



Leading for 87 Years and Beyond | An Interview with George Wootan

October 21, 2023

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Speaker 1 00:02:00 All right, recording Live from Aspen Grove, Utah. We're here with the live studio audience. Let's hear it. Very good. Very good. So, we are in the midst of a leading saint retreat called Zion Camp. And if you didn't know about it, you should listen to the podcast more 'cause I pounded it over over your head for a while and in the newsletter and whatnot. And so it's actually happening. So we're in October 17th, 17th, 2023, and we're here. We got one more day of the retreat. And, uh, how's it going so far? Great. Yes. All right. And I thought it'd be fun to record an interview while we're here with a, with a live audience and people who actually care other than my mother. So we'll do it. Now. We have a special guest, I'm not gonna introduce him yet, but who in the room could introduce our guest who's maybe talked with him? You wanna come do it? We got a mic up here. Come on up and, uh, introduce George.

Speaker 2 00:03:00 George is a doctor.

Speaker 1 00:03:02 Well, you gotta first introduce yourself if you want. Well,

Speaker 2 00:03:04 I'm not that important.

Speaker 1 00:03:05 Well, I mean, you're

Speaker 2 00:03:06 The, my name's Tammy. Hi.

Speaker 1 00:03:07 Where are you from, Tammy?

Speaker 2 00:03:08 I'm from Salem, Oregon.

Speaker 1 00:03:09 Nice. And is your second leading Saints retreat? It is.

Speaker 2 00:03:13 Nice. The first one was just so good. I couldn't help it. I have to. There

Speaker 1 00:03:15 You go. Maybe there'll be a third. I don't know. Right there. Better be. Okay. <laugh>. We'll, we'll get it done. All right. Back to George.

Speaker 2 00:03:21 Back to George. George is a doctor. He currently lives in Florida. Now. I sound like I'm announcing a game show. <laugh> <laugh>. And George has 11 children. Really?

Speaker 1 00:03:32 George, I didn't know that. Oh, we got, we got a lot to talk about.

Speaker 2 00:03:36 He's got some amazing stories. And he's a smart, smart man, and he's funny and you're gonna love it.

Speaker 1 00:03:41 Okay. Is that all accurate, George?

Speaker 3 00:03:43 It's all I, well, I don't know about funny but <laugh>, I

Speaker 2 00:03:47 Was

Speaker 1 00:03:47 Laughing. <laugh>. Awesome. Well, thank you Tammy. Now, George, I'm, you know, when we put a retreat together, there's sort of a demographic we expect to show up, but you're 87 years old, right?

Speaker 3 00:03:58 Right.

Speaker 1 00:03:58 And so why a leading Saints retreat? What, what appealed to you about it?

Speaker 3 00:04:02 When I first read the flyer, it made, I, I'm, I'm sure the flyer didn't say that, but it sounded like this was going to be a group of weirdos, <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:04:14 And you were right,

Speaker 3 00:04:15 <laugh>. And, um,

Speaker 1 00:04:18 It's funny, this is so true. Alright.

Speaker 3 00:04:20 I tell people that I have spent my life living outside the box trying to convince them that I'm inside the box. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And it sounded like this was gonna be a group of people who were also trying to live outside the box and accomplish change. Uhhuh <affirmative>. And I'm always for change. Every place I've ever worked probably has had to put bridles on me because <laugh>, I've always got ideas and trying to change.

Speaker 1 00:04:57 Yeah. So that, that's interesting. You said you're outside the box trying to convince others. You're inside the box

Speaker 3 00:05:02 Trying to convince people. Okay. I'm living inside.

Speaker 1 00:05:05 Tell me more about that. Like, as, as an example, come to mind and experience whether work or church or whatever.

Speaker 3 00:05:11 Well, I try to be very conventional at church, but in the background, I'm usually doing something that is trying to change the way we deal with people. I, I'm very aware of people who are on the fringes of the church and trying to show them how they can fit in and that what they're trying to do is, is good and they just need to stick with it. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:05:43 Would you say you were, throughout your life, you were always like that?

Speaker 3 00:05:47 Yes. Well, when I initially I was just very bullheaded and just kept hitting my head against the wall. And it's, it was, I can remember very clearly I had gone to Florida to do my internship and I received the Mel priesthood there. I hadn't been a member of the church very long. So

Speaker 1 00:06:10 What, what age were you at this point? About

Speaker 3 00:06:11 23. Okay.

Speaker 1 00:06:13 So convert to the church in your early twenties

Speaker 3 00:06:15 In

Speaker 1 00:06:16 Yes. Okay.

Speaker 3 00:06:17 And it really changed my life and I began to see that there was another way. And by putting, uh, Christ in my life, it caused me to think differently. And so I started trying to learn and not just butt heads with people. Hmm. And, um, it's, it's taken a long time. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:06:41 <laugh> <laugh> even 87, maybe You haven't mastered it completely.

Speaker 3 00:06:44 I'm still working on it. All right. I, my bishop will tell you that. What's he doing here again? <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:06:51 And what, what do you mean by that? Like, uh, what's that experience?

Speaker 3 00:06:54 Well, God has given me a, a really interesting brain. I have really severe dyslexia. Oh, really? And so I read maybe 25 books my whole life. Really?

Speaker 1 00:07:07 Even You made it through med school and everything?

Speaker 3 00:07:09 I made it through med school.

Speaker 1 00:07:10 Wow. It was

Speaker 3 00:07:11 Very difficult. And as I look back on it, the hand of God was really there. So I don't read, but I am, I have a, a brain that if you give a problem, and I can probably come up with 17 solutions to it. So I'm always at the bishop's office with a new idea,

Speaker 1 00:07:31 <laugh> or 17 <laugh>

Speaker 3 00:07:33 Or 17. Nice. And

Speaker 1 00:07:35 So, and that's interesting, just as I've talked with you, you know, offline here, just hearing your engagement and how didn't you say, like, as you found this retreat, you sort of said, these are my people. Like Yes. Like you identify as someone who someone is a natural leader. Right? Or how would you phrase it?

Speaker 3 00:07:51 I don't really think of myself as a leader, but I today, I think has made me feel more like, like a leader.

Speaker 1 00:08:02 Like today being here.

Speaker 3 00:08:03 Yes.

Speaker 1 00:08:04 Tell me more about that. What, what do you mean by that?

Speaker 3 00:08:07 <laugh>, the, uh, exercise where people came and said what they had noticed about me was, um, was different.

Speaker 1 00:08:20 It was powerful. Very

Speaker 3 00:08:21 Powerful.

Speaker 1 00:08:22 Did you feel like it was, they were saying things to you, you've known all along, but just to hear it from somebody else? Maybe confirm that

Speaker 3 00:08:29 To, uh, some degree, but I don't really think of, of myself as a, a real leader. I do usually try to stay in the background because people don't like too many ideas all at once. Hmm. And they've got an idea. And so I usually just kind of wait and see how it turns out. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:08:56 That maybe goes back to that, that bullheadedness you've sort of figured out how to temper a little bit, right?

Speaker 3 00:09:00 Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:09:01 Right.

Speaker 3 00:09:01 Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:09:02 So at 87 years old, you know, there, I think a lot of people in your demographic, your peers, they, they feel the sense of, you know, the term is feeling out to pasture, right? Like Georgie lived, lived a good life. You've had sort of your, your career, your, your high points of maybe influence in, in the church. And do you feel that at times that you're sort of out at pasture

Speaker 3 00:09:24 Or what? Oh, no. No. And I tell the bishop, whenever they call a new bishop, I usually go in and tell him I may be, you know, 87 or whatever. And I'm not through, don't classify me as old. I can still do whatever needs to be done and I wanna do it. And if you don't find something for me to do, I'll find it myself, <laugh>. And I just, I retired from practicing medicine about a year ago.

Speaker 1 00:10:00 Wait a minute, <laugh>, you were 86 years old when you retired. Yeah. And did they, everybody was good with that? Like, or was that a hard thing to, were they sort of helping you maybe think about retiring? No, they were good about, huh?

Speaker 3 00:10:15 They, um, I've had offers to work since and it's been hard to turn it down. I practiced for 65 years and Oh my goodness. So it's kind of in my nature and, and you can probably ask, I've given medical advice to people here, <laugh>. Yeah, that's great. So it's, it's hard to stop.

Speaker 1 00:10:36 Yeah. And what type of medicine did you practice?

Speaker 3 00:10:38 I, uh, was trained as a family practitioner and I did something called functional medicine. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, which is, um, studying cellular physiology, looking at, uh, things from a cellular viewpoint rather than a symptomatic Yeah. Viewpoint.

Speaker 1 00:10:55 So identifying as like this leader, did you have more formal experiences of leadership in the church at Bishop Ricks or anything like that? I've been

Speaker 3 00:11:03 A counselor in the Bishoprick a couple of times. I think I learned the most from being executive secretary a couple of times. Hmm. And, uh, that was my favorite calling because you have all the power and no responsibility. <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:11:19 Yeah. You're the gate gatekeeper. Right.

Speaker 3 00:11:21 You're the gatekeeper <laugh>. Right.

Speaker 1 00:11:23 Nice.

Speaker 3 00:11:24 And

Speaker 1 00:11:24 You did that a few times or?

Speaker 3 00:11:25 I did it twice. Oh,

Speaker 1 00:11:27 Great. Yeah. And you've bounced around the country in your career, you, you mentioned to me, right?

Speaker 3 00:11:31 Yes. Yeah. I've, I lived in China for three years and I worked and was a CEO of the hospital there. And I've, um, worked in Boston. I set up, uh, my, this was my favorite job. Uh, I set up ICUs in people's homes, and you can imagine that's expensive and there's, there's no feeling exactly like having somebody give you a credit card with no limit on it. <laugh>

Speaker 1 00:12:03 Wow.

Speaker 3 00:12:03 It's just, it's a wonderful feeling. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:12:07 Interesting. So why is a little tangent here, I guess, but why ICUs in a home?

Speaker 3 00:12:13 Uh, these were family members who were critically ill.

Speaker 1 00:12:16 Okay. And they had the funds to do that. They had the fund

Speaker 3 00:12:18 Okay. To send up to set up the, uh, ICUs. And so Wow. I bought all the equipment and trained all the personnel. Uhhuh

Speaker 1 00:12:27 <affirmative>, Uhhuh <affirmative>. Now, you originally, uh, returned from, uh, mission service. Tell, tell me about that.

Speaker 3 00:12:32 My, my wife and I served in the Tampa Mission office and did, she did the finances and I did housing. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

Speaker 1 00:12:40 And were you the, also the, the doctor for the missionaries or? No,

Speaker 3 00:12:45 Uh, I, I gave a little bit of advice, but advice not too much. They had a nurse and they have a doctor Uhhuh <affirmative>, you know, for each admission. And so I didn't have to get too involved. Yeah. I would've liked to have gotten more involved because with functional medicine, we could have done a lot, particularly with the missionaries with emotional problems. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> and things like that.

Speaker 1 00:13:08 Did you see a lot of that

Speaker 3 00:13:09 Lock? Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:13:09 Yeah. And how, how did that usually manifest? Or what, what did you, how were you aware of that?

Speaker 3 00:13:14 Depression. You could see it in their eyes and you could tell when they were really having trouble because we were in the mission office, you know, they were always coming through and so we got to know a lot of them.

Speaker 1 00:13:28 Yeah. And so your responsibilities were over housing?

Speaker 3 00:13:31 Just housing? Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> doing leases and finding apartments Yeah. And things like that.

Speaker 1 00:13:36 And, uh, is that your, uh, first mission then?

Speaker 3 00:13:39 That's the Yes. Our first mission. Great.

Speaker 1 00:13:42 And any, what encouragement do you give to maybe people in, in their eighties looking to do that? Oh,

Speaker 3 00:13:48 It, the energy that you feel from the young missionaries, it's, it's just wonderful. Mm-Hmm. It, it's, you know, they're so full of energy and enthusiasm and, and we learned a new language,

Speaker 1 00:14:02 <laugh>. Oh, yeah. From the missionaries? Or

Speaker 3 00:14:03 From the missionaries?

Speaker 1 00:14:05 Well, well share that language with us. Oh,

Speaker 3 00:14:07 I, it's left me already <laugh> <laugh>, but you know, just the, oh, I learned, uh, how you do some sort of salute like that. That's supposed to be a really, uh, I understand. I get you. I'm with you.

Speaker 1 00:14:23 Oh, oh, gotcha.

Speaker 3 00:14:23 Sort of thing. So they were, they all laughed because, you know, this old man is

Speaker 1 00:14:29 <laugh> saluting them. Huh. So, that's right. So, nice. And, uh, that was one you lived at your home? We lived at. 'cause you lived just south of Tampa, right? Or north? Just north of, okay. Mm-Hmm. What's the name of your city?

Speaker 3 00:14:40 Uh, port Richie.

Speaker 1 00:14:41 Okay, cool. And, and so you were able to commute in and we did. And it was a, a huge disruption of your life, but you could still experience a great mission. Well,

Speaker 3 00:14:50 It, we pretty much shut down all of our other activities Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> and focused just on the mission.

Speaker 1 00:14:58 Yeah. Yeah. So take me back to, you know, some, maybe some principles that, some epiphanies that have stood out here and you applying in, in your life. As far as like, how did you, what is that the day-to-Day, other than connecting with your bishop and giving, sharing ideas and whatnot? Like, how do you be a leader without being formally called as a leader?

Speaker 3 00:15:19 Well, I adopted what we've been told. The Blue Book is just a guideline. It's not something you have to follow. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And I found that bishops, you know, they're swamped. If you do something and you set it up and you get it working, and then you go and ask the bishop's permission, he's most likely to say yes because he just doesn't have time to say no <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:15:47 Yeah.

Speaker 3 00:15:48 And so that's kind of what I've done. Yeah. And just picked an area or an idea that, oh, this is my chance.

Speaker 1 00:15:58 Go, go for it. George

Speaker 3 00:16:00 <laugh>. So I'm trying to build unity in our ward, and I think we need, back in the old days when we used to have dinners to raise funds to build our, the chapel. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:16:12 The building fund. Right. The

Speaker 3 00:16:13 Building fund. I've,

Speaker 1 00:16:14 I've often thought about, I, I wanna do an episode where I gather a bunch of eighties bishops and just talk about like, what was it like, what did the checkbook look like? Right. Like Yeah. Or the building funds, like, 'cause back when my dad was a bishop, he had to stand in front of the ward and say, we gotta pay utilities folks. Right. Like, yeah.

Speaker 3 00:16:29 Right. You had not only the building fund, but you, we paid a certain percentage of the utilities and

Speaker 1 00:16:36 On top of your 10% tithing Right.

Speaker 3 00:16:38 On top of the tithing. Wow. Yeah. But the unity that we had was really great because we gathered so often to do activities, you know, to raise the funds that the side benefit was something that I think is really missing. Yeah. Today, the getting together. Yeah. So often

Speaker 1 00:16:58 I was encouraged by Elder Gong's recent general conference talk, you sort of alluded to this as far as like encouraging activities and whatnot. But, and really this is a, this is a, a general problem that I think a lot of wards face. I mean, I think many of you would say in this room is your ward need some help with unity. Yeah. Right. And so, yeah, keep going. So

Speaker 3 00:17:16 My, I've got a lot of ideas, but the one that I'm really promoting is, uh, you know, about warm, charming.

Speaker 1 00:17:23 I'm lost, George. What? Tell me about warm, charming. Anybody here?

Speaker 3 00:17:26 Everybody knows.

Speaker 1 00:17:27 Okay. Brazen. Okay.

Speaker 3 00:17:29 You're the first people that I've ever talked to about,

Speaker 1 00:17:31 Well, these are your people, George. So

Speaker 3 00:17:33 <laugh>. That's true. That's true. So what you do is you get a stick and you carve notches in it, and then you have another stick, and you put the first stick down into the ground about eight to 12 inches. And then you rub the, uh, stick up and down the notches, and it creates a vibration in the earth that is similar to a mole going through the ground looking for earthworms. And so the worms know that vibration. And so they pop up to the grass and you pick up the worms.

Speaker 1 00:18:06 We've taken the Leading Saints podcast to a whole nother level <laugh>. I'm like, so fascinated. Okay.

Speaker 3 00:18:10 So everybody out there, we're gonna have a national contest. There is actually the International Federation of Warm, charming <laugh>. And,

Speaker 1 00:18:18 Uh, and you're the president, right? George? Is that <laugh>?

Speaker 3 00:18:22 It's my aspiration.

Speaker 1 00:18:23 Okay. All right. All right. We got a long life ahead of you. So,

Speaker 3 00:18:26 And, uh, so you mark off a three square foot plot. You have the team, you have the gruber who rubs the stick. You have the, uh, collector, and then the counter. And you have, uh, 30 minutes.

Speaker 1 00:18:41 You have to do the certain time of day, or

Speaker 3 00:18:43 No, you can do it anytime.

Speaker 1 00:18:46 So they're scared of the, of the gopher. Of the moles. Of the moles. Okay.

Speaker 3 00:18:49 Of the moles. And so you, at the end of the 30 minutes, you count up the worms and the team with the most worms wins the contest.

Speaker 1 00:18:58 Olympic sport folks. Okay, good. Alright. So, so keep going. Yeah. Bring us back. So,

Speaker 3 00:19:05 So, uh, this is in England. It's a big sport. Oh really? And there's a town in Florida that does it. And they usually have an attendance of about 5,000 people. So this is a, uh, little known great sport

Speaker 1 00:19:21 Now, and it's not just a sport, but they're harvesting the earthworms to fish, or what? Well,

Speaker 3 00:19:24 No, uh, what this actually used to be a, um, an occupation in the south. Okay. Women could actually support their family by, uh, doing this worm gru. Wow. And, um, so once they invented plastic worms, the occupation kind of died out, although there's still some, some women who do it. Wow.

Speaker 1 00:19:46 Alright. So take us here to, to toward unity. I'm sort of like, we're, we're

Speaker 3 00:19:50 <laugh>, so, so we're gonna, we're gonna have some food trucks, and we're gonna have, we're gonna invite the, the town and we're going to get, you know, some other activities. Oh. And one thing I've thought about was we're gonna have a, uh, contest, uh, parade for the children. And the best worm costume wins <laugh>

Speaker 1 00:20:10 <laugh>. We, the, the audience demands pictures, George, so send them our way

Speaker 3 00:20:18 Away. So, um, so that's the sort of thing I don't have to ask the bishop about that. You know, I'm, I

Speaker 1 00:20:25 You can just go do it. Right.

Speaker 3 00:20:26 I got, I've got a publicity chairman, and we're gonna, um, we're gonna try to do it.

Speaker 1 00:20:32 So is this a publicity chairman from your ward or from the ward? So, and you haven't approached the bishop about it, or you're just gonna do it, or you,

Speaker 3 00:20:39 Once I got, uh, everybody in place and I got the rules and, uh, got an idea of what we were gonna need to do, then I went to the bishop and said, um, this is what I'd like to do. And he said, okay. Worm grubby <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:20:55 And so you have this on the calendar in your

Speaker 3 00:20:58 We're That's the, we're at the stake. I did, uh, involve the ward activities. Okay. Committee, because I didn't wanna clash with anything else. And so she's supposed to be setting up the date as we speak. Wow.

Speaker 1 00:21:10 And do you, so do you have an official calling in the ward?

Speaker 3 00:21:13 They didn't know exactly what to do with this <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:21:17 So <laugh>,

Speaker 3 00:21:20 So we've, uh, been called as ward missionaries, but we're, uh, functioning under the bishop and not the ward, uh, missionary. Nice leader. And so I figured that gives me the right to do just about anything. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:21:33 <laugh> sounds like even Worm <laugh>. So, uh, tell me about your wife. Like what is your wife? My wife. Along the same vein or,

Speaker 3 00:21:44 Um, no, she's Italian. Uh, she's very traditional. She's a good wife. How

Speaker 1 00:21:50 Long you been married?

Speaker 3 00:21:51 Uh, nine years.

Speaker 1 00:21:52 Okay. Second marriage.

Speaker 3 00:21:53 Second marriage. Okay. And she really is tolerant because pretty much everything I do is different. And she had a, she had a very traditional first marriage, and so she's kind of, oh, we're gonna do

Speaker 1 00:22:13 That. <laugh>, she's a lifelong member, or

Speaker 3 00:22:17 No, that's a story. Well, I guess you can cut it out if it's too long, but <laugh>, here we go. Um, I did obstetrics and she had her first child by c-section, and she

wanted to have a home birth for the second. And so she, I was doing home births, and so she came to me and, uh, I was present. Uh, I usually say I helped her deliver it, but she wants to make clear that she delivered it <laugh> <laugh>. And I was just there

Speaker 1 00:22:50 Attending.

Speaker 3 00:22:52 So then that daughter grew up to be, we were in the same stake, and she wasn't a member at the time, but, uh,

Speaker 1 00:23:01 And obviously this was long before your marriage tour? Long

Speaker 3 00:23:03 Before, okay. Yeah, 37 years. So she had had the missionaries come to the door, but they'd never paid any attention to them. But because of our relationship, and she knew I was a member of the church, she invited a man and she and her whole family joined. Wow. And so then it was about 36, 33 years later that we were both divorced and she was in, um, Florida. And she called me and, well, if there's any, do single people listen to this?

Speaker 1 00:23:38 Uh, every once in a while, yeah.

Speaker 3 00:23:40 So I used to go to, um, the wards and I'd go to, to the bishop, and I'd say, my name is George Wootan. I'm single. I'm looking for a wife. Do you have any women in your ward that would like to date?

Speaker 1 00:23:52 <laugh>. He's a charmer. <laugh>.

Speaker 3 00:23:56 So it's a great pickup line. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:23:58 And obviously it worked, uh, I'm assuming so,

Speaker 3 00:24:01 Uh, I was in Florida and I wanted, uh, was gonna go to, um, a town called Largo. And because I'd heard there were a lot of single women there, <laugh> and I, um, sat down at the computer to get the address, and I got this impression, go to Odessa. I, I wanna go to Odessa. It's outside my stake. I prefer to stay inside the stake, go to Odessa. So I go to Odessa and, uh, Bishop, I gave him my line and he said, um, okay. He had, think about it, <laugh>

Speaker 3 00:24:37 The next week he came by and, um, he said, well, I thought there was one woman that would be interested, but she's just not interested in dating right now. So I look up and I say, okay, I'm here. He said, come here. You know? So I went to Sunday school and, uh, the, um, Sunday school teacher was really a neat lady. She was very nicely dressed, knew the gospel. She had served two missions with her husband, was just, just an ideal person. And so I'm sitting there and all of a sudden in my head goes off this light, birds of a feather flocked together. So I went up after Sunday school, my name is George <laugh>. Uh, I'm single. I'm looking for a wife. Do you have any friends that would be interested in dating? And her eyes got kind of big. And I said, well, you can talk to your bishop, because he's called my bishop. And, uh,

Speaker 1 00:25:35 He's clear folks. <laugh>. Yeah.

Speaker 3 00:25:38 And so, um, she said she'd think about it. And so the next week she said, well, I do have a couple of friends that are interested, but my daughter-in-Law knows this lady up in Orlando that she thinks would be perfect for you, and she's gonna text her, and if she's interested, she'll give you her phone number. And so she texted her, and the way she described me, Lucrecia knew who I was. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And, um,

Speaker 1 00:26:05 And I imagine you hadn't really had contact for decades, right? We did,

Speaker 3 00:26:08 Yeah. We hadn't had

Speaker 1 00:26:09 Any, but just remembered who you were. Yeah. Wow.

Speaker 3 00:26:12 Well, she described me as a doctor with 11 children who practices some weird kind of medicine.

Speaker 1 00:26:17 <laugh>, not, not too many of those running around. Huh? <laugh>

Speaker 3 00:26:20 Nice. So, so she knew who I was. So we, um, we met and, uh, nine days later we were engaged and we got married a couple of months after that. Uh,

Speaker 1 00:26:31 That's sweet. Wonderful. And so, uh, going back to this, your, your wife sometimes just puts up with this, uh, eagerness to get out there and serve and lead. Yes.

Speaker 3 00:26:41 Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:26:41 Yeah. Interesting. All right. Any other, I'm, I'm intrigued by these ideas. I know you have a lot of ideas. We can't go through 'em all, but what other ideas like, uh, have you found effective and just in your informal role as a leader?

Speaker 3 00:26:54 Well, one of the things, I got off of one of your podcasts, and I don't remember who was, but he talked about inviting families to feed the missionaries. And if they weren't economically able to do it, the, they provided the food from the Bishop storehouse. So we, we've started that program. Wow. And, um,

Speaker 1 00:27:19 So what does that look like? Like how do you facilitate

Speaker 3 00:27:22 That? Well, we, we kind, I, that's my role is to contact the families, find the families. I've got somebody who's gonna coordinate the calendars because we're gonna try to do this just with, uh, part member families and inactives. Then, uh, I've got five or six people that are gonna help support the program. And we'll see. We're just getting ready to, um, to start our first families.

Speaker 1 00:27:49 That's great. And it's just a matter of, you know, making sure that opportunity's available to everybody in the ward, and even if they can't afford the food or afford to.

Speaker 3 00:27:56 Well, we have one of the, um, members of the, uh, I guess he's the assistant ward mission leader, and he does a calendar for the actives and, uh,

Speaker 1 00:28:08 They pass it around relief side. Your elders quorum, right? Yeah, Uhhuh.

Speaker 3 00:28:10 Yeah. So we're not, we're gonna coordinate so that we don't conflict there, but I'm just trying to focus on the inactives and part number families.

Speaker 1 00:28:20 Well, that's fantastic. I think it's a brilliant idea. I mean, fantastic. So tell me, just like, what comes to mind, just what's your typical Sunday like? I mean, are you, you say you at times you're sort of just sit, you know, drop back a little bit and not put yourself out there too much. But is there any routines you go through as far as maintaining that your engagement in, in leadership in the work?

Speaker 3 00:28:41 Mostly I'm just, as our group talked this afternoon, um, one of the things that has struck me in studying the New Testament this year is about how names were very important to Jesus. And so I've, um, pounded on my, uh, elders Quorum President, you know, to, we should, everybody in the quorum should know everybody else's name and it's not gonna,

Speaker 1 00:29:12 We'll get there. Delete that. I like it. I like it. Uh, and, um, how big is your quorum?

Speaker 3 00:29:18 We have

Speaker 1 00:29:19 Average attendance or whatever,

Speaker 3 00:29:21 Probably 40, 50

Speaker 1 00:29:23 Maybe. Okay. We've got goods size, quorum, good size

Speaker 3 00:29:25 Quorum. Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:29:26 No. And you, we were talking in one session, uh, Jessica Johnson was facilitating, and we were talking about the leadership traits of Christ. Right. And then we shared some of our answers. And you said something that was like, so powerful. You, you said one of the traits of leadership, and correct me if I'm off here, that one of the traits of leadership is that Christ knew people's name and changed their name. Right. And I thought, oh my goodness, Christ knows my name and he's changed my name. Like, that's so powerful. Like, 'cause he gives you, he recognizes your identity today, and then he'll give you a, a more dynamic endowed identity later. Right. That's powerful.

Speaker 3 00:30:04 Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:30:05 Any other ideas? George? What are we missing?

Speaker 3 00:30:08 Well, let's see. We're going to, um, I'm looking for a lady that bakes bread. And we're going to, um, uh, have one of the youth assigned for a period of time long enough that they can learn to bake bread. And, um, my goal is to bake, uh, six or seven loaves. We'll do one for sacrament, one for the youth that's helping, and then give three or four loaves to the Elders Quorum president and have him assign some ministers to take that bread that week and go out and, uh, deliver it.

Speaker 1 00:30:47 Lovely. Building Zion, right?

Speaker 3 00:30:50 Yeah. Food's the answer

Speaker 1 00:30:52 When end doubt <laugh> go with food. All right. Usually I don't have this, uh, all these co-hosts of mine in the room. What, what question am I missing? Or anybody wanna ask George a question about his journey, his experience? And you gotta come and talk, speak into the mic. 'cause the rest of the world needs to hear you, Adam. So, and tell you, you gotta say where you're, who you are, where you're from if you want. But

Speaker 4 00:31:13 Yes, I'm Adam Salisbury from West Jordan, Utah. And so, George, my question for you is, did you ever have an idea or anything that was not taken well by a bishop? And what was the idea, how'd it go? And like, how did the Bishop respond and then how did you handle it?

Speaker 1 00:31:28 Great question.

Speaker 3 00:31:30 Well, not too much. I mean, I don't really remember, but I know that there have been ideas that I have presented that they didn't like. Mostly people are sort of afraid of the, the handbook and, um, they are, if it's not in the handbook, it's really tough for

Speaker 1 00:31:54 Them. Yeah. Because they almost like, if it's not there, maybe we shouldn't do it. Right. Because if we should do it, it should be there. Right. <laugh>. Right. And yeah, that's a, a trap for sure.

Speaker 3 00:32:01 And I did, I keep telling them, you know, it's, and I, I think it's hard for some people to separate the gospel from policy. And as we can see in, since President Nelson has been the prophet, you know, all sorts of policies are changing. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> and the gospel is still true. You know, and, and I'm, I never try to change the gospel, but the policies, you know, if, if it's gonna build unity, bring us closer together, you know, uh, create, um, more unity, unity, then we should try it. Yeah. You know?

Speaker 1 00:32:41 Yeah. And, and again, these aren't, I mean, every idea you share, these are not radical approaches to anything. They're service-minded, they're, you know, innovative and

Speaker 3 00:32:50 Certainly different. Yeah. But difference is, is good. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:32:54 Are there others, uh, maybe around your age in your ward or maybe in your peer group or whatever that, I mean, what encouragement would you give that group that any other encouragement come to mind?

Speaker 3 00:33:05 Well, I, I think that you just, uh, you know, you have to find like-minded people. I don't expect to find anybody as far out in left field as I'm <laugh>, but you know, they can take a little piece of it. We've started a men's group, uh, for single.

Speaker 1 00:33:24 Oh yeah. Tell me, tell me about this.

Speaker 3 00:33:26 The eligibility is, uh, being over 40 and single and, uh, within your

Speaker 1 00:33:31 Ward.

Speaker 3 00:33:31 Within our ward. Okay. So I found somebody who's interested, he's fits the category and he's interested in taking just that little piece. And, uh, that's the way you put it together, is to find people that will just accept a small bit of the, the idea and run with that. And, uh, that's so far that's been very successful. I, I haven't really gone out because we've just, we were just released the 1st of October from our mission. I really haven't gotten out into the far reaches to, uh, talk to people who, you know, really haven't been around a lot. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:34:13 And so the idea is to gather this specific demographic and then like what whatcha gonna do, like, have like gatherings or get togethers or,

Speaker 3 00:34:21 Um, I think the idea is to have a wide variety of choices. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Because one thing, not everybody's gonna sign up for Worm Grummy, <laugh>

Speaker 1 00:34:32 <laugh>, I'd be there, George

Speaker 3 00:34:34 <laugh>. But, um, you know, the different things. And I think service is key. Uh, finding ways that we can be of service people like to be of service and most of them don't, you know, know how to do it. And so we're gonna just try to focus on a lot of little programs Yeah. That will coalesce and, and bring us all together.

Speaker 1 00:35:00 Yeah. Again, it goes back to that, that community concept. You're gathering community, or in other words, you're, you're gathering Zion. Right? Right. You're creating Zion in your area. Any other question from the, the audience come up? Robbie, who are you? Where are you from?

Speaker 5 00:35:14 I'm Robbie Shaq from New Braunfels, Texas. Nice. And so George, as you talk, uh, you say you're 87 years old, but you have lived your life in a way that I think we'd all agree that you have 870 years of experience in those 87 years. And so, and you talk about giving lots of ideas to, to your current leaders. If you could give any advice not to your current leaders in your ward, but to the future leaders of the church, what advice would you give?

Speaker 3 00:35:48 Ooh, that's a big one. One of them. I just really can't stress how important I think names are, and I think that we need to, to focus on, um, learning names. And I liked what was said last night, uh, by, uh, brother Strong, strong, yeah.

Speaker 1 00:36:09 Jeff Strong, Uhhuh <affirmative>

Speaker 3 00:36:11 About, instead of Brother Smith, it should be Brother Al. Hmm. First names. I mean, we don't address our friends by Good Day, Mr. Smith <laugh>, you know, you, you address them by their first name. And I think that that's really important. People, uh, oh, this is, uh, um, one of my other driving forces is there was a survey that showed three, two out of three people in America are lonely. And the Surgeon General published this big thick thing about loneliness crisis. Yeah. And how loneliness is actually killing more people than smoking did. Wow. In England, they have appointed the Minister of Loneliness. Oh,

Speaker 1 00:37:01 Really? Yeah, I was not aware of that. Wow.

Speaker 3 00:37:04 So it, it's a problem. And, um, I think that we need to, uh, find all kinds of ways to make people feel accepted. And I mean, if you think about it, if you walk into a building and everybody greets you, and how's, you know, Sarah and how's the dog doing? And think, who's gonna leave? Something like that. Hmm. And, uh, it's up to us to create that, that atmosphere. And then I think, uh, it'll, it'll really help and go a long way to create Zion. Hmm.

Speaker 1 00:37:45 Powerful. Any other questions? Who are you and where are you from?

Speaker 6 00:37:50 Hi, I'm Donelle Quinn. I'm from Arizona, and I've loved getting to talk to George these few days, so thank you for being here. You've changed my life. He told me that he's been assigned to reach out and find all the people on the records that the Bishop doesn't know about. Mm-Hmm. And I think you told me there's 950 of them, 50, and he's been assigned to find them. So I'm just curious how you're gonna do that. I'm certain you're going to <laugh>. I just wondering, I

Speaker 1 00:38:18 Have no doubt it's

Speaker 6 00:38:18 Gonna have a, I'm just wondering what your plan is for that.

Speaker 3 00:38:21 So the first step is, um, we've had a couple who have been serving an MLS mission in our ward part-time. So I'm meeting with Thursday and we're gonna go over all of the information that they've gathered over the two years, and, uh, that'll sort of serve as a base. I found a young man in our ward who, um, is, has some disability. I'm not sure what it is, that he likes computers. And I'm, uh, gonna train him to, uh, become the tracer of lost persons so that, uh, we can use the internet. And somebody gave me an idea today, we do have, uh, someone in the ward who is an ex intelligence officer, and he was telling me how, uh, he had tracked down some people, and so he's got some skills. And so we're gonna use those skills to help track down the people to find out, you know, it's, uh, the list says 950, but we know that there's not 950 people out there. And so We'll,

Speaker 1 00:39:33 Because they've either moved or is

Speaker 3 00:39:35 They moved Yeah, they died. Yeah. You know what? Whatever. Yeah. And so we'll, we'll narrow that list down and, and the rest of it's just gonna be a lot of legwork. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:39:46 And, uh, I'll get you this info later, but this was a big concern in the world where I served as Bishop. We were in a very transient ward, a lot of people coming and going. So naturally this unknown list builds up. And so what a lot of bishops do typically is maybe around the end of the year, Christmas, they'll send out a letter right in the mail, and they'll announce the new church times and wish everybody Merry Christmas, whatever. And then they get the, the letters back and they know, okay, this person's moved. Often they have a forwarding address, but that's a lot of stamps. And it can be a, a big dent on the, the word admin budget. And so there's services out there that, there's a company called Melissa Data, and I don't know if they're still in business, but there's definitely others where they have a system for like 15 bucks. You can submit a spreadsheet of addresses and they go out and hit the, the mail forwarding database, which is public data, and then it bounces back with all of these addresses are, here's the new address. So, and it it's really cheap that way, so. Oh, that's neat. Yeah. So you look into that. So any other questions? Yeah.

Speaker 7 00:40:48 Hi, I'm Jessica. During this conference, I made a comment on the first day about how it's easy to play small as a woman in the church when you have to take all of your requests through priesthood leaders. And you made it a point to find me after the meeting and one, ask me about my experience, and then two gave me some great advice. Do you remember what that was?

Speaker 3 00:41:14 You're the president, you've got the keys, do the work.

Speaker 7 00:41:18 I love that. And that was very powerful. How can we elevate women's voices in our ward?

Speaker 3 00:41:25 Well, I heard something at the table tonight about having the Relief Society president and the elders quorum president sitting on the stand stand during a sacrament meeting. I think that that would be good. We need to publicly display, you know, the roles and their importance and certainly, uh, the Relief Society president needs to be recognized.

Speaker 1 00:41:49 Awesome. Love it. Well, George, I guess as we, we wrap up here, just a few things that come to mind. Just like this retreat experience, like being with your people. And I'm honored that I'm one of your people like that we're kindred spirits and I wanna, I wanna grow to be George. Right. And you inspire me. So like, what does this, anything else you'd say as far as what this means to you to just be with other leaders?

Speaker 3 00:42:14 I think the thing that this, I've gotten a lot of ideas. I looked at the ideas, and I think it's important to know that there are other people that are trying to do the same thing.

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, it's hard when you feel like you're the only one. And, um, I think that this, are we gonna do this next year?

Speaker 1 00:42:40 I only feel calm George <laugh>. So

Speaker 3 00:42:43 I think it, it's something that's needed because we are swimming upstream and it takes a lot to be able to try to implement, you know, all of this. I mean, look at the difficulty the Savior had and trying to, you know, create a Zion and it's gonna take a lot of work, but I think it has to be done. Yeah. And, um, the more we can communicate with each other and support each other, I think the better off. We'll, yeah. Our results will be.

Speaker 1 00:43:20 Yeah. Love it. As I think back on this interaction, like what I found most inspiring is you just like being willing to meet with your bishop and just say like, don't count me out. Like, I'm not old. I can still give. Right. And, uh, like, that's so inspiring. Is that like a, is that a formal appointment? You said an email in the hallway. You mentioned that or like,

Speaker 3 00:43:42 No, I go to the office,

Speaker 1 00:43:44 You get in that room and

Speaker 3 00:43:45 I get in the room. I want him to know that I'm serious. Yeah. And when we moved back to Florida, my wife and I both went in. Yeah. And we said that, uh, we're here to do something. We want to do something. Oh, it was an interesting story. So we renewed our temple, recommend, and, uh, then went to the stake. And, um, this was just like maybe, oh, I guess, um, not, not even a month, I think after we had moved back to Florida and, um, we went into the stake for the second part of the interview, and the president was about halfway through the questions and would you stay afterwards so we could talk for a few minutes, <laugh>? So that's when he called us on our mission. So, um, awesome. Then we had something to do. Yeah. <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:44:44 Yeah. That's great. That's awesome. That Well, thank you George. I, I sprung this on you. It's not like I've been playing for weeks. Uh, George will be here. Well, we gotta interview him, but, uh, definitely it, it was meant to be. And, uh, thank you. I'm just gonna throw this in here. You said as you were walking on stage, you were having a tough time coming up the, the stairs here. And you said you fell down the stairs on Monday.

Speaker 3 00:45:04 On Monday morning, and

Speaker 1 00:45:05 It's, and like on your, like this Monday.

Speaker 3 00:45:08 This Monday, yeah.

Speaker 1 00:45:09 It's, it, it's Tuesday. <laugh> <laugh>. But you still, but you got and nothing's broken doctor, right? I mean,

Speaker 3 00:45:18 Well, I don't know, but I didn't wanna take, I don't wanna find out until after the conference is over. <laugh>,

Speaker 1 00:45:24 You don't need another one of your colleagues telling you you can't go to a conference. Right. Well, right. Wow. What sacrifice, I mean, and so it's just an honor to have you here, so

Speaker 3 00:45:33 Thank you very much.

Speaker 1 00:45:34 All right. Last question I have for you. As, as you reflect back on 87 years of being a leader, how has being a leader helps you become a better follower of Jesus Christ?

Speaker 3 00:45:44 Well, if you're gonna really lead, you gotta, you gotta walk the walk and it's, you know, takes, you have to think about it this year in studying, uh, the, uh, come Follow Me program and listening to some of the, uh, podcasts, uh, and the YouTube videos. Yeah. I made the, uh, decision that I, I'm one of those person I love the to-do list, you know, I've got a to-do list every day. And, but I first got kind of tuned into it, I think it was Brother Rogers who gave a talk to be or to do. And, um, I decided then I needed to work more on the to Be. And then this year, listening, um, I've decided I wanna become a disciple and not just a follower. And, um, that's, uh, if you make that commitment, you have to make some changes and it changes your priorities.

Speaker 1 00:46:57 The end. That's it for this Leading Saints episode. I encourage you to check out some of the most popular episodes of the podcast that we list at the bottom of the show notes. If you haven't listened to all of those, do so now. And remember to get on the email newsletter list, simply go to leading-saints.org/fourteen.

Speaker 8 00:47:24 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.