



Stepping into the Mentor Role as Young Women President | A How I Lead Interview with Natalie Cox

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Attention youth leaders, if you have recently been called to lead the rising generation, I have a next step for you. Listen to an awesome presentation by Yvonne Hubert and Peter Vidmar who are both respective members of the Young Women and Young Men General Advisory Council for the Church. Their presentation really helps clarify ways on how to effectively lead the youth using the Children and Youth Program. They also cover topics like youth -led groups, how to lead through personal ministry, how to meet youth where they are, identifying the youth's strengths and capacities. This presentation is part of the Young Saints Virtual Library and you can access it at no cost by going to [LeadingSaints .org slash 14](https://LeadingSaints.org/14). Again, simply click the link in the show notes or go to [LeadingSaints .org slash 14](https://LeadingSaints.org/14). 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 2014 came around, we started the podcast and that's really when it got some traction and took off 2016. We became a 501c3 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 we just talk about sharing what the other guy is 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 Lead segments to share. And we're back for another How I Lead episode. This is where we connect with the everyday leader out there somewhere in the world and simply ask them, how is it that you lead? And today, this is a good one, I'm really excited to share this one with you. This is with Natalie Cox, who's in Gilbert, Arizona. She grew up in the LA area, has five kids. One of them is currently serving a mission in Ohio and she has a daughter who is, at least at the time of this recording, has received her mission call to the Scotland Ireland mission. Natalie has a business, a handbag business on the side that she loves doing and she's been a Young Women's President for seven months. And so we explore that experience of being a Young Women's President in the Gilbert, Arizona area and let me tell you, listen to this interview alone. So many people are going to disagree with it and that's why what I appreciate about some of these interviews is that it makes you sit and think with some of these things we do and why. And we talk about texting and youth and that discussion alone is probably worth the episode, but she says so much other good stuff as far as secret ministering, how to involve the Young Women in the weekly experience at church and so this is a phenomenal how I lead episode. This is why we do it. Absolutely. So here's my interview with Natalie Cox from Gilbert, Arizona. We're headed back to Gilbert, Arizona with Natalie Cox. How are you? I'm good. How are you, Kurt? Very good. Well, I'm excited to chat about your time as a Young Women's President and maybe let's start there.

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What's the story behind you being called as a Young Women's President in your ward? Okay, so I was serving as the stake primary president and I was two years into that call. And this is like last October, I started having these feelings like I needed to be in Young Women's. My daughter who is now 16 was going to be going into the 16 to 18 year old class. And she has honestly just struggled with her testimony since she was 12. Feeling God's presence is really hard. I believe, firmly looking at my five kids, I firmly believe that feeling the spirit is a gift. Feeling the spirit easy is a gift that some have and others really struggle and they struggle to have faith and to feel that and through no fault of their own, oftentimes, it's just hard. Anyway, so I thought, okay, what better time for me to be in Young Women's than when she's transferring to a new class and I actually felt really embarrassed. I've never asked for a calling up until I had some experience as a stake primary president. I was not a calling person, I hated callings and almost said no to so many. Anyway, so I had some really good experiences as the stake primary president that really like transformed my willingness to serve. So that being said, I still needed a lot of time to reach out to my bishop. I reached out to him and I just said, hey, Bishop, is there any way that you can find some space in the Young Women class, the Laurel class for me? My daughter's moving up,

he knows her situation and I said, I can do both. I can serve in primary and Young Women's and essentially they'd have to be like making a calling for me. I didn't really care. I just needed to be there. And he responded, I don't know how to categorize his response, but it was like, whatever, you know, whatever. But still I kept just having this feeling and I actually even opened this notes tab in my phone because I kind of kept having these thoughts come to me of what I would implement and what I would do. And it was actually really embarrassing for me. We don't aspire to callings. Our Young Women's president was two years in. I was two years in. It didn't make sense. But the thoughts just kept coming kind of almost obsessively and they really bothered me. Anyway, so during this time, my bishop, I guess, had a strong impression that I should be the next Young Women's president. And he went to the stake president, stake president said, no, find somebody else. And I wasn't on their list because I was in the stake at the time. And so he said, find somebody else. So Bishop prayed about it and he came back to the stake president and said, I can find somebody else. But it's Natalie. The stake president said, all right, I'll think about it. And this is all over a matter of like two and a half months. And then one day again, I'm like cleaning my kitchen. Inspiration comes when I'm driving the car and I'm in my kitchen. And so I'm just kind of thinking, I have this feeling that I need to let my stake president and the first counselor who I work with in primary, let them know what I had said to my bishop. Like, hey, I have space for both. If he reaches out by chance, I can do both. And it took me a little while to send it because I just felt really stupid. Anyway, I sent the text and they were like, OK, great, that's fine. And that was, I guess, the prompting that my stake president needed to kind of let me move over. And so he called my bishop and let him know, like, all right, you know, this obviously is meant to be. Let's move over. And I was called and released and it was, I wasn't expecting it. Usually your bishop calls you or the secretary calls you ahead of time and you have a few days to like, OK, let me see if I know what this is. And you kind of like mentally prepared. This was like we got a text in the middle of Sunday school to come meet with bishops. So I was kind of assuming it was for my husband or something random, which I prefer that type of calling myself. I don't want to roll over it, but I was not prepared. I was not prepared. So when he called me, he said, you know, will you be the young one's president? I was like, oh, you know, I kind of moved on, I guess. I don't know. So I felt really blindsided and a little bit overwhelmed. But then I was driving home and I was like, oh, my gosh, I have a notes tab of all these ideas. And I just driving home and I'm reading through all these things that I had felt inspired about. And I was like, all right, I guess I'm ready. I didn't mean I'm not terrified of teenage girls, but I was I was ready. And that's that's how that that's awesome. I appreciate you sharing that. And if there's anything I want to really destigmatize through the leading saints resources is that there's nothing wrong with these feelings of of of that we may frame as aspirational. Right. That that that those thoughts came and we almost categorize these things like, oh, my oh, my goodness, I feel like I'm going to be the next bishop for the next through Cyprus.

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I need to put this on the impure thoughts, a shelf and be like, I can't believe, you know, but in reality, there's nothing wrong with that. You want to have influence, especially in the life of your daughter. And and what a fantastic process that Lord was guiding you and others through to get you in the right spot. Yes, yeah, it's it's been awesome. It's been wonderful. So was it just I mean, I think we all at the beginning of many of these callings, we we have a lot of fun ideas and ideas that excite us and the implementation maybe doesn't go as well as we thought. So what was that first part of the calling like trying to implement the list that you'd already put together? I mean, honestly, it wasn't it wasn't so bad. But first, I had to get over being terrified. I am. It didn't matter that I felt like I was supposed to be there. I walked through the hallway like you have a youth hallway. I think most people do. It's like Sunday school and you're hanging out and I was walking down the hall and I felt like terrified. It was like a Sunday school week. And I looked at these girls and I didn't even talk to them. I was like, oh, I just didn't I didn't even know what to say. And I was like, oh, I don't I didn't really know a lot of them. And anyway, I went home and I read well, I mean, in the next couple of weeks, I read Elder Irens, our President Irens talked, you know, the one about like who the Lord calls, he he qualifies, you know, and so I just prayed for confidence. And that's where it started. Like I needed to know how to interact with the girls. And that was the part I was really missing, like I just didn't know how to have the confidence, know how to talk to them, but implementing wasn't so bad. My counselors are amazing. They were like totally gung ho. And so that that part was not a big deal. So we sat down and discussed maybe the hardest part was, you know, advisors that are in there already. It's kind of hard to switch when some people are existing and some people are new. It's hard to say, OK, I'm going to add more to your plate, be OK with this. So that I think is the biggest challenge. I'm the newbie and I'm coming in and I'm like, let's just shake this up a little bit. That's like never really. Yeah, it's kind of annoying, you know, like so anyway, that part was a little bit tricky. But, you know, let me ask you about the I mean, just gaining buy in from those that are, you know, the advisors that are already in place. Was there anything you did to necessarily gain their buy in or was that was messier than you expected? You know, I'm not sure that I really did gain buy in. To be honest, you only have so much mental energy and my mental energy was really on the young woman and I had 28 laurels that I had to get to know right away. I needed to convince them that I loved them, that they could trust me and that they could, if they don't love me, if they don't know I love them, they're not going to learn from me. And so honestly, most of my focus went to these 28 girls. We have about 21 that come on Sundays and then obviously like trying to foster relationship with those seven who are not coming. And so I don't I didn't do the best job really getting buy in. It was more like, this is what we're going to do and let's do it. And I would just come home and pray that they were OK with it. Yeah, yeah. And I really appreciate that. I mean, that's a real experience, right? Because, you know, if this was a movie or something with a perfect story or you win everybody over, you know, on the all the adults that are serving there and then you move into the next round of winning over the girls. But you're right. I mean, gaining that establishing that foundation of relationship with those girls. I mean, you're you're nothing as a leader without that as a foundation. No, no, absolutely not. And they they I mean, I think in general, young women, teenage teenage girls are they're not like super trusting. It's like they need you to prove themselves first. You know, it's like, oh, one more leader, Sunday school, Sunday school teacher, another young ones leader, another adviser. They need to know that you really deeply care before they're going to open up and and trust

you. And that actually takes an insane amount of time. So what did that look like? I mean, was it just sitting down one to one with with girls or what did how did you begin to build that that relationship? OK, so it started I got called right before Christmas break, which kind of was like a little bit more difficult because I didn't I didn't get to hop right into young women's. I was going to be gone like the first Sunday that we were actually going to meet. So what it looked like for me was sitting down and texting these girls, like in small groups to ask them to go to dessert, to go to dinner, like let's go grab a soda. And it's really putting your pride on the line because I felt like a high school teenager again, like, oh, my gosh, am I going to be rejected? These girls don't know me. They like to hang out. They're leaders. And I sent this text. I remember. So I'm trying to put together groups, kind of girls that already kind of know and interact with each other.

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I'm not a giant fan of especially in such a large board of meshing girls and trying to force a relationship that's not as natural. Like, I just want them to feel safe and oftentimes that's just with girls, they already have a little bit of a relationship with. And then you can kind of create a little bit of smaller group experience within that. And so I sent off a bunch of these texts and I sat there and I was just stewing and my husband's like, what's wrong? And I'm like, oh, my gosh, what if they don't respond? What if they say no? I'm like, I'm going to be so embarrassed. Oh, my gosh. Oh, my gosh. And it took a minute. And I guess I found out from a parent later behind the scenes, they're all texting each other like, what is going on? Why does she want to go out with us? Are you going to go? Am I going to, you know, like if you're going to go, then I'll go. And so the floods of text kind of came in and that's really how I got to know them. I went to dessert with a small group, Chick -fil -A, and then went to dinner with a small group Chick -fil -A, then took a small group to sodas and just kind of had conversations and let them know, like, I'm interested in you. I like I care about you. And that's really how that started. Yeah, I love this middle ground where, you know, it might have been overwhelming to, you know, take every individual, individual girl out for ice cream and have a long conversation with them. It's also hard to do, you know, as a full group, you're just going to the quiet ones will fall to the back or a small group. And because there's this feeling of like, well, I don't want to leave anybody out. It's like, well, you know, you get to everybody. But but there's such power in just having that small group to really have a real conversation. Yeah, 100%. And you know, when they're all together, there's no way to interact with all of them. Like, I wish I could trap them at the door, like no one leave our room until I can look in your eyes and say hello. I'm glad you're here. But with that many girls, it's impossible. Yeah, powerful. So yeah, let's get into some of the things you did and what comes to mind as far as implementing some of your ideas. OK, so one of my favorite, favorite things was silent ministering. And this idea, honestly, it just came to me and it obviously was inspired. The Lord knows what he he wants. He just does. So silent ministering is the way we set it up was no one knows who's ministering to who. It was the class president and I who knew. And not everyone had a silent minister. It was only the girls who are really struggling. So and the it's maybe like a little confusing to explain the silent minister. Didn't like she only communicated

with I only communicated with her, she didn't know if anyone else had that assignment. I think only my presidency and my class president knew the term silent minister, because as soon as everyone knows. As soon as the girls know, they're like, is this authentic, is this not? Yeah, so we said some girls who are struggling up with silent ministers, these girls who are more confident and comfortable, and what that looks like was one girl who really struggled to come to young women's unless someone came and grabbed her in sacramenting. What that looked like was her silent minister. It was her job to go and grab her after sacramenting to look, is this girl here? Let me grab her. I'll make sure she comes with me. Or it was like for another girl, it was like, hey, are you coming to mutual today or I'm just going to sit by you. I'm going to make her feel like she has a friend. And so I think and so this is kind of just going on for a few of the girls. And it was it was just like it, like I say, silent ministering was all very silent. Interesting. But the personalities were very intentionally placed together. And one girl in particular had two silent ministers who didn't know about each other, but she needed she needed more help. And so one wasn't going to do it. So she had to. And seven months in, I've been young and present for seven months, we do not have silent ministering anymore. I haven't felt like any of our girls coming need it anymore. It's become we're a more unified group. Everyone's kind of taking care of each other. And as needed, we'll be like, all right, let's assign this person to this person. But really, that one was it was quite easy. But the biggest thing, the biggest thing is feedback. When you see a girl going out of her way to minister and to sit with or to gather to text someone else, you tell them how much it matters. You let them know how important they are. We love to know. We love to hear good job and to know that, you know, anytime we go out of our way, like it matters or it made a difference. And so I think the thing that made it the most successful was just helping them to know that they mattered and to say thank you.

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And I recognize you. I see you. You are wonderful. Yeah. So this reminds me of the isn't there thing at Girls Camp called Secret Sister? But this is this is different, right? That's true. Those are you give each other like a gift. You give the girls a gift every day and at the end, they find out who your secret sister is. But the person giving the gift knows who who they're who they're assigned to or whatnot. Right. They don't know who's giving them the gift. Right. Well, yeah. But in that case, everybody has a secret sister. And but this is different, it sounds like. Yeah, it's different. It's different. So I'm honestly telling you makes me a little nervous because if any of the girls listen, they will know and I'll be in trouble. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. OK, well, we'll deny it all. So this is more of like like you may have sat down one girl in particular to say, hey, let's talk about so -and -so. I've noticed that she needs she's more likely to come to the second hour when she's approached in sacrament meeting or at the end of sacrament meeting, sort of shepherded on to the class. Right. And so you would do that for a time. And it sort of jump starts the culture. Right. Like you said, you're not doing it now. Because that culture sort of has some momentum. Absolutely. And friendships were started as girls who needed friends. They just needed someone to sit with. Those friendships are now in place. They don't need they don't

need a title. They don't need a job per se. They are now friends. Yeah. And this I mean, I'm just thinking even like elders quorum relief society president could do something similar. And again, you want to be careful because we don't want to like turn people into like I don't know, I would if I knew like a few neighbors are conspiring to serve me, I'd be like, what's going on here? Like just, you know, so there's like a fine line here. But I love the idea of sort of jump starts the system where if, you know, in an elders quorum of ministering, is it going well? What what more intention can you put into it to really, really identify how people could be served? And let's take those steps, not because they're a project or we're going to always do this, but it jump starts the system for sure. It really does. And there's so much even though we we really shy away from things feeling inauthentic. It becomes authentic, it really does like. It just it genuinely does, and I think one of the really hard, hard parts of a class presidency is if they're the ones doing the ministering immediately, it's like it's inauthentic, you know, the relief society president's reaching out to me. That's what she's got to do, you know. But if it's like someone without a title, a position in a presidency, it just I think we accept it in a better way. Yeah. Even if it's choreographed. Yeah, that's really helpful. You already went through sort of the the connection with with the young women. Anything else that any other ways that you connect with them other than those sort of small group outings? One on one texts, and I don't believe that is allowed. Honestly, the prophet would have to come to me and say, Natalie, you cannot text your young woman one on one for me to stop. Like it is so powerful for me to reach out and to say, I missed you today. Hey, are you working today? Are you coming to Mutual? How did your soccer game go? You know, you just had surgery. How are you feeling? You got wisdom teeth out. Can I bring you some ice cream? Like, there is nothing more powerful than I in my relationship with these young women than during the middle of the week, them knowing that I'm thinking about them, you know, reaching out and really honestly, it's like, man, I was at your soccer game. You did so good. That was amazing. And just just super, super consistently. And I sent out a lot of texts as school started. Do you have classes with friends? How's it going? Do you have someone to sit with at lunch? And I and I think the best part is I mean it, I care, and I think when sometimes maybe the best part of leading is that the Lord blesses you with this love that you wouldn't otherwise have for his children, because I don't know, I didn't know these girls. It's impossible for me myself to come into Young Women's and immediately love 28 girls that I don't know. That is a gift from God. And as I text them one on one and as we interact, I think and I hope that they know that it is so genuine, like they matter to me. Love it. And I'm so glad I'm so glad you said, you know, that may be against the rules or something. But at the same time, like this is something this is a topic that myself and Dan Duckworth, who's on our board of directors, we've had long discussions about because we have these rules and they're in place. They're important. Yes. And there's much bigger rules than texting, like, you know, being alone with youth and all those things. But we sometimes we have so many rules sometimes that we we we push out the dynamic of mentorship.

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Right. And there's some organizations and I've actually taken steps to try and figure out some people who I could talk to, like in the the big brother, big sister nonprofit that, you know, they have sort of cracked this code on mentorship without having too many problems. I don't know the history. But anyways, the point being is that I think we really need to as leaders, we're not saying do everything that Natalie's doing and feel free to text or whatever. But you've sat with this dynamic of like, how do I truly be a mentor to these young women and that and you've taken some steps to to make sure that that's clear that I am a mentor here and I'm here to support and love you. And yeah, you're right. You're going to get a call from from the top in order to stop that. And these are these are these are typical habits of positive deviance where I'm just going to push the limits in this area for the sake of the development of those that I lead. And so for those listening, spare us the email so we get it. This is but nonetheless, like this is leadership is sort of just figuring out how to make it work rather than sometimes our number one objective is let's just make sure all the rules are kept right. So I get that we're dancing all over the place here as far as where a lot of us I just want to do what the handbook says. I just want to but this is this is how leadership looks sometimes. So anyways. Yeah. Yeah. And I honestly we you know, if we're doing what we're supposed to be doing and we are honestly, you know, praying and working to be guided, I think we need to leave a little bit more room for, you know, inspiration and also promptings and knowing knowing what is what's okay and what's not. And instead of just you're right, like sticking with the rules without any sort of personal revelation kind of mixed in there or, you know. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. So awesome. Any anything else with connection with the girls that you haven't mentioned? Actually, I do take them on a one on one outing. And this started because a mom actually reached out to me and said, I thought this was amazing. I never would have it never would have occurred to me to ask the leader. She said, Hey, will you take my daughter on a one on one? She is really struggling. And I was like, Oh, my gosh, you betcha. Absolutely. You know, I love an assignment. And I love to know where I can can help and fit in where I didn't know. But again, the problem is like, is actually her daughter going to want to go on a soda run with me? You know, so I text her daughter and I'm we're trying to figure out a time and you assume as an adult leader that they're like, Oh, my gosh, Sister Cox is going to make me go get soda with her. Why don't she is so lame? Oh, my gosh, I'm so busy anyway. So I'm assuming this is going on in the background and I just consistently have to swallow my pride and say it's not about me. It's not about me. So we went we drove to Swig, we you know, you wait in the line, we're chatting. And then honestly, we got our sodas and we drove home and then we sat in her driveway for about 10 minutes and it was incredible. It was incredible for me to get to know her. And and I one thing that I try really hard when we do these one on one soda runs is tell them their spiritual gifts as I see them, tell them how they matter, listen to their struggles or friend problems, but also leave them with some sort of positive affirmation about why they matter and why they're unique. It's so hard for us to see, you know, how we are different, to see our own spiritual gifts, to see, you know, why we matter. We are the way we are and we kind of assume a lot of people are like us and it's hard to see where we're different. And so that's my goal is as we chat, they're comfortable with me and I don't know, they've been they've been really good. There's some girls I'll never be able to reach. They're too busy. They don't want to go. That's fine. But they have they've been incredible. And it's yeah, again, it's going to be one of those things where someone's going to have to say from really high up, you can't do this. Yeah, yeah. So and I love that we're just we're just going on a walk about

here and these different dynamics and rules and things. But like I think back to my interview I did a couple of years ago with Jennifer Roach, she has she referenced some research that shows that the the positive development of any young person requires three additional adult influences other than their parents. And to me, as a as a bishop or as a, you know, a young men leader or young women leader in your case to take that take that that that point to the parents and saying, listen, it doesn't have to be me. It can be whoever you choose.

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But if you think you're going to do this parenting thing on your own and have a well developed individual, the data doesn't necessarily show that's going to happen. So you can involve me in that process or you don't have to. Right. And so I love this dynamic. The parent was involved in this that, you know, it was up to the parent. They you know, they were totally fine with you taking this young woman to do a soda run and that that life was benefited because of that. So to me, I'd love to step back and just say, listen, I get there's rules. Of course, you want to keep everybody safe. We get there's some really tough situations out there that we never want to happen. And not to mention that vast majority of abuse that happens is with somebody within their family. So that's a whole nother thing. But just to step back and say, all right, how can we really approach this in a healthy manner? What is your child? What does your teenager really need? And how can how can I help as the youth leader? Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And something that I guess I should say, maybe the best way to do it would to always be reach out, always reach out to the parent first and ask for permission. Right. I know these families enough. I don't think they're worried about it, but maybe from now on, I will ask. I'll just reach out and be like, hey, it's all right. So anyway, it is tricky. I mean, I have a girl who's turning 11 this next year, so she'll be going to young women's and I can see that if just sitting down with a young women's leader and time throughout, I think of the young women's leader in my current ward, I would have no problem with them texting directly to my to my daughter, right. And to give them that permission again, I know as a parent, I'm not like shocked, like what do you mean? And if something goes sideways? I mean, again, it's there's always a risk there, but that the upside of it is worth considering. Right. Yeah, absolutely. You know, it's so interesting that you said that three of the youth to be well adjusted need three adults. This was actually I listened to that podcast, your podcast, and I heard that a long time ago and it was one of my word council. I can't refer as a training. I kind of talked about that. And then we had a board meeting within young women's and I said that and I was like, all of our personalities, we are all so different and we are we are going to connect differently with each girl and different girls will be drawn to me and different girls will be drawn to someone else. You know, like my personality is a fit. And so in the scheme of things, we all matter. And I told them every youth needs three people to be interested. Just just be one of them, be one of them, you know, care about them, let them know that they are so important and special. Right. Yeah. And again, I'm trying to dodge all the future emails that are maybe coming because at the same time, if you had a parent come to you and be like, hey, listen, Natalie, I just appreciate if you didn't text my daughter directly, you'd be like,

hey, no problem. Happy. So so again, it's not like there's so many good intentions here and the upside is so valuable compared to having sort of this distant leader that you only see on Sunday. And they're always like bearing their testimony about things they don't even know about your life. You know, it's like like that scenario doesn't work either. You know, so it really it doesn't. It doesn't. It's not effective. They are looking for connection. And in order to believe you and to hear your testimony and learn from you, they want to feel connected. And I think in some words, I will say this in some words, it's going to be a lot easier to on Sunday connect with these girls and on activities, connect with these girls. With the amount of girls we have in our classes, it is just about impossible. It would take me six months of activities to really reach each of these girls, whether or not they show up or if I'm there or, you know, it's I think extra steps have to be taken when you're dealing with so many. I don't just have like seven laurels. I have twenty eight and in general, I have thirty one, you know, and so there needs to be at least I think there needs to be some exception because it is so difficult to connect with that many. All right, great discussion. I love that we that we ventured off in that dangerous territory. So we may both just disappear, Natalie, and they'll be like, well, they should have kept the rules. We're going to listen back to this. And this part's probably going to be missing. Right. All right. Where do you want to go next? Leaders are terrified of teenage girls. So you've covered that a little bit. But anything else to add to that? You know what? They really are. And it's something that I've been really surprised. Well, actually, I mean, I was terrified going in, but it's really surprising how. How difficult it seems to be for leaders to just kind of. To say, I don't matter, like it's not about me, it's not it's not about whether or not I'm embarrassed or I feel awkward and I don't know what to say, just go hug them, say how's life, what are you doing for fun? But there really seems to be a struggle. The young men's leaders really do well at this.

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And I think in large parts because they know how to play. They they play alongside the young men. There's not as much chatting typically. And so they just, I think, naturally feel a little bit more comfortable. So I think one of the biggest things for for young women's leaders is just saying it's again, it's not about me, you know, for this hour and a half Wednesday night activity. I cannot matter. It is I am here for them. It doesn't matter if I'm awkward. It doesn't matter if I don't know what to say. It is not about me. And I think if we all went into it feeling that way, it would change the way that we show up. You really just have to put your own. Anxiety aside. Yeah, yeah, I remember a time when I was a pre -school advisor and and I noticed that there's these moments where, yeah, like first off, there's sort of standoffish and you're like, hey, how's everybody? Sometimes I overdo it like what's going on in school? And they're like, I don't want to talk to you, you know, but there'll be these moments like these glimpses they show you into their world. I remember sitting in pre -school just quickly dancing over and this priest was looking on his phone at the Dallas Cowboys score. Now, I could have been like, hey, listen, put that away. No phones in class. But I'm like, hey, Cowboys are your team. And so the next interactions I had with him, I was able to sort of engage on that level, like, all right, who's who

are the Cowboys facing this week? You know, what do you think? You know, little by little, they start opening and giving more glimpses in other world. And as you step into that, so you have to sort of lean in and hope that those those glimpses open up. Absolutely. And I think one of the one of the things that I have learned is that we matter more than we we think we do. All of like the Dallas Cowboys, that matters so much in the lives of these youth. And I think sometimes some girls, some young men are so hard to reach and they don't give you a lot of feedback. And you send them a text and they don't respond. You send them another text, they don't respond. You know, you say hi to them at church and they're like really standoffish and they don't come to class very often. And but it still matters. So I had I'll tell you a story. I had this one girl who I really I just could not reach her. And she was also this one that would only come to class if someone came and got her first. And I just texted her multiple times. I reached out to her mom, like, what can I do? How can I help her? Just let me know a little bit about her. And I never got a response. And then six months in, she sent me this text and she said, I just want you to know that I am so grateful to have you as a leader. I know you are full of so much light because I can feel it when you are talking in young women's. And even though I don't go to activities, I always feel your genuine kindness at church and means a lot and makes it easier to go. And I'm sorry, the first two times you reached out, I didn't respond. I don't know why, but it made me nervous. Oh, wow. If you told me that what I did mattered for this girl, I'd be like, no, it doesn't. No, it doesn't. But it did. And it meant, again, just persistence. You know, I felt like maybe my interpretation was that I was like a little bit annoying. And anyway, it was so powerful that we really all these little things, they matter so much more than we will ever know they do, whether or not we get positive feedback or not. Yeah, it's so true. I mean, and I think back to my youth years that, you know, I had some great youth leaders where they like exceptional above and beyond, you know, hitting all their marks. Not really. But I look back to them and I'd build statues to them in my world. Yes. Like they had an impact on me. You know, and I remember being a bishop and seeing my bishop as a youth and like hugging him in a different way because I'm like, I'm finally on the other side of the desk. Like, I get it. It's so hard, you know, like, but you did it for me, you know. So, yeah, I just don't think even though in those down days, it's so important to remember, like, you don't really understand the impact you're having and maybe someday you will, maybe you won't. But let's have faith that you are having a remarkable impact in these worlds. So, yeah, teenagers don't usually let you know. So most likely you'll never know how much impact you have. Awesome. Anything else about being terrified of teenagers? No, you just got to suck it up and just just pretend you're not just fake. I tell my kids all the time, fake it till you make it. So you just pretend you're not nervous until you're not nervous. Love it. Awesome. All right. Tell me about the young men, young women working as a team. The impossible task. Does it feel impossible? So it's so funny. I think I come at this from a different. So my husband has been in Young Men's now for seven and a half years and he loves it, adores it. He was a young men's president until that job kind of got canceled and then they just put him as a priest advisor. And I think the bishop was at the time was really smart, kind of like, oh, wow, a lot's just been added to my plate.

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Young men's president is now gone. I'm effectively the young men's president. And so he kind of kept my husband there because he kind of knew how to run things and he knew how to support, I think, to support him. So he's been in that position forever now. And so as his as the wife of a young men's leader, I look at it differently. I think there there gets to be this like tit for tat. I did this. Now it's your turn. I've done this and this and this. And you haven't done anything when really like all that matters is the youth. It doesn't matter who does what. It doesn't matter how good it is or it just really doesn't matter. And I have a special place in my heart for these young men's leaders and our bishopric, who they go to work and then they come home and they are trying to be everything for their family. You know, like they're trying to switch off the work compartment and be in the family compartment. And then they've got, oh, wait, it's Wednesday night. I've got to plan this activity. I've got to have this thing here. I think for me, I have a lot more flexibility. I'm at home and, you know, I work from home, but that gives me a lot more space to really think about things and to kind of like set things up. And so I will happily plan all of the activities. I'm not I'm not really worried about it because to me it's a little bit like a service to help the men out. And again, the bottom line is the youth. It's not about me. It's not about the young men's leaders and what they are or not doing. Like, for instance, temple appointments, they're really hard to make here. You I'm sure you taught the same way. You've got to be on the computer at midnight to get those temple appointments three months out. And so I schedule them for everybody. I some some of the young men's classes are better doing on their own, but I schedule the priest's temple visits and all the youth, because all that matters is they get there and I'm already on the computer doing it. And I so don't know, it just and also, I think one of the big reasons I do it as well is I feel like one of my jobs is to get the bishop in front of the young women. To build that relationship, and it's not always an easy task. He's got so much on his plate, but especially these 16 to 18, our bishop now, he will be their bishop when they leave on missions, he will be their bishop most likely when they come home from mission, if they've got worthiness issues, when they are interviewed for a blessing, ecclesiastical endorsements, he will still be most of their bishop for all of those things. And if I can plan an activity where he can be there and just show up with the young women like I will I will do that every day of the week if we can foster that relationship, if it means that we're combining for a lesson and, you know, I'm I'm teaching, but he or I mean, that doesn't usually happen. Usually, I ask him to teach because I want him in front of the young women. Because the young men, they are so lucky. They get his time all the time, just naturally. And anyway, so that feels my job feels like connect with the young women, make the bishops job easier, and then help facilitate his relationship with them. Yeah, that's that's awesome. Anything else you'd say as far as the dynamic between the young women's presidency and in some experiences? No, what is so funny is I don't know that we have yet found an ounce of tension. And so I don't know that I have even a way to comment on that. Maybe just like what does that look like, you know, in practice? So like in ward council, like, or is when youth things come up? How do you work with the bishopric to carry things out? I don't know. We just text a lot. We talk about it. I mean, my bishops phenomenal. I've Like he's been so lucky to have a stake presidency to work with. That's just great. You want to do this? Awesome. And my bishops the same way. And sometimes there's a few things that I guess I will say this. I wanted the young women to be greeters. I felt the young men, they come to church

with a purpose. They're going to pass the sacrament. They're going to bless the sacrament. They're going to set it up. They kind of have a job. And the young women, they don't. And so I thought, what better way to kind of give them a job than to be greeters? So we, I, I texted or I, I talked to the bishop on the phone. Actually, this was right when I was put in and he, I asked him if the girls could be greeters, you know, like let's, it'll help more unity. It'll give them a purpose, you know, it'll help the youth and the adults kind of interact. And, um, he said, no, he said, that's the teacher's job. And that really bothered me. And of course I didn't tell him that.

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I'm not, I'm not going to say, you know, I, I love him so much. I respect him. I'm not going to say anything, but I kept thinking about it. It kept nagging at me like, no, no, no, I really think this is the way it's supposed to be. And, um, my husband, he was, we were taking a walk one night and he said, just wait, just give him some time. Just, just give him some time. Like you can't just throw things at him and expect that he's going to say yes to everything. And, um, so it worked out maybe like two weeks later, there was a podcast and I can't remember if it was yours or not. I think it was yours where the bishops talked about having the young women as greeters in their ward. And I sent the podcast to my Bishop and I said, it gets really good at like minute 23 dot, dot, dot. And then word counsel that Sunday. And he looked at me and he said, okay, it sounds like you would like the young women to be greeters. And I was like, oh my gosh, that was really, that was awesome. It was a really good example to me that, um, I mean, my impressions are going to be different than his, I think almost always they line up and then sometimes you just have to wait. You just have to wait for them to feel maybe the same way you do, just like they have to wait. He has to wait for me to get on board with something that he wants to do, that my immediate reaction is like, you know? So I think just respecting that relationship, respecting that position and the, the responsibility and the heaviness that goes along with that, um, I think really goes a long way. Like I think maybe we need just a little bit more of that sometimes. What, what a great lesson I there's, cause there's sort of this push and pull relationship with, in these leadership dynamics, right? That someone will sort of push on you about something. You're like, what, what's the big deal? Why are you doing that? Like get away from me over time. You know, these, these little, um, these little moments will build up to the revelation or direction the or autonomy that maybe you need as a leader to suggest something like that. Yeah, for sure. And, and to his credit, the girls are greeters and he brought back the program. We didn't have programs. He allowed us to bring back the program so that the girls, they're not just like standing there. They can smile and say hello and hand you a program. And it gives us the opportunity to tell these girls how much they matter. They're welcoming people. They smile. I say, if you know their name, say their name, especially if it's a young woman walking in the door, use her name. It's such a good, um, honestly, it's been phenomenal. Um, the adults love it. They love to be greeted. And even though the girls complain, some of them do, it's really good for them to have a purpose and to get comfortable interacting with adults. Yeah, I love it. Great story. Well, any, any other principle or point before we wrap up that you want to make sure we fit

in here that we maybe skipped over or left out? Um, I think, okay. Something else that we started doing that has, it's a work in progress. It can, we can do it better, but I think the idea is great. The concept is awesome. So, um, ministering like my daughter is my ministering companion. I never take her with me. It's like, if I'm going to have a really quality visit with the women I ministered to, I can't have my 16 year old there with me. And it's, so it's really difficult to figure out that ministering dynamics. Something that we've started doing is taking ministering bread on young women's week. So on Saturday I make, um, a couple of loaves of bread. And then, um, we assign the girls who, um, the, you know, 16, 17 girl, girls who drive, they get a loaf of bread and they gather younger young women, either their peers and or younger young women. And they take bread, um, to someone in the ward who's struggling. So I give them the bread and a card and in the car, the older girls and the younger girls, they write this card, then they go to the door and they drop off the spread. And it has, we've gotten so much positive feedback because it's really connecting the young women with the adult women. And we try to stress how much they matter. Like, you know, when they are baptized, they are coming into more with those that mourn. And comfort those that stand in need of comfort. And to me, this is like, this is that in practice, you know, they're learning to, okay, you know, so -and -so is in the middle of chemo. Let's stop by and give her a hug and take her some bread. But then at the same time, it really helps these younger girls to learn from these older girls and kind of mix. And again, this is, it's a challenge when you have so many young women, but it's been so successful that the bishops started having the young men do it. So the priest take, I also make two loaves of bread for them, and then they take teachers and deacons in their car and they drop it off. And we just kind of decide ahead of time, which four people in the ward are our bread is going to go to. And it's, I mean, it's, it's been awesome. I love that.

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Perfect. Great idea. All right. So as we wrap up here, the 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? I think just trusting that as we, it's helped me to trust that as I am a better disciple of Christ, as I serve him, as I serve his people, he will take care of me and my people. It is oftentimes when you do your calling well, you're sacrificing time with your own children, your own spouse, and oftentimes work. You know, it's, my business has taken a big backseat for me as I have really tried to magnify my calling and I trust and now know, I know for myself, as I've implemented that the Lord will take care of me and he will take care of my people. And if we all, I think really knew and understood how important it was to him, that within our callings, we really just took ownership of taking care of his children and then knowing that in return we will be taken care of. Things would just run so much better. And the last few years, as I've really tried to magnify wherever I am at, I have had so many experiences where I know that, you know, the Lord sees me. It's like, Heavenly Father, or Natalie, I see that you are sacrificing. I am here. You know, I will make up the difference. I will make this work. And that immediately helps me to be a better disciple of Christ. And that concludes this How I Lead interview. I hope you enjoyed it.

And 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 experience. And this is how we develop as leaders, just hearing what the other guy is doing, trying some things out, testing, adjusting for your area. And that's where great leadership is discovered, right? So we would love to have you share this with somebody in this calling or a related calling. And that would be great. And also, if you know somebody, any type of leader, who would be a fantastic guest on the How I Lead segment, reach out to us. Go to [LeadingSaints .org](http://LeadingSaints.org) slash contact. Maybe send this 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 see if we can line them up. So again, go to [LeadingSaints .org](http://LeadingSaints.org) slash contact, and there you can submit all the information and let us know. And maybe they will be on a future How I Lead segment on the Leading Saints podcast. Remember, check the show notes to listen to the powerful presentation by the General Young Women Advisory Council members, or go to [LeadingSaints .org](http://LeadingSaints.org) slash 14. of the earth.