



Can God Be Disappointed in You? | A Presentation by Kurt Francom (rebroadcast)

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Speaker 1 00:00:03 It is finally available. I've been working on a manuscript for the past four years, and it is finally a book I can hold in my hands. It's titled, is God Disappointed In Me Removing Shame From a Gospel of Grace? This book has gotten so much attention that it is already a number one Amazon bestseller. I'm Beyond amazed in just a few words I wrote, is God Disappointed in Me for Latter Day Saints who often feel overwhelmed by the gospel and who are constantly worrying if they are doing enough. It's for the latter day Saint who have stepped away from the church. It's for the individuals who appear to be living right but still can't find peace and happiness. And frankly, it's for everyone who enjoys listening to the Leading Saints podcast. You will love and cherish this book. Now, warning, you might want to consider purchasing multiple copies to share one Bishop who got an advanced copy, read it in one weekend, and then literally purchased 100 additional copies. You can order it on Amazon. The link is in the show notes, or starting in March, you can find it in your local Costco in Idaho, Utah, and Arizona. It's called Is God Disappointed In Me and you can order it. Now,

Speaker 1 00:01:25 If you wanted further insight into a Come Follow Me lesson, you'd probably search in YouTube or get the We Believe app, tough church history questions. You'd reach out to the BH Roberts Foundation. But what if you wanted to learn to be a better leader? Well, I'm glad you asked. You'd come to Leading Saints. That's why we exist to help Latter Day Saints be better prepared to lead by being familiar with others' leadership experiences, understand the latest leadership research, and finding a community to share ideas. That's why I'm glad you found the Leading Saints podcast. We hope you will dive into the archives and visit leading.saints.org to find out what are the top most listened to episodes on the podcast. Welcome. You're gonna love it.

Speaker 1 00:02:13 Hey, leading Saints world, it's time for another throwback episode on the Leading Saints podcast. And this one is quite unique and very appropriate for what's happening right now. You just heard at the beginning of this episode, uh, that a new book is out that I wrote called *Is God Disappointed In Me?* And this has been a long journey. This started several years ago with really this episode. You see, we were doing the Liberating Saints Virtual conference where we did a deep dive on how to be a leader or a mentor to individuals struggling with pornography. And it's a series of different presentations, which again, you can get access to @leadingsaints.org/slash/14. But one of those sessions was me, a presentation I did all about the role of shame when somebody is struggling with pornography and really shame is ubiquitous. It is constantly in our lives no matter what struggles we have, whether it's pornography, whether it's self-worth, or whether it's just being human.

Speaker 1 00:03:12 So I put this presentation together called *Is God Disappointed In Me?* I may have tied it a little bit different back then, and I did this presentation and the feedback was remarkable. The downloads were off the charts, and suddenly I was getting invitation after invitation to come to different wards and stakes to put on a fire site around this concept. And after doing that so many times, I thought, Hmm, maybe this is it. Maybe this is that book that needs to come out next. So I began writing, and boy was it a long journey of putting this content together, but I'm so pleased with the end product and how it came out. Uh, like I said in that intro, I've had individuals read it and, uh, just become more excited to share it. And so I wanted to share this throwback episode with you to give you a flavor of some of the concepts that I talk about in my new book. And maybe I will encourage you to go get your own copy, which is a number one Amazon bestseller, and grab it on Amazon, of course, and it will, it will actually start showing up in various Costcos along the, along the Wasatch front in Utah and in Idaho, Arizona, and I think a few select locations in California as well. So let's go back to where it all began, the journey of this book with this presentation of *is God disappointed in me?*

Speaker 1 00:04:34 So today I wanna focus on some topics and some points, some perspectives that will maybe, I pray that they'll help you as maybe a leader as a parent, a loved one of an individual who's, who's struggling with pornography. And, uh, I wanna approach this from a doctrinal standpoint. And this is always a healthy approach. Uh, the, the, uh, elder bednar he talks about in, uh, some of his books that when we teach the gospel, it's very easy to approach it from an application level, right? This is what you do, this is how you do the gospel. And then he talks about above that, there's the level, the, the principles approaching and teaching the gospel from the level of principles. And then above that, there's approaching and talk, teaching the gospel from the doctrinal level. And he always encourages whenever you are, are teaching the gospel to always start from the doctrinal level and allow each individual to figure out maybe the principles and the application on your level.

Speaker 1 00:05:35 And so that's what I'm gonna do today, is I want to talk about some doctrines. And again, sometimes we use that word doctrine and sort of saying like, these points cannot be argued with, these are doctrines have, from my perspective, how I understand then how I interpret them. And so you're free to disagree with these or you can interpret them a different way. But I hope that seeing these doctrines will maybe help you, you better in your journey mentoring somebody through a difficult, a difficult struggle with, uh, pornography. So let

me, uh, pull up my slides here and, uh, we can jump into it here. Alright, so I wanna talk about behaviors verse doctrine or behaviors verse the heart, because this is where it all begins. And the, we often approach these situations thinking about behaviors, but that can sort of be a trap, right?

Speaker 1 00:06:25 As a leader, we may have somebody coming into your bishop's office who's, and your, you maintain focus on the behavior. What relapse did you have? What did you look at? How many times, those types of things. Now, those details are, are important, but when an overemphasis, there can actually be to the detriment of not only that person trying to recover or overcome their struggle with pornography, but it also can really hurt the, hurt your relationship with that individual. So let's go with a, uh, famous quote that, uh, most people are familiar with and and know maybe too well. S elder boyd k packer says, the study of doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study, a behavior will improve behavior. Now, this is a great quote, but we rarely finish the entire quote, which is, preoccupation with unworthy behavior can lead to unworthy behavior.

Speaker 1 00:07:21 That is why we stress so forcefully the study of the doctrines of the gospel. So in your effort to mentor an individual or help an individual overcome pornography, my hope is that there's not an overemphasis on the behaviors or else the preoccupation leads to more negative behavior. Okay? And we'll go through some of these tactics and why that's the case and how we can avoid it. And really focusing on doctrines, presenting doctrines, teaching doctrines, and let that individual interpret them and be led to the scripture to ponder and digest those, those doctrines in his, in his own way, his or her way, right? So typically, here's the thing is we often think, well, if I, if I emphasize good behaviors, that's gonna lead to a change of heart. This individual will be able to overcome their addiction. They'll be able, able to overcome their, their struggle with pornography.

Speaker 1 00:08:13 So I'm gonna encourage them to read the scriptures, to attend church, to avoid certain things that lead to good behavior. But I really think we have it backwards where we try and change behavior, which leads to a change of heart. But I wanna propose that we change heart, which will then lead to a change in behaviors or lead to good behaviors. Now, oftentimes it's, it's swapped. Sometimes we focus, we we wanna avoid bad behaviors 'cause that will change their heart. Or we're afraid that if we change, if their heart changes, then that'll lead to bad behaviors, right? But I want you to focus on that changing heart truly does lead to good behaviors. And that we, we need to focus on the heart first before we can focus on behaviors where we make the mistake often to focus on the heart so that the behaviors, or I'm sorry, we make the mistake, you're getting this right, you make, I make the mistake of focusing on behaviors in hopes to change the heart.

Speaker 1 00:09:09 Okay? So how does Satan tempt us? This is an interesting question. One question that that was presented to me when I interviewed Rob Ferrell, who's a former young single adult stake president. If you have not listened to this episode on the Leading Saints podcast, it'd be worth, uh, maybe pausing the video and, uh, making a note to bookmark. That episode is actually the most listened to episode in the history of, of leading saints. And, and it's probably gonna be tough to beat. So I always love showing this images when I do youth

fireside, this image of, uh, you know, the typical cartoon attempting <laugh>. We've seen it with Donald Duck. We've seen it in, uh, the emperor's new groove like this. Where we envision the way that the saint tempts us is, well, obviously we have a good angel that's encouraging us to do good things over our, over our shoulder.

Speaker 1 00:09:56 And then there's the bad angel or the, the devil angel that appears over our other shoulder that tempts us to go rob a bank or go do something bad or go look at pornography. Right? And that's a bit too simplistic, I believe, because the devil has a much, the adversary, uh, Satan has a much more cunning plan as we learn in doctrine covenants. Uh, section 10 verse 12, the devil has sought to lay a cunning plan that he may destroy this work, okay? This isn't just some basic plan that, oh, he's just whispering temptations in our ear, and that's what's getting us to do bad things. No, no, no. It is much more intense, much more cunning, much more deceptive, much more complicated than that. So that this would be a question to maybe sit with and, and let this question stir your heart. How does Satan tempt us?

Speaker 1 00:10:47 How does he go about it? Here it is, Dr. CU 10 verse 26, he causes them to catch themselves in their own trap. He causes us to tempt, to, to catch themselves in our own trap. That sounds almost ridiculous, right? Why would we set our own trap that we would step in, that the adversary would win, right? It's sort of like if you were a, a, a football coach and you said, okay, team, here's our plan. Here's our game plan. Gather round, listen close. The way we're gonna win today is we're gonna let the other team score all of the points. Now, that sounds ridiculous, but there are some teams that do that. And it breaks my heart. My beloved Zach Wilson here. It seems like when he played Utah, he, like, he scored the points for the other team. Anyways, he totally redeemed himself in the games that followed.

Speaker 1 00:11:34 But, uh, anyways, I'm a big BYU fan, as many, you know, and it broke my heart. And I know that maybe some mute fans would appreciate this, but isn't this, this is the Satan's plan, right? What we're gonna do is we're gonna get the other team to just throw, pick sixes all, all game. Now, that wouldn't be a great plan. This is very hard to do that. But that is the adversary's plan, and it works so effectively. Dr. Cummins, section 10, verse 63, say that Satan does stir up the hearts of the people to contention concerning the points of my doctrine. And then in these things they do air for, they do alter the scriptures and do not understand them. Now, there's two words that really stand out to me in, in that verse, heart and doctrine. He stirs up the hearts of the people and he to contention concerning the points of my doctrine.

Speaker 1 00:12:23 So he explains this game with our hearts, and he's playing it with our doctrine. He attacks our hearts through our doctrine or through the, by altering the doctrine, it causes contention in our mind. And there is this contention that causes us to sin and to be tempted and to do things that we could have never imagined ourselves ever doing. Okay? And that's what you, we face with individuals that struggle with pornography. They never intended for this to happen. They never intended it for, to get outta control to become almost to a level of an addiction for them. Okay? Lemme give you an example of a clear example how this happens. These two words are some of the, probably the most two powerful words in the English language or in any language as translated, you know, directly I am, this is, you know, even in the Bible, this is a scriptural phrase.

Speaker 1 00:13:14 You do a study about the words I am and the scriptures, and, and it's remarkable the things you can learn, right in the, the Old Testament, the Old Testament, I am that I am he told Moses that tell them that I am, that I am sent to you, right? So these words, they reflect godliness to some degree because the great I am, right? So this is, if there is one, if someone's to tell me, all right? Boil, boil down. The the adversary's plan to one concept, and this would be it. He is trying to attack the phrase, the two most powerful words of I am. Or in other words, he constantly strives to attack our identity. Now, think of in the scriptures examples where it is re a specific temptation is recorded in the scriptures. Now, there's various of them, but I'm gonna share a few of them here.

Speaker 1 00:14:03 What about in the garden of Edem Moses? Four verse 11. This is when the adversary is tempting eve, right? For God to know that in the days in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be open and ye shall be as God's knowing good and evil. You see, he's coming to eve with a temptation of identity. If you partake of this fruit, your identity will be different. Your identity will be as the gods knowing good and evil. So powerful. How about this, this temptation of Matthew four, when the adversary, you know, crisis fasting 40 days and 40 nights, and the, the, the adversary, Satan is tempting Christ, he says, and when the tempter came to him, he said, if thou be the son of God, command that these stones be made bread. You see, he's tempting his identity. If you truly believe that you are the Savior of the world, the son of God then prove it, right?

Speaker 1 00:15:00 So he's always coming at an angle of identity. And what, because that identity is directly connected to our heart and connected to our mind. And that causes contention, right? When these doctrines of I am a child of God, I am the son of God, I am a daughter of God, and he causes contention in that very doctrine, then it reflects in our mind our identity. I love this quote by John Milton. The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell and a hell of heaven. Our mind is so powerful, and if the adversary can impact our identity through our mind and our heart, he wins. That's how he tempts us. He can corrupt us so much with contention that we can't help but set our own trap, our own snare, and step in it time, after time, after time.

Speaker 1 00:15:52 So setting our own trap, how, what, lemme give you an example of this. This comes from actually the Lion King, the new Live action Lion King. But I mean, obviously it's almost the exact same movie. Uh, I have this exact same movie as the animated movie, but let me show a clip, actually a, a trailer from this. And I want you to pay attention to the voice that you hear throughout this trailer. That the voices, there's two voices. The voice of the adversary, which is represented by scar, right? And the voice of our father in heaven, which is represented by, by Mufasa, right? With James Earl Jones being the voice. So here is that clip

Speaker 2 00:16:42 Who see, I when I shall never be king, you I'll never see the light of another day.

Speaker 3 00:17:00 Everything you see exists together in a delicate balance while others search for what they can take, a true king searches for what he can give,

Speaker 4 00:17:24 Run away, run away, and never return.

Speaker 3 00:17:47 You must take your

Speaker 0 00:17:48 Place in the circle of life.

Speaker 1 00:18:18 So I love that, that trailer, that clip, because the, the contrast between the two voices that are in there, right? The voice of the adversary and the voice of our father and the adversary is saying things like, life isn't fair, right? Run away. And as we know, those who have seen the, the movie Scar convinces Simba that he actually killed his father. That it is his fault. And so though he tells him to run away, he doesn't, Simba doesn't take much convincing because he is attacked Simba's identity of how he sees himself. And therefore, Simba sets his own snare and just leaves, he solves the problem for the adversary by leaving, which in turn makes the adversary king, right? So I wanna highlight the story of Steve. Now, you, you probably, if you have been watching the, the summit, you've actually heard the whole interview with Steve, and he has a remarkable story of his journey through addiction and overcoming that and being in recovery now.

Speaker 1 00:19:16 And, and there's so much I learned so much from Steve when I, when I talk with him and you listen, you actually can listen to Steve's full story through the Leading Saints podcast. And it's actually in the resources section. If you scroll down, you see a picture of Steve and his wife where they talk about their experience and, um, his journey. And he basically goes to this life where, you know, as a, as a youth, he came across, uh, pornography became obsessed with it. It became a habit. And later on, you know, even got to a point where he, he white knuckled it and served a, served a mission, but even there was still having some problems of, of relapse. Uh, finally came over to his mission, married, and during this time, he was creating two lifestyles. One of the perfect latter day saint, uh, boy that, uh, is progressing through leadership and serving the Bishop Rick, and as an elders quorum president, doing those things.

Speaker 1 00:20:10 But behind the scenes, he was living a life buried in shame with, uh, buried in shame and with a habit that was completely unbecoming of, of a latter day saint, right? And so he talks about this dichotomy that he had, the adversary has had convinced him of his identity that he had, he could, uh, stand behind a mask of, you know, the pure priesthood holder identity and hide those wounds and scars that truly he was feeding through his addiction. And so I encourage you to check out Steve's story because I feel like it truly shows this example of how Satan not just doesn't tempt an individual saying you should go look at pornography, but he, he doesn't even have to do that because when he tempts and, uh, when he attacks their identity and convinces them of a specific identity they take, they set their own snare and it takes over and, and consumes that individual.

Speaker 1 00:21:04 So the adversary has the goal of destroying the agency of man as it talks about in, in Moses. I'm gonna, I'll reference that scripture here, here in a minute. So that's the goal to destroy the agency of man. It has been from the beginning of time when he put himself forward in, in the Councils of Heaven as, uh, as Lucifer, his plan was to remove the

agency of man. And the game plan is to alter identity. And the tool he does that is shame. And shame is, uh, we've heard a lot about it in, uh, some of these sessions of the conference. But I wanna delve into it from a, a doctrinal standpoint and talk about exactly what shame is and how sane uses shame as a tool to alter identity. And if he can alter identity, he wins because he doesn't have to try anymore.

Speaker 1 00:21:53 The individual takes over and sets their own snare. So let me give you an example, more innocent example maybe with eating. I love myself some good dessert, and I find myself going through this process many times. So you, you may think, I'm inspired to eat healthy and maintain a clean diet. I'm not going to eat sugar for at least a month. I shouldn't have eaten that piece of cake. I ate another piece. Why do I keep messing up? I can't seem to get eat healthy. There's something wrong with me. See, this is, you see how the, the identity, it went from a, a behavior to identity. The behavior was simply eating well. But by the time I went, will go through this mental game, the adversary causes contention in my mind. And by the end I'm asking, is there something wrong with me? Why can't I do this?

Speaker 1 00:22:40 And this is a habit or a process that many addicts or individuals struggling with pornography will go through. They get to a point where everything, they try, every behavior, good behavior that they try to, to put in their life doesn't work. And so they begin to wonder, is there something wrong with me? And that's where the, the, the shame sets in. Now, Brene Brown, if you're not familiar with her, you get her books, read 'em, they're fantastic. So helpful around this. This, uh, she's a shame researcher. She says this as a shame researcher. I've learned that wherever perfectionism is driving us, shame is riding shotgun, right? And I would even maybe adjust that whenever behaviors are driving us, shame is riding shotgun. Now, in our culture, it's very easy to get into this behavior game, right? Because worthiness temple recommends they're all, a lot of them are based a lot on behaviors.

Speaker 1 00:23:32 Are you keeping the law of chastity? Are you keeping the word of wisdom, right? These are all behaviors. Now obviously, beliefs are, are worked in there as well, but it's easy in our culture to think behaviors is what matters. If I get the behaviors right, then my heart will change. That's dangerous. Thinking again to, we must think that if I get my heart right, behaviors will, the good behaviors will follow. Because if we focus on behaviors, shame is always, always, always riding shotgun, constantly reminding us, oh, you're not doing a good enough. Oh, you thought you, you were supposed to be perfect and you're still not right? And that causes contention and then messes with our identity. I love the phrase that, uh, Sam Teman said in his session. What does that say about you as a person? This is a good exercise. Whether with yourself or with others.

Speaker 1 00:24:23 If you're mentoring somebody who's struggling with pornography and they come to you and say, ah, another relapse man, another relapse. I thought I was on a good, you know, I was going three weeks strong and then I had another relapse. You ask them the simple question, what does that say about you as a person? And you can identify shame right away, right? This is the test. If they say something like, I don't know, I guess I just don't have what it takes. Or if it is an I am statement or something that's defining their identity, you know, that the adversaries causing contention in their mind and linking it to their identity as a person.

And so, you know, you've gotta get 'em out of that, outta that mode. And I'll, we'll talk about how that that's done. So of course, we know that the, uh, the work and glory of God is to bring, to pass the immortality and eternal life of man Moses 1 39.

Speaker 1 00:25:12 Right? Have you ever wondered like, what is the adversary's work and glory? Now sure, there could be some discussion about what that really is, but I would contest that his work in glory is to destroy the agency of man, right? We, we talked about this in the Councils of Heaven. That was his game plan, numero uno. And I believe it truly is still his game plan. 'cause think of it, if his, or that's his goal anyways, and, and he's doing that through the game plan of altering identity. If we can get all of us to alter identity, he's gonna win. 'cause here's the cycle. Shame. He causes shame, which alters identity. And that, that causes you to lack agency. When you are in an addictive state, do you have much agency? It sure doesn't feel like you do. Of course every everybody's got a choice.

Speaker 1 00:26:00 But in your mind, how you're identifying it so much feels like you don't have a choice, therefore, your agency is gone. And so this is the shame game is how he gets us to removing our agency. Now, that doesn't hear me clear. That doesn't mean that, you know, you're not, uh, accountable for, for these sins or mistakes. But again, we lay our own snare. He doesn't have to tempt us to lay our own snare. Or if he gets us with shame, which alters identity, which leads to lack of agency, which leads to shame, which leads to alter identity, which leads to lack of agency over and over and over. That is the trap that he gets us in, right? And we'll talk about how, how to help people out of that. But I wanna talk about this phrase. I am, I am an addict, right?

Speaker 1 00:26:47 Using the, the two powerful words. I am, I am an addict. Now, this has had much discussion. I was actually going to, uh, call the, the Si summit Porn Addicted Saints. And I put that out there into the internets, and the feedback I got was all over the map. Some people really like that. Like yeah, we need to call it what it is, which is an addiction. And other people hated it, right? As if we, the, the word addict is giving permission to people to actually act out. Okay? So I went back to the trying board, and that's how we came with Liberating Saints, which I'm glad we did. It's a, I think a more more fitting name. But I think it's important for, for, uh, leaders, for individuals who are mentoring, mentoring those, overcoming a struggle with, with pornography, how this phrase looks to different people, because it's not all bad, it's not all good.

Speaker 1 00:27:37 And I heard a podcast, uh, with Brene Brown, the, the shame researcher again on, uh, a podcast with Whitney Johnson, who's actually a former guest on the Leading Saints podcast. And she said this phrase that jumped out of the podcast and hit me right in the center of my brain. And I had to write it down because it exactly, um, what we need to keep in mind when using this phrase, I am an addict, she said, no one wants to be defined by their hardest struggle. And so we have to find this really interesting space between owning it and I identifying it, but rejecting being labeled by it and reduced by it. Okay? So we, I would say that is, it is dangerous to be all in, on either camp to say, say calling yourself an addict is really bad, or calling yourself an addict is really good.

Speaker 1 00:28:23 What we need to ask is me using that phrase or the individual I'm working with, using that phrase, is it reducing them as an individual, reducing their identity? Or is it expanding their identity and helping them move closer to Christ to his identity, right? So, so well let, let me give you some examples of when it may be expanding your identity and whether it's, uh, re reducing your identity. First one, I'm helpless without the saving grace of Jesus Christ, right? So I am a lot of addicts who say, I am an addict. They are in a state of mind, I'm an addict. Therefore, I need the grace of Jesus Christ. That's a very healthy state to be in, right? To label yourself that you are broken, not because you are broken and helpless, you're broken. And therefore need the atonement that is a healthy, progressive place to be in a reducing place.

Speaker 1 00:29:17 I'm broken and beyond saving, right? They're buried in shame. And they may use this as, I'm an addict, I identify with this, therefore, I am beyond saving and broken. Right? That is a reducing state of mind. Another one, e expanding state of mind. There is hope because Christ has overcome all things. I'm an addict and there's hope because Christ is overcoming all things. Or I'm just hopeless. I'm an addict, therefore I'm hopeless. Right? That is not a good place to be. I'm an addict. And it might take some time to overcome, but I'll get there. I do You feel the hope in that statement that they're not identifying, they're not altering their, their identity, but that is encouraging them, establishing hope to reach out where I'm an addict and I can't, I can't help but act this way. If it's a label that's giving them an excuse that's, that's damaging, that's not going to be helpful.

Speaker 1 00:30:08 What about I have a disease and I must never assume I'm healed. I remember being in a, uh, stake conference years ago and the, the stake president was speaking and they, and he said, you should never identify as an addict. You're not an addict. Right? And I, I, I appreciate what he was saying and this the way he was saying it. 'cause he was, he wanted us to identify in an expanding fashion. But I would say sometimes it is extremely helpful for an individual to identify as an addict. Now, as we learn from Tim Hollingshead, we, you know, it's not our job as leaders or loved ones to apply this label to other individuals, however, that individual may apply it to themselves or a, you know, it can be a form of a, a diagnosis, right? So maybe a professional who has the, uh, the right to apply that is a good way to do it.

Speaker 1 00:30:59 So from a third party leadership standpoint, I would never apply that label to somebody or tell them, you are an addict, right? Even in my mind, I know I'm thinking, yeah, there's a lot of science here. This person's probably an addict. I would not apply that like label. But if they apply it and they're doing it in an expanding way, I think that's very helpful. Other than the, the reducing manner of I have a disease and I can't be healed, right? If they're in that state, you know that they're buried in shame. They're in that trap where they're setting their own snare, they're setting their own trap and they can't get out of it a shame cycle, right? So just know that these two terms can be, can be very, this term can be identified in two ways. It can be a very expanding thing.

Speaker 1 00:31:39 It can be very reducing thing as far as the identity is concerned. Hopefully that makes sense. Lemme give you an example of some ways we kind of fall into this trap as, as mentors, uh, whether a leader or a family member. So let's take Tom and Tim. These

are two individuals that are struggling with pornography, okay? And typically what happens, let me start with Tom, is Tom comes into the bishop's office, and what do you do? You start with behaviors and accountability, right? Huh? Well, how many times does this happen? When does it happen? Where does it happen? Uh, where you know, is it on your smartphone, on your computer? All right? We're all talking about behavior, right? And so we jump into, let's stop the behavior, okay? We're gonna get some, you know, internet filtering software. We're gonna have you call me every night.

Speaker 1 00:32:20 And, and of course we're gonna encourage the positive behavior, right? This makes sense. This is the type of bishop I was, right? I was focused on behavior, and this is sort of what, what followed. And the person themselves is thinking, you know what? I'm, yeah, the bishops encouraged me. I can change this. I must change this, right? So it becomes a, they put the onus on themselves to change it. There's no surrender, there's no turning towards Christ per se, even though maybe they say that, but it's all an, I must change this through my behaviors. And what happens is a setback or a relapse, and then they think, ah, man, I must control my behaviors more. And so they do a double time. Bishop, I'm not gonna call you every day. I'm gonna call you three times a day and I'm gonna crank up my internet filtering software, right?

Speaker 1 00:33:05 'cause we're only focused on the behaviors. We're not focused on the heart. And then they feel like this, this is not working. They, I feel broken, right? That's the shame. And then they may enter sobriety or they may give up. So you see how this is, they, they feel broken in this sort of, this good intention approach of focusing on behaviors can actually stimulate more shame because it's all, the focus is on behaviors. Not about them changing. We're trying to change them through the behaviors. And it, and it doesn't work. And this is how I, I approached it as a naive bishop myself, is I was telling those I was working with, okay, you call me every night, all right? Or you text me, right? You leave a message on my voicemail, you tell me if you relapse or whatever. And all that did was stimulate shame.

Speaker 1 00:33:48 Because what happened is they would relapse from time to time, and they wouldn't call me 'cause they were so buried in shame. Of course, they don't want to call me and tell me that they're broken, that they relapsed again, right? So let me give you a better way to maybe help people pull, pull people out of this, this process, this, this, uh, trap of the shame cycle. So let's talk about Tim. When Tim goes in to see his bishop, he just, he's met with, uh, the bishop, starts with love, grace, hope, and patience. Hey, Tim, we love you. Yeah, this is hard. But you know what? There's, there's a lot of hope here. I've seen a lot of individuals overcome this. You know, the savior's right here with you. He's not frustrated with you or disappointing you, which we'll talk about in a minute. He, you know, there's, there's hope here.

Speaker 1 00:34:28 I've seen so many people overcome it. You know, here's some resources, right? And then, you know, this is part of the plan, Tim, repentance, that's part of the plan. Isn't it beautiful that God put a plan in place that you can do this, right? You see how we're not even getting close to behaviors or things you should do to do that, or things you should do to, to overcome, overcome this. We're just in a state of hope, giving hope and grace and reassurance, patience, however long this takes, Tim, we're gonna be here. You're not

discouraging me. I've seen people far worse than you overcome this, right? Uh, and then that puts them into a state of, okay, there's some hope here. And God is the only one that can change me. It's not about me changing myself, but God is the only one that can change me.

Speaker 1 00:35:06 And guess what is so helpful to tell the individual there is going to be setbacks and relapse. And you know what? That's okay. We'll figure it out. Obviously, again, people mishear this. Think the bishop is not giving permission for them to relapse, but they say, you know what, most nine times outta 10 or more <laugh> people relapse. That's okay. That's what, what, what this office is here for. And that's why we have a plan of repentance to get through this, right? So it puts 'em in a state of a lot of hope. And then they want to surrender themselves more to the savior and say, I am helpless. Right? You go to his 12 step meeting, and this is a huge part of that, surrendering yourself to God, I cannot change myself. God must change me. I cannot change myself through my behaviors. God must change me through my heart, which will then lead to good behavior.

Speaker 1 00:35:54 And then these individuals are more open to seeking connection. And you go to listen to Steve Shield's, uh, interview again, uh, that was part of this connection is so vital. Connection is so vital, and they'll enter recovery. Okay? So just look at these two contrasting experiences. Oftentimes the tom situation happens when an individual maybe goes to the bishop's office, or an individual goes to their parent, right? They're just like, okay, well we're, we're gonna get this buddy. We're gonna monitor your behaviors to the t I'm gonna become the police officer and we're gonna get this. And then even near the bottom, and I think we'll talk about this in a minute, where they may enter sobriety, right? The bishop says, okay, just go get to seven days. If you can go seven days without, uh, viewing porn or, or masturbating, like you can take the sacrament, right?

Speaker 1 00:36:40 So it becomes all about that behavior and that shame game just completely takes over where the other individual is saying, you know what? I'll, as long as it takes Tim, there's, there's hope here, there's grace. I'm gonna be here for you. You're doing fine. Oh, you relapsed two times. Like, Hey man, that's okay. That's okay. You're getting it. You're trying, you're getting there, right? And it leads to a state of mind where you're gonna surrender and, uh, hand yourself over over to God's grace. So you see the difference between good behaviors, the danger of focusing on good behaviors, hopefully will change their hearts, but instead change their heart, which leads to good behaviors. And let me dive into this a little bit further as far as what this looks like. Changing behaviors versus changing heart. When you are changing behaviors, which isn't gonna work most of the time as far as long-term relapse, you lead with accountability.

Speaker 1 00:37:26 Now, again, hear me clearly here. Accountability is crucial in the process of overcoming a habit or a compulsion or an addiction. Accountability is crucial, but we can't lead with accountability. When we lead with accountability, it just becomes a policing relationship. All right? You come to me how many times this week? Okay, well, don't do it. Let's don't do it anymore. Okay? Well, how many times this week? Right? That's a policing relationship, which isn't going to be full of hope and it's not going there. There's so much shame in that they don't want, they don't want to come back to the bishop's office or talk to their parents

again, when it's all about accountability, right? It's important part, but it's not what we should lead with. Oftentimes when we're changing behaviors, we just tell them to, to pray more. Read your scriptures. The more right? If you do that, that's gonna help you overcome this, right?

Speaker 1 00:38:12 Again, we're focusing on behaviors. We're trying to change their heart with good behaviors, and it's not gonna work. We've gotta change their heart first and then the behaviors will change. Influence behaviors through restrictions, spiritual time outs, right? So this is a tough one, and again, you can disagree with me or take this any way, way you want, but it's very, I found myself as a bishop oftentimes using restrictions to motivate them to change, right? I'm using restrictions like no temple recommend, or restrictions of the sacrament and all those things which are important and have a place. But in my opinion, restrictions like that are not meant to be used as a stick to beat them with so that they'll change, right? Well, you can't take the sacrament until you get this, right? Right? You can't have your temple recommend back until you get this right.

Speaker 1 00:38:59 And your brother's wedding is coming up, right? You see how that's a very shameful place to be in, and they're, they're just buried in, in the, the shame of those behaviors, okay? Ask them not to share behaviors. This is a, this is, uh, reducing connection at times. Again, you don't need to tell them to go share behaviors, but don't create a situation where they feel like, oh, we need to, we need to keep this in the bishop's office, right? This is between me and you, we'll work this out. Let's not tell anybody, and we do this with good intention, right? But we need to say, who can you share this with? Who are your friends? What connection can we create? Do you mind if I tell the elders quorum president and he can help you? We have a whole, we have two or three individuals who've gone through the same thing.

Speaker 1 00:39:38 Can we loop them in on this and get their help? That connection's gonna come. It's gonna be helpful. And then the infamous, you know, if you can make it seven days or if you can make it three months, then we'll get you on your mission, right? We get them in a state of sobriety, not recovery, and then they relapse even on their mission. And this, there's so, I mean, everybody listening to this probably has heard of an instance where an individual came home early because they white knuckled it for three months in order to sign off on their mission papers. They got their call, they went out there, but they weren't in recovery. They were in sobriety. And it was, and the, the stresses, I mean, you wanna talk about stresses of, of life. Go on a mission <laugh> and try that for a, a few months.

Speaker 1 00:40:16 Of course, they may relapse on their mission because if they're just, they're white knuckling it. So we wanna shift from changing behaviors to changing hearts first. 'cause that will then lead to positive behaviors. And the, and the behaviors will take care of themselves, right? And lemme just pause and just point out the irony. You see, we're using the same plan that the adversary's using because the adversary knows it works. But we can use, we can fight fire with fire. We're not gonna focus on the behaviors anymore. We're gonna focus on the hearts. And then good behaviors will, will come from it. Just like the adversary focuses on the heart and corrupts it. And bad behavior comes from that. So one, we're always just offering hope, hope, hope, hope. We're gonna get through this, right? I've given several examples of that. Explore doctrines, especially mercy and grace, a fantastic exercise for any leader or parent

or an individual wrestling with, with addiction or struggling with pornography to go to the scriptures and look up every scripture with mercy in it.

Speaker 1 00:41:17 And there are far more scriptures, the mercy in it than there are with condemnation, right? And so encouraging the individual to explore doctrines. So this is the, the trap that I would get in as a bishop. The individual would come in. We are in a very police relationship, right? I'm policing you. You're here to tell me how many times you relapse and confess those relapse. 'cause that's just what we do here, is we confess bad behavior, right? So it was this negative relationship where I was just policing the individual. And you can meet with the individual and not even mention why they're there as far as the behaviors even, okay? We both know you struggle with pornography, we're not even gonna talk about it. We're just gonna explore doctrines. Let's talk about the temple this time, right? The next time we come back, you dive into this, uh, the temple experience and you know, go to Moses and read all of Moses.

Speaker 1 00:42:09 And you're gonna tell me how those doctrines fit in with the doctrines we learn about in the temple, right? Again, you're not even talking about behavior. You're not talking about even the temptation or the struggle of sexual purity and all this. You're just talking about doctrines. And what happens is doctrines influence behavior more than the study of behavior, right? We're now implementing elder packer's famous quote. We're focused on doctrines. Even doctrines aren't directly related to the problem, but what that's doing, it's awakening their identity. It's awakening those principles that connect them with God and they feel hope. And they're, they're not dreading that experience at the bishop office. 'cause oh, we're gonna, the bishop, we're gonna talk about the temple. I feel so good when I, we talk about the temple, right? That's the power of focusing on the hearts through the doctrines. Admit that you can't fix them, right?

Speaker 1 00:43:01 That it's so easy for that person to assume that I'm walking in the bishop's office because he's gonna fix me, right? The atonement is gonna fix me. And of course the atonement is gonna fix you, but not necessarily because of the bishop, right? The bishop is just a representative there of that process. So it's very helpful for a bishop to say, listen, Tim, I want you to know I'm not here to fix you, okay? I don't have a magical wand here. I'm not here to fix you. Christ will fix you, but I'm here. Can we go on that journey together? Can we learn about the doctrines together and figure out how he can help you overcome this and reach a recovery and redemption? That's the powerful of you communicating them that we're, that you're not here to fix them. Define the purpose of CPR Church.

Speaker 1 00:43:46 Pray and read scriptures. I love this, this acronym that someone introduced me to, CPR. It's so easy to say, okay, we're here, you know, uh, we we're gonna focus on good behaviors now. So go to church, read your scriptures and pray, right? But define the purpose of CPR. I'm not saying you don't mention good behaviors, but you define the purpose of, of the good behaviors. These good behaviors can't fix you, Tim. They're not here to fix you. But what they're here for is to connect your heart with God's heart and to understand him more fully. And that leads us to a place of surrender, which then can help us overcome this problem through, through the atonement, right? So define clearly why you want them to read,

pray, and attend church. Because if you just said, I need you to do these three things, they're thinking, oh yeah, because if I do them more, then that'll fix me.

Speaker 1 00:44:35 The behavior won't fix you. Only Christ will fix you. Why you do these things is it connects you with your God so that you can further understand his redemptive powers, right? That, and that is what fixes you. So make sure you are clear in why you're asking to do those behaviors. Turn them towards their father in heaven, right? You're there to not with all the answers, you may just say, you know, Tim, you need to go home and I want you to pray about this. Take these questions to your maker, to your father and see what direction he has and then come back and let's talk about that, right? Let's talk about that. Overwhelm them with connection. Overwhelm them with connection. Again, go back to Steve Shield's episode. What did, it was individuals reaching out to him even when he didn't wanna be reached out to that connection has so much power, right?

Speaker 1 00:45:24 If there's individuals in your ward who have struggled with something like this in the past, and now you know that's behind them, they don't need to talk about this. Call them into repentance and say, we need your help. There are individuals suffering like you suffered. And if they don't see where you're at now, they may lose hope. I can't show up as the bishop, right? Unless obviously the bishop's been there. But that's why you need to connect them with individuals. Invite them to say, to ask if you can, uh, share this with the relief society president, the elders quorum president, whomever's their, their leader, right? And say, we need to get you some help and connection right now. It may take some time. They may be so buried in shame, they don't wanna tell anybody as you go through this process and soften their heart.

Speaker 1 00:46:08 They want connection and they'll see the power in it. So lemme tell you a story about James, him and his lovely family here. So James is a friend of mine, uh, someone I've met through this journey of understanding, uh, understanding recovery and those things. Um, James was a, a good latterday saint, raised in sort of some rough circumstances at times, but nonetheless attended church later, went on a mission, served a mission, and came home and sort of had this, this, uh, consistent relapse cycle. This shame cycles. He, he terms it every three months. He would, he'd do good for about three months and then just completely re relapse and then do good for three months, white knuckling it, and then fall into that shame cycle. And he's a good example is why, why this term I'm an addict can be so helpful for people, right?

Speaker 1 00:46:58 Once he was able to identify himself as an addict that then let him knew there was actually a plan. Like people had, other addicts had overcome this. So if I'm an addict, there's hope and a plan that I can figure this out, right? So with him, label labeling himself and addict was very expanding, very helpful for him in his journey to overcome his addiction or his, uh, his habit of, of viewing pornography, right? And, uh, he's got a great, great story you can listen to on the Unashamed Unafraid podcast. It's in the resources, uh, below this video that, uh, is a powerful story to help understand more why that term can be so helpful. Alright? So that's one tactic is as far as identity or, or, or one way that God impacts our identity, I want to talk about disappointment, okay? This is more powerful than you maybe realize.

Speaker 1 00:47:49 I bet you never really thought about disappointment in the context of doctrines or in the context of the gospel, right? Disappointment is just sort of a feeling we feel right in this mortal experience, and we kind of assume that it's a common feeling, which it is. But I'm gonna, I wanna propose to you that it is a strong tactic that the adversary is using through disappointment, that is altering our identity, which again, attacks our hearts and causes us shame, which leads us to set our own trap of, uh, sinning. Okay? So I, I often show this, uh, this image in, in Youth Fireside that I do, and this image is, uh, obviously not Norman Rockwell's the, the famous artist he painted one of the principal's office and one in the dentist office. And I have to ask these youth, all right, who's been to the principal's office before, right?

Speaker 1 00:48:36 You ever been in trouble? And few raise their hands, and then I say, who's been to the dentist's office? And all sorts of hands go up, right? And, uh, because everybody goes to the dentist's office, there's no shame in the dentist's office. And I talk about this dynamic, this dichotomy between the principal's office and the dentist's office, that when you get called to principal's office, it's sort of a man you're in trouble. It feels really shameful, right? You think, oh no, I don't want my parents to find out about this, right? But if you get called into the dentist's office, or if you go to the dentist's office, there's no shame about that. Everybody goes, right? In fact, you want your parents to know that you're going to the, the dentist's office, right? So it's an interesting dichotomy to think about this. When you think about the context of the Bishop's office.

Speaker 1 00:49:22 So if you're a bishop or, or if you've been a bishop or, or a leader, like what did your bishop's office feel more like the principal's office or more like the dentist's office? Did people see it as a place to, that they they were going to because they were in trouble or they've done something wrong? Or did they feel like it was a place that they were going to because they're supposed to, they're going in for a checkup, right? Yeah, they didn't floss very well, but or spiritually floss very well, but they're going there to get that figured out, right? I think all of us would agree that we want the Bishop's Office to feel more like a dentist's office than we do a principal's office. Right? Now, of course, there's some negative things to a dentist's office, don't get me wrong. It's not like everybody's favorite thing to do, but there's no shame in going to the dentist's office.

Speaker 1 00:50:09 There's no shame in going to get a cavity filled. Most people have cavities, right? Most people have to go to the dentist's office to get cavities. There's no shame in that. And that's the feeling of the Bishop's office. So lemme explain my, as a youth a, a story of my interaction with the Bishop's office. So it is 1997, I am sitting on the sofa in my TV room, my mother is folding laundry and we're watching a crime, and she's watching some crime drama right? Show. And she's folding laundry. And I'm looking at the TV screen, but my mind is a million miles away from there because I feel so much shame about what I've done. And I remember forcing myself to tell my mom this phrase during a commercial break. I say, mom, I think there's something wrong with me. Right? You see, the adversary had worked with me to the point that it wasn't that I was doing bad things, but now he had got my identity.

Speaker 1 00:51:08 He was altering my, how I saw myself altering my identity, which was leading to shame, right? And I remember my mom sort of brushed it off and it was sort of a

weird thing to say at a weird time. And so a few days later, I'm sitting in my parents' bedroom on the edge of their bed, uh, bed by their nightstand because they had a phone on their nightstand. And I'm calling the executive secretary because I know that I need to set an appointment with my bishop who sure felt like I was going into the principal's office. Nothing that against that bishop. That's just how my mentality was thinking of that age as, as a 16-year-old. And I remember calling his extra sick. I thought, oh man, he is gonna ask me what I did. I'm gonna have to tell this guy. I don't even know this guy.

Speaker 1 00:51:50 I mean, he's just some old guy in the ward. I'm gonna have to tell him what I did. Ah, and then, uh, sure enough, he, he answers the phone and I said, I need to set an with my bishop or with the bishop. And he says, okay, I have about Tuesday at seven. I said, okay, that's fine. Great. See you then click. And he hangs up and I, oh, I don't need, I don't need to, you know, divulge these, these details to this guy in the ward. So then a few days pass and it's Tuesday, I'm sitting on in, on the sofa outside of the bishop's office and I just wanted that building to fall down. I wanted to catch on fire. I wanted to explode. I just, I wanted out of there. I just felt so bad and I knew for sure that the bishop would be disappointed in me.

Speaker 1 00:52:34 I knew for sure that God was disappointed in me. I felt worthless. I felt broken. I felt without hope, right? So my question is, how did Satan get me to feel like that? How did Satan get me to feel like that? How did he attack my identity? And this is probably the most powerful way I would argue that, that the adversary attacks our identity is that he knows that God loves us. And you would think the adversary wants us to think that God doesn't love us, but he doesn't start there because we sort of own that doctrine, right? Every since the time we started nursery to the present day, we've been learning I am a child of God and he loves me. God loves me. And so, yes, God loves you. You see the adversary is actually going to use this against us cause contention in our mind with this doctrine that God loves you, which will then impact our identity.

Speaker 1 00:53:28 'cause he says, yes, God loves you, but he sure is disappointed in you. Yes, God loves you, but he sure is disappointed in you most of the time. In fact, the most, he's disappointed you in the most, the most. Because when I sat in that chair waiting to see the bishop, I truly believed I was the only youth in the history of that ward to ever have to set up a, an appointment with the bishop, right? That's what the adversary had had convinced me that my identity was so messed up. I was the only youth that had to sit in that chair and go see the bishop. I felt alone. I'm the only one. I'm the only one. And now can you see how easy that is? Through this, this idea of disappointment, he altered my identity so that I was setting my own snares.

Speaker 1 00:54:15 So what is disappointment? Let's just zone in on this because I think if we understand this, we can help a lot of people get outta the shame cycle. So what is disappointment? Well, you can look it up through Google or obviously you have a certain expectation, right? And that expectation does not happen. So therefore you are disappointed. Now, let me ask you this. Can God be disappointed or can God be disappointed in you? Okay? So can God have an expectation and expect that expectation to, to follow through and then it doesn't follow through? Hmm, lemme put it this way with this question. Can God be surprised?

Now, I know there's maybe some debate around whether God knows the beginning, the, the present and the future, or the past, present and future, but I, I would say it's a pretty solid doctrine that God is all knowing, right?

Speaker 1 00:55:06 So therefore, if someone has asked you, can God be surprised? I think most people would say no. And most people I've asked say no, God can't be surprised. So therefore, can he be disappointed? Hmm. Because if God can't be disappointed, the adversary can't use this trick against us saying, yeah, God loves you, but he sure is disappointed in you. Some people argue, well, Kurt, have you read the scriptures lately? I mean, there's a lot of the examples of a disappointment of disappointed God, right? I mean, a lot of people he is disappointed in. Is it really though? Or is he just maybe upset and wanting to give them direction? A good example is doctrine covenants section three, where the, you know, where Joseph Smith has lost 116 pages and God sounds super disappointed if you read that. If you have a mean dad read that. It sounds like God is super disappointed.

Speaker 1 00:55:58 However, he starts the section with these verses, and this I think is so powerful, the works and the designs and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated. Neither can they come to not, for God does not walk in crooked paths. Neither does he turn to the right hand, nor to the left. Neither does he vary from that which he has said. Therefore, his paths are straight. And his course is one eternal round. And here is the, the kicker. Remember, remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men, right? I mean, there are so many examples that of God had a plan, God knew that he was, that Joseph Smith was going to lose those 116 pages. He, he had a plan, right? Which was the Book of Lehigh. We didn't, didn't need the book of Lehigh, the book, the plates of Nephi.

Speaker 1 00:56:48 You know, help fill in those blanks and, and, uh, communicate all the doctrine we need in this dispensation. I love these three verses. 'cause the rest of the chapter, the rest of the section, sure, sounds like God is disappointed, but he's not. He still offers guidance. He's given Joseph some pretty clear direction on how to change and how to adjust. But he is not disappointed 'cause he knew it was gonna happen. You cannot be disappointed if you know that it's gonna happen. So God's not disappointed in you ever. God wasn't disappointed in me as a youth, right? He knew it was part of his plan. And behold, this is my doctrine. He says, this is the doctrine. Sum it down to one verse. This is God's doctrine, whosoever rep penance, and come with them to me the same as my church. If you come into, if you repent and come to me, that's the plan here.

Speaker 1 00:57:43 That's what we're doing. That's the game we're playing is repentance. And so I'm not disappointed in you when you, when you trip up, when you falter. That's just the game that, that, that's just what we're doing here. That's the plan is repentance. Of course, you're in the bishop's office again, just like of course you're in the dentist's office again, you, you gotta learn how to floss better. You gotta brush a couple times a day at least, at least daily, at least weekly, right? Like, that's why we go to the dentist's office and, uh, or or otherwise known as the Bishop's office and not to the, uh, principal's office. It's not a principal's office because nobody's disappointed in you. It's part of the plan. We all knew that you'd have to repent. So get rid of the shame, right? You see how this message pulls people out of the shame cycle.

Speaker 1 00:58:29 God's not disappointed in you. He knew this would happen. Now let's, let's move on. See how we can, we can progress. He's justified you. Now let's talk about how you can be sanctified, right? The atonement iss there, you're, you're good. So lemme go. And, uh, I love this quote by Elder Robbins. Repentance isn't his backup plan. Plan in the, in the event we might fall. Repentance is his plan, knowing that we will, it is his plan. So let me tell you about my sweet daughter Dery. She is the epitome of a 7-year-old right now. She turns eight in in May, and she's so sweet. I mean, loves to twirling her dress. She loves to have dance parties in our kitchen. Um, she loves mermaids. I mean, she is so sweet. When she was one years old, she, she obviously started to learn to walk. Right Now I'm home alone with Dere when she takes her first steps and I'm thinking, oh my goodness, I can't believe my wife isn't here when this is happening, right?

Speaker 1 00:59:32 I mean, that's why we picture that the wife is there. I mean, the whole family's there witnessing this. So I pull out my phone to turn on the recorder to capture this moment. And I didn't realize in the moment what I was capturing the analogy that I was recording in that. So I want you to watch this, this video, this clip, and I want you to hear my voice, which represents the voice of our father in heaven. And I want you to see DeVry as our mortal experience, that we we're trying to become better, but we're falling down. Look at you walk. Oh my goodness. I turn the camera on and you fall down. Okay, let's do it again. Come on. Stand up. Okay, here she goes.

Speaker 1 01:00:21 Yeah. Yeah. She's so fun, huh? Over here now. Oh, she can't pivot yet, huh? Should we stand? Okay, here we go. Okay, come on. Div. Oh, isn't that much easier than scooting? Oh, you're gonna fall down another bazillion times, but it'll be worth it. Clap your hands. You did it. Clap your hands. Good girl. I get emotional every time that I watch that clip and, uh, obviously 'cause of my daughter, but more, uh, more to the fact of what it speaks to me as a son of God, uh, as having a loving heavenly Father. Just those, those terms I'm using. And I'm not even trying to use 'em, right? I'm just acting as a father in that moment, right? Here we go. Get up. Oh, you fell down. You're gonna fall down in more another bazillion times, but it'll be worth it, right? I just love how, I just feel the love of my father in heaven when I watched that clip.

Speaker 1 01:01:31 And I've seen it so many times. And, uh, that's the experience. That's the, that's the relationship we have from him. I was not one bit disappointed in my daughter when she fell down. 'cause I knew she was growing. I knew she was developing and progressing. And that's the love of God that comes from that. Uh, we get from, that's the, the love of God that comes from God, right? So, man, I gotta assure you this quote, I love it so much from Elder Dale G Renlund, this shepherd, our good shepherd, finds joy in seeing his diseased sheep progress towards healing. I think Elder Renland just called us all diseased sheep <laugh>. I, I love that term because we truly are diseased sheep. We are messed up, we're broken. We need God to redeem us. We need God to fix us, right? We can't act like we're figuring out ourselves because of our good behaviors.

Speaker 1 01:02:25 We are all broken. We are all disease sheep. Here's a few other, uh, great quotes. A CS Lewis. A car is made to run on gasoline and would not run properly on

anything else. Now, God designed the human machine to run on himself. He himself is the fuel of our spirits, the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other God is our fuel. We do not move without him. We do not repent without him. We do not progress without him. Of course, we need repentance because of course we need gasoline if we were a car, right? So I wanna tell you a story. Uh, back in March of 2019. I'm, I'm in my home office. It was a different, uh, office than I'm sitting in now. And my scriptures are open on my, on my desk.

Speaker 1 01:03:13 I have, you know, obviously this is a standing desk. I have a desk over here where I do my more intense study and my scriptures are open and it's almost like my scriptures are mocking me, right? Like, Hey, Kurt, like you haven't done your scripture study yet today. Oh, it's been another day. It's been two days since you've done your scripture study. And at this point, I'm just, I couldn't figure it out. There was just a void in my heart when it came to scripture study. I'd even try and sit down and read, and they were just words on a page. I, I don't know if you can relate to, if you've ever had similar experience. So there I am, just sort of conflicted with, ah, man, I feel so bad because I'm supposed to read my scriptures every day. Like that's what good latter day saints do.

Speaker 1 01:03:55 And I'm a good latter day saint, right? Identity. You hear the adversary's voice. That's what good latter day saints do. And if I'm gonna be a good latter saint, I better check that box or else, man, if I go another day, I'm gonna feel so bad and I'm not reading my scriptures. But I later found out that God actually removed the joy of scripture study from me for a time in order to teach me a lesson. Because a few weeks later, after this experience, I'm sitting in a, in a leadership conference, a Christian leadership conference, and they have some great Christian music going, uh, before they start the session. And I'm just sitting there and this, uh, dynamic, this, uh, this experience, this circumstance comes to my mind why it's so hard for me to study my scriptures. I, and I feel the shame of it.

Speaker 1 01:04:38 I feel the guilt of it. Just like, ugh, I know I, I gotta do better with scripture study. And for some reason I just can't get into the scriptures, right? And in the moment, something so precious happened to me. 'cause I heard in my, in my mind this phrase, you could never read your scriptures again and I'd still love you. And then it came a second time, you could never read your scriptures again. And I'd still love you because here I was still in this, this shame cycle, right? And it happens to all of us. These lessons, these doctrines aren't just for the, the, the addict, the person that's can't handle life because he's so addicted to something or their marriage is falling apart or whatever, whatever is like this, this happens to all of us, this shame cycle. I was in that shame cycle.

Speaker 1 01:05:23 I thought God was so like, yeah, I'm a good boy. I've got my temple recommend. I'm doing these things right? I'm doing my best, but God's so disappointed in me that I'm not reading my scriptures. And it really hurt, right? But in that moment, he connected with me. He said, Kurt, I'm not disappointed in you. You could never read your scriptures again, and I'd still love you. I actually want you to read your scriptures, but not so that you can check a box and feel like you've earned my love. I want you to go to the scriptures so that we can have a relationship together so that we can connect, so that our hearts can connect, right? So in the

moment, like the God was teaching me that it's not about your behavior. I want your heart. And once I have your heart, you won't be able to do anything else but good behavior, right?

Speaker 1 01:06:11 You won't even have a desire to sin like it talks about in Mosiah. And that's what I feel like it's been like. Now, my scripture study is completely a different world. I just, I love my scripture study because it's not about studying the scriptures or, or checking the box, but it's about, it's about worshiping him and connecting with him, right? So this is a phrase that I want you to, to think about. You could fill in the blank, whatever it is. You could look at pornography the rest of your life. You could, uh, never go to church again. You could, uh, have a diet coke habit the rest of your life. You could never go to the temple again, or you could never want to go to the temple again. And I'd still love you, right? You see how that message touches the heart, that no matter what you do, he will still love you.

Speaker 1 01:06:57 And it's important, you know that as many times as it takes, I'm gonna be right here. I'm gonna be right here encouraging you to take those steps. I'm be right here changing your heart. And when you do that, you'll, the behaviors will come and it'll be okay. But you, you feel the hope. Like if that message came from a bishop or a, or a, uh, loved one, it doesn't matter how many times you relapse, you know, I'm still gonna be here. I'm still gonna love you. Sure, there's gonna be some boundaries, right? Sure. We're gonna approach this a different way, but that doesn't change anything about how I feel about you, how I identify you in my mind, and how you should identify yourself in your own mind. Love this quote by CS Lewis. The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because he loves us.

Speaker 1 01:07:44 The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because he loves us. That's the message of redemption, of life, of returning to him, of sanctification. We don't have to justify our behaviors so that we can be sanctified. Christ has already justified our behaviors so that we can be sanctified. That's the beauty of this gospel, of this doctrine. In closing, I want to talk about this scripture. If you love me, keep my commandments John 14:16. It's so easy to feel, I mean, read incorrectly. I think this can be a very shaming scripture, right? Like the adversary wants us to read this and say, I thought you loved God. Hmm, but you keep messing up, don't you? I guess you don't love God. And I guess God knows that you don't love God because you don't keep his commandments.

Speaker 1 01:08:34 Hmm. Well, I see this, I interpret this a different way. And there's a great movie. It's actually in the resources, a great movie called Heart of Man. And here's a, a quick screenshot from it. It's basically the parable of the prodigal son that they go through. But they do what these characters, and I love the actor, they used to represent our father in heaven. Here he is so loving, and he actually, in this parable, he puts together a violin. He constructs a violin, a beautiful violin that he makes with his own hands. And I want you to show you a clip about, uh, from this video that again, I encourage you to go check out and rent it or, or you can buy it. I bought it. I would encourage you just, just to buy it. It's, it's worth the cost. And it's an awesome movie that I've watched many times and shared with others. But I want, in this clip, I want you to see, uh, the part pay attention to the violin because, and in your mind, think of the violin as

commandments and covenants that God has given us. And see how God gives these commandments and covenants we're the violin to the one that he loves, which is all of us,

Speaker 6 01:09:49 Many of us are still trying to prove that we are enough by the very law that tried to prove to us that we're not enough. When he calls us a saint, he makes an incredible statement about us. We are no longer defined by being a sinner.

Speaker 1 01:10:20 Hey, podcast listeners. Uh, this clip doesn't really translate well to, uh, just the audio. And I don't know if you're listening to podcasts, it's just audio. I'm going to link to this video clip in the show notes if you wanna watch it. But just to give you context in this video, it shows a man, a father who's made this violin for their son. And then he is, he gives it as a precious gift to a son and then teaches the son how to hold the violin, how to play the violin. And then, then he practices the violin with the son. So I think it's a great allegory to, uh, our interaction with our father in heaven and covenants. But you can, again, you can see the, see the clip in the show notes.

Speaker 1 01:11:01 So I love the imagery here that God loves us so much that he gave us commandments and covenants, he handed it to him. And I love that the imagery of showing us that God showed us how to hold them, how to position 'em right? And then he showed us how to play those commandments and covenants so that we can return to him, right? It's not about a list of rules that you gotta to keep or else you're going to hell. Now, these are empowering parts of our mortal experience that God's given us to help us on this difficult journey. And when it gets ti when it's difficult, we play those even, uh, more loudly. And I encourage you to watch the whole film because the way the, the violin plays out through all-out this where the son becomes a prodigal son, right? And, and leaves, leaves his father's presence and turns towards sin and the imagery of the violin in that moment, oh, it's so good.

Speaker 1 01:11:54 You gotta, you gotta watch it. So the way I see it is that it's not if you love me, keep my commandments. It's if you love me, hold onto my commandments. I've given you these tools in order to help you survive mortality and to become sanctified and connect with me when you play your violin. I'm gonna play my violin. When you keep your commandments, I'm gonna keep the commandments too. When you go to the temple and renew covenants, I'm gonna renew covenants, right? Like it's this relationship with the eternal maker, with the eternal God. He gave us commandments. Not so that he can beat this with them, but that, that we can play them and connect with them on deeper, deeper level. And even this word keep, here's a great, a great scripture as far as keep. And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon.

Speaker 1 01:12:40 And they who keep not their first estate, shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate. And they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads forever and ever. I just love the context in which this word keep has, right? You already have it, right? The first estate is already yours. Keep my commandments, hold on to my commandments so that it can be yours. Here's another one, doctrine incumbents 78 18. And you shall bear all things now nevertheless be of good cheer for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings there of are yours and the riches of eternity are yours. You already have it. You already have the kingdom. It's yours. He's given it

to us right now. It's easy to say, well, I don't know about that, Kurt. I mean, uh, we gotta sort of, you know, keep the commandments and do these good behaviors.

Speaker 1 01:13:34 I get what you're saying. In theory, it's, it's cute and all, but no, you gotta keep the rules right, because that's how you get back to heaven. And I think this is a rebuking chapter or a rebuking verse in Alma 33 16. For behold, he said, thou our angry oh Lord, with this people because they will not understand thy mercies, which they have bestowed upon them because of I son think how frustrating it would be to send your son here to die. And, and he, uh, suffers through the sins and crucified for all of us and offers grace to us through that atoning sacrifice and we don't understand it. That would be be very frustrating. It would make me angry for sure, right? And this is that what it's talking about in Alma, that thou our angrier Lord, because we missed it. We don't understand your mercies.

Speaker 1 01:14:20 We don't understand your grace. So if you love me, keep my commandments. That scripture's so empowering and loving to me that it pulls me out of the every shame cycle I fall into when I'm in that shame cycle. And the adversary starts to get me to identify myself differently through the shame he is constantly causing through contention. I think to, if you love me, keep my commandments. I remember that God's given me commandments and covenants to become like him and to play that, those covenants, to play that violin when I need 'em. Most, of course, famous scripture in Romans 8 38 through 39, for I'm persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities, nor power, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is Christ Jesus.

Speaker 1 01:15:07 R Lord, he loves us so much. He will never, ever, ever be disappointed in you ever. And my prayer is that when individuals go to the bishop's office, that that's the message they feel. Tim, John, Billy, Susie, Ann, Patricia, I know it hurts. God's not disappointed in you. He expects you to, to make these, uh, decisions from time to time. And that's why the plan is repentance. That is his gospel. That is his gospel. And I love the scripture that I've read completely different. Just a few days ago, Luke 1520 of the prodigal son, right? Parable of the prodigal son, he says, and he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And that phrase I've underlined there, he arose and his father had compassion on him when he was yet a great way off.

Speaker 1 01:16:06 I remember as a bishop, individuals come in and in my mind, I think, boy in my mortal mind just thinking this guy is messed up. Like he's, why is he making these decisions? Doesn't he get it? I mean, come on, get your life together, right? And sometimes I'd punish them and with spiritual timeouts for taking recommends or restricting sacrament and and tell you understand, right? Like that was the message I was sending. But if we could show compassion, even when they are a great way off, even when they're so far away from the standards of the church, we still show compassion. We love them and we say, you're in the right place. This is the dentist's office. This isn't a principal's office. This is the dentist's office. And and this is where you're gonna meet a loving savior. And I hope for a moment I could be that

representative to you as your bishop or as your, as your parent or, or loved one that he has saved you.

Speaker 1 01:17:03 He offers nothing but redemption. Yeah, you're gonna figure out these behaviors, but let's first figure out your heart. Let's pull you after out of the shame cycle through the doctrines that are true and bold, that you can overcome this. And once you get your heart right with the doctrines, the behaviors will come. Not because you feel like you're supposed to do 'em or should do 'em, but that you wanna do nothing else because it's how you connect with God. It's how you live, uh, become like him and strengthen those spiritual muscles so that you can be sanctified through his atonement. As I ask everybody in, uh, as we, we end a session, I always ask the people that have been part of this, what encouragement would you have for leaders, for loved ones out there? And I just want to just encourage you that you bless your heart for looking for resources like this.

Speaker 1 01:17:55 And I'm not saying this is a perfect resource, but man, we're, we're trying as a community to gather some information together. And you may agree with some of it, disagree with others, but all you just sure hope is making you think. And so bless your heart for reaching out and finding resources. 'cause I know how much you wanna save that person. You wanna help 'em, you wanna figure out how you can guide them down a path that's gonna lead them to recovery. And I promise you that you can do it. The savior can do it through you, but he is the savior. You're not the savior, he's the savior. And it's gonna happen. He's gonna be there by their side playing that violin as long as it takes. He never loses hope. He's never disappointed with them. And hopefully we can follow that pattern ourselves. Alright, that concludes this episode. If you're interested in learning more or hearing more of sessions from this virtual conference, you, you can actually go to leading-saints.org/fourteen and gain access to the full Liberating Saints virtual conference. And it is, it is phenomenal. It's worth a listen for sure. And again, if you want to check out the finished product of, of this book, is God disappointed to me, removing shame from a gospel of grace. You can, uh, go to Amazon or your local Costco and check it out.

Speaker 7 01:19:43 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.