're at the steps of the temple. They're about to go into, receive their endowment. And I ask myself, what do I hope that youth knows? What skills do I hope they've developed? What experiences will I have want them to had by the time they go to the temple? And what kind of people do they become? You know, we're, we're literally preparing kings and queens and priests and priestesses. And I think if we have that vision in mind of that's where we're trying to get 'em, um, then I think it helps us kind of put things together as we think about how to implement the program and what to do, what specific things to do.

Speaker 1 00:11:02 Yeah. And I, I just love that, uh, that mindset again, that, not that everybody needs to take, you know, John's, uh, outline of what he just said and say, well, I guess I'll just redo that. But the fact it's obvious that like you've sat with this as far as the, the mindset you talk about, like, what is it we're doing here? Like, how can I get in the mindset and o obviously you've turned to the scriptures and you think, you know, what is this preparatory priesthood? What, what does that mean? And how can I articulate it in order to, uh, cast that

vision and, you know, shepherd people down that path? And I, I often say like, it's one thing to, to believe the gospel or know the gospel. It's a whole other thing to be able to articulate the gospel. And so I love that example you just gave, that you really articulated these concepts in a way that, uh, can help shift people in the right mindset.

Speaker 2 00:11:51 Yeah, I agree. And it helps to articulate a mindset. 'cause I think intuitively we kind of, we know these things, especially those of us who have grown up in the, the church or been members for a while. But to, as a leader, to articulate it, to be able to kind of get all the leaders on the same page, the youth also give them the vision of where they're going. You know, I think it's important. Yeah. Um, I have an experience where this actually kind of came to life. You know, there was a young man in the ward that was, um, he wasn't coming to church. His parents were very worried. They came to me and they're like, Hey, he's not coming to church. I don't think he's gonna go on a mission. And they were worried about those things and, and that those are great worries to have.

Speaker 2 00:12:36 But in my head, I wasn't so worried about just the fact that he wasn't coming to church or maybe wasn't thinking about going on a mission. To me, those were symptoms of something much deeper. I worried that this young man had not yet had a real experience with Jesus Christ, that he, he hadn't yet felt the spirit speak to him. And I remember talking with this young man, and I think, you know, he was 17. And I think the, a lot of people you get that age, the expectation is go on a mission. Like what's the next step? Oh, it's go on a mission. But I, I probably had a conversation I don't know that he had had before. I actually didn't talk to him really at all about going on a mission. I said, Hey, let's talk about where you're at with your testimony of Jesus Christ. And after working with him for a few months, 'cause here's, here's my thought. I was thinking, and experience has played this out many times. Going on a mission is a worthy goal. But I don't think it's the goal. I think the goal is to know Jesus Christ. And if a youth can know Jesus Christ and have an experience with them, then I imagine that nine times outta 10, they'll want to go serve a mission. Mm-Hmm.

Speaker 1 00:13:59 <affirmative>.

Speaker 2 00:14:00 So if we can have help the youth have that experience, um, in, in this case, it, it happened that way. I mean, it took a, a few months, he had some issues he was working with, but he had a deep experience filling the, the redeeming and the healing power that comes from Jesus Christ. And then a month later he comes and tells me he wants to serve a mission. Yeah. And it, it was amazing.

Speaker 1 00:14:29 Yeah. Yeah. Man, that, that's such a powerful example. That is, it, it seems like on paper it almost seems backwards. 'cause we think, well, if we can get him on a mission, then we'll introduce him to Christ. Or then they'll have a discipleship, uh, life because they're on a mission or they're doing the things. When in reality, if we encourage them in a discipleship life and guide them to Christ and point them to Christ, there's, there's something about his grace that we can't ignore is that when we feel it, we can't help but turn to him and say, how do I do that? How do I be that type of person? And he'll say, well, check out my commandments and covenants, uh, go on a mission. And, you know, you'll begin to understand

what it's like to be that disciple to become more like he is, you know, so powerful example. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:15:15 Yeah. Exactly. And, you know, some, some youth, they'll leave on a mission before having a conversion. And that's okay. I think if a youth has enough faith to, to feel like, Hey, this is good. Even if I don't feel like I've had a deep conversion, but I still feel like this is the right thing to do, I still wanna do it. Hey, that, that's fine. And, and hopefully on their mission, they do have those deep experiences, but it's those, it's those deep experiences with the spirit and with the atonement of Jesus Christ that that changes lives.

Speaker 1 00:15:46 Yeah. And again, that's a, a helpful mindset for a leader or parents to be in, is that we're not just looking, the goal isn't to get 'em on a mission. The goal is to get them to Jesus Christ. Right. And obviously, mission could be, maybe that is, maybe they're like, you know, I don't really know what else to do. I could probably do a mission. Why don't I do that? And, you know, they'll, they'll find deeper experiences with, with Christ there. So, yeah. Really good. Yeah, exactly. Really good. Um, can I ask you about the, on the outline you sent me, and I know that this has maybe tweaked since, uh, you originally sent to me. Yeah. But you said there's some common misunderstandings with the youth program. Uh, yeah, I, I'm intrigued. Let's explore those.

Speaker 2 00:16:22 Yeah. So I, I, I mean, I think these are common misunderstandings. 'cause in conversations that I've had with other bishops or other youth leaders, and these are definitely things that we had to learn about the program. So we were called, we've been a Bishop Rick for, uh, just under three years. And we were called, uh, just as the, our ward was coming back to, um, back to church after kind of the covid break. Right? We were starting to have face-to-face meetings again. Um, and if you remember the, the children and youth program was launched just before covid, and then the whole world shut down. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And so when we were called as a bishop, Rick, we, we didn't really know exactly what the children and youth program was. Uh, it didn't to us at the time, seemed very well defined. It definitely didn't have the list of things to do, like personal progress or the Boy Scout program. I mean, those things had, yeah.

Speaker 1 00:17:21 That wasn't there for sure. Things to do.

Speaker 2 00:17:23 Yeah. Um, you know, so I think some of the common misconceptions here is that the main part of the program, for example, is goals. I think there was a lot of focus on goals in the early, uh, rollout of this program for a few months. That's all we really focused on. It's like, okay, yeah, we've got these four development areas, let's set goals, and then let's see how those goals, we can incorporate those into activities or whatever. But actually the, the personal development or that goal setting, it's only one of three pillars. You've got the three pillars of the children and youth program. You've got gospel learning activities and service, and then personal development. Um, one of the other, I don't know that this is a misconception, um, but it's, it maybe just goes back to kind of some common mindsets or phrases that we use.

Speaker 2 00:18:25 One of the other things is that we hear this phrase a lot of, let the, let the youth lead get outta their way, let 'em lead. And I think sometimes I've seen that lead to a leader totally backing off and just putting it all on the youth and saying, Hey, you've got this, but then backing off a little too much. And, uh, elder bednar, he, he taught a, a great principle that it's not just getting out of their way, it's coaching them to lead. It's being there. Yes. Put something in their, in their, on their plate, but coach 'em through it. You know, a lot of these children have not, uh, the children and youth have not led or been a part of a presidency before. So to just put things on their plate and expect things to happen, that's maybe going a little too far in one direction.

Speaker 1 00:19:21 Yeah. And that's the, I think the goal, you know, that misconception of you can get sort of trapped in the goal set setting mentality. 'cause Yeah. It's like, oh, it's something we can do. Yeah. Let's have an activity, draw the quadrant, you know, have everybody write their goals. Uh, but, uh, and then the other side is you want to let the youth lead, but man, easier set than done. Right? Like, yeah. They just wanna play basketball every, every week <laugh>, you know, like, yeah, exactly. How do I just, how do I get outta the way? But it's more of that mentorship, the coaching that is really crucial.

Speaker 2 00:19:50 Yeah, exactly. And sometimes letting them lead means you give them three options and they get to choose one of the three. It's not that. 'cause you're right, man, especially with, uh, you know, I, I don't mean to pick, pick on the deacons corn, but <laugh>, you'll have a Deacons corn presidency meeting, and if you don't suggest anything, the list of their suggestions is, yeah. Basketball, you know, video game night, uh, laser tag. Like, like, these are awesome activities, but let's, maybe, let's maybe pitch some things out to them, help coach them on what, what the goals are. Give them a vision of what we're trying to do.

Speaker 1 00:20:28 Yeah. That's awesome. Um, where should we go next as far as, uh, uh, your, your, your approach to the youth program and integrative approach? Is that the next step?

Speaker 2 00:20:38 Yeah. So, um, we, I, going back to the temple analogy, you know, I, I envision a youth, um, that's, you know, 18 years old, they've now kind of graduated the youth program. They're at the steps of the temple. And there's four, I call them the four intentional questions, know, do, be and experiences, right? So what do we want them to know by the time they leave the youth program? What do we want them to be able to do? Or what skills do we want them to have? What do we want them to be? What kind of person do should they be? And what experiences do they do we want them to have had by the time they graduate the youth program? These four intentional questions. By the way, I don't want people to think that I'm came up with these on my own. I actually got these from a book called The Intentional Father by John Tyson.

Speaker 2 00:21:33 Oh, wow. And, um, you know, he's talking about these four kind of questions for a father, kind of thinking about, you know, my son or daughter when they leave the house, what do I want them to know and do and be? Um, but I think it's applicable here. So these intentional questions can actually help you lay out the types of activities you want to have. They can lay out discussions that you have with your youth presidencies. So, going over just a

few examples of these. So what do we want our youth to know? Maybe it's their identity, maybe the plan of happiness, the importance of covenants, how the spirit speaks to them. And even practical things like how the world works. What are their options for the future? Um, do we want them to know how to, that they can do hard things, um, know how and where to turn for answers or know who they can trust for guidance.

Speaker 2 00:22:32 There's a lot of things that, that, uh, you know, and, and you can brainstorm these as presidencies or as a Bishop Rick, but there's certain things that they're gonna have to know by the time they, they graduate the youth program and skills are the same. What kind of skills do we want them to have? Um, study skills, know how to interact with people, know how to answer questions. Practical things like cooking, budgeting, planning for the future, planning out their day. Um, knowing how to set goals. Goals is important. You know, other, other good habits. How to lead, how to organize a service project. Um, what, what kind of experiences do we want them to have had experiences with the spirit, experiencing, experiencing Jesus Christ atoning power as it heals and redeems and it strengthens them. We want them to have challenging experiences, meaningful service. We want them to be familiar with the temple. So, you know, the beautiful thing about the program is, I think in the beginning we all wished that there would've been a lot more structure.

Speaker 1 00:23:47 Yeah. Just tell us what to do, right? Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:23:49 Give us a manual like the Boy Scout Handbook, <laugh>, and, and we'll do it like, we'll, <crosstalk>, what

Speaker 1 00:23:54 Are the mirror badges? Right? Yeah, exactly. Like how many do they need to get the Eagle Right, <laugh>.

Speaker 2 00:23:57 Exactly. But the beauty here is that you can actually customize. I mean, the youth program as it has been launched by the church is a wonderful foundation. And then as a ward, you can build on top of that foundation, whatever is fit for purpose for your youth in your ward at this time. So if you wanted, you could just take the the Boy Scout handbook, give it to the Deacons Corn President, and be like, Hey, once a month we want you to do, uh, an activity, something of a skill or a, a something out of this handbook. Or you could give them, uh, merit badge handbooks, or, you know, a lot of activities that we've done, we're trying to expose the young men and young women to a lot of new things. A lot of times we'll just grab a merit badge book and just kind of go through it.

Speaker 2 00:24:55 They're not earning the merit badge, but the, those books are awesome. 'cause they, they teach you how to do it. Then they have, you know, practical things to help the youth kind of practice with. And I think as a, as youth leaders in the ward, you can, you can build as much or as little structure, uh, around this program as, as you want and as your youth need. But for me, it's taking those four intentional questions. What do we want them to know do be, and experience and integrating those into all of our touch points. And there's a lot of touch points that we have. I mean, you talk about Sunday school classes, presidency meetings, activities, your annual semi-annual interviews with the Bishop Rick, uh, family visits.

Our ward still does by yds, the, the Bishop Youth devotionals, uh, camps, youth conferences. In all of these kind of, I call 'em touch points, you're intentionally integrating that mindset and those four intentional questions, and then that starts to build up your program. 'cause if you can answer those questions, it tells you what activities you should have. It tells you what skills to focus on, what skills to build, what experiences to help the, the youth have, et cetera.

Speaker 1 00:26:20 Yeah. And I love this framework that no do be experience and, uh, 'cause we can get trapped, you know, in our, in our faith tradition or just any church tradition, right? It's like, you go to church and we're gonna like talk at you. So you know, some things, let's talk about doctrine, you know, Bible stories, whatever. But, uh, it's, it gets a little more tricky. Or, or, um, a lot of leaders are unsure how to do, move into some of these become an experience, uh, components. And so I love this model to, to sit with and add and ask yourself as the leader, how are we doing these things? How, how, how can we get them to become something? Or how can we get them to experience something? And then those all work together. That's fantastic. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:26:58 Thank you. And, and maybe I'll just give like a couple ex ex uh, specific examples of kind of how we've done this. Perfect. That's what,

Speaker 1 00:27:06 That's what I was gonna ask for <laugh>. So how, what does this look like in your world?

Speaker 2 00:27:10 Yeah, so I mean, one of the goals that we, uh, one of the do, so what are the, one of the skills that we've identified we really want our youth to have is the social skills and being able to kind of interact with other people. And depending on where you're at, depending on the circumstances of your youth, um, I don't know about everybody else, but our youth, uh, in our board, they tend to communicate a lot through devices. Not a lot of face-to-face interaction these days. Things can be a little awkward, uh, when you, when they do interact with people. So that's a skill that we want them to have by the time they leave the youth program, is to, to be able to interact and talk with people appropriately and hold a conversation. Um, it's a little bit different. So like, you probably are the same.

Speaker 2 00:28:04 When, when I was a youth, our leaders were always trying to like, keep us separate, especially from the opposite sex, right? <laugh>, it's like keeping us apart. And at dances they would like watch us like hawks, make sure we weren't getting too close <laugh>. But now it's the completely opposite problem. Like, we're trying to actually get the young men and young women together actually talk to each other face to face. So, you know, knowing that this is a skill that we want them to have. We put together ward youth conferences, overnight camps, uh, where we bring all the youth together, generally 14 and older. So not the youngest of the youth, but we'll bring 'em together, do a young men, young women combined conference or overnight camp. And we'll focus on things that help them interact with each other. You know, even having a mix of young women and young men make dinner together, or on the last one that we did, we put together this kind of, uh, forget what we called it, but it was like a, a hike at night where we would have the youth, we'd have young, one young man, one young woman pair up and kind of lead a devotional.

Speaker 2 00:29:20 And we had several of these stations and we kind of took a hike, um, to each of these stations through the night. Just gave them a chance to, to kind of talk with each other, be able to kind of teach or explain something or, you know, hold a conversation. And I don't think that we would've necessarily thought of those things had we not been intentional with the skill that we were trying to build.

Speaker 1 00:29:45 Yeah. That, that question of, uh, what do we want them to do or become or know, like yeah. Right. Like you can get lo those skill sets can get lost in in the shuffle.

Speaker 2 00:29:54 Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. This one, uh, uh, one more example. I wanted to just, I think it's such a genius idea that our young women's leaders, uh, developed this year. Again, the ability to customize what we do, um, is fantastic. So earlier in the year, like with many wards, we have a fundraiser. We raise money primarily to have camps. Um, so we raised a good, uh, a good amount of money so that the young men could have good summer camps, and the young women's could have a good, uh, young women's camp. But the young women, they just couldn't find a week where they could get the majority of the young women there. We have a variety of, you know, personal and family circumstances that it was just impossible to kind of find a five, five day span in a week where most of the girls could attend.

Speaker 2 00:30:53 So our young women's leaders, they decided to break, instead of having, you know, one five to six day camp, they said, what if we break it up into five or six day camps that we place throughout the year? So they call these things, uh, unity camps. And because they, they only last maybe an afternoon or maybe a morning just about all the young women have been able to attend at least, at least all the young women have attended at least one. Um, and they do meaningful things. They, they've done zip lining, they've done service, special temple, trip dinners, celebrations. They're actually doing their last one for the year. Tomorrow they're gonna go visit the giving machines. And so this is just a, a again, you know, hats off to our young women's leaders who had a, had an issue, but because they felt free to customize things, they kind of found a solution that gives more of our young women opportunities to, to come together Yeah. And have those experiences.

Speaker 1 00:31:57 So was this idea of splitting that up into multiple, sort of Unity camps, was that that came from the youth that, that idea or,

Speaker 2 00:32:04 Um, I think it just came from the young women's leaders.

Speaker 1 00:32:07 Oh, gotcha. Okay. Yeah. Nice, nice.

Speaker 2 00:32:10 Yeah. It might have been collaborative, I'm not sure. Yeah. But the young women's leaders, you know, brought it to me. And I, it was a fantastic, so you think about the experiences that you want young women to have, you talk to any adult woman who was in the young women's program, most of them are gonna point to wonderful experiences that they had at Girls camp, at Young Women's Camp. Um, so we want our young women to have that experience. And this is a way in our ward that we could make it happen, um, even when we were able to do kind of a traditional camp that, that most wards do.

Speaker 1 00:32:50 Yeah. Any other examples that come to mind as far as how you've, uh, executed some of these things?

Speaker 2 00:32:55 Um, yeah, I mean, nothing specific. I, I do think, you know, I kind of already mentioned it, but like in presidency meetings, for example, when we're meeting with the presidencies, the youth presidencies, and they're trying to kinda develop activities or service opportunities or even plan lessons, Sunday lessons, um, we, we have been kind of coaching them on these four intentional questions. So we talk through, okay, what skills do we want to, um, to learn, you know, this month or this quarter, whatever planning period we're doing. And the, the youth are, if the youth have the vision, they're fantastic. I mean, without a vision, yeah, they're gonna come up with just basketball and laser tag and video games, but if you give 'em the vision, you coach 'em a little bit, they're gonna come up with some amazing, amazing things. I mean, we've had the youth ask us to teach personal finance classes, or, um, a couple youth were interested in very specific careers. Um, so we found people in those careers and kind of brought 'em, um, and, and because the youth asked for it, because that was something they were interested in, it turned out really well. So, yeah, I don't know that, that's great. That's a very specific example, but I think just in general, it kind of shows that if you can be intentional and, and in every interaction you have, try to put that mindset and those intentional questions in play, it leads to some pretty awesome results.

Speaker 1 00:34:39 Yeah. So, uh, a few questions just as far as, you know, your role. And, and, and so I would imagine, like you, were you the one that sort of introduced to the youth leaders this, these four questions? Or,

Speaker 2 00:34:54 Yeah. So, and it's, it's been a, it's been a bit of a journey. Um, and, you know, a couple of your podcasts I've really found super useful, especially like with, uh, Dan Duckworth for, for example, he had a couple of podcasts on, on youth and leadership. Um, so I remember it probably was, it was probably a year after I was called. 'cause that first year, man, my head was spinning. I didn't know what I was doing, trying to get a grasp on things. Um, but I, I put together kind of my initial thoughts on what a vision and a mindset could be. And yeah, I pulled, I pulled all the, pulled the Bishop Rick, the young women's presidency, all the advisors together. We did kind of a discussion training type thing. Um, since then I meet, I as a bishop, Rick and a young women's presidency, we meet jointly.

Speaker 2 00:35:51 We try to meet once a month. And that's a mixture of training, plus kind of planning as well. Um, so, and a lot of it's, a lot of it's collaborative. I think, you know, the, the four intentional questions that I've been using from, I got the idea from that intentional father book. Um, yeah, that's something I came across. But how we implement things, how we talk about things, uh, it, it's very collaborative and, you know, it's beautiful to have people's input. Um, and ultimately, like the young women's coming up with their, their solution for those camps, that's something I wouldn't have even thought of. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:36:28 And well, I, I really appreciate you, uh, recognizing that that has been a journey. Right? I, uh, I fear that a lot of people maybe listen to a podcast like this or, or hear somebody else's experience and they try it and it's like, ah, it didn't work. You know? Yeah. You

made it sound too easy. It doesn't work like that. But, you know, this is just, you have to really massage it into the culture, um, of the, of the leadership of, of regrouping time and time again. Right. And, and recognizing it's gonna take some time to maybe get some traction in these callings. And like you said, maybe it's, you're a brand new bishop and, you know, the youth aren't the only thing you're worried about, even though on paper that is sort of the message. Right, exactly.

Speaker 2 00:37:09 Yeah. Yeah. And maybe from a year from now, I'll look back, uh, to today and I'll be like, well, you know, half that stuff I don't even do anymore. 'cause I've learned these other things. You know, it, it really is a journey.

Speaker 1 00:37:20 Uh, is there, is, so you meet, uh, once a month with, uh, the Bishop Rick meets with the young women's presidency. Is there a any typical agenda that you try and go through? You're just sort of regrouping and talking through that, what happened last month? Or how would you explain those, those meetings?

Speaker 2 00:37:36 Yeah, it, it's really just making sure we're on the same page. You know, there's a lot of, uh, planning that goes in, a lot of just making sure. 'cause there's a lot of things that cross both young men and young women. Um, there's Sunday lessons. Uh, one of the big questions now, after last general conference, the leadership training, uh, from general conference talks a lot about how to make Sunday lessons and the Sunday Church experience better. So, you know, some of our meetings over the last couple months, that's been the main question of how do we help our youth be more involved in sacrament meeting, for example. Um, are there things that the young women can do to get, to get more involved? How do we make our classes on Sundays more conducive to learning and experiencing, experiencing having experiences with, with Jesus Christ? So it really is just kind of a council meeting about the youth, um, with, you know, jointly.

Speaker 1 00:38:45 Yeah. Yeah. That's great. And, um, and then what would you say as far as the, you know, when, when sort of friction point of being, uh, with this new effort, even though it doesn't feel so new anymore, but how do you, how do you focus on the youth and not get caught up in other things going on in the ward? Or how do you delegate to the Elridge Quorum Relief Society? What does that look like?

Speaker 2 00:39:10 Yeah, you know, I think for me, some of it's just been, um, I don't know if you call it luck, but we've had excellent elders quorum presidents and excellent relief society presidents. Um, I still meet with them. I try to, to have a, like a one-on-one with them at least once a month. Um, we'll invite both of them into at least one Bishop Rick meeting a month. And then, of course, ward Council, I just, our, like I said, our elders quorum presidents, relief Society presidents have been amazing. And I think when we were called as a bishop Rick, about three years ago, that momentum, that prophetic council to have the bishop focus on youth that was kind of in full swing. So we were able to just start right off the bat. And, um, our, our elders, quorum Relief Society presidencies have really stepped up. I have not felt really at all over these last three years that I was doing too much with adults or too much with welfare issues, or too much with these other things that we've been asked to, to, to delegate.

Speaker 1 00:40:26 Cool. Uh, I do want to thank you. This is, it is just so helpful to just hear what the other guy's doing, you know, and, and to see how you've wrestled these things, some ideas you've tried, the inspiration that's come. So I, I, I appreciate you, uh, being willing to share, but even going further that like raising your head and saying, Hey, I may have something to share with the audience. And I feel like two, some of the best leaders feel like it's some form of humility to like, not reach out and share it with the world. So yeah, that was sort of a passive aggressive shaming that I just did there. But hey, I'm glad that you don't fall in that, that category. So I hope other people feel inspired to follow your example. And let's just share it that, again, nobody's gonna put you on a pedestal or act like you have it figured out, but let's do it, you know? Yeah. So, uh, well, John, last question I have for you is, as you reflect on your time as a leader, how has being a leader helped you become a better follower of Jesus Christ?

Speaker 2 00:41:17 Yeah. You know, Kurt, I listened to your podcast. I know this question is coming, but, um, uh, you know, I've had a lot of thoughts about this. You know, first and foremost, I feel like Mormon, um, in Moroni chapter seven, he said that it was by the grace of God, the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and his holy will, because of the gift of his calling unto me, that I'm permitted to speak to you at this time. I, I feel that way. I mean, this calling and other callings, but this one specifically has been such a gift. And, um, there's, I've done nothing to deserve it. It's only by the grace of God, um, that I'm here, that I'm even permitted to, to work with the youth at this time. As I, as I try to magnify my calling, as I try myself to point myself to Jesus Christ, the more I come unto him, the more I realize how much further I have to go, how much further I need to develop as a disciple.

Speaker 2 00:42:26 And it's, it's humbling. But the thing that's different when you're coming to Jesus is he not only, you know, if, 'cause you, you compare yourself against other people, and sometimes that can get you down. You compare yourself to Jesus Christ, you're, you know that there are some areas that you really have to work on. But the difference is that Jesus Christ will help you, he'll strengthen you. He'll actually, he's not just at the finish line rooting you on. He's actually the every step of the way helping you in your journey. And this calling has just given me kind of a new perspective on that. And, um, I, I hope, I hope that I'm becoming a better disciple of Jesus Christ because of it.

Speaker 1 00:43:21 And that concludes this how I lead interview. I hope you enjoyed it. And, uh, I would ask you, could you take a minute and drop this link in an email, on social media, in a text, wherever it makes the most sense, and share it with somebody who could relate to this, this experience. And this is how we, how we develop as leaders, just hearing what the other guy's doing, trying some things out, testing, adjusting for your area. And, uh, that's, that's where great leadership's discovered, right? So we would love to have you, uh, share this with, uh, somebody in this calling or a related calling, and that would be great. And also, if you know somebody, uh, any type of leader who would be a fantastic guest on the How I Lead segment, uh, reach out to us. Go to leading.scenes.org/contact. Maybe send this in individual an email letting them know that you're going to be suggesting their name for this interview. We'll reach out to them and, uh, see if we can line 'em up. So again, go to leading.saints.org/contact. And there you can submit all the information and let us know, and maybe they will be on a feature

How I lead Segment on the Leading Saints podcast. Remember, go listen to Dan Duckworth's presentation about youth mentorship by visiting leading.saints.org/fourteen.

Speaker 3 00:44:39 It came as a result of the position of leadership, which was imposed upon us by the God of Heaven, who brought forth a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And when the Declaration was made concerning the own and only true and living church upon the face of the earth, we were immediately put in a position of loneliness. The loneliness of leadership from which we cannot shrink nor run away. And to which we must face up with boldness and courage and ability.