



## Part 1: Leading Saints in 2024

January 1, 2024

Speaker 0 00:00:01 Hey everyone, this is Kurt Francom. We're jumping into this live stream to record Leading Saints in 2024, or what is Leading Saints in 2024. And we are going to, uh, publish this via the podcast as well. Every year I record this type of an episode, sort of a state of the podcast, state of the organization, type of, um, content, right? So give you an idea of what what, what we're gonna cover here is, uh, I've got a, a series of questions that I've collected from the audience, uh, that are people people are dying to know, right? And, uh, we're gonna talk about the history of leading Saints because a lot of people come across leading Saints and they're not quite sure what this is, what we're about, um, if we're shady or not. And so I'd love to just tell the, the story, 'cause I get that question a lot.

Speaker 0 00:00:50 Like, how did Leading Saints start? Like, where did this come from for you? All right, so let's, uh, gather around, uh, find a, a place on the carpet here as, as if we're in a kindergarten class. I'm gonna tell you a story of Leading Saints and, uh, I've told it before, I'll tell it again. But, uh, it's important for people coming across leading Saints or maybe you've been listening to Leading Saints for a long time. You're wondering where, when, and where Leading Saints started. And this goes back really, I guess the beginning of Leading Saints really starts in 2005, maybe 2004, 2005, where I, uh, there's a few years after my mission. I moved into a student ward, as we called them today. We would call them a YSA ward. And in the student ward, uh, this is student ward where I met my wife.

Speaker 0 00:01:40 So I'm so grateful I felt led to join that ward. I was living at home in West Valley City and we attended this church. I attended this ward at the Salt Lake Community College Institute building. And it was a ginormous, uh, ward. I think it got split once when I was, I was there and I was called as the Elders quorum President. Now I had had really no experience as a leader, uh, in the church. I mean, on my mission. I'd been a district leader through a couple

companionships, but that was really it. And so here I am entering a new phase of my life where I've been asked to lead. And you know what? I wanna do a good job. And in fact, I sort of assumed that everybody else sort of wasn't trying right? That <laugh> 'cause they didn't really get results, right?

Speaker 0 00:02:27 I didn't see really an exceptional elders quorum function in the past, or a relief society, or even award per se. I mean, we did our thing and went about our, our going through the motions or whatnot. But I thought, you know, they've called me and boy, are they lucky? Because I am really going to try. Boy did I have a reality check coming my way. So I started in this, uh, role as an ELSs Quorum president. I had well over a hundred elders in my quorum, even though the doc good doctor comes in and says, you should only have 96 elders in the quorum. But nonetheless, this is what we were doing. And I made, I I made a lot of good decisions. I feel like I really took the time. I, I went through the printed war directory where I could see faces and I literally memorized every name of the elders in there.

Speaker 0 00:03:16 And it was such so, um, empowering, or I felt really confident as when lead, when elders in this huge quorum would approach me and I could address them by first name basis. So that was cool, right? Like, I did those little things that were good, but then I fell into a lot of the typical traps. You know, I gave the phenomenal guilt trip lesson in Elders Quorum and <laugh>. I really gave it to him, you know, and I remember there was a member of the bishop attending, uh, that, that, uh, lesson, and he stood up after and almost like, just sort of applauded me and, and echoed my, my message. And Wow, isn't this great that President Frankham is really encouraging us to do home teaching? Right? And little did I know, I I'm just completely shaming the group and it was so typical and, and, uh, but I wanted to really make a difference, right?

Speaker 0 00:04:06 And so I remember, um, I, I just poured myself into this calling, just burning the candle at both ends. I'd spend so much time in the clerk's office. 'cause that's really the only place you didn't, we didn't have these cool apps back then to update, you know, home teaching and whatnot. So I was in, uh, the, in the clerk's office a lot. And if, 'cause I thought if I could just get the, the, the routes and the companionships, right? Suddenly this is gonna make a difference, right? And so I I, and we'd have so many new people moving in. It was a very, you know, student ward, very transient ward, making sure all the new people had companions, all the new people were assigned home teachers. And we were gonna do this, right? And I remember printing out, you remember the white slips we'd pass out in elders quorum.

Speaker 0 00:04:53 I passed out all the white slips. And if they weren't there to get their home teaching assignment, I put 'em in an envelope, put a, put a stamp on it and mailed it to 'em. 'cause they'd have no excuse, right? And so during this guilt trip lesson, I remember that I was, uh, I, I wrote on the board, I thought, you know, it's important for every elder in that quorum to know where we stand with home teaching. Like the percentage, right? And so I remember going to the board and I wrote 38%, and I'm just like, look at it. Ah, hopefully this burns into your soul that we need to repent. Right? 38% not good enough. It needs to be, it needs to be high nineties. And, and then I went to work, right? Doing all these things to make a difference. And I remember once that month ended, we got the reporting back.

Speaker 0 00:05:42 I went to look at the numbers and I was so devastated when we dropped a percentage, 37%, like, ah, you know. And so from that point on, I was in that role for about nine months. Uh, got engaged, obviously married, moved out of that war, and I left that experience really, um, discouraged just thinking, what's the point? Like, what are we doing exactly? Like I tried really hard, but I didn't move the needle. And, you know, I put it in the back of my mind. Didn't think about it. A few. We moved into, we, we, I guess we were in a basement apartment for about a year, and then we moved, we bought a condo in South Salt Lake and moved into this ward. And, uh, I was called into the bishoprick soon thereafter. And that was fun. Just new experience seeing the ward from a unique perspective.

Speaker 0 00:06:28 Served in the Bishoprick for a couple years. And then, uh, that Bishop got released and I was called, uh, was, I was also released from the Bishoprick and called as the high priest group leader right back when that was a thing. So here I am, 26 years old, called as a high priest group leader. And I think, what's the point? You know, why do, am I going to pour myself into this calling when I, I tried before as an Elders quorum president, and it just didn't even, didn't make a difference. So what am I doing right? And nonetheless, I I just couldn't, I couldn't reconcile what going in. I'd walk into a bookstore and there'd be shelves full of life leadership, business leadership, family leadership. I mean, so much research about how to lead, but rarely was it ever being discussed. Like these principles. Rarely, rarely was it ever being discussed in the context of a church leadership experience.

Speaker 0 00:07:32 I mean, we have, you know, this tradition of church leadership meetings and whatnot. But I mean, these are essentially, they're just another form of like a sacrament meeting where you hear somebody give a spiritual talk and maybe they'll mention leadership and throw a few guilt trips in there, right? But nobody's really talking about how do you run a meeting? How do you mentor people? How do you motivate a group of individuals to do something that they don't wanna do, but that, that organization needs or that the community needs, right? So I thought, you know, I'm no leadership guru, but maybe I could create a platform to bring the individual gurus or the, the research and have start a discussion about this. Now, this was 2010. And so I thought, well, I'm gonna start a blog. It was May 26th, 2010. That's, that's the birth date of Leading Saints, is how I say.

Speaker 0 00:08:28 I went to, uh, some domain, uh, company and I purchased the domain leadinglds.com, and it became a blog. And it was just a hobby blog for a few years there. And I would read a book, Daniel Pink, Stephen Covey. I mean, there's so many books that I just loved devouring the research and understanding it, and then applying it in my role as a high priest group leader. And I was learning so much. And I was starting to see the needle move, right? And I thought, man, we could really build something here that would give a thought and perspective to other leaders, or just to hear what the other guy's doing. Is there a, is there a high priest group leader or an Elders quorum president or Relief Society president out there who's having success? And how do we know what they're doing? So maybe we, we can create that platform.

Speaker 0 00:09:16 So this blog started, uh, created, you know, I would post off and on. It was very irregular. And then, um, year after year, and, and it's interesting, during that time, I

knew it wasn't something that I was focusing on as much as I should. However, I always knew like it, like God was always reminding me, this is going to have impact. You just keep at it, right? So over those, about four years, I was like, off and on blogging, posting things, and it was getting a little traction. And then in 2014, I came across, uh, podcasts. And I had had jobs where I would do a lot of public speaking. I was comfortable speaking into a microphone. And I thought, well, I could do that. I could start a podcasts. And so a few people helped me understand how to, how to do the basics.

Speaker 0 00:10:04 And I began to record the podcast, making all sorts of mistakes, trying different things, interviewing people. And that was in 2014 where it really started to get some traction. Now, during this time, I served as a high priest group leader for two years. Uh, then I was called as bishop of that ward for about five years, and then served in the, the stake presidency for a couple years. And that was like my laboratory. I could discover like new dynamics and issues. And I, ooh, like this is something I didn't anticipate. I wonder how I could approach this and better, uh, understand, you know, the, the solution or actually help people or do something that's actually going to move the needle more and more, right? And so these, these are like, this was like my laboratory. And once the podcast started, it really got some traction.

Speaker 0 00:10:51 Um, that was definitely sort of the launch point of it, uh, getting more and more popular. And it's been growing ever since 2016. We became a nonprofit organization, 501 C3. Uh, I went full time with Leading Saints. I'd been running a web development company for about five years prior to that. And, uh, it was getting leading, saints was becoming so much more, uh, demanding of my time that the decision was made that I, I sold my shares to my business partner and went, uh, full-time with Leading Saints. And I did a whole bunch of like, side gigs. Uh, I just hustled outside of that to everything from picking up dead bodies to running. Uh, I worked for a company that, uh, did teleprompter services. So I would like go to events or commercial shoots and I'd run a teleprompter. I'd be behind stage at like huge MLM conventions running, uh, slides or things. So I, those are such years. I look back now and I thought, wow, I was really hustling. I didn't realize it. I was just trying to survive. 'cause I knew that I had such

Speaker 1 00:11:52 A passion in leading Saints and what we could do with this. And seeing the growth and the, the feedback we're getting from people, it was, it was awesome. So, uh, thankfully I don't have too a lot of those side gigs anymore. Uh, and now it's just, it's thriving and donations are coming in and people are stepping up large donors and, and helping us accomplish, uh, projects and keeping us funded and helping us move towards the next phase of Leading Saints, which I'm gonna get into. And so, uh, I think I hit all the points. That's the story of Leading Saints The End, and they podcasted happily ever after until next year when I'll give you, I'm sure even a better update. So, very cool. So let's go through these things. I see some questions coming in. Again, uh, feel free to post a question there.

Speaker 1 00:12:39 We'll make sure we, we come back to it and answer it, and that would be awesome. So I'll jump down here. What, what to expect leading, uh, leading Saints in 2024. Obviously we can, we plan to continue to do the, the podcast. Um, you know, with, uh, every Wednesday we publish a How I Lead episode where we talk with everyday leaders. Um, every

Saturday we publish more of like a topic fo focus or an expert focus. That's where I talk to the PhDs, the authors, the therapists, and we do a deep dive into a certain concept. Um, or if I interview like a 70, uh, that's usually where those will happen or those will be published. So the podcast is gonna continue going, we're gonna update the website, sort of, it's time for a refresh. I have a team working behind the scenes on that.

Speaker 1 00:13:28 So hopefully in the first quarter here, you'll see an update to the website, uh, the Leading Saints community. This is so awesome. Let me, so this is the community. If you're not in here, you should be, and I'm looking from this from just a random account of somebody, just so you don't get the admin focus of it. But, um, so obviously here's the post I did about this livestream, but people are posting all sorts of great stuff on here. The other guy in the Bishop Rick. Uh, where do we sacrifice but not obey? I, you know, I start some discussions going, I'm, I'm, if you enjoy the Leading Saints newsletter, which is probably the second most popular thing that Leading Saints produces, uh, you would love the Leading Saints community. So I encourage you to get in here and check out this discussion that's going on.

Speaker 1 00:14:14 Warden Stake mission plans, raising the Child after a Baby Blessing and things. There's so, you know, people are commenting and, uh, but it's, uh, not being utilized enough, at least, uh, not as much as I would like to see. There's so much opportunity for, to get some discussion going. And you'll find a community of leaders here who, uh, maybe if you're wrestling with an issue, uh, you know, a leadership issue or a, a situation in your ward, you can even, uh, post anonymously and what, and, and get the discussion going and get some ideas and thoughts and perspectives. See what the other guy's doing. So the, this is gonna be a big part of 20 Leading Saints in 2024 is being a part of the community. Here's a little, uh, leading Saints Hack, okay? If you listen to the podcast and you go to the show notes, scroll down to the bottom, you will find all sorts of links to our mo more popular episodes to, uh, resources like the community to our top, you know, our, our most download and listen to, uh, episodes.

Speaker 1 00:15:13 So, uh, check out those that, uh, that's what may be a good launching point if you really want to get into Leading Saints. A also on the website, if you scroll down here little bit, the most popular podcast episodes we've put the top nine, yeah, the top nine most downloaded episodes of Leading Saints. And do not miss these. So if you're just jumping into Leading Saints as a resource, it should be required listening to really understand all of these things. I'm sure, uh, many of you, I, I'd love to hear just in the comments, like, out of these nine episodes, which ones, which ones have been your favorites? I mean this David Durphy episode about repentance. Incredible. Rob Ferrell. I'm excited. He's coming home from serving as a mission president this summer, and we're gonna get him in. I've got, I've got plans for, for President Ferrell for sure.

Speaker 1 00:16:05 So we're gonna get him back on the podcast here. Just what his ex, his experience was like as a mission president. Um, Chris Rowley, he did sharing a story about being a stake president who struggled with, with pornography, I mean such, uh, just removing stigmas and things, doctrine. And Darren Bush, his How I lead episode, that's the most downloaded. How I lead episode is with Darren Bush. Um, I guess Rob Ferrells is also in that, in that vein is of how I lead episodes. So, um, Jared says, I love the leading saints, uh, I love the

Leading Saints community. Highly recommend two thumbs up. Jared's very active in there is great, gives some great perspective. Yeah, definitely check it out.