



Leading Others to Come as They Are | A How I Lead Interview with Georgia Travers

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Speaker 1 00:00:03 How's your teaching calling going? Have you ever asked a question during the second hour and suddenly everyone is looking at the carpet in silence? There are proven methods to stimulate class discussion that work like a charm. David Farnsworth does a masterful job presenting on this very subject in the Teaching Saints Virtual Library. What questions? Get people talking? How can you effectively listen to the answer they're saying without being distracted of where you wanna take the class next? These are crucial principles to consider, especially in this time of Come Follow Me Sunday School. You can watch David Farnsworth presentation by visiting leading-saints.org/fourteen. There you can gain free access for 14 days to the Teaching Saints Virtual Library, where you'll find hours and hours of content to help you be a better prepared Sunday teacher.

Speaker 1 00:00:58 So my name is Kurt Francom and I am the founder and executive director of Leading Saints and obviously the host of the Leading Saints podcast. Now, I started Leading Saints back in 2010. It was just a hobby blog and it grew from there. By the time, uh, 2014 came around, we started the podcast, and that's really when it got some, uh, traction and took off. Uh, 2016, we became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and we've been growing ever since. And now I get the opportunity of interviewing and talking with remarkable people all over the world. Now, this is a segment we do on the Leading Saints podcast called How I Lead, and we reach out to everyday leaders. They're not experts, gurus, authors, PhDs. They're just everyday leaders who've been asked to serve in a specific leadership calling. And we simply ask them, how is it that you lead? And they go through some remarkable principles that should be in a book that should be behind a PhD. They're usually that good. And, uh, we just talk about, uh, sharing what the other guy's doing. And I remember being a leader just simply

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

Speaker 1 00:02:39 Hey, it's Wednesday. That means we're recording and sharing another episode of the How I Lead Segment on the Leading Saints Podcast. And if it's not Wednesday, if it's Thursday, you know, we're just doing our best to stay on our schedule here. But nonetheless, we're always getting you at least two episodes out every week. Wednesdays we do the How I Lead Segment Saturdays we do a much more topic or expert focused discussion, and, uh, they're just great, they're fantastic. And this, in this episode, we're headed over to England, the UK to talk with Georgia Travers, and she lives just north of London in a fantastic ward there. I actually know her bishop quite well as well, and we should probably get him on the podcast. But, uh, that's for another time. And Georgia is a convert to the church. She joined when she was 20 years old.

Speaker 1 00:03:23 So we spend a few minutes at the beginning of the episode hearing her conversion story, and then she gets into the details of her being called as a Relief Society President, how she began that role, and, uh, pay attention to how she focuses and utilizes relief society council meetings. Man, I need to get back into the handbook and, and really understand, uh, what the guidelines are or the guidance for these council meetings, uh, because they could be a powerful concept. And I would guess most relief societies aren't leveraging the power of a council in the context of a relief society meeting. So let's learn more about what's happening within the church over just north of London. And I think you'll appreciate Georgia's English accent, which we need more of here on the Leading Saints podcast, just like we're getting more of in general conference. So here's my interview with Georgia Travers. Today we're, uh, headed to the other side of the world to chat with, uh, Georgia Travers. How are ya?

Speaker 2 00:04:47 Yeah, good. Great. Um, it's nice to be here on this podcast.

Speaker 1 00:04:51 Yeah, I'm excited to do it. And now you, um, many people may not realize this, but, uh, a year or so ago I, uh, acquired the podcast called This Week in Mormons, and Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, I got that from, uh, I purchased it from Jeff Openshaw who wanted to retire from the podcasting world. And you, uh, often co-host on that podcast as well. So if people love Georgia's voice and wants to hear more of it, you can uh, find her at This Week in Mormons. Right. Has that been enjoyable for you?

Speaker 2 00:05:19 Yeah, it's, it's been brilliant. It's been really fun, uh, to record the podcast and to find out about, about new church news. I suppose I'm often not tapped into into the news of the church. So it's been nice to delve into it in a little bit more detail.

Speaker 1 00:05:32 Yeah. And it's always good, which is part of why we're recording today, to get an international perspective, you know, outside of the United States, whether it's about, uh, church news or even about leadership. And so that's why I always love having some international voices on here, some accents like yours. And, uh, so it's good to, good to have you here too.

Speaker 2 00:05:51 Thank you. Yeah, I did notice at general conference actually how many different voices there were, which was quite nice. This most recent conference. So we are a global church.

Speaker 1 00:06:00 That's right. And it's good to hear more and more accents, uh, during general conference for sure. Certain diverse accents. Anyways, so now you live in, I'm, let's see if I can get it. St. Alban's. St.

Speaker 2 00:06:11 Alban's. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:06:11 Albans <laugh>. It's our, hard to say with a, an American accent, but that's just north of London. And are you born and raised in that area?

Speaker 2 00:06:19 Yeah, actually, I, I grew up about 20 minutes from where I live at the moment. I moved away for eight years. So I went to university in Bristol. I moved to Australia, then I lived in Oxford in England, and Surrey in England where Harry Potter's from. And then I moved back to Hartfordshire about, well, near St. Ban's in Hartfordshire about four years ago.

Speaker 1 00:06:38 Oh, okay. And now, and if I remember right, your husband's Australian, is that right?

Speaker 2 00:06:42 Yep, he's Australian. So we lived in Tasmania for a year, so pretty much as far away as you can get from England.

Speaker 1 00:06:48 Wow. So Tasmania really exists, huh? <laugh>. Yeah,

Speaker 2 00:06:51 I knew it did, but it does, it's, it's not just the, uh, the cartoon Tasmanian devil that is an actual place

Speaker 1 00:06:56 Know. Nice. And I, uh, I'm trying to think on, uh, somewhere I heard that Tasmania would maybe be a potential, uh, site for a, a temple just because it's, it's an island, it's sort of secluded. Does it? What's it, what's it like going to the temple when you live in Tasmania?

Speaker 2 00:07:12 Yeah, that is a brilliant question. So the nearest temple is Melbourne, so that's actually where we were married and we had to fly over. I took my wedding dress on the plane, um, I put it in the, um, in the cabin. They let me lay it on top of the, uh, all the other suitcases. So yeah, you have to fly to go to a temple. Wow. So, it is tricky. It would be amazing to have a temple in Tasmania. Wow. There, there's a fairly strong, uh, group of saints over there. Um,

Speaker 1 00:07:37 I bet. Wow.

Speaker 2 00:07:38 That's cool. Yeah, they were two stakes. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:07:41 So let's start a little bit, uh, I don't know which story to start with, but maybe let's go with your conversion. 'cause you're, uh, a convert to the church. It, was it in your late teens or early twenties? What's the story behind that?

Speaker 2 00:07:51 I was 20. Yeah. I was at university, so I, I was a very curious child. I was, I'm one of those old souls who's just always been interested in really deep questions. So even when I was six years old, I was thinking about why am I here? Where did I come from? And asking all the big questions. And my family are pretty much the most non-religious people that you would come across. So asking them the questions, you know, I didn't really get the answers that I was hoping for. I did go to a Catholic school, so we would say prayers, um, at the end of the day and at lunchtime and, um, at various other times. And we'd go to, uh, we'd have assemblies, kind of like a mass, I suppose. And I got something from that definitely. Um, but I didn't, it didn't quite resonate with me, I suppose.

Speaker 2 00:08:45 And then I got a bit older, and in my teenage years, that was when I was really, really curious about, just about the world, not just from a religious perspective, but also from a scientific perspective. And, um, I'll go more into that later. But I, um, yeah, I was just absolutely fascinated by just these big questions. So was asking all the time, almost every day it occupied my thoughts. And I had the opportunity to study at school religion, and I had the wonderful opportunity to study Islam for two years. So that was fun. And found out, you know, a lot of, I suppose a textbook understanding of, of that religion and that faith, which helps me nowadays. Uh, there are a lot of parallels, uh, between our faith and between Islam, which is wonderful. Um, but yeah, it wasn't, it just wasn't quite clicking with me.

Speaker 2 00:09:38 There were a few big questions I had. Um, and then I, I got into the final years of school and I took, in England we have a qualification called an A Level. So it's the final two years of school. You take your A levels, typically you pick three or four subjects. So I picked physics, maths, philosophy, and French. So a really good mix there. And in the philosophy class, I learned about William Paley. So he's, um, from the 17 hundreds, and he has, um, an argument which is based in teleology, the teleological argument. Have you heard of it?

Speaker 1 00:10:14 Uh, no. That's okay. New to me.

Speaker 2 00:10:16 Well, it, it really resonated with me. And what he said is, we can look around us in nature and we can see the intricacies and the, the sort of majesty of creation. And that leads us to thinking that there is a creator. So it's, it's sort of basing your understanding of a creator on the world around you. So there's a famous argument, the watch argument. Imagine you're on a beach and just out of nowhere you see a, a watch, and you look at the watch and it's got the hands and it's got, um, this, this intricate watch. Would you think that there was a watchmaker behind the watch?

Speaker 1 00:10:57 Yeah, absolutely.

Speaker 2 00:10:59 You would, right? Yeah. So that's the same with the world around us. We can look at the, the cosmos, we can look at the stars, and we can look at the, the planets

and we can look at everything around us. And it's amazing. And somehow people don't think they're the creator behind that. But for me, as a 17-year-old, that just really hit me. And I mean, I was writing essays about this, I was learning about this at school, and I was thinking, yeah, this, this really matches up with what I think. So by that point, I was, I was really invested in this idea of something divine. And then it was over the next couple of years as I went to university, all about finding out which religion was the right one. 'cause there's so many, right? There's so many. And, and which one was the one that was the one for me? And which one would match up with what I felt? I'm, I'm very much a feelings person. What would, what did I feel? What's right? Um, and, and ultimately it led me to this church. Nice church of Jesus Christ for last day Saints.

Speaker 1 00:11:59 So how did you originally get in contact with the church?

Speaker 2 00:12:03 It is a funny story, which I will tell briefly. Okay. <laugh>, I was given a leaflet, and it was a plan of salvation leaflet with Jesus Christ on the front. I was in my second year of university, and on the back it said mormon.org. I went on mormon.org. I, the first thing that came up was that you could request missionaries to come round. And I loved debating religious topics with people. So I thought, great, I'll get, I'll get some people round and I'll, I'll kind of bash their religion and I'll prove them wrong. And then they can, they can go on their merry way out the door and, and that'll all be good. And so I invited them round. They came round, and for the first maybe six weeks, it was just this sort of really difficult back and forth of, of me just arguing, being really argumentative and really putting up a fight. And then eventually I just conceded and let the spirit work on me. And I haven't looked back. It, it totally has transformed my life.

Speaker 1 00:13:02 Hmm. That's awesome. Alright, now let's, uh, fast forward to, uh, several years in the future. You were called as Relief Society President. So what's the story behind you being called as the Relief Society President?

Speaker 2 00:13:14 You know, that's a great question. I knew that I was going to get called as Relief Society President before it happened. I had a feeling the morning that, so before the bishop asked to meet with me, I, I woke up one morning and I thought, I'm gonna get called as Relief Society president. And then sure enough, the bishop texted me, said, I wanna come around to your house. This was during Covid, uh, we must've been allowed people at our houses by that point. And he came round and he said, we'd like to extend the call as as Relief Society president. And it was the first time in my life where I've received a calling that I felt like I'd been prepared for in ad in advance. I felt like I knew that it was coming, and I knew that it was the right time for me to be Relief Society president. And I've been, uh, relief Society president for just coming up on three years now.

Speaker 1 00:14:05 Oh, wow. Wow. So a good long experience there. That's fantastic. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So, I'm, I'm curious, when you began, uh, you know, you're set apart, you begin on this calling as Relief Society President, uh, with just your, your background, uh, being a convert, being, you know, that being raised as, as a curious individual with a religion

and whatnot. How did that, how did that begin to impact just starting in that role as Relief Society president?

Speaker 2 00:14:31 Well, I think being a convert is both a strength and a weakness. It's a weakness in that, I don't know how things are generally done, but then it's also, that is the same strength. Right? Exactly. Yeah. I can, I can reinvent things and I can do things the way that I want to do them. So at first there were a few teething issues because I just didn't know what I was meant to be doing. So I had to rely on the handbook. And I relied heavily on the previous Relief Society president and asked her so many questions because I felt entirely underqualified for the role. And we have a lot of, uh, very incredible people in our ward. Very, uh, experienced members who I just felt like I was very surprised that I was being called to lead those sisters. Uh, about a year ago.

Speaker 2 00:15:23 I feel like I moved into the role in a way that I understood why I had been called. And I feel now, like I'm really bringing my unique perspective to the table. Because the other thing about me that I've not mentioned yet is that I'm a physicist. So I'm a physics teacher, secondary school physics teacher. And that comes in a lot into my, my sort of gospel practice because I just, I love it. I love being scientific and I love being religious. For me, <laugh>, that's great. They're really similar. For most people. They're really different. They think science and religion can't go together, but for me, they really do. So that's been a nice perspective to be able to add into things, into the mix as well.

Speaker 1 00:16:03 Yeah. So tell me more about that. I mean, how does that manifest itself when you're, when you're perceiving the gospel through the scientific and the spiritual lens?

Speaker 2 00:16:11 Well, I think I just have an understanding of how things work from the physics side of things. So for example, force equals mass times acceleration. But then the why of why a ball will drop if I let go of it, that's down to, to to God, to, to religion. So science for me answers the how religion answers the why. And I think if you are just religious and you're not at all scientific, you maybe don't have the added depth of the understanding of the natural world around you. And then similarly, if you are just, uh, scientific and you give no place to religion, then you, you have no understanding of of, of why you are here. You know, so many people in my, in my physics cohort at university, were, were so strongly atheist and we're studying these amazing things. You know, we're looking at, uh, particle physics, and we're looking at, you know, what is inside an atom and how that, uh, helped the universe to form in those very, very early moments.

Speaker 2 00:17:20 You know, we're looking at all of those kinds of things, and nobody is stopping and thinking why all of this has happened. You know, in physics, we've got, um, one of the, one of the principles of physics, energy cannot be created or destroyed. You've heard of that, right? Mm-Hmm. Energy cannot be created or destroyed. Only transferred from one form to another to another. But how did the energy get there in the first place if it can't be created or destroyed? You know, there's these big voids within science that we just, we don't necessarily think about if we're just thinking from a scientific lens. But then if we add a religious lens to it, the two can work really nicely in harmony. Yeah. At least that's what I've found.

Speaker 1 00:18:00 Yeah. Because yeah, even through science, there's still gaps that require faith or, or big questions. Right. There still haven't been, uh, proven or understood. There's so many theories in, in science, right. And something's behind those theories that takes some faith. Right?

Speaker 2 00:18:14 Yeah. And I, I talk about this in the classroom all the time because we, um, we teach physics essentially as one big theory because, you know, physics has been proven wrong on occasion. We used to think that the earth was the center of the universe. Now we know that it's not, it's just a tiny pinprick. It's not even, it's not even a pinprick. It's so small. Uh, we we're constantly replacing scientific theory with new scientific theory and, and new understanding. Understanding. And, and that's the scientific method in action. So for people to say that science is absolute, I I disagree with, and that seems to be the attitude of, of many physicists who are atheists, that they think that science is the truth. But actually I see absolutes within, within our faith. And then I see the science as the thing that's changing to adapt around the faith.

Speaker 1 00:19:09 Yeah. So let's go back to those, uh, just beginning in your Relief society, president calling. Any any other stories or an anecdotes come to mind as far as, uh, how you, how you moved into that calling or what you learned as you were starting a calling?

Speaker 2 00:19:24 I think I've learned, and, and I don't want to be critical here, so I'm, I'm gonna be careful with my words because Sure. I absolutely love our church. But I do think that it is quite rigid in the way that it does things sometimes. And I think we need to give a lot more thought to how we're doing things within our congregations, because I think that we could be doing things very differently and in a way that is more inclusive to the wider community. So in terms of what I've learnt as I've served, I suppose it's, um, for me personally, I feel like I've encountered a few brick walls where I've been surprised that I haven't been able to, to open that door, that it's been a wall rather than a door for me. That being said, the leadership that I work with in the local area have been nothing but incredible.

Speaker 2 00:20:18 You know, if I've, if I've had an idea, they've always given me time and always given me energy to express that idea and to explain to me why things are the way they are. But to give you a couple of examples, it has surprised me that women don't conduct more meetings. So, for example, a sacrament meeting, there's, to me, there's no reason why a woman couldn't conduct that. It doesn't necessarily need to be a member of the Bishop prick. It's just conducting, you know, the bishop prick can preside fine, but there's no reason why we can't add, you know, a more, uh, around more rounded approach to things. Uh, so yeah, that, that's been a bit of a surprise. And I think for me, uniquely, because I've been part of other churches over time, I sort of dotted around from church to church to church, trying to find the one that, that fitted for me. I've built up a, a repertoire of ideas and things that I've seen from other congregations that I absolutely love, and that I would love to be part of our faith, but which aren't. And, and the answer to, to why they're not, I haven't quite gotta yet.

Speaker 1 00:21:28 Yeah. So, has any, uh, have any of those ideas, like, you know, obviously, uh, there's some ideas that maybe our culture or handbooks or whatnot aren't, aren't,

aren't ready for yet. But are there any ideas that, uh, you have put forward and, and executed it on that, uh, are maybe more unorthodox?

Speaker 2 00:21:48 I wouldn't say yet. No. I mean, I, I think I'm still in that kind of ideas phase of things. Yeah. I don't think I am, I don't think it's, anything's going to change in a hurry, but, but there are small things that we can do as part of our leadership that just changed maybe a tiny thing, a culture thing within, within our local congregations. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So, one thing that I'm really passionate about at the moment is, is gospel music. So in the Church of England church that I used to attend, there was this huge worship portion of the meeting, and it was, it was the beginning of the meeting, and it was for about half an hour, and we would just get together and we would just worship Jesus. You know, and that's, that's what's important. That's, that's why we go to church, right?

Speaker 2 00:22:32 To deepen our, our relationship with Jesus Christ. And I'd turn up to this, this Church of England Church, and we would just have this amazing time of singing these songs and being really immersed in music. And I think music has the most wonderful transformative power within our, within our souls. I think music stirs our souls. And I would love to see that within our, within our worship services. You know, we have a sacrament meeting, and I understand that the sacrament is in incredibly important, and that's why we follow a schedule for the, for the sacrament meeting. But then I wonder if there's a way for us to be more, or I suppose to be less rigid sometimes in our approach. The other thing is just about inclusion. So the fir, you know, this is the first time I've been to a church where I'm expected to, to wear a Sunday best.

Speaker 2 00:23:26 Usually I'd be wearing casual clothes, and I feel much more comfortable in casual clothes. And I think for someone who attends church for the first time, it can be quite jaunting to turn up and to see people in suits. And you know, I've, I've never seen the church leaders in casual clothes. They're always wearing, you know, white shirt tie, even just a blue shirt or a pink shirt, you know, just, just, I understand why it has to be a white shirt and the symbolism and, and all of that. But I think if we wore casual clothes to our church services, because it says everyone welcome on the outside, but is everyone does, is everyone made to feel as truly welcome as they could feel? The temple's a different matter. I understand Sunday best at the Temple, but why not in our chapels? Why, you know, on a Sunday we could, we could be in casual clothes. It's just my opinion, you know? Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 1 00:24:17 No, and, and so there's little nuances, right? That, uh, like you said, we put on the sign outside, but does it feel that way when people walk in? Right? If somebody walks by and say, oh, look, it says I'm welcome and I'm just gonna walk in and do it, will they instantly fill out a place? And then what can we do to, um, uh, shift that, you know, and, and, you know, that doesn't mean like you mandate everybody coming sweatpants and casual clothes, but again, what, you know, put that in, put that into the Revelation machine and award council and say, you know what, if someone walks in, how can we help them feel more, more welcome? Or what if somebody's preparing to come right to what, what can we say to them to not put this pressure of now you have to go out and, and buy certain clothes in order to just come visit with us and worship with us on Sunday, right?

Speaker 2 00:25:01 Yeah, exactly. So yeah, nothing's happened yet, and I, I don't expect that it will, because it's just part of our, the way that we do things. And it, you know, change happens slowly. Sometimes it happens fast. But with this, I think it would, it would happen slowly. But there are a few things, especially with, with the culture in our congregation that I am trying to, to shift and to change. And I feel very passionate about us just coming as we are and not trying to be anyone different. One of the most incredible, liberating things about being baptized is that for the first time in my life, I felt like I could identify as myself rather than having to identify as trying to be something else. I felt like my baptism marked a time where I decided to become my authentic self and to not worry about what other people thought of me, to just say, this is me.

Speaker 2 00:25:57 And I think our membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Lest Day Saints gives us this wonderful, uh, identity. You know, we are children of God, and that's life changing. When we realize what that truly means for us, that's, it's totally life changing. But going along with that, we need to know that God loves us for who we are, and we don't have to try and turn up to church and be someone different from who we are. We can turn up and just be ourselves. So, in Relief Society at the moment, I've, I've got two incredible teachers, one's just, just being called, and I'm, I'm really excited to, to give them some training this week on just being themselves, because they're both, um, they're women I admire so much that they're very different from one another, but they're very, um, what's the word? They're set in their beliefs, and they know who they're, and I want them to be themselves. I don't want them to try and fit within the, what they think a relief society teacher should be. And we've had some beautiful spiritual lessons where people have opened up and discovered more about themselves by being authentic. So I feel very passionate about that at the moment.

Speaker 1 00:27:08 Yeah. And, and I, I'm curious if there's many, maybe something more there as far as, I mean, did they, did they feel like, did they, did you have to communicate to them that it's okay to sort of be themselves as they teach, or do they just naturally feel that way? Or, I mean, how do you, how do you perpetuate that in Relief society?

Speaker 2 00:27:26 I think it comes from me being myself. So in a lot of my Sacrament meeting talks, I will be very open at the pulpit about my struggles. You know, I won't go into massive amounts of detail, but I'll show my weaknesses. And I think that's important as well, because I think it was Elder Udo said, you know, the church is like a hospital. It's, it's for sick people. It's not for perfect people. And I just try and be myself. And then naturally that helps other people to feel like they can be themselves as well. And then they can start tapping into their divine nature. Then they can start tapping into the specific responsibilities that God has given them. So for me, I think I've been, at this point in my life, given the spiritual gift, that I just have this, this belief, this conviction, and I've had it my whole life so far. And I pray that I never lose it, that I just have always believed in God. And that's such a gift, you know, and I, I need to hold onto that. And everyone has been given their own spiritual gifts and things that they can bring to the table. And everyone's strengths and weaknesses are different, but we all need to just bring, bring what we are to the table, and then that helps others to feel more comfortable about who they're as well.

Speaker 1 00:28:39 Yeah. Yeah. I love that the emphasis on recognizing that everybody has spiritual gifts and then allow them to, to, you know, testify, to witness, to, to be a latterly saint through those spiritual gifts. Right. And they're not always gonna be the same spiritual gifts you have, but to recognize they're there and let them manifest those.

Speaker 2 00:28:58 Yeah. And not, not just within our congregations as well, but in the wider community. Yeah. It's really sad. We've, we've, we're part of this, um, what we're trying to be part of this wider community, right? So we're at the moment as a ward council, we're thinking about community outreach and what can we do to sort of raise the profile of our congregation amongst all the other congregations. And last year, I, I found a group in our city called Christian Churches in St. Bans, and I thought, well, we could join that group. You know, we're a Christian Church in St. Bans. So I, I got up the application and, and started going through it because I thought, if we can be part of this, you know, it's a networking group so we can, we can meet people from other Christian churches and we can share ideas, et cetera.

Speaker 2 00:29:52 But in the application phase, we were immediately declined because we don't qualify as a Christian Church. So the, the perception of us, at least in England, is, is a, is a huge challenge to be overcome. And it's only gonna be overcome if our members are true to themselves wherever they are. So, and this is a challenge for me. I find it really hard when I'm at work to be open about my faith, and sometimes I'll pray for an opportunity to, to share my faith at work. And if I pray for it, it'll always happen. So I'm a bit scared to, to pray for it. But we need, yeah, we need to be more, um, I guess ourselves in our local community so that people can, can start understanding who we truly are. Because I think it's really sad that we don't qualify as a Christian Church. You know, we're, we're all about Jesus Christ, so we need to find a way of opening our chapel doors. I think getting more people in the doors of our chapel, helping them to understand who we are. They don't have to be scared of us. There are some crazy perceptions. I mean, my, my friends and family, as I was thinking about joining the church, really did come up with some wild things that I could never have thought of before. Yeah. That they thought things like, they thought that I would only be allowed to wear black and white clothing if I became a member of the church.

Speaker 1 00:31:11 Wow. I've heard that one.

Speaker 2 00:31:13 I know they thought that the chapel building was fake, and there was like a basement level where we all went for our services. So the chapel area, if you walked in, would be like a stage, and then you would, you would go to the, to the actual place where the services happened. You know, just stuff like that, that they genuinely believed that I, yeah. Just couldn't believe. But the misconceptions are, are very, very strong. And there's so many of them. And I'm trying to find ways to, to break that down. People are always surprised when I tell them that I'm a member of the church, and I hope that one day they're not surprised.

Speaker 1 00:31:53 Yeah. Yeah. I love that. Just like recognizing that maybe they won't approve your various applications to whatever it is, but to say, okay, if you won't do that, then I want to get you exposed to us as a people, as a religion, so that you have a better

understanding and not these horrible misconceptions about what we believe and whatnot, and really recognize that we're believers of Christ, you know?

Speaker 2 00:32:15 So, yeah. And I think the Book of Mormon musical, because it's, it's in London Uhhuh, and it's really popular on the big Red double Decker buses. You see the words, the Mormons are coming <laugh>, so it's everywhere. So a lot of people have now heard of the church. I don't, I, which I think is a good thing in terms of the musical that they have heard of it. But then I think it breeds a lot of negativity and a lot of misconceptions because the things that are in, in the musical are half truths and they aren't quite right. It has led to some good discussions, though. Um, but I feel like it's my calling at the moment, and it has been for the last, sort of nine years since I joined the church, to be breaking down those barriers, to be breaking down those walls and to help people understand who we truly are. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, because my, my perception of what the church was versus what it actually is, is very different now. Yeah. Having been a member for almost 10 years.

Speaker 1 00:33:09 And, and so is that, is there anything specific you do as a Relief Society president to, to move forward with that, uh, vision?

Speaker 2 00:33:17 Well, the community outreach aspect of it, because sitting on Ward Council is really helpful because that gives me Okay. Sort of greater access to be able to, to move the ward forward in that direction. We're doing loads of community outreach, which is wonderful. We've just started, um, an external group has started using our building, um, once a month on a Saturday. So I am a mom of twins, so the St. Bans Twins Club is now meeting at the Chapel. So this past weekend we had, I think it was 75 people in the cultural hall, and my family were the only members of the church, so Oh,

Speaker 1 00:33:54 Wow.

Speaker 2 00:33:55 Things like that, you know, because people will naturally ask questions. I, I did have someone ask me a little bit about the faith. She's a Christian herself, and, and as you walk into our chapel, our bishop did a really good job of choosing lovely artwork for our, for our foyer area. So we've got, you know, all of the paintings are of Jesus Christ. So it's very obvious when you walk in what we stand for, which is good. And I think that that will lead to some questions. My, my role as Relief Society president has been interesting. Um, I focus a lot on, on the sisters in our ward. I wouldn't say I've necessarily moved too much into, into thinking about how to embrace specifically sisters, but in terms of community outreach outside of our ward, that's something that's at the forefront of our minds.

Speaker 1 00:34:47 Yeah, I love that. That's really cool. Um, anything that you would, uh, highlight, uh, as far as the twice a twice a month, relief Society meeting, uh, you know, you mentioned your, your instructors and whatnot. Anything else that's maybe unique or, uh, approach you take in just facilitating that meeting every other week,

Speaker 2 00:35:09 Week? Well, we've started up Relief Society councils. So in the handbook, I can't remember when, I think it was last year, they mentioned that we could have a

Relief Society Council at the beginning of a Relief Society lesson. And I've been conducting those, and there's, the handbook is quite vague. It doesn't say what you're meant to talk about or how you're meant to conduct those councils. So what I've been doing is I've just been trying to follow the spirit as best that I can. And I've been trying to have candid discussions with the sisters on things that they perhaps struggle with or things which are faith promoting. And I'd be really interested to hear how other Relief Society presidents are conducting these council meetings, because I feel like I'm just on my own at the moment. I did speak to another Relief Society president within our stake, and she said that she hadn't started up those relief society councils yet.

Speaker 2 00:35:58 But that's something that I've been doing and that I've really been enjoying. I am very fortunate the sisters in our ward are open. They are receptive to change. They are, we're a good bunch. We're, we're small in number, but we're strong in spirit. I think there's about, I think we get between, my bishop can correct me if I'm wrong, 60 to 80 members attending in the ward per week. So, you know, thinking about a typical relief society meeting, generally we have between seven to 20 sisters attending per week. And I've enjoyed the Relief Society councils. I'm, I'm hoping for some more direction soon, but if not, I'll just go with what the spirit's telling me to do. It's working well so far. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:36:42 So if, if you had a new relief site president ask you like, okay, I, you know, Georgia, I wanna do the, the council meetings, I, I recognize there's some info in the handbooks. What advice would you give me? Like, do you, do you start with a question? Do you do it every week? I mean, just give us the, the nuts and bolts as far as how you've done it. Generally speaking,

Speaker 2 00:37:00 I would give a very simple piece of advice, which is maybe a cop out response, which is follow the spirit. The spirit is not going to lead you wrong. The, the meetings, the council meetings that I have conducted typically take between five and 10 minutes. I typically start with a question. I use a whiteboard, and I put, um, answers up on the whiteboard. However, on occasion, I have diverted to something that I felt strongly that I need to do. I think the challenges that the sisters face will be different in every ward. And I think the spirit is key to letting that relief society president know how best to help the sisters within her ward. Yeah. 'cause the challenges that I experience in the UK will be very different from the challenges that are experienced in, in other nations, and even within the UK in different congregations.

Speaker 2 00:37:55 There'll be a different demographic and there'll be different challenges. So following the spirit, I think, and, and that's something that we are so blessed to have in our church, is that gift of the Holy Ghost is such a tangible difference in my life since I've received that gift, I, I feel like I have that every day now, as long as I take the steps to remain capable of, of receiving that, and it, it just makes such a difference. I I say it all the time, like it, I got the glimpses of it before I joined the church. And I, I remember asking, uh, a youth pastor when I was about 16, I remember saying, I feel this really special feeling sometimes, and I feel really peaceful, but it never stays with me. Why does it never stay with me? And he said, it doesn't stay with me either.

Speaker 2 00:38:43 And I remember him talking about a rollercoaster and how sometimes we're gonna feel it and sometimes we're not. But in our church, we can have that constant companion con, you know, constant. Yeah. And, and we can use that in everything that we do in our service, in our personal lives, in our families. And it's not gonna lead us wrong. So that's why I'd say follow the spirit as a new Relief Society president, because it's the, you know, heavenly father knows his children, he knows what the sisters need, and, and he'll communicate that through the spirit, uh, to help in whatever form that takes. Yeah. And that's what a relief society president does. It's very varied.

Speaker 1 00:39:22 Mm-Hmm, <affirmative>. Yeah. Well, I, and I think that's Sice. I appreciate that. Um, and any other, before we wrap up, any other concept principle, uh, uh, habit routine you do as a relief site president would be worth mentioning before we wrap up?

Speaker 2 00:39:36 I, I think before we wrap up, one thing that I haven't talked about is perspective. So this calling has given me the most wonderful perspective. And I, I hope that I never lose it. That we are all different. And if we think that someone has life sorted, if we think that they're sailing through life, then we clearly dunno them well enough. Because every single person on this planet has significant challenges, significant difficulties, significant strengths, weaknesses. We all have things that we're going through. And that's what this calling has given me, is perspective. And I hope that I never lose that, because it's been really transformative to me. It's been one of the biggest lessons that I've learned is that everyone has, has their own battle that they're going through. And our role on Earth is to try and help other people as much as we can to, to overcome those challenges and, and to move on to the next challenge. And that, that's what's guaranteed. If you're over one challenge, you will be given another one. I've definitely learned that

Speaker 1 00:40:35 <laugh>, for sure. Well, uh, Georgie, this has been fantastic. I, um, I hope someday I get to, to visit your ward and, and see all, you know, that, that wonderful, uh, community in action and whatnot. So, um, last question I have for you, Georgia. As you reflect on your time, the last three years as a Relief Society president, as a leader, how has being a leader helped you become a better follower of Jesus Christ?

Speaker 2 00:40:58 It has humbled me for sure. Um, I alluded to it before, but becoming a leader has enabled me to see people the way that Jesus Christ sees them. And that has helped me gain, uh, a new perspective on, on the Savior and on my relationship with him.

Speaker 1 00:41:26 And that concludes this how I lead interview. I hope you enjoyed it. And, uh, I would ask you, could you take a minute and drop this link in an email, on social media, in a text, wherever it makes the most sense, and share it with somebody who could relate to this, this experience. And this is how we, how we develop as leaders, just hearing what the other guy's doing, trying some things out, testing, adjusting for your area. And, uh, that's, that's where great leadership's discovered, right? So we would love to have you, uh, share this with, uh, somebody in this calling or a related calling, and that would be great. And also, if you know somebody, uh, any type of leader who would be a fantastic guest on the How I Lead segment, uh, reach out to us. Go to [leading-saints.org/contact](https://www.leading-saints.org/contact). Maybe send this in individual an email

letting them know that you're going to be suggesting their name for this interview. We'll reach out to them and, uh, see if we can line 'em up. So again, go to leading saints.org/contact. And there you can submit all the information and let us know, and maybe they will be on a feature How I lead Segment on the Leading Saints podcast. Remember up your teaching game by listening to the David Farnsworth presentation by visiting leading saints.org/fourteen.

Speaker 3 00:42:43 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.