



Being a Church Worthy to Receive People | A How I Lead Interview with Travis Hunt

January 10, 2024

Speaker 1 00:00:04 Let's be honest, few humans enjoy meetings and many feel trapped in meetings. As leaders, we don't want to burden those we lead, but meetings can seem to do that more often than not. We wanted to address the pain of meetings through the meetings with Saints Library. Here we have 15 plus presentations dedicated to improving the meetings we run. We have experts in the field addressing topics like getting people involved in meetings, staying on task, dealing with conflict in meetings, and a ton more. We'd love you to explore the full meetings with Saints Library over 14 days at no cost to you. You can do this by visiting leading-saints.org/fourteen. That's leading-saints.org/one-four. We'll also give you access to all of our virtual libraries to educate about other leadership topics. It's really good stuff. So visit leading-saints.org/fourteen, or click the link in the show notes.

Speaker 1 00:01:26 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 00:03:06 All right, we're making it happen. We brought all the way from Brisbane, Australia, Travis Hunt. How are you? Really good. Uh, suddenly you're listening to the podcast on the other side of the world, different continent. And now you're in the podcast. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:03:18 Crazy <laugh>. I I really crazy. That's that's

Speaker 1 00:03:20 Great. And I sort of, I kind of tricked you into this 'cause you were like, I wanted to connect. You said you were coming to the us we'd been emailing like, Hey, we should connect. And then I was like, well, while you're here, we might as well get you in front of microphone. Yeah. And uh, and you said that sort of relates to when you were called as Bishop.

Speaker 2 00:03:36 Yeah. Yeah. It tell us that story. I mean, it just had the same, it just had exactly the same feeling because, uh, yeah. Shell and I, my wife and I, who had moved and

Speaker 1 00:03:44 She's off camera

Speaker 2 00:03:44 Here. Yeah. Shell's here. Um, we just moved into a new ward and in the, my previous ward, I ward I'd served as a bishop, uh, in the as counselor in the Bishoprick. And we thought, you know, that's when you move outta the ward, that's how you get out of the calling. Right. <laugh>. And so we thought we were very safe. The the bishop was there and he didn't, there's no real reason why he, uh, we would've expected for him to be released, I guess, um, despite the fact that he'd been there a while. But, uh, the stake president said, Hey, can, can I catch up with you and your wife? And we, we know, I know this guy. You know, I grew up with him. He was, he's one of my best friend's dads. And, um, so we just went in and we thought, oh, this is, he's so nice. Like, why does he, he just wants to catch up with us, see how we're going, what a minister, what a nice stake president. And, uh, and so we were just completely caught off guard and we were just chatting and it was almost like he didn't really warm us into it either. He is just like, we're chatting, chatting, chatting. Also, um, we'd like to ask you to service the Bishop of Qvo. What?

Speaker 1 00:04:40 <laugh> like, come again. What?

Speaker 2 00:04:41 Yeah. And um, and I just remember, you know, sort of being a bit jaw dropped, like, you know, speechless. And, and Rochelle just started laughing. She's just sitting next to me laughing. And he's like, uh, <laugh>. No, I'm sorry. I'm like, and I, we had to just clarify with him, are you just, 'cause we know him well. Yeah. And, you know, so I thought, no, this could be a pretty sick joke. But, um, yeah, sure enough. Anyway, I guess that was, I felt similar when you were like, 'cause we were just like, oh yeah, we catch up. Yeah. We should have a chat. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, yeah. And also, do you mind if we record an episode of Leading <laugh>?

Speaker 1 00:05:13 Yeah, I love it.

Speaker 2 00:05:14 Yeah, sure. Right, <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:05:16 Well, and we're always striving to get, you know, more international voices on leading Saints, and if we can do it in person Yeah. Even better though. I need more and more excuse to travel in Australia. So if you can line me up with some other, uh, potential guest, then I can, I'm give myself a beautiful country. I'm, I could. That's awesome. So maybe just give us the lay of the land of, uh, maybe generally what the church is like in Brisbane. Uh, you have the temple there for a while, right?

Speaker 2 00:05:40 We, we do. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:05:41 Uh, when was that built?

Speaker 2 00:05:42 Whew, about 2002

Speaker 1 00:05:46 <laugh>. See, you're getting all sorts of questions, drew. Yeah. Yeah. I think it was part of like the, the surge of temples around President Hinckley's time, right?

Speaker 2 00:05:53 It was, yeah. Australia just got, you know, a couple of the kind of, um, all the same temples. You go that box, you get that box, you get that box all the same, you get 'em all nice. Some of the main cities. Yeah. Got temples.

Speaker 1 00:06:02 That's great. So tell us what's the church like in 2024 in, in Brisbane?

Speaker 2 00:06:06 Uh, I mean, it's, it's, you know, I I I mean, I'm, I'm hearing Utah with you now, and I I was actually surprised how similar it is. Hmm. Um, it's, uh, you know, we, we visited Ward here in Salt South Salt Lake, and, you know, it was very clear to me some of the same kind of struggles that, that we experienced over there, uh, being experienced here. Hmm. Um, and

Speaker 1 00:06:30 And what, what would you say some of those struggles would be like generally speaking?

Speaker 2 00:06:34 Well, <laugh>, I mean, it's winter here and, you know, we went to the nine 30, uh, ward, and apparently that's early <laugh>. That's like an early <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:06:42 So people trickle in.

Speaker 2 00:06:44 Yeah. Yeah. So, I mean, we were, we were like five or 10 minutes early and, you know, there's just no one there. Like, is this, is this on <laugh>? Like, um, but you know, sure enough, similar to Australia, you know, as, as it gets closer to the, the starting time, people trickle in. Yeah. But, you know, I mean, um, our ex our kind of perception of Salt Lake and Utah is like, you know, just members coming out the rafters. You, there's just thousands of members everywhere and, um, you know, that just, just wasn't, and you know, to the point where like, my two boys were asked to pass a sacrament 'cause they didn't have, you know, enough young men, which is something that we deal with all the time in Australia, but I, you

know, you don't expect to deal with it here. So, um, yeah, I mean, uh, apart from that, we have the same sorts of things. Faith, crises, faith transitions. Um, I think in some ways, uh, people in the church in Australia can be more orthodox even than, than members here. You know, especially those that, you know, joined the church, perhaps. Um, they, my parents' generation, you know, as the, there was lots of rules that we were brought up with and, you know, if you were brought up in the church. And, um, I think it's this generation that's sort of pushing back on some of those rules. Mm-Hmm.

Speaker 1 00:07:58 Yeah. Yeah. So maybe give us, what was, how would you describe your ward during the time you served those seven and a half years as Bishop?

Speaker 2 00:08:06 Yeah. So, um, our ward, my ward was called Ka, was, it was called Kapal Ba Ward. It's actually been absol absorbed to, to two different wards now. But, um, it was a small ward. Um, and we didn't mind that. I think everybody in the ward appreciated that it was small, but we had a very family feel. Um,

Speaker 1 00:08:24 How many did you get on a typical Sunday? Do you remember?

Speaker 2 00:08:27 Uh, pre covid or post Covid? <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:08:30 Pre Covid? Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:08:30 Yeah. Pre Covid is probably 160 or something. Okay. Post Covid was more like 120 thereabouts. Yeah. Um, so yeah, small ward. Um, but you know, we, we, over the course of, you know, I was serving for seven and a half years, so I mean, we, we really tried to, um, have a family feel, have a, have a warm feel and inviting feel so that, you know, when each of the members of the ward came, they felt great about coming and when guests, you know, visitors were in town, you know, uh, it was often, and I would per, I mean, I'd take pride in this, but you know, they would come to you after they'd visited the ward and they'd be like, whatever's happening here is, is a good thing because Oh, wow. You know, we don't experience, we don't have this experience every time we visit a different ward. So, um, we tried to make it super warm, super welcoming, and super friendly.

Speaker 1 00:09:19 Nice. And we'll, we'll get into some of that as hopefully crack the code on how, how you did that, right. Um, lots of youth, would you say, I mean, as of the bishop, did you, was that a, obviously that's a focus, but was it a lot of youth in the ward?

Speaker 2 00:09:32 Yeah. Again, I would've thought probably not by Utah standards, let's say. Sure. But I mean, we had probably, uh, 20 to 30 youth, you know, 10, 10 young men, 10 young women that were kind of, and then that would fluctuate. So sometimes there was less and sometimes there was more.

Speaker 1 00:09:48 Nice, nice. Um, anything else as far as the general structure of your ward or uniqueness or characteristic, or did we cover, give a good idea there?

Speaker 2 00:10:00 No, I think other than that it was pretty standard ward. Yeah. You know, you have sort of a mix of demographics, mix of age groups, you know, um, some return missionaries, some, you know, lots of strong sisters. Um, yeah. Yeah. I think it was

Speaker 1 00:10:14 Pretty, because I mean, Brisbane is a huge city, relatively to, uh, you know, one of the top five cities, I guess, in Australia, right? Yeah. So, I mean, you have just some, naturally, you just have some stability there with just having numbers of people, right?

Speaker 2 00:10:26 Yeah, that's right. I mean, uh, our building has three wards that meet in it, so, um, and that's pretty rare for Brisbane. I mean, there's not many buildings that have, you know, more than one ward. But, you know, certainly three wards is, is our building, was our stake center. Um, so, you know, there's, in, in the surrounding area, there's, you know, quite a, um, you know, a good kind of allocation of, of church leadership, former stake presidents, former bishops, former relief society president, stake Relief Society presidents. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:10:54 How long would you say it would take to drive from one side of the word to the other? Half an hour. Okay. So that's, I mean, that's, yeah, it's not doable,

Speaker 2 00:11:02 Right? It's not too bad. It's not like, uh, again, it's

Speaker 1 00:11:04 Not Utah, but it's

Speaker 2 00:11:05 Yeah. But it's not, I don't have one of those stories where I'm like, I drive three hours to visit, you know, so and so no <laugh>

Speaker 1 00:11:10 Like, plan out my whole day. Right. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Great. Um, well, let's jump into, you know, as we do in these how I lead interviews, I ask you to maybe think about certain principles that served you well during your time of leadership, not because you figured it out, but like you said, you, you felt like the ward, uh, developed into a very, uh, welcoming ward and felt like a family. And I'm sure there's a percentage of the ward who's watching this and being like, no way. Like <laugh>, he did everything wrong. Right? Absolutely. But, um, but nonetheless, that was your attempt, and there was some indicators that that was happening. And so the first principle you, uh, you have here is what you bring, you'll eventually see in the ward, unpack that one.

Speaker 2 00:11:46 Yeah. So I mean, I, I guess, um, I think when I was first called, I, I remember going into ward councils in the, in the, in the early days, you know, really just so green and not under not really understanding what I was gonna do, how I was gonna do it, but, you know, just feeling a sense of like seriousness, a sense of, uh, kind of over solemnity in ward councils and that sort of thing. And that's just not my personality. So I, I mean, I, I just, I like to be an ward counselor, and I want to, if we could be there for an hour, we, we may as well have some fun as well. Like, we're gonna talk about all the stuff, but let's, let's have some laughs and, you know, let's have a good time. And, and, you know, so over the months and the years that I served, you know, we would come up with various focus points and, and that sort of thing.

Speaker 2 00:12:31 And, and I just think that, um, without overemphasizing the, the impact of a bishop, because there's so many working parts to award, but if you are pumped about, you know, this certain thing and, and you ex you exuberate that energy that's gonna, everybody in the room is gonna start to feel that if you kind of repeat yourself on, on how you feel about that, and the, and the energy is there, and you don't have to be like a rah rah kind of person, but, um, you know, the, the re the release site president's gonna pick that up. Your bishoprick counselors are gonna pick that up. The elders quorum Presidents, everyone's gonna pick that up, and they're gonna go into the ward with that same energy regarding that, that topic or that focus point. And, you know, that's gonna come through in talks, it's gonna come through in conversations in the hallway. Um, and so, you know, little by little, I feel like it, it tri those sort of things would trickle down to the entire ward to the point where, you know, you would meet with random ward members in the hallway and they would say things that you said in, in ward council. And I think I, I guess so I point being that you, you really, as the bishop have to show up, um, with that, that that energy around the things that you think are important, your vision. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:13:38 Yeah. Yeah. And so was it a matter of just like, walking those meetings and just making sure your, your real personality comes through? Or what, how did you, like start that momentum happening so it spills over to the other experiences in the ward?

Speaker 2 00:13:53 Well, I guess it's, it's a bit like, you know, we're, we're having a podcast right now, and, you know, we, we met for a meal beforehand. It's like, it's like this warmup kind of thing that you have to do. You can't just rock up toward council and be like, all right, let's talk about, um, you know, baptizing more people. You, you know. So giving each person, each individual inspe also in the stewardship catchups that I would have, you know, like when we would have those, it's not like, okay, you know, sister, so-and-so release Society president, you know, how's, uh, ministering going? It's, you know, let's talk, let's have a laugh. Let's, you know, develop that relationship so that then when we would come inward councils or, or those larger meetings, the, I hate to use a teenage word, but the vibe is already there. Like, um, you know, everybody knows that it's okay to have a laugh, that we're gonna have a a, a pretty good time.

Speaker 2 00:14:42 This isn't gonna be a drag. Um, and, you know, so I guess giving people their individual time, especially in those one-on-one moments, so that when you go into the larger setting, it's, it's already warm. Mm-Hmm. So, um, and people feel sort of free in that kind of environment. I think, you know, um, I think, you know, when you wake up, I imagine on Utah, you wake up on a Sunday morning early, you gotta, depending on when you have, you walk council, but you go to Ward Council pre free church, and it's cold, and, you know, and, and you don't wanna go and like, <laugh>, you know, and, and then you get there and you got a, a pious bishop who's just like, you know, let's let us pray. <laugh>. Like, um, it's just no one wants to be there. And, and if they don't wanna be there, they're not gonna contribute. They're not gonna offer up ideas because, you know, you know, perhaps that, that, that kind of attitude applies to, um, reception of ideas and that sort of thing. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:15:37 Yeah. So, so it sounds like, I mean, just even beginning a meeting, you just, again, you're not jumping into the agenda or you're even the prayer right away, right. You're

letting the room breathe a little bit. You're connecting with people, and then it sounds like you're develop outside of that context, you're developing relationships with every member of your word council so that they know you, you know them. You're, you're gathering as friends and not as well, because the handbook said we should.

Speaker 2 00:16:00 Yeah, absolutely. And I mean, everybody has their own personality and not, I, I certainly don't consider myself like funny or a comedian <laugh>, but I do like to laugh. And you're

Speaker 1 00:16:09 Australian, so you're halfway there. Yeah. <laugh>, that's, they, they love a good laugh. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:16:13 And, uh, and I think it was important for me that people understood that. Yeah. So that when we came to those meetings, and I think, to be honest, um, you know, when I was first called, I, I said, well, I'm just gonna be me. ICI can't be anyone else, and I can't try and be Mr. Serious, like, um, you know, Bishop. And so I think, you know, there was probably a couple of members of that ward council initially that were like, a little put off by this, and just like, why, why are you making a joke of this? This is serious business. Mm-Hmm. Um, and, but y you know, I guess each person has their own personality, and this was just mine. And, um, I think it as Disney who said, um, you know, laughter is no enemy to learning. Mm-Hmm. Um, and I used to, and I essentially award council or a bishoprick meeting is just a learning, it's just a learning environment really.

Speaker 2 00:17:02 Yeah. I mean, we call it revelation, we call it whatever we want, but you're trying to learn about each other. You're trying to learn about ward, you're trying to learn about a focus point. Um, and when you have a good time along the way, um, it, it, it comes easier, to be honest. I actually find it, um, you know, like the effectiveness with any meet with any meeting was always commensurate with how many times we laughed during the meeting. Mm-Hmm. Um, if it was quiet and solemn, overly solemn, there's a time and a place to solem. Sure, yeah. But, um, we wouldn't get anything done. Nothing good would come from it and people would leave going That sucked. <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:17:36 Yeah. Yeah. Um, and, and I appreciate like just this principle of what you bring, you'll eventually see in the ward, like just giving permission for your, your type of leadership or those that you call their personality, allow that to, you know, filter out into the culture of the ward, that if you're fun people, it's okay if the ward's fun. Right. And maybe there is that bishop who more Solomon and yeah. Maybe the word will need that for a few years of maybe going that way, but just giving yourself permission to letting your personality spill over into your leadership and into the, the organization.

Speaker 2 00:18:09 Yeah. Yeah. A hundred percent. Um, m my wife is, uh, grew up Baptist. And, um, she was telling me about just earlier today about her pa like every so often you would get a pastor a change, and, you know, it's a paid ob occupation, obviously. Mm-Hmm. But it's sort of similar, you know, Pastora is kinda like a bishop, but when you get a new Pastora, that new Pastora might have a completely different personality and a completely different vision. And

sometimes that would be well received, sometimes that wouldn't, but, you know, eventually people kind of come around to it and you can't try and be what you're not. And so, yeah. I mean, certainly allowing your own true personality to come out. And some people are a bit more serious, and that's, that's cool too. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Um, and some people, you know, like us, we, we wanted to have a good time while we're there. Yeah. Not there for a long time there for, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So, um,

Speaker 1 00:19:00 Yeah, and I appreciate that the Disney quote that, and even altering that, that, you know, laughter's no enemy to revelation, you know, you can have a good time and have a very high revelatory experience. And in our culture, I see this often where, you know, we, we, we sort of overcorrect into that pious, you know, like you said, there's a time and a place, but sometimes it's like you can only receive revelation when we're all whispering, or like, when we listen to that very quiet hymn, and now we're, you know, we're reverent. Like we are in primary where it's like, no, we're, God's called us to these roles, and yeah, here we go.

Speaker 2 00:19:32 Yeah. And I, I think we take, you know, scriptures around, you know, um, you know, what's the scripture about? Not, um, being light minded and Oh, yeah. You know,

Speaker 1 00:19:42 I'm sure I know it somewhere,

Speaker 2 00:19:44 <laugh> avoiding things. It's flashing on the screen right now, sorts of things. But I think we, you know, sometimes we can take that a little too, literally, you, you laughed, you know, <laugh>. Yeah, yeah. Now we can't have the spirit. No. Come on. Um, yeah. I mean, is one of my favorite proverbs actually is a Proverbs 17:22. It says, A merry heart does good like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones. Mm-Hmm. Um, and, you know, I think the, the more intimate the situation as well, the more that can, you can get a good feel for that. So, you know, at ward council level Yeah. You know, we have some laughs but you know, there, there, there's probably some boundaries that you don't want to go crazy. But then, you know, at a, in a bishoprick, you're even more intimate. So, you know, there's three or four people, or five people with your, your exec, second your clerk, and, you know, you get to know each other very well and, you know, um, how far you can go Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> within, you know, and, and still, you know, have a good time. But you know, then with that intimacy and that, um, ability to be who you are and for your counselors to be who they are, I think it, it, it allows the spirit to be more, um, free flowing and not be restrained by, uh, Bishop wants me to show up this this certain kind of way. No. Show up how you are. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And, um,

Speaker 1 00:20:57 Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And I, and I appreciate, I remember, you know, serving as a bishop, we were all, we were in this inner city ward, we're all in our twenties in the Bishop Rick. Right. And so, and I remember there were times, whereas as the bishop, I sort of had to correct the other way where it seemed like we were trying to, you know, who could say that the funniest one-liner at every step of the way. And Sure. And there were moments where I had to kind of say, Hey, let's regroup here. Like, let's stay focused and let's have fun. But, you know, we don't need to turn this into just a, a laughing stock. Right. So, again, there's a balance, but I think the, the main point is clear. So anything else with that first principle that we haven't touched on, or?

Speaker 2 00:21:31 No, not really. I mean, in, in when I was, I had the for good fortune of, I think I was younger than my, I was the youngest all the time when I was, all my counselors all the time were always, always older than me. So, um, and I, I usually would have one that was a reasonable amount older. So, you know, there was always that personality about, you know, never let anything get outta hand, but yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:21:54 Good balance. All right. And the second principle is kindness. I like this

Speaker 2 00:21:58 <laugh> you like kindness. Yeah. I,

Speaker 1 00:22:00 I think everybody does. Everybody should be kind, right? Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:22:03 Yeah. So, I mean, um, I guess all these principles, they, they're just, they're just ideas without a vision. But I, I think part of our vision for the ward, and, you know, I think for Rochelle and I, um, as you know, Rochelle, you know, as kind of leading the ward, um, was that the ward would be a warm place. That it would be a safe place. That it would be a, a safe haven, emotionally, spiritually, physically, um, intellectually. Um, and so that when people come into the ward, they feel that, they feel that, um, you know, whatever their values are, whatever their persuasions are, whatever their situation is, that they're welcome, um, that we are so happy to have them with us. Um, that was kind of, you know, every little, all these little principles kind of come off of that idea. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And so kindness is just like, of course, um, I, I love the idea that, you know, each of us is, we like to say we're created in the image of God.

Speaker 2 00:22:59 And that's sort of one of the unique things about our theology. You know, I, we have two eyes, we have two arms, but, um, I think it was as Michael Wilcox, I think that taught, uh, that, you know, it's not just that we're created in the image of God, physically we're created in his, in the image of God, emotionally, spiritually, all of the kind of beautiful characteristics of God that we know, forgiveness, um, that he is, you know, loving, merciful, charitable, those are in us too. And one of those obviously is kindness, you know, um, which we attribute to God. And so like when we work with God, he can bring that out in spades Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> with other people. And so, um, yeah. I mean, as a leader, I think that that can manifest in so many different ways. It might be just simply, um, you know, sitting with people in the, in the hallway or in the office and, you know, being with them in their pain, um, and not just barking. This is what you need to do at them. Yeah. But, um, just being really be empathetically being with them Yeah. In their pain. I

Speaker 1 00:24:02 Think most leaders really desire that. You know, they want to create that. And sometimes they're like, I don't really know how, but I think the, the passive aggressive battle that happens is often that the administrative drum of things, right? It's like, all right, sacrament's over, let's get to the, to the second hours. Or do we have teachers, right? And, and a bishop picture sort of, uh, uh, obsessing about these things at times. And, you know, well, there's no teacher we gotta scramble, or, you know, this person didn't show up, or, you know, whatever it is that, that sort of has this gravitational pearl pull. And I remember I call my bishop, smiley principal with my counselors. I'd say, I wanna be Bishop Smiley, that I'm not rushing to

make sure the primaries functioning as it should. You know, let's make sure people do that. But for me, I wanna be the type of guy that sits down at the pew with Summit. It takes a few minutes as if I have nowhere else to be, but with them. Right. Yeah. And, and I think that's what you're articulating.

Speaker 2 00:24:52 Yeah. And, and ideally, you know, as long as you, as you said, you, you, you articulated that to your counselors, so, um, when the people you're serving with know that, and you articulate it like you did, they can kind of cover that base. So when you do need to sit down with that person Yeah. They can see that your exec, exec, your counselors can see that, um, and they can, you know, obviously recognize it and pick up the slack and move, move those, those more administrative things along. Yeah. Um, so that's, yeah, certainly, certainly having that. Um, uh, but yeah, I think, uh, when, when I was serving, you know, I think especially in the early days of serving, I remember having so many people come into the office and they would be like, telling me how a church makes them anxious and church, like their anxiety peaks on, on Sundays. And, um, and I really like, I understand, I understood why, but I also like hated <laugh>. I hated not there, not them, obviously, but, um, I hated that that had to be the case. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:25:50 It shouldn't be the case. Yeah. You'd hope that there'd be hope and

Speaker 2 00:25:52 Yeah. Yeah. And it should be. And so I guess it, it really pro prompted me to kind of really try and make the ward a place where you could come easily. You know, it wasn't a challenge to come, you know, you could walk into the doors and you knew that there was somebody, uh, people there that were, I guess, worthy to hold you in however you show up. Um, we use like, the words worthy a lot, you know? And I personally don't really like that, but I like the reverse of it when we can be worthy to, um, worthy of people's stories, worthy of people's, um, uh, vulnerabilities. You know, worthy of people's truth, worthy of people's difference, you know, worthy of people's lack of testimony, <laugh>. Um, so that when they come, they know, I can trust this person. I can, I can, I don't have to be perfect. My hair can be a bit of a mess today. I or I, I can be doubting everything there is about the gospel, and I can still show, show up and, and, you know, have people that aren't gonna be like, well, you just need to like, you know, pray more. What's, you know, do do the right thing more. Yeah. What are you doing wrong? Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:27:02 Um, I, I love that framing of so often we talk about worthiness as, am I worthy to go to church? But to flip that on its head, is church a place that's worthy to receive me and to receive everybody? And that's what it really should be. 'cause then, then they'll find that worthiness going both ways as, as we create that community. Right?

Speaker 2 00:27:21 Yeah. And, and I guess that was, um, you know, as a bishop, you, you're trying to promote in yourself, obviously, and in the leadership group especially, but then ev amongst everybody in the ward, this idea that, you know, be ready, be ready when you come on a Sunday, because it's not about, you're not coming to church for you. You know, sometimes people say, I don't, why do I even have to go to church? Well, you, you don't really, not for you, you come for other people. And so make yourself, you know, equip yourself, be in a place that,

you know, be prepared every Sunday that you, you could be a very special person to somebody on that, on that day. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:27:58 So take me just into, like, let's just talk about sacrament meeting, like, uh, the, for the leaders listening, like the Bishop Rick members thinking, I would love to do that. I just, what does that even look like? I mean, were there components, were there specific callings? Were there, did people stand certain places? I mean, what, what led into that? Or is it more natural, uh, or organic?

Speaker 2 00:28:17 Yeah, I mean, I, I'd love to say, you know, I, I, I

Speaker 1 00:28:19 Implemented, here's the five point plan. Come

Speaker 2 00:28:20 On. I learned it, these five callings. And they, you know, like, not really. I mean, and in fairness, this whole vibe in as much as we had any success is not like, oh, you know, Travis and Michelle, it's not down to, you mean me as a bishop. It's, you know, there was multiple people that invested in these ideas, um, ward council to, to, you know, the elderly people in the ward that, um, you know, that still messaged me to this. I told you our, our ward is no longer, but they still messaged me to this day, you know, saying, I wish our water was still a thing, you know? Yeah. Um, you know, so these, these other people invested in the same ideas. But I guess, you know, it goes back to that first point that what you show up with will filter down. You know?

Speaker 2 00:29:01 So you only get a certain amount of touch points with the members of the ward. You know, um, you, when you're giving talks, you know, when you've got a lot of members, you, you, you can't talk to 'em all every Sunday or even every week. And so when you do, you really, you're, that's prime time <laugh>. And you really gotta make sure that, um, what you feel to be important or whatever your vision is, is, um, very clear. And there's no mistakes. <laugh> not, and not in a authoritative kind of like, this is the way, but just, you know, if you, if you want your ward to be warm, and, and you know, there's principles behind that and there's theology behind that, that, uh, you need to articulate that, um, to, to the ward council so they can further on. But also, you know, when you're talking, um, from the stand, um, and you know, they will, they will start to grasp that.

Speaker 2 00:29:50 I, I, there was things that we said in our ward, um, you know, one of the next things that I was gonna talk about, but that, that became buzzwords, you know? Um, and, and everybody in the world would start to repeat them. And, you know, I'd have people message me saying, oh, did you know some of these things that we implemented? Um, and, and so I guess, yeah, I don't know if that answers the question, but certainly, um, there was no specific callings it, but when you, when you get the chance, you need to articulate the vision, and that needs to be clear. Yeah. I, I'm still surprised. Like we, you talk about vision in the podcast a lot, and I, I gather that you find it's, you know, really important.

Speaker 1 00:30:27 Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:30:28 But, and I think everybody understands that in theory. But I'm surprised when I see, um, I guess leadership not making their vision very, very clear. Like, that's the first thing. And it's not like some sort of billboard ad or some stupid catchphrase or something. But they have to know what you want for the ward or for the stake or whatever it is that your, your elders quorum release society. What do you want, what, what kind of release society do you want this to be? What's the, what's the vibe? They need to understand what you want. They may not agree <laugh> that that's the best thing, but they need to understand that what you, what you are envisioning Yeah. For

Speaker 1 00:31:08 You at least they know where you stand Yeah. As the leader, right. Whether they are a hundred percent on board quite yet or not, uh, they know where, where, where Bishop Hunt is coming from, right. And what, what he is desiring. And, and it's one of those things like, and I appreciate you're saying, you have to, you have to be so clear and articulate it. Right? And that's maybe easier said than done, but it's almost a part of that is also articulate what we're not doing. Right. So, to create a warm feeling, you may have to tell your board council, we're not worried about Sunday school starting on time. You know, or we're not worried about it ending on time or what, and not saying that that's what you did or anything, but people are, that suddenly people are grasping like, oh, okay, so I don't need to rush off.

Speaker 1 00:31:46 Or, I remember my infamous moments of, uh, being a bishop. This is during home teaching time. We were in a very transient ward and in ward council, I, I strongly articulated the message of I could not care less about home teaching. We're not even thinking about it. And, and in, for an elders quorum and relief society president to hear that, they're like, well, then what do we do? Like, I'll tell you what we do. 'cause I was more concerned about all the names on the list that we didn't know. Were they there? Did they move? We gotta go find them and figure out who these people are. And then maybe down the road we can worry about home teaching. So it's, sometime it's the, it's articulated so strongly being like, and this is, we're doing this, not these things for now. Right. Because that's the vision. And then, then people are like, oh, now I know where to go. Now I know what to do. Right?

Speaker 2 00:32:30 Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And I, I, to be honest, I think I might've got this idea from you years ago,

Speaker 1 00:32:35 Oh, let's, let's pretend like you did <laugh>.

Speaker 2 00:32:37 But I, I mean, it just reminded me of, um, you know, earlier in, in the time of serving as a bishop, when I said to the, the ward council, like, if you're not, you know, every bishop struggles with those moments where like, you, you wanna have ward council, you wanna have an effective ward council, and you want people to bring stuff to the agenda, and they don't. And, you know, and so I, I think, I dunno if there's freeing spells for you, but, um, I, I just told him, um, if you don't have anything with the agenda, we're just not gonna do World Council <laugh>. You know, like, I, I'm not gonna, like, we're not gonna, it's not like, you know, have it every, every week or every fortnight, whatever you do. But, um, if you are not gonna participate, if you have nothing from the elders quorum, if you have nothing from the least side

to actually talk about why, why would we gather we're not gonna do it. And, but we, you know, with that, we also said, but of course, you know, we'd

Speaker 1 00:33:26 Love to have somebody to talk about.

Speaker 2 00:33:27 Right. Of course. Like, and, and I know I trust you guys, I love you guys, and I trust you as the Elders Quorum president. I know you love all the people in the el quo, and I know you're working with 'em hard, so it's very unlikely that you won't have stuff. But if you don't, we're not, we're not having it. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you know, so, uh, you know, I guess just being super authentic, as authentic as you can be, as with people as well. Not just, um, I don't know. I just, just the attitude of being very clear, like you just said about, you know, why you would or wouldn't have it. And, you know, there's obviously more to that conversation. It's not just like, Hey, guess what? We don't have to have ward councilors, you know? Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:34:01 <laugh>, because we have nothing to talk about then.

Speaker 2 00:34:03 And it, it never worked like that. I told, I remember, I remember even telling the Ward that I had told the Ward Council <laugh> we're not having Ward Co council, uh, like from a talk in a talk, and it never happened. You know, it never was like, sweet, cool Ward council. Everybody was like, okay, yeah, no, if I have to, you know, love my, my quorum, I have to love my, my, my group, whoever I'm leading, um, I'm going to actually bring stuff to talk about. Yeah. And yeah.

Speaker 1 00:34:29 And 'cause I think the, generally the status quo is like, Lord Councils the Bishop Ricks meeting, and they'll bring the agenda, they'll tell us what we need to talk about, and yeah. If I may have an item here or there, I'll bring it up. But, and so I just love that enabling of like, no, this is our meeting. And so you're bringing stuff to the agenda as, as long as, as well as we are. But if there's nothing to talk about, one less meeting. Right? Yeah. Yeah. That's awesome. Alright. This, I, I love that you bring up this word. 'cause I've read about this word. There's a lot of research around this word, and it's propinquity. Yeah. Is this used more often in Australia than the us or is this I,

Speaker 2 00:35:03 I, I don't know. I I I'd never heard of it before hearing.

Speaker 1 00:35:06 So teach us what propinquity is.

Speaker 2 00:35:09 Well, according to the dictionary, propinquity is the tendency of individuals to form close relationships with people they repeatedly encounter. Almost like

Speaker 1 00:35:18 A ward.

Speaker 2 00:35:19 Yeah. <laugh>. Yeah, exactly. But, you know, I, I, I, I mean, it's not something I obviously came up with, but, um, so I, I think I, this idea came from Kevin J Worth and Oh, that's who I got it from. I don't know who he, he got it from. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:35:30 And well, there's, I know the, uh, the influencer book, uh, which is written by a bunch of Latter-day saints. Okay. Uh, and they're, they're BYU grads and whatnot. They've done a lot of research about influence and motivating people using this concept of propinquity. So this, uh, this has sort of been debunked, but the open office concept a few years ago, this sort of, um, people did that with this, well, if we can get people intermingling, more than more ideas and innovation will come out. But I think more research in that context. So it didn't really work like that, but the, the science is that as we associate with each other, things happen. Right?

Speaker 2 00:36:06 Yeah. And I know the science behind it, but for me it was, it's just like, duh, <laugh>, like Right.

Speaker 1 00:36:12 You know, it's one of those, uh, research. Yeah. Of course.

Speaker 2 00:36:14 That's not science. That's like, of course. But, um, but I guess, you know, I'm, we, we, I guess in a sense use this propinquity idea as yeah, like kind of like a marketing buzz word kind of vibe thing, but because it's just so, just rolls off their tongue and become something that people can really just latch onto easily. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Um, but yeah, I guess the idea is that, you know, we wanted the ward to be together as, as frequently as possible, you know, especially with, I was a bishop over the, you know, period of covid. And so, you know, we obviously had our downtime. And so especially post covid, we really wanted to get back in physical connect, physical contact, physical connection. And not because we all needed to be best friends and best buddies. Um, but you know, the, as we know, one of the beautiful things about our church is that you are with people that disagree with you.

Speaker 2 00:37:03 But this is all good. Like, this is all part of the, like, the growth process. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> for each of us as members. But, um, certainly we would, we were trying to draw the people together and, you know, as, as Kevin Ja says, nothing, prop pinks like propinquity <laugh> and so on, <laugh> love it. So we would just try and get together as con as frequently as possible. And, you know, um, we, we didn't, you don't, didn't shy away from the idea that you may not like, like everybody here, but we are a ward family. There's no getting around that. And so, um, you know, I would, one of the beautiful things that I, one of my best lessons, um, I guess from serving as a bishop was that when I started serving, I would look at people that I perhaps found annoying <laugh> and go, it's pretty annoying. You know? And that's it. <laugh> <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:37:56 I'm glad you're human. This is very relatable.

Speaker 2 00:37:59 Yeah, exactly. But, you know, you can't do that as a bishop. You, you can't do that and be effective as a bishop anyway. If someone comes into your, into the bishop's office wants to talk and tell you about some stuff, and you just go, man, this person's so annoying you, you're not gonna help them. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Um, and so, you know, one of the biggest blessings was find, looking past that. And I, and I loved the opportunity to, to have somebody come in and be someone that perhaps I don't naturally kind of connect with, or I'm not gonna ideally go and hang out with, but to find, set a challenge for myself, find the divine in

this person in front of me. Um, find what makes them beautiful. Find what makes them special, find what makes them likable. Because I, I, and the reality is I never met somebody.

Speaker 2 00:38:46 There was not a person in our ward that I gave that, um, space to or, or tried that with that I couldn't find it. I always found it. I always found not just what was divine 'cause I mean, yeah, we're all sons and daughters of God, but I always found what was likable about them. Why would people like not, and even love this person? I always found it. Hmm. Um, when you go into any interaction with somebody with that mindset, um, you know, it's amazing how you can connect with anybody. And I guess we would try and encourage that same kind of mentality in the ward members. So then when we, we brought about this, this idea of propinquity. So we're gonna get together a lot, but don't get together and be like, great, I've gotta hang out with, you know, sister Smith. Again, she's so annoying. <laugh> get together and you, you have a challenge. Every, we all have a challenge. Find what's beautiful about Sister Smith. Yeah. And, um, you know, and I think to an extent the Ward did that. And, you know, when, when that happened, you know, that that warmth that, that you caring environment just naturally Yeah. Was a result.

Speaker 1 00:39:50 Yeah. I appreciate this term and how, how you bring it up. 'cause I'm, you know, living in Utah, even Utah County, I, you know, I walk out my house and I can see the bishop's house, the elders quorum president's house, right. Where, uh, you know, outside of Utah, especially outside the us, you, you could probably go Sunday to Sunday and not see a member of your ward. Uh, and, and really Sunday's the only time you really gather and whatnot. And so, uh, really leveraging these moments of gathering and then perpetuating them so that it's stimulating unity connection. You're actually sitting with Sister Smith and learning more about, or not just rolling your eyes that are comments every week in Sunday school. Right. And so it's, but it's a proactive thing.

Speaker 2 00:40:29 Yeah. And, and that's the really rewarding part. I mean, it's when you meet someone and you're like, this guy's so cool, and you, and you get along and you make a friend, it's great. But when you meet someone and you're like, it is that person that's saying those obnoxious things, and you, and you, you're like, man, hard to love. And then you, you actually take that, you do that experiment, and the result is that you're like, I do see what's really great about her. That's really rewarding as a, as a person. Um, and as a, you know, spiritual exercise. And, you know, the beautiful thing is that it's not limited to demographics either. 'cause I mean, obviously, you know, the ward is small, so you're not gonna always, um, have heaps of people that are, you know, I'm 42, so I'm not, there's not gonna be heaps and heaps of 42 year olds that, that love the NBA and love, you know, <laugh> with all the same things that I love. Um, and so to be able to sit down on a couch with a, a 72-year-old woman and just, just shoot the breeze is a very, and, and know that we care deeply for each other is a very rewarding Yeah. Um, exercise. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:41:32 And again, you bring so much purpose to religion in general, but even in our faith tradition, there's some unique parts about it that the typical person, the t typical, uh, American or Australian doesn't get this throughout their typical day. They don't find themselves having to engage with somebody who's a little bit different than them. You know, they can just

retract into their silos and it's, uh, it's a, it leads to a more enriched life, you know? Yeah. Yeah. Anything else about Propinquity, uh, the word of the day that we need to talk about?

Speaker 2 00:42:02 Nah. All

Speaker 1 00:42:02 Right. That's all right. The last que uh, last principles is lower the bar increased participation. Oh boy. <laugh>, where are we going here? This is good <laugh>.

Speaker 2 00:42:12 Yeah. Well, um, yeah, I, I mean, I, I wanted to just throw this in and, you know, you can edit it out if it's too offensive. <laugh>. But yeah, I mean, I used to say to people, um, when we're setting goals and that sort of thing, and, you know, ward councils and I, you know, that people go, oh, let's, let's, let's try and get to X amount of crazy baptisms. I'm like, nah, let's like try and get one, you know, <laugh>, I don't. Yeah. You know, I guess, um, and I used to say, and I don't know where I pick this up from someone, but, you know, let's make the bus so low that you can't crawl under it. <laugh>. Like, it's, it's impossible not to reach the goal. I don't know, maybe I got it from you. I don't

Speaker 1 00:42:50 <laugh>, I'll take it.

Speaker 2 00:42:52 Um, but yeah, I mean, um, and I, and I guess it's controversial because, you know, I know that there's a lot of, I mean, I even have an audio book by Brad Wilcox called Raising the Bar or something. And I, and I have, you know, and I know that there's been talks over the years over the

Speaker 1 00:43:09 Last, that was like the missionary raise the bar. Yeah. Raise the bar. That's it. 10 or so years ago. Right?

Speaker 2 00:43:12 Yeah. Yeah. And, and so we wanna raise the bar, but, um, I guess there's a couple of ways in which, or context in which I, I think, you know, lowering the bar, um, can be beneficial. Um, I used to often talk, you know, I guess one easy example that I think I wouldn't get much pushback on would be like, testimony meeting. I would often get up at test. You know, you get those awkward silences in testimony meeting, and sometimes people don't wanna get up for various reasons, obviously. But if, I always would find it troubling when people wouldn't get up because they thought they didn't have a testimony. Mm-Hmm. And I would often, you know, when it's my turn to, you know, start the meeting off and bear my testimony, I would, I would say like, try and clarify with people that like every, every single one of us in this room has a testimony of some sort.

Speaker 2 00:43:58 Um, if you are here, you, you couldn't be here without a testimony that, that God is good, you know, just come, you can just say that God is good. That's what I believe. Um, you know, uh, that, that nature is a blessing. This is, these are all, you know, or that, um, the word of wisdom is a, is a great principle. Uh, and it helps my life. You know, there'd be super basic level principles and everybody, um, has those. And sometimes I think we make the, it's inadvertently right? Culturally, we make the bar too high on simple things like that, where it's like people start to think that because of what they hear come from this, the pulpit, um, oh, well I can't get up if I don't know that the book of Mormon's true. And that the, the, that the, that

Russell m Nelson's a prophet and that, you know, all of these things, these, these, um, tenets that not everybody believes necessarily, not everybody in the congregation.

Speaker 2 00:44:52 Yeah. And we want to, I, I guess, lower the bar or increase access to participation in as much as, as many things as we can. I think. Um, so, you know, that's a really easy one testimony meeting. But <laugh>, I think probably, um, you know, other, other areas where we could potentially consider that is like callings. Um, you know, I've, I, I struggle with, um, the idea that, you know, people need to be perfectly quote unquote worthy to, to serve in a calling. Um, or that we can't find creative ways, at least to enable, enable participation, um, in, you know, the activities of the church. Um, there's so many people that sit on the sidelines who are want to participate. And sometimes through, in my opinion, bureaucracy, bureaucracy of, you know, leadership, uh, are kept from participating. Um, and so I, I think, you know, you know, whether that's what we kind of talk to as like a worthiness issue. You can't surf 'cause you, you did X or YZ, so you, you don't have the spirit. And I, I just, I just push back on that a little bit. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

Speaker 1 00:46:03 Well, I think there's a powerful principle that, 'cause we do, you know, we do want to raise the bar in some context. Like we do want them to go on the mission, and there's cer definitely standards. We do want them to have the temple marriage and ceiling, and there's certain standards there, right. But on the, in that ward level, like that's a starting point for a lot of people, right? When, when somebody is investigating the church, they come to church and like, that's the step one of like, okay, I'm here. Like, so by giving them at least something that they can reach for, or even trip over being like, you're doing it. You know, like you can, you have a place here to stand and share your testimony, or you, we can find a place for you to serve, even though you feel like your life is outta control and full of sin. Like, there's lots of sin in this war, but we, we, you know, so I think as a sound leadership principle of like giving them that starting point of saying, yeah, we're not there yet, but you're not expected to be there yet. We'll, we'll get there.

Speaker 2 00:46:57 Yeah. And I think it's just a mentality of looking for reasons why they can't serve or participate, and just flipping that and looking for ways in which they can't just like really focusing on how can we enable them rather than how can we continue to prevent them or prohibit them. Yeah. Um, you know, and, um, I think it was Tom Christofferson that, that said, you, you know, and this is not doctrine, but it's just a thought <laugh>, but, um, you know, that there's a temple standard of worthiness, and then there's a chapel standard of worthiness. Mm-Hmm. And the temple standard is what we know it is, but the chapel standard is if you walk through the door, you're worthy <laugh>. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And, and so I, I, I think, um, you know, we, we just need to look for ways to, um, to enable people, um, to serve, to participate in, in every way. Um,

Speaker 1 00:47:48 Yeah. Love it. The last question I have for you is, as you reflect on your time as a bishop, uh, how has being a leader helped you become a better follower of Jesus Christ?

Speaker 2 00:47:58 You know, I, I think when you, when you're call to serve as a leader, <laugh>, it's, you know, you inevitably, inevitably stretch. Um, one of my favorite <laugh> videos online, maybe you can reference this afterward, is this is this video of this, um, it's a, it's like a, a concert. It's like a, a festival and you've probably seen it, but you know, there's this crazy dude on a hill and he's dancing, and everybody else around him is like, there's a weirdo man. And then gradually one by one, another person joins in and another person joins in. And, you know, and you know, I guess, um, being a leader, you, you really like, especially as the bishop of award, you, you're kind of the first follower and you can, you can I guess, stand out there on your, by yourself. Um, but you know, as you do it and you do it well, people will come and follow. And, um, so I guess, um, you know, being a leader or being called to serve as a leader, um, just helped me kind of refine who I am as a person. Um, and without being able to serve in that capacity, I'm sure that I, I I wouldn't have, um, stretched in the way, ways that have both within a church context, but in a personal context as a father, as a husband. Um, there's certainly lead, uh, lessons in there that have helped me kind of leverage my relationships outside of church.

Speaker 1 00:49:38 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. 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, solve the burden of meetings by visiting leading-saints.org/fourteen and getting 14 days access to the meetings with Saints Virtual Library.

Speaker 3 00:50:55 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 only 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.