



Fitting in With Other Christian Churches | A Discussion with Jeff McCullough

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Speaker 1 00:00:04 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're doing enough. It's for the Latterday 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 00:01:26 I got an email the other day from an individual, I forget where he is in the world, but he says, Kurt, I love Leading Saints, and I listen to it every time I'm on the treadmill. And then one time during an interview he heard that Leading Saints has a YouTube channel, and like all the interviews, at least the vast majority of them are video recorded. And you can watch the video recording of the podcast episodes. And I'm like, yeah, man, get on there. Go subscribe on YouTube to Leading Saints, and you can, uh, get a visual of the interview and not just an audio experience. And even if you're not a big YouTube user, uh, do us a favor. 'cause this actually helps us gain more reach and, uh, expose our content to individuals who could really benefit from IT leaders around the world. So regardless if you are on YouTube

a lot or not, go to YouTube and search for Leading Saints. Find the Familiar Red logo and just subscribe even if you don't plan to, uh, view every episode there. That's gonna help us, uh, gain a larger audience, a more reach dial in the algorithm. And, uh, we'll start showing up on Leaders feeds that they didn't know how much they're missing here at Leading Saints. So, head on over to YouTube, search for Leading Saints and subscribe to our channel and leave a comment every once in a while. But be nice.

Speaker 1 00:03:12 Hey, as many of you know, I have developed a great relationship with Pastor Jeff McCullough, who's an evangelical pastor exploring all things related to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints. He does this through his popular YouTube channel called Hello Saints. And he's been so kind to inviting me on as a guest or as a latter day saint to give my perspective on some of the topics that he explores in our faith context. Now, he's recently started a podcast to go along with his YouTube channel, and I was one of the first guests on the podcast where we discussed the idea of the Evangelical Church merging with the Church of Jesus Christ at Latter Day Saints. Now, let's be honest, this is sort of a silly question, but, uh, <laugh> and not gonna happen. However, it was a question worth sort of putting out there 'cause it led to a phenomenal discussion that you're about to hear.

Speaker 1 00:04:01 So I wanted to simulcast this episode, the pastor Jeff already published on the Hello Saints YouTube channel. And if you wanna see the video of this discussion, you can find the link in the the show notes to this episode and watch that. And we're just trying to model what it would look like for two individuals of different faith backgrounds to come together and have an open dialogue, even though we disagree on many theological points. I really appreciate Pastor Jeff's friendship, all that I've learned from him, and really the ways that our relationship, our interaction, even a lot of Jeff's content that I was not involved with, has deepened my faith in the church of Jesus Christ, Latterday Saints, and helped me become a better disciple. So I encourage you to subscribe to Hello Saints podcast wherever you're listening to Leading Saints, and there'll be future episodes that I think you'll appreciate as well. And, uh, you will most likely see my face, uh, again on the Hello Saints YouTube channel as we've got some other fun projects that we're working on together. So here's the discussion between me and Pastor Jeff on whether the Evangelical church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter a Saints would ever merge. It's a fun ride. I love that question because it's so provocative that every evangelical and every latter day saint just scoff like <laugh>. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:05:18 Welcome to the Hello Saints podcast. My name is Jeff. I am a pastor exploring everything I can about the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. And I'm really excited for this episode because I have probably my closest latter day saint friend with me on the podcast, the

Speaker 1 00:05:35 Closest. Jeff,

Speaker 2 00:05:35 We just dtr we just defined the

Speaker 1 00:05:37 Relationship. I'm number one <laugh>. Take that Greg

Speaker 2 00:05:40 Madson. That's actually the whole purpose of this episode. What I'm wanting to talk about and what I'm actually wanting us both to be able to demonstrate is sort of a, a peek into what does it look like when two guys from two different faith persuasions move toward one another in friendship and relationship and get to know one another, compare notes when it comes to our understanding of truth and also kind of what insight might it give us into a larger consideration, which we'll talk about later on of organizationally, not relationally right? But organizationally, what could or would it look like for the Evangelical Church to move toward the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and quick teases we're gonna discuss, I don't know where it's gonna go, but is it possible that the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and the American Evangelical Church would ever merge? Ooh, it's an interesting question. That

Speaker 1 00:06:36 Is, that's Clickworthy right there. It is, it is. And I think one, one thing I'll mention is that a lot of people may not realize is obviously we've done videos together Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> traveled down to St. George at one time, and so people know that we talked, but we, I mean we, we've done Marco Polos, thousands of Marco Bullet is probably back and forth saying like, well, what about this thing or that thing? And yeah, well, do you know about this, you know, esoteric doctrine and your jaw drops, right? And then you share me. I'm like, wow, I never knew that. Right. So the conversation between us go has been going on, you know, back and forth Yeah. For a while. It

Speaker 2 00:07:08 Has. And one of the reasons why I've very much valued your insight into not just my journey, but even like, this is a life thing for me, and I've, I've been able to be edified by your insight and what you've spoken to me about just clarifying things Yeah. Is because you have before told me, like, listen, I'm not necessarily an expert in things. I'm, I'm kind of just a run of the mill, latter day saint and all that other stuff. But that's what's been so valuable to me, right? 'cause you're not coming at this from this, you know, academic standpoint or anything like that. That being said, tell people a little bit if they don't know who you are, which they probably do, 'cause you're kind of a big deal, who you are, what you do, and what kind of content you create.

Speaker 1 00:07:51 Jesus thinks I'm a big deal, Jeff. Okay.

Speaker 2 00:07:53 <laugh>, he thinks we're all a big deal

Speaker 1 00:07:54 For. That's right. That's right. So, um, I, and this is another level that we sort of share, is you've been a pastor. You are a pastor. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> in the evangelical world. I have been a bishop or in, in our faith tradition once a bishop, always a bishop. So I'm a bishop in our tradition. And so we've, we've led congregations, we've done done the things in our own respective faith traditions. But, and from that background, I started a platform called Leading Saints, where I wanted to explore, um, how all things leadership within the context of the church, from how to run a meeting, to how to help somebody with, uh, mental health, uh, mental illness concerns, to mentoring someone through a pornography struggle. So because in our, as a lay leadership, we don't get formal training or like you went to school and master's degree with this intent of becoming a pastor, where I was a marketing grad, 28-year-old kid in inner city South Salt Lake. And they just said, Hey, we, we need you to step

up and serve this role for five, five years. So that led me into creating this platform, leading Saints podcast, uh, you know, online conferences and all the things to explore leadership in our church. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:09:00 And, and I think that's one of the reasons why you and I kind of very naturally converse Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> because we come from a very similar space. I think we joke often that in an alternate universe you flip the coin and I'm a latter Saint Bishop and you're a Protestant pastor. That's right. And that's, I think, just gets to, it's not just a sentimental edification. Right. Like, we actually bring really unique perspectives from a similar posture that I've just found really valuable. Yeah. So what are some of the things as you've engaged with Hello Saints, or as we've talked just in friendship that has been helpful to give you maybe a more informed insight to evangelical Christianity?

Speaker 1 00:09:38 Yeah. And, and as I do with Leading Saints, I always like to underscore these principles that, like when we drove down to St. George together like that for five hour drive there and back, um, like that was the best podcast that nobody will ever hear. Yep. But it was good because it was an audience of one. And we both know in these platforms where we have, you know, it feels like it's an audience of one, but we know a lot of people are Right. Watching. So it's hard to be maybe go all the way in with some of our real answers that we're still like, we're not settled with yet. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And, and we're worried about, maybe I'm not gonna say it here in a public platform 'cause I don't know how people are gonna interpret that, but if I'm just in a car with you Mm-Hmm.

Speaker 1 00:10:16 <affirmative>, you're willing to hear that, you know, help me process it, help me understand. And then we're both better off from that. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So I would say like, one thing I've learned just observing your journey, and then, you know, 'cause I have the benefit of not only watching your videos, but then I get to like, call you up after and be like, wait a minute. Like, let's talk A, B and C through. Right. Um, but one thing I've appreciated, 'cause as people know that, find out that we're friends and we chat and I'll, I'll sometimes get the real question like, all right, really like, this is, this is this guy for real. You know, like, what's is he, is his motives really pure or what is he really trying to do? Right. And some of 'em will say or share their frustration. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> with me about Hello Saint.

Speaker 1 00:10:58 It's like, why can't he just acknowledge how awesome the Book of Mormon is? 'cause it's a Jesus book. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And can, can he just do that? Right. And you've, you've alluded to a little bit on your videos. Yeah. But one thing I've learned through your journey is that from a latterday saint perspective, it's much easier. I would, and correct me if I'm wrong, but it's much easier for me to step into your world and be okay with it, where I I've probably watch, uh, several sermons, evangelical sermons every week. Mm-Hmm. You know, every church puts their Yeah. Sermon on YouTube. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And I really appreciate seeing how, you know, trained pastors who have experience in public speaking get up there and articulate the gospel Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> in their, from their faith tradition. So I'll listen to those and I'll, most of the time I'm like, Hmm, that's great.

Speaker 1 00:11:42 Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. The the flip side of that is, the way I explain it is Latter Saints, we have a prequel and a sequel of doctrine and a lot of it uhuh. And it's very detailed. And you saw that you sort of, you sort of wrestle with that through the President Oaks talk that you recently Yep. Responded to. And so I'm realizing, oh, it's a little bit harder for evangelical, like Jeff to just walk into our world and be like, yep, I'm okay with everything. A little bit different, but Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, uh, but there's a little bit more of a, a jarring response. Like, wait a minute, like, you know, premortal life Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> eternal families and eternal marriage and Yeah. You know, kingdoms in heaven. And like suddenly it gets, it's, it's,

Speaker 2 00:12:25 It's a lot to take in. Right?

Speaker 1 00:12:27 Yeah. And so people, I think people don't understand just the, the struggle that that is, that I've gained a lot of empathy for seeing that, where I'm just like, Jeff, just, just read the book of Mormon. It's awesome. Yeah. Like, look at this Jesus scripture. Yeah. Like, let's let, why don't you start sharing that? Yeah. And isn't that awesome? But it's like, oh, I don't know. You know? Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:12:46 And I think a lot of that just comes down to the fact that we, we have two almost opposite approaches to understanding what God has revealed. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So in a evangelical sense, we have this view of God has revealed specific things at specific times. And that is our constant rallying point. Anytime something new Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> comes on the scene, whether it's something cultural, even something religious, we're always trying to get back to the, the re the redux. Mm-Hmm.

Speaker 1 00:13:18 <affirmative>

Speaker 2 00:13:18 Of objective truth, which we say is the Bible. Whereas Latterday Saints, you're like, just as he revealed from the beginning, and he, he is still revealing. So there's been so much added that goes so much against the grain of an evangelical. It's like, whoa. Right. You guys have added a lot here. Prologue, epilogue of existence, <laugh> not to mention the extra scriptures. And it

Speaker 1 00:13:39 Does. And we, and we believe many more things will be revealed. It's sort of like, yeah. Like we haven't hit stop on this, you know? Right.

Speaker 2 00:13:45 So it does require a certain tolerance Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> to not have that normal reflex of like, Nope. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. You know what I mean? But to be like timeout, like, let me hear them out. Let me understand where they're coming from. So I've appreciated your willingness to grant empathy to grow in empathy where I'm trying to grow Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> in maybe tolerance or threshold for something I would otherwise just turn, do an about face on.

Speaker 1 00:14:13 And this is where, when it's face to face and approach with some level of spiritual maturity, I can sit with that. Yeah. And you can sit with that and be like, okay, that's not what I believe, but yeah. Interesting.

Speaker 2 00:14:25 And, you know, I talked about this on another podcast episode with my wife, where when you come from a different faith persuasion, we just, we have a really bad habit, evangelical, latter, saint whatever, Jew Muslim to dehumanize someone who's from a different context. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And how that is antithetical to the mission of Jesus. He actually came to bring clarity to a humanizing humble, uh, posture. And but it takes, it takes two.

Speaker 1 00:14:56 Right. And I think it, what comes from this, this is just maybe one caveat, is that once we sort of see that we're willing to sit with each other with that really heavy topics, or the more core doctrines that may be conflict, it's fun to have those moments where we can share things that are very esoteric in our faith. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> like that we have this moment on Marco Polo. Well, I said, because I don't know if you know this, and I'm pretty sure there's a latter. Same thing only, but we believe that Gabriel is Noah, go figure. And you responded, your jaw was just dropped. Like <laugh>

Speaker 3 00:15:32 What? My brain is like reaching for connections here. Um, wow. No, I didn't know that. I'm sure there's some really fascinating teaching around that.

Speaker 2 00:15:45 Excuse

Speaker 1 00:15:46 Me.

Speaker 2 00:15:46 <laugh>. Right.

Speaker 1 00:15:47 So, but it's sort of fun to be like, yeah, that's us. And I didn't, as I present that, I'm not worried like, oh, Jeff's really gonna think we're, we're weirdos now. Yeah. I mean Yeah. But you're willing to embrace it. And we, we sort of smile like, yeah, I think it's kind of cool Yeah. That we know who Angel Gabriel is. And you're like, well, we don't know. But that is cool. Yeah. And interesting.

Speaker 2 00:16:04 Well, and you, and that's why you have to cross a threshold Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> where you initially at a distance would be like, well, that's weird. Mm-Hmm.

Speaker 1 00:16:13 <affirmative>.

Speaker 2 00:16:14 And I've thankfully, like, the more I'm on this journey, I'm less like, well that's weird. Just 'cause it's different from what I believe and more like, well, that's different. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Okay. And I'm, I'm not saying that in a patronizing way. It's like

Speaker 1 00:16:25 That a is very different. I get it. It sounds a little weird, but it's, I've learned this stuff from, from a baby.

Speaker 2 00:16:30 Um, but yeah, I, and that's one of the, one of the misperceptions I had to cross Mm-Hmm. There's been many for me because we are in an evangelical realm where evangelizing, and so we're always looking at different faith groups. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And there's full, there are full classes. And I know that from a latter saint context, this is a bit

strange because it's like, why do you have a whole class on Islam at some of your Bible schools or seminaries? Like it's just a Muslim bash. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Like, why do you have entire classes on Mormonism or church, Jesus Christ, latterly Saints? Is it just a Mormon bash? And I get why it comes across that way. It's not that, it's because if we feel that we are called to bring the gospel forward, and these are groups that believe something different, it's an attempt to explain those beliefs.

Speaker 2 00:17:18 Right. The problem with that is oftentimes they're not very well informed in what we're being taught and trained about. In some cases they are. In other cases they're not. So one of the misperceptions I've had, I've been able to jettison as a result of our friendship is this line that I've been fed that members of the church, of Jesus Christ, of Latter Day Saints don't know their scriptures. They don't read the Bible. They don't think about what they believe. They're told not to think about what they believe. Most of the latter day saints, though, that I've engaged, which is a lot of, of latter day saints are very well informed about their scriptures, about the Bible, about why they believe different things. You guys have very strong convictions and rallying points of truth. And though it is different, not weird, different <laugh>, sometimes

Speaker 1 00:18:04 It's

Speaker 2 00:18:05 Worse. Okay. <laugh>. Um, I, I've grown to respect how informed latter day saints are about their own Yeah. Faith. So what else? What else do you got?

Speaker 1 00:18:14 All right. So, uh, this dynamic of the, the, the, the question of our, our latter day saints, our Mormons Christian Mm-Hmm. Right. This is the ongoing discussion just in our interaction with learning things. Now, I believe, if someone asks me, are you a Christian? Yes. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, I believe in Jesus Christ, the man from Nazareth who, I mean, we get in a, we get in a DeLorean and go back in time. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, we're gonna point at the same guy. That guy right there. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, I've also learned of differentiation of the purpose of how we see the savior, uh, his role, his mission, our relationship with him, even obviously to the dynamics of the Trinity Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> as opposed to, uh, being separate beings. And it's helped me realize, you know, if we truly believe that we're a res, the restored church of Jesus Christ that has ongoing revelation, that's a more dynamic faith.

Speaker 1 00:19:07 Like, of course it's different. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And not only did I think many latterday scenes have seen that as like, you're putting us in a, in a deficit position of like, no, no, no, you're not one of us and we're just so desperate to sit at your lunch table. Like, no, no, no. We we're part of the team. When in reality, I think it's helpful to step back and say, okay, we believe we're Christian, however it is, it is, uh, a, a remarkable thing of this additional knowledge that we feel we have. And so I can own that. Sure. Like, I, I can understand why you struggle with that. Yeah. And that's our message of saying we have more Mm-Hmm. That's been revealed that we wanna wanna share with you. So I hope I'm articulating that where I just, that I'm, I'm more at peace with that, um, dissonance that sometimes in the conversation, I don't need to convince Jeff that I'm a Christian the way that he thinks. Because what, what would be the point of, I mean, we would just be another denomination. Why would we need living profits?

Right. Why would we need authority? All these things. Yeah. Of course. We're different and that's okay.

Speaker 2 00:20:06 Yeah. Yeah. And that's, that's been sort of this interesting thing as I've maneuvered through that dynamic where people will, like you said, they wanna sit at the lunch table. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And my whole thing is like, yeah. I mean, there are reasons why it's not always going to be compatible. Historically, we believe in the same Jesus. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, when we get into the nature of Jesus, it is different. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. I'm not saying that to be mean, latterly saints agree. It is different. Right. The mission of Jesus. It's similar in some ways when it comes to him being the remedy for sin. But when it comes to, uh, uh, evangelical belief or even a mainstream Christian belief that it has to do with the horrible atrocity that took place in the garden, that there was nothing good that came out of that. It was the greatest tragedy in the history of existence, that Jesus is a one by his grace who is recovering and restoring that to get us back to him. That has more nuance. And there are more layers to that. In the latter day Saint thought, we can honestly say that's different. And then you're talking about the historic piece. Um, we're not not letting latterday saints sit at the lunch table because we don't want them to be y'all excuse yourself from the lunch table <laugh> in 1820. Yeah, exactly. Like you're saying, when Joseph Smith said that he received this vision, that, and that should be a

Speaker 1 00:21:18 Beautiful thing from our perspective. Like of course, if we believe what Joseph Smith said he was Right, of course we're gonna excuse ourselves from that table and say, guys, when you're ready, come over here. 'cause we're right. We got some good things cooking. And

Speaker 2 00:21:29 I think that's one thing that we'll get into our conversation in a minute about whether we will ever merge is I, I, we're lot of these saints want to be considered Christian. I'm a little bit interested to see if that posture might change over time to reposition that to be like, well, we're not necessarily as interested in being considered Christian by you. We're a little bit more interested in you seeing the importance of the restored gospel and, and gathering with us. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> because we believe that this is what Jesus meant to restore.

Speaker 1 00:22:00 And another like, dynamic that maybe help articulate what I'm trying to get at is it's us going to the mainstream Christian world and trying to convince them to let us sit at their lunch table is almost as asinine as the evangelical world going to the Jews table. Hmm. The Jewish tradition and being like, no, guys, like, we're Old Testament guys. We like, we love the Old Testament. Yeah. Like, scoot over here, we're gonna sit down and be like, no, no, no. Yeah. Like, we're right. So recognize it for what it is. We love the Jewish people, their faiths, the, the history in our, in our scripture. Right. Um, and so, but it's okay to see ourselves as the new covenant as we, we claim to be that Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> we're something entirely different. Just like the evangelicals see themselves as entirely different as the old Covenant or, or the Jewish world. I don't know if that's a helpful Oh yeah.

Speaker 2 00:22:50 It's, it's a problem because I mean, when we even say the new Covenant in an evangelical sense, we are talking about the Messiah who came to usher in the

kingdom of God and be the fulfillment of all Old Testament. Not only law, but prophecy. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> that is an addition Right. To the Torah and to the pro, you know, the prophecies and all that. So yeah. I think that's a pretty helpful parallel Yeah. As to what is being asked of one another when we're hoping to Yeah. Come together. I'll take my turn now. And something that I've learned from you that's been incredibly helpful, um, and this is tied into even some of your, your personal endeavors recently with a book that you've recently wrote. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> and just the, the posture you take on leading saints in general. And that is, um, this, uh, perception that I had, that latter Day Saints are so fixated on works and ordinances and covenants and, you know, doing the work in the temple, that there's zero concept of grace.

Speaker 2 00:23:55 Now, I can't, I I'm new to the, I'm new to the game here. I don't know what it's been like historically, but what you've been demonstrating to me is someone who holds quite firmly to traditional and orthodox latter-day saint belief, while also, um, valuing the grace of God, the grace of Jesus, and how grace plays and needs to play not only a fundamental role in our faith, but in, in your context, you're hoping plays an increasing role in latter-day saint thinking on how you view faith with, with, uh, in, within, you know, your religion, relationships with God. Um, why we even do what we do, how we live our lives, how grace needs to be important to that.

Speaker 1 00:24:42 There has been a history, I feel like, of just the way messaging came through things, the way doctrines were framed, where even as a youth, I sort of felt like, well, yeah, like Jesus is great, but it seems like there's a standard Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> of what I have to do in order to live up to, to what's expected of me around here. Sure. And so I think just through those innocent lessons and doctrine where we're, we wanna emphasize some of these greater blessings of ordinances and things we lose, we lost Jesus in there. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And so I think there's been this resurgence, I'd say in the past 10 to 15 years of people in our faith tradition better framing grace and understanding it. Now, people may say, well, come on, there's obviously been a, an orchestrated shift here so that you're, you want you now that you really want to see that the lunch table. Right. Right. But our topic, our topic or what the gospel topics on the latter, uh, the church of Jesus christ.org website, if you look up grace, it is defined as the enabling power of Jesus Christ. I think that's a perfect way to do it, because when I feel God's grace, when he comes to me and says, Kurt, you could do nothing ever again. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And I would still

Speaker 2 00:25:55 Be

Speaker 1 00:25:56 Overwhelmingly in love with you as my son. Like, I can't help but turn to that God, to that savior and say, how do I become like you? And in that moment, this is in our faith tradition where I would articulate in that moment, he'll say, awesome. Yeah. I've got some commandments. I have some covenants that if you work on these, you'll become something, you'll become like me. Mm-Hmm.

Speaker 2 00:26:20 <affirmative>. And, and as I hear you articulate that, I mean, it's just, this is like case in point of this dynamic that exists here. 'cause you're articulating some things

that doctrinal theologically from a biblical standpoint. I'm like, a, you're close. Like, there's certain things that are really close, but like, it's, it's not totally that, like when you're talking about the ordinances that give us the opportunity, Uhhuh <affirmative>, I'm like, God, it's the Holy Spirit and all that. And which I think you would agree with that. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But all of that chatter, which is good. I think that's, that's discernment taking place. Right. Which is good. I'm also hearing the chatter of fellow evangelicals who will say, oh, those latter day saints, they're putting a focus on grace. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, that's a PR campaign. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, like, they're just wanting to look more evangelical. It's a, it's a survival move. And I'm saying, no, this is, this is not somebody who works for public relations for the church

Speaker 1 00:27:09 <laugh>.

Speaker 2 00:27:09 Right. I am seeing them and hearing them articulate experience in the testimony of people where something spiritual Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> is at play here. And

Speaker 1 00:27:17 So again, that's where I think the spiritual maturity comes in to just be like, that's cool. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> great. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, I see it differently. You see it differently. Like Yeah. Let's keep talking. Yeah. Because it is fun to talk about. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:27:28 So all of that being the case then, let's, we've, we've talked around it, we've actually talked about a little bit, but let's get to how do we view this from a larger sense then? Is it possible that the evangelical church and the church of Jesus Christ of Vitally Saints would ever merge? I have thoughts. I wanna hear your thoughts. And by the way, I just wanna make sure it's very clear that we are both the final authority on this matter. That's right.

Speaker 1 00:27:52 <laugh>. That's right. Absolutely.

Speaker 2 00:27:53 No, we're just, we're just kind of giving our opinion, uh, based on our perspective.

Speaker 1 00:27:57 I love that question because it's so provocative that every evangelical and every latter day saint just scoff. Like, ha Yeah. No way. Right? Yeah. Now from a latter day saint perspective, from a more practical sense, it's like, Jeff, like we got prophets, like Moses lives for us, you know? So like if you guys are all on board Yeah. With admitting that President Nelson is the modern day, Moses, like, let's do this. Yeah. Right. But that seems like such a stretch, right? Yeah. So it's easy to be like, no way, like not happening Now, I would say the short answer is it's not gonna happen. So what do we do about it? But, um, I think there are many places where we can merge and flourish that way. But I mean, am I headed down the right path there? I,

Speaker 2 00:28:40 Yeah, I think so. And, and maybe one way that I would answer that question is, well, what would need to be overcome in order for there to be a merger? So from an evangelical perspective, the things that would need to be overcome would be deal breakers. So I think there would need to be a, uh, a repositioning, not necessarily a jettison, but a repositioning of the regard for the profit. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, because I, I don't think that we would, from an evangelical standpoint, um, submit to that authority in that sense. Um, there

would need to be a repositioning in a, maybe even a jettison, maybe not, but definitely a repositioning of the regard for the Book of Mormon, Uhhuh <affirmative> and the additional Scriptures, doctrine and Co and all those.

Speaker 1 00:29:20 And so scripture as, as you

Speaker 2 00:29:22 Said, right. Right. And, and so the solo scripture thing, we would either, either you guys would need to embrace solo scripture, or we would need to embrace, uh, at least maybe in a spiritual sense Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> the, uh, edifying revelation that comes through the book of Mormon and doctrine covenants. Um, and I don't know if this is paramount, but would still be pretty important, is the understanding of, you know, what is heaven gonna be like and how necessary are certain things to experience a certain type of afterlife? Like, we're getting into fundamental core doctor now. So obviously Right. These are things that would need to be overcome and as it stands right now would be considered deeply troubling to most evangelicals. Yeah. So the question then is, where could we

Speaker 1 00:30:08 Right.

Speaker 2 00:30:09 Potentially link up or join? Because there's not gonna be a full blending right

Speaker 1 00:30:14 Now. Let me ask a clarifying question. Yeah. Because if you were asking me, are we a denomination of Christianity, I would say yes. Hmm. You asking Evangelical be like, uh, no, no, man. Right. Like, bless your heart. Yeah. Like, you're not, right. So are you asking this in terms of like how one denomination is engaging with others? They haven't necessarily merged, but they're willing to like, be on the same playing field. Yeah. Is that, is that what you're asking? That's

Speaker 2 00:30:38 A good clarifying question. Yeah. And I mean, it just becoming like another denomination, another right. I, I suppose I don't even know where you would categorize it. I don't think you would categorize it as Protestant, maybe Evangelical definitely, but maybe just another denomination within mainstream Christianity. Right. And it's interesting for me to hear you say that you would consider yourself another denomination. I would think that Latter Day Saints would say we're, we're not a denomination, we are the restored church.

Speaker 1 00:31:06 Yeah. And that's where it goes back to my earlier points of, like, generally speaking, I'm like, you guys we're at the same lunch table. Okay. But also when you come back to me and be like, no, 'cause of this, this, and this, I'm like, I know. Isn't that cool? Come on over. Right. Yeah. Right. So it, there's, there's different ways to frame this. Yeah. We would've

Speaker 2 00:31:22 To go the the wrong way on one way streets. Yes. In order for that, I think to, to merge in the sense of how we're kind of talking.

Speaker 1 00:31:29 Yeah. But I would say when Lattery Saints really struggle with evangelicals saying, you're not Christian, what they're feeling, and like, you're, they're not saying

like, oh no, we're the same. Like our beliefs are the same. We're saying like, no, we're a denomination of Christianity. Like, we, we would believe that. But I have further understanding and under Yeah. Of why that's harder to get to for evangelicals.

Speaker 2 00:31:49 And I mean, really for me, at the end of the day, and I don't say this as a cop out, and I don't say this as a sidestepping Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, but we oversimplify the desired objective when we ask questions like our Latter Day Saints Christians. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Um, another one that gets this is super provocative, and I know it, it makes Latter Day Saints kind of wince, but like, is the church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints a cult? Right. Right. Um, I don't, I personally don't think that there's a yes or no answer to those types of questions because we're defining them differently. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Okay. So I think it's more important that we commit to a longer conversation where we get to the more fundamental realities of, regardless of how the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints started Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> or the Methodist Church, or, you know, even the first Century church and how the, you know, cultic religions of Rome and played a role and how Judaism played a role.

Speaker 2 00:32:53 I, I think the Lord is more interested in the individual of like, what is the spirituality of this person as they stand before Almighty God? And how do they regard Jesus? Like, so to me, I try to avoid the yes or no answers to those questions. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, because I just don't think it's that, I don't think it's as simple as we wanna make it. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Um, and another reason why I get a little bit reluctant to just give a definitive answer is because usually a definitive answer shuts the conversation down. And what I'm wanting to do on Hello Saints, and what I'm wanting to do, for example, in relationships to you, is I wanna keep the conversation going. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, that's the most important objective. And I don't say this very often of Hello Saints and of my desired relationship to engage with Latter Day Saints, and hopefully vice versa is we're not trying to gather the data so we can make a conclusion about you and see bye nice knowing you. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But it's to keep the conversation going and allow the Lord to be in that space as we desire to see him more clearly and walk on a path of truth. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:34:03 And, uh, there's two places I go here, but, so I guess I come back to this question like, okay, we're not going to, they're not gonna get on board with prophets, uh, you know, the Book of Mormon, all these things. So where can we get on board with Yeah. And I dunno if you want to go here, but, uh, from a latter day saint perspective in the, in the realm of politics, it was interesting as a latterday saint to observe in 2012 when we had our boy Mitt Romney running for president. Right. And there were in, you know, in the primary season there's this obvious contention, um, about his faith. And then obviously he gets the nomination, and then we're like, and usually it's like everybody on board now. Like that's typically how Yeah. Politics go. Now, generally, there was a lot of evangelicals that jumped on board on the Romney train.

Speaker 1 00:34:48 Yeah. Um, but then from a latter day saint, and I could be wrong with these statistics, but then we see like later on when Donald Trump wins and we see more evangelicals vote for Donald Trump than they they did for Mitt Romney. And we're sort of like, I mean, and obviously many of us, many latter day saints are on board with Donald Trump, and

obviously we voted a majority that way, but we also step back and be like, oh, wait a minute. Like, so you're good with Donald Trump, you know? Yeah. But like Mitt Romney wasn't good enough. Yeah. You know, so, so then we think, we walk away like, dang, like, we can't even come together in the political realm where some of these issues that we, we dramatically agree with certain policies and things. Right. Yeah. I mean, what comes to mind there? Well,

Speaker 2 00:35:31 I'm not a clearinghouse when it comes to like, the specifics of political trends, Uhhuh <affirmative>, because I've written Rem Mitt Romney in every presidential election since 2008. There you go. Even before 2012. So we

Speaker 1 00:35:44 Can't come together.

Speaker 2 00:35:45 So Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:35:46 <laugh> <laugh>,

Speaker 2 00:35:47 Even in the last election where he's not on the ballot, it's Donald Trump and Joe Biden, I wrote a MIT Romney, like, I've just always liked him. I know a lot of people are really mad at me, and you've just turned on the pod, turned off the podcast <laugh>, but it's just, it's true. So I, I feel like I'm a little bit biased here because his latterday Saint connection was not a deal breaker for me. I didn't think, you know Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> in St. Louis at the time where, you know, these elections are taking place. I didn't hear a ton of evangelicals gripe much about his latterday saint connections. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Um, I felt like people were just a lot more enamored with Barack Obama in 2012. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Right. Um, but then there are the poll numbers of like how many evangelicals turned out from MIT Romney. And I, I just think that there, again, I don't get into all this, but I do think there are a lot of, um, like evangelicals who have certain, uh, racial convictions or like convictions in the race space Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> that might've been more inclined to put aside maybe left and right because of the importance of Barack Obama Right. Being in that role. Yeah. And so, I, I can't get too analytical there because it's way

Speaker 1 00:36:53 Above my paper. We we're totally out of our realm, both of us. But

Speaker 2 00:36:56 I do think in a political space though, um, we can and do align on so many things of virtue and value Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> that there's a lot of linking arms that could take place when it comes to, uh, principles that we think are good for society and families. And, um, I think what we would probably even both say God's ultimate, ultimate design for community and culture and a people group. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:37:26 Yeah. And, and I think, and uh, obviously we're both probably naive as far as the dynamics of what's happening behind the scenes, even in like the, the pro-life. Sure. You know, dyna the debate there that I'm sure that there's, you know, uh, rallies and things where you show up and both evangelical and latter Hastings are there doing their thing, but then it's like, but then do you like go have lunch together? Right. And then you keep talking. Like, I think we just need to keep taking it a step further, realizing, oh, we're more alike than we are different in a lot of things. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:37:55 I think as we engage culture Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, um, whether it's political or not, I think that there's an, there's enough alignment there where, um, we can do good together. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And that's one of the reasons why I enjoy being a part of interfaith groups here in Utah, which is usually evangelicals on Latterday saints. There's, there's sometimes other faith groups that get involved. There's some, uh, Jewish presence and some of that. But, um, I just think that it's okay for us to just say, yeah, like, we, we align here.

Speaker 1 00:38:24 Another dynamic I think that would be worth exploring is that I've talked to many latterday saint parents who maybe they have a son or daughter sort of lose their faith and wander, but, but then they say, but you know what? She's found a great Baptist church where she lives that she goes to, so I'm just so glad that she's still on, on the Jesus train. Right, sure. That she's still engaging there. I don't feel that as much where if an evangelical son daughter lost her faith, but then joined the latter day saint movement in faith, there's still a bit of disappointment. They're like, yeah. And so I wish they would be a little bit more like, Hey, they're still engaged with God and sure they don't see Jesus the same way we do, but they're still there. Yeah. You know?

Speaker 2 00:39:05 Yeah. And I think that goes back to, um, like a latter day Saint would see someone leaving the church and going to a Protestant denomination. It's like, well, you are relinquishing certain benefits that come from Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, the, the restored gospel, the plan of salvation, but you still have Jesus and that that matters foundationally. Whereas evangelicals would say, oh, but now you're leaving the Baptist church, but now you're moving into the space where they've added so much. Right. Are you missing Jesus? Right. I think many would say, I'm concerned that you are. Yeah. Um, I think that there's probably a, a little bit of a shift taking place in the openness of people saying, I have significant concerns with Latterday Saint Doctrine, that I do believe that it is possible for somebody to have who has left the Protestant church to be living in relationship with Jesus within the church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints. But

Speaker 1 00:40:01 If the, if pushed on that, like, isn't it better than them being a, an all out atheist?

Speaker 2 00:40:08 I think a lot of evangelicals would say,

Speaker 1 00:40:09 No. Now bless the hearts of our atheist brothers and sisters. Hello atheist. That's a whole nother thing.

Speaker 2 00:40:14 That's my other channel. Yeah. No, I For sure. I mean, 'cause obviously we believe that hope is found in Christ, in Christ alone. Right. Right. That's something that we do, we do share. Um, but if pressed on that, yeah. I think, uh, many evangelicals might say no, only because they would say it. It's the same thing whether you're part of a false religion, which many event, not many, but some evangelicals would say the LDS church is, or an atheist, it doesn't matter one way or the other. You're outside of Yeah. Being in a redeemed relationship with Christ. Um, but yeah, I think you would get a range of answers there. Right.

Speaker 1 00:40:49 And that would be my invitation to an event evangelical audience of like, I get that it's difficult, but just sit with that a little bit. Yeah. Take it to God and really explore that. 'cause this is maybe a point where we can at least take a step further. I'm not saying let's completely merge there and be again, we're not, uh, you know, you don't see us as another denomination, but Sure. It, because in our, you know, it's not this overwhelming complete disappointment Sure. When somebody's sort of engaging in a different faith that way, it's like, well, I'm glad they're still Yeah. Having

Speaker 2 00:41:18 Faith and see, but this is a good punctuation point for the conversation because when asking a hard question where there could be discomfort, you and I have learned to be comfortable Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> with the fact that you're saying, dude, I love that you testify of Christ. I think you're missing out on a lot Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> by not, um, being more open or receiving the latter day saint, you know, revelation of the, the, the restored gospel. Um, so you, you're kind of in a position of like, I'm glad you love Jesus, but you're kind of missing out. And I'm saying, I love hearing you testify of Jesus and that you're saved by Christ and Christ alone. That's all that matters. At the end of the day, I get concerned that all the other stuff you're doing might clutter your understanding of God's grace and who Christ is. But I love that you continue to rally around the fact that at the end of the day, all doctrine aside, your hope is in Christ, in Christ alone. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Absolutely. Okay. So is there tension in there? There is. But we can sit with that tension and continue to talk through not only other aspects of our faith, but just be friends. Right. And see what else we can reconcile, um, and our perspective as we just live life together. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:42:29 And I, I wanna highlight something that's really important in this dynamic that we're having and, and what you're doing with Hello Saints. 'cause you get a lot of, and I hear it too, a lot of encouragement like, Hey Jeff, listen, go down to Brigham Young University that they've got a slew of PhDs. They'll sit down with you, they'll talk you through this. Now I hope you do some of that and you have done Sure.

Speaker 2 00:42:48 I did

Speaker 1 00:42:48 To, yeah. And it's really interesting. Right? Yeah. And, and we've all seen the, you know, his name's Robert Millett, who's our, like, he's retired now, but he was the, the dean of of religion education at BYU. He's got PhDs and things that he can talk about the gospel in such a awesome way. And he's done interfaith sit downs with Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> with your scholars. Yeah. And those are sort of fun to listen to. Yeah. The, your smartest guy with our smartest guy and let 'em go. But I think this is really crucial of we don't have those backgrounds. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And, and like I said, I can't rattle off this verse and that verse and this quote, but I think it's important that we model just like how the everyday guy Yeah. Sits down and has these without being the gospel scholar. 'cause oftentimes we wanna bring him with it. Like, yeah. Well, I don't know the answers, but here's Robert Mill, so you should talk to him. Yeah. Like, no, like even Robert Mill wants us to have these Yeah. Engagements, even though we don't have the PhD. That's

Speaker 2 00:43:38 Right. And, and it's interesting that you're saying that, and I think that's, this is actually a good way for us to kind of like punctuate the conversation because I had, uh, lunch yesterday with an evangelical who's in a faith space very similar to Hello Saints. It's just not public. It's more behind the scenes. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> it is more in the academic world. So he is closely tied into people like, um, Richard Mao and Craig Blomberg, who are like huge evangelical thinkers in the academic world and connecting them with BYU professors or even people within church leadership. And they pride themselves on sort of doing that hard work at a higher level with people from a more academic standpoint to figure out how organizationally there can be a meeting of one another. I think the whole point of this though, is I think the real work is done here. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. It's in friendship. It's in relationship. Absolutely. It's when there's not a, an agenda attached to it, um, that can clutter just genuine, authentic friendship. And I like the word you keep using, taking a mature adult empathetic approach to just loving one another. Yeah. Because that is, you know, the greatest commandment. Love the Lord God, love your neighbors yourself. And I've really appreciated your openness to friendship and, um, just continuing to, especially now that we're in Utah living life together. And

Speaker 1 00:44:55 It's fun.

Speaker 2 00:44:56 It's super fun. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's

Speaker 1 00:44:58 Good. And we don't always talk about churchy stuff.

Speaker 2 00:45:00 We don't, sometimes we talk about why the Utah Jazz is still called the Jazz, even though they're not in New Orleans anymore. Come on guys. And why

Speaker 1 00:45:06 You have such a real, uh, a strange fascination with hockey and soccer. I don't get it, but hey,

Speaker 2 00:45:11 Because you're the two greatest sports in the world. So there you go. Anyway, if you don't know who Kurt Francom is, you probably do, but if you don't, please check out his podcast. It's the Leading Saints podcast. You can also watch videos of his podcast on YouTube. All the links are down in the description. Is there anything else people need to know about finding out who you are and how they can connect with you?

Speaker 1 00:45:28 No, I think you gave a good starting point.

Speaker 2 00:45:30 Okay. That's great. Also, I'm gonna give a special thanks to Studio in Lehigh, and that's Studio With Two is they provided the space for us so that we can get this, uh, podcast recorded. You can go to studio.com. Again, that's with two is linked down in the description. If you want more information on what they do, you can, uh, support me on Patreon if you'd like. I'm sure there's ways that you can support Leading Saints as well. We'll put that link down in the description. Yep. And continue to come back for more regular Hello Saints content on the YouTube channel, but also more podcast episodes like this. So until next time, we'll see you later. Saints

Speaker 1 00:46:23 The End. That's it for this Leading Saints episode. I encourage you to check out some of the most popular episodes of the podcast that we list at the bottom of the show notes. If you haven't listened to all of those, do so now. And remember, grab your copy of my new book, *is God Disappointed In Me* on Amazon or in select Costco stores?

Speaker 4 00:46:52 It came as a result of the position of leadership, which was imposed upon us by the God of Heaven, who brought forth a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And when the Declaration was made concerning the only and only true and living church upon the face of the Earth, we were immediately put in a position of loneliness. The loneliness of leadership from which we cannot shrink nor run away. And to which we must face up with boldness and courage and ability.