



Becoming an Influencer Instead of a Consumer | An Interview with Kempe Nicoll

April 3, 2024

Speaker 1 00:00:04 Have you ever tried to help youth with their mental health? Wow, that's a tricky road to travel. I have to tell you about an inspiring presentation we recorded with a one and only Jody Moore. Yes. That life coaching Jody Moore. A few years ago, she recorded a fantastic presentation covering topics like normalizing tough feelings with youth, a more positive understanding of stress, how to minimize shame, and mastering the skillset of empathy and better understanding anxiety. I want you to see this presentation as soon as you finish this podcast episode. You can go to leading-saints.org/fourteen, and this will get you access to the entire video library at no cost for 14 days. Jodi's presentation is in the Mentally Healthy Saints Library, and you'll be a better leader or parent when you finish it. Again, go to leading-saints.org/fourteen or check out the show notes for the link.

Speaker 1 00:01:25 Before we jump into the content of this episode, I kind of feel it's important that I introduce myself. Now, many of you have been around a long time. You're well familiar with My Voice and the with Leading Saints as an organization, but if you're not, well, my name is Kurt Francom, and I am the executive Director of Leading Saints and the podcast host. Now, leading Saints is a nonprofit organization dedicated, helping latter day saints be better prepared to lead. And we do that through well content creation like this podcast and many other resources@leadingsaints.org. And, uh, we don't act like we have all the answers or, uh, know exactly what a leader should do or not do, but we like to explore the concepts of leadership, the science of leadership, what people are researching about leadership, and see how we can apply them to a latter day Saint world. So here we go.

Speaker 1 00:02:42 Hey, welcome back to the Leading Saints Podcast. In this episode, I get the opportunity to sit down with Kempe Nicholl, who is actually a bishop in Bountiful, Utah, but most people will probably be familiar with him through his Instagram and social media presence in Declare My Word. He has a huge audience where he shares mainly quotes and thoughts from general conference from our prophet, Sears and Revelators. And just a really fantastic approach on, in social media of declaring the word and getting the words of our prophet seers and revelators out there. Not necessarily in a, in a way to convert people to the church, but just to give them encouragement. And we all know the encouraging words that come from, from our leaders. So in this episode, listen for the, uh, where he talks about how we can leverage social media, not out of obligation, but maybe if we're already using it, maybe how we can encourage youth, those that are on social media or who use social media to learn how to approach social media so it doesn't suck them into the abyss that it can sometimes be.

Speaker 1 00:03:42 And, uh, teach them to share, uh, and promote positive messages to people around the world. And then of course, we take, uh, some time to talk about camp's experience. Being a bishop has been about a year since he's been a bishop, but has served in some bishoprics what he's learning, some unique approaches, uh, more specifically, uh, how he involves youth to connect them with maybe individuals who aren't as active in the church, but to talk about their mission and to get mentorship about their, their mission, uh, as these youth are preparing to serve a mission. So, really good stuff. Check it out. Here's my interview with Kempe Nicholl. Today, I'm here with Kempe Nicholl How are you, Kempe? I'm doing good. Awesome. Happy to be here. Now, we've had an opportunity to sort of, uh, cross paths right? At different, uh, events and, and, uh, most people may be familiar with your, your online platform, but maybe not the man behind the platform. It's really the family behind the platform, right? Probably. Yeah. Yeah. So what, what's your platform like? Put yourself into context for us.

Speaker 2 00:05:07 Um, so a few years ago, 2015 when I created the account, but, uh, most recently I created a, an Instagram account called Declare My Word. And, um, I, I did it with the intent of just, uh, providing it for my young men. I love general conference quotes. And I was in, so

Speaker 1 00:05:21 You're serving in young men's? I was serving

Speaker 2 00:05:22 In young men's at the time as young men's president. And, uh, I was, I was actually in the Bishop's office. We were having our core meeting and we're just talking about it, and I was like, man, social media, there's a, there's a lot going on here and it's not going away. And so in that meeting, I, I created the account Oh, really? <laugh>. Um, just with the idea of I wanna create some content for my young men so that they see something good. Yeah. And then from there, you know, five people followed it, 50 people followed it, and now there's, uh, quite a few that follow it. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:05:48 Almost 200,000 people,

Speaker 2 00:05:50 Right? Yeah. Almost 200,000 probably by the end of the week. And that's cool. Um, I, I just, uh, it's kind of taken, uh, taking control of itself. Yeah. You know, and people love the messages, and I just get excited to share the content.

Speaker 1 00:06:00 Yeah. So starting out, like how long ago was this that you started it? Uh,

Speaker 2 00:06:04 I created it in 2015. Oh, okay. But that was back Oh, wow. When you could only share 15 second clips Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> on video and trying to get a good quote. And so I, I created the account, didn't do much for a while, but then 2020, there was about 5,000 followers at the time. Um, and at that point I kinda made the decision, okay, I'm gonna do this. Nice. Um, with a lot more effort. And then ever since then, it's grown.

Speaker 1 00:06:24 Yeah. Now, typically today, when you look at it, it's a lot of general conference quotes right? Or quotes from general authorities, apostles. Right. Um, was that the intent from the beginning? Is that what you started sharing from the beginning? Yeah,

Speaker 2 00:06:36 It was, um, because kind of going back to my mission, I, I was the missionary that every time we walked into the apartment, I'd turn on general conference on the cassette player, Uhhuh. And anytime I could find a new general conference tape, you know, I, I get a recording of it. So I love listening to general conference. And so it just became something that I did naturally. I love sharing and reading general conference. And so I just started sharing those clips, and then all of a sudden I learned people would share these clips with other people, and I was like, I'm back to being a missionary. Mm-Hmm. I love this. Yeah. You know, so it's, it's really been a missionary effort.

Speaker 1 00:07:04 Yeah. And so what's, what's it like watching general conference now? Are you, I obviously you're trying to listen, but you're like, oh, that's, I gotta, yeah. I gotta mark that one.

Speaker 2 00:07:12 Yep. No, I do. Yeah. Um, it, it's, I don't do it anymore than I've, uh, I did before. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, I, I've always loved general conference. I love going to general conference, but now I'll hear something I was like, oh, I gotta make sure I write that note down. Mm-Hmm. Because I'm gonna do that one. Um, and it's, it's just fun. That's

Speaker 1 00:07:28 Cool. Now, um, the reason I want to and highlight, and you're also currently serving as a bishop. Yeah. So we have, we have lots of directions we can go today, which is fun. Uh, but, you know, I think there's a lot of youth leaders, just leaders in general. And, and I, I look at it that, man, it's so, like, the more we can project the voices of living prophets right, the better, right? Yeah. Because sometimes there's this pressure, I'm, you know, obviously a content creator with social media, there's this pressure of like, okay, I gotta like get a graphic designer, a video editor, and, you know, do all these things, which to some extent that's helpful. Um, and, you know, and we have to create the content, but over reality, the content's out there, we can just project it from, especially from living prophets. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:08:09 Um, and we live in an influencer economy, right? Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And, and I think most leaders understand this, maybe the older generation

doesn't quite grasp it, where an individual, whether it's youth or someone in their twenties or thirties, they, they're, they're scrolling, right? Yeah. On Instagram or Facebook or whatever, Twitter. And they're picking up that there's a, there's a message being delivered to their brain, like Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> just over and over and over again. And I, I sometimes wish we could, you know, this isn't my prerogative or powers of be, but you know, I, I think like, it would be great if Elder Nar, elder Anderson or whoever was, was on social media 10 times a day Yeah. Sharing a quick, casual, informal message. But for whatever reason, that's not the case. And, you know, we do see it. Maybe they're sitting in their office a

Speaker 2 00:09:00 Little bit more now than

Speaker 1 00:09:01 Before. Yeah, yeah. They're, they're right. And so, but what we can do is share the messages. They've already spoken, because we'll hear it at general conference, and Yeah. Then, you know, we may listen to it again, or read it or review it in Elders Quorum Relief Society, but to just share the gospel that way, it's really a powerful way to do it. Right?

Speaker 2 00:09:18 Yeah, absolutely. Um, the word I like to, to use is I love to amplify their message. Mm-Hmm. Yeah. Um, and I think it's great that people are creating their own content. Um, I've never really put myself on the account, um, just because I was posting, you know, quotes from general, uh, general leaders. But I've tried to put myself on there a little bit more, because I think it's important if, you know, if we're gonna be missionaries to find opportunities to share our own testimony. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And so I've, I've done it a little bit more, um, as, as you were saying that there, there's, there's a hundred reasons why I created the account, and there's another a hundred reasons why I've done a little bit more, but just to highlight a few of those. You, you mentioned Elder Bednar in 2014 at BYU is when he gave his kind of his social media Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:09:56 Speech. And I was, um, I was taken by that. I was like, man, this is amazing. We need to flood the earth with positive messages. So that was one thing that kind of led into me creating the account, um, not thinking it would be what it is today, but I kind of feel like it's, it's helped accomplish that. Um, and, and when I, when I create the account, I, I post those, those quotes. The thing that I really love is I know that I'm creating content for other people to share naturally. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Um, we love listening to general conference. We love listening to our profit, and I love creating a post in a way that you mentioned that people are just scrolling through, if I can create something for them to stop, listen to the prophet amplify his message, and hopefully they jump off of wherever they're scrolling through, and they go read the talk Mm-Hmm.

Speaker 2 00:10:41 <affirmative> or they jump into the scriptures, something that we can do to help them get more engaged with the gospel. And then there was a, a, a second talk by Elder Stevenson in 2017, and I think he was talking at Women's conference, but one thing that really stood out to me is he said, I hope you'll have the courage to swipe, to swipe up post tweet, blog, all those things. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And, uh, I took from that we need to have the courage get on there. This is where people are at. People are listening to this, and they're spending their

time here. And if we can be a digital missionary and share the gospel there, people will get engaged. And there's been a lot of good experiences and blessings that have come from it.

Speaker 1 00:11:18 So take me just like, what advice would you give to the lay member who, you know, they've got a hundred followers, you know, it's just their friends and family. They're not looking to have an impact or things, but they can still amplify the amplified message, right? Yeah. That, that you're doing. Um, so how, how, what advice would you give just to the lay members they approach social media? Um,

Speaker 2 00:11:37 I, I think the first thing that comes to mind when I read there's, you know, we have the church handbook, but there's also the missionary handbook that's available online. There's some really good things in there. But one thing it says, talking to missionaries who are doing things on social media, it says, don't worry about the reach. Don't worry about your followers. Just create content. And I'm paraphrasing, just create content that's good. You know, I can get it out there. And I think that's the advice that we have, that's being a digital missionary, um, that's sharing the gospel. Um, so rather than focusing on getting a hundred thousand followers, we need a hundred thousand people in the church sharing positive messages. Yeah. And I think that fulfills what Elder Bednar was saying, we need to flood the earth with positive messages. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:12:14 I think of somebody who has, you know, maybe isn't in Utah and surrounded by Latterday Saints, but you know, they have a following of 200 people Right. In their circle of influence. Right. And maybe half of 'em are non laar Day saints. Like as a missionary, if you were invited to come to a conference room or a church or, or someplace to share a message with a hundred people, we'd be like, this is incredible. Right. But now it is sort of, that's been skewed a little bit. We think like, oh, only a hundred. Come on. No. But like, if you were in a room with that many people, that would be well worth your time to do. Absolutely. So it's worth, again, not that you have to create the content, but amplifying these Mm-Hmm. This good, this good content online is, is the way to go. Right.

Speaker 2 00:12:54 Um, a as you say that, going back to what L Stevenson said, another thing that stood out to me, and, uh, you know, that talk was in 2017, a lot has happened since then. Um, but I've recently had conversations with people, they're concerned about social media, and I have the same concerns. Are we spending too much time on it? You know, what are we consuming? How are we being influenced? Um, but Elder Stevenson at BYU in 2017, he, he made the comment that the benefits will outweigh, you know, the things that might draw us back. And it's, it's sometimes really hard to see Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But I think you just pointed out, if you have an opportunity to share your testimony to a hundred people, that's huge. Yeah. Um, and if we stay focused on sharing and doing things in normal and natural ways, you'll see the lift. And I think we're already seeing that right now. Yeah. So having the courage, um, to do it.

Speaker 1 00:13:41 Cool. And this is just, again, more on a more practical level, people would just be sharing it on like Instagram or on Facebook, or like, what do they actually do if they see like the content you produce?

Speaker 2 00:13:53 Yeah. Um, uh, kind of going back, you know, what's my advice? I think it's really important that we stick with what the prophets have said, do things in normal and natural ways. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Um, so I, I'm not suggesting that people need to get on a certain platform if you're not currently on it, but if you are on a platform, if you are using Instagram or using Facebook, are you finding opportunities to share the gospel? Or are you just consuming? Right. Um, and, and that's kind of the danger that I, I'm, I'm afraid of if we're just on there scrolling, but not engaging that, that, that's a concern. Yeah. But if we can find opportunities in normal and natural ways to share things that are important to us, just like you would share, Hey, I went to the park, or my, uh, my child did this in the school play. We share those things on social media. What do you enjoy about the gospel? And share it in the exact same way.

Speaker 1 00:14:40 Yeah. And, uh, this goes back to some advice I got from my friend, John Dye, uh, who, who emphasizes share moments, not messages. Yeah. Where it's good to, you know, share a general conference quote or clip, you know, as, as they come. But if that's all you're sharing, we all, we all have that ant, right? Yeah. It's like the one ant shares all political messages, <laugh>, Uhhuh, the other t's just like, just fire hosing you with like general conference quotes. Right. And it's like, here we go, we're gonna really give it to 'em. But mixing in there like just natural moments, then you're going to capture, um, more people's attention rather than just fire hosing them with religious messages. Right.

Speaker 2 00:15:17 Yeah. Um, I was actually, that was actually the next thing I wanted to say is be balanced. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, the normal and natural is what do you do naturally? You know, there's seven days in the week, and one of 'em is, we go to church, we should be comfortable on a Monday to say, this is what I did on Sunday. And then on Tuesday we talked about going to the play. But what I've learned over time is what messages resonate the most? Um, if I,

Speaker 1 00:15:37 I I wanna ask you this. Yeah. Like, what, which ones are standing out?

Speaker 2 00:15:39 So, um, you know, on certain platforms when people are really contentious on those platforms, you know, if I post something about the Temple or like baptism for the Dead, they jump in, you know, and it's negative, uh, because, because they're looking for that opportunity. But what I really like to do, and what I found is people love sharing quotes that talk about kindness, that talk about family. Hmm. That talk about parenting. Um, there's a lot of people out there with children who are struggling, and it's, they'll stop and they'll listen to somebody say, Hey, I've had, you know, these challenges, I've overcome these things, and this is something that provides hope for them. And what I've learned is if it provides hope, they'll want to share it. Mm. And so that's kind of what I go looking for when I listen to general conference now, is like, I know somebody's gonna share that, and so I get excited to go create that content where they may not have the digital tools to, to do it. I do. You know, and I've, I've kind of built that skill. Yeah. So that's my way to help them if I can create the content. Um, especially President Holland <laugh>, there's, there's a quote, and I've posted it probably 5, 6, 7 times. And every time it just, it's something that goes viral. Uh, there's another quote about

parenting. There's just some of these that I just know that will go viral. And so I look for opportunities to share the same, same messages.

Speaker 1 00:16:50 Yeah. Yeah. And these are things, because I'm thinking back, like, um, October, 2023 conference, uh, president Oak's talk, you know, he, he went in deep about like the three degrees of glory and very, and a great talk, I mean, gave a lot to unpack, but maybe, you know, some of those talks were like super doctrinal focus. They, they may not be the type of, of, of quote you share, but it's more the, the hopeful encouraging, which, you know, those are intermixed, and sometimes that is present. Oaks is giving that as well. Right? Yeah. Um, and, and I'm just thinking of the, like, do you find that, um, even like, not, it goes viral on like, in in places of even non-members or people who don't, you don't even know who this Jeffrey Holland guy is, right? Yeah. Uh,

Speaker 2 00:17:34 I'm glad you said that. Uh, there's a post from Lindsey Robbins where he talks about, um, parenting. And he says, you know, some of us, if we're lucky to have children, you know, you have an experience and they're obedient and is parenting 1 0 1, but some, some children can provide an experience where you're in parenting 5 0 5 <laugh>. And he says, I hope that you'll think about it. That not what did you do wrong in the pre-existence to have to go through this experience? But he makes a comment. Some of these children who are more challenging, think of them as a blessing. You know, how much do you need them, as much as they need you? That's helping you become more patient, more loving, more kind, and becoming more like the savior. So he, he flips this upside down that, oh, this is a, a blessing, you know, to have some of these challenges and families.

Speaker 2 00:18:21 So to your question, um, do, do not members, you know, share this, that is one specific quote where they are taking his message, recreating the real and putting pictures of their children and their family Oh, really? And all these things. And I get so excited because I get to engage with them and have conversations with them, and they say, thank you for this message. I needed to hear this today. Yeah. And so, um, it kind of breaks that boundary of just messages and communication within the church and us being able to provide opportunities to share the gospel with people outside the church.

Speaker 1 00:18:51 So, any stories, I mean, I obviously, the, the intent isn't purely to convert people to the church of Jesus Christ, latter Saints, like you said, just putting message of hope, encouragement, that ev I mean, that's the world be lit if it needs more of that. Right. Yeah. And if our general authorities can provide that, then great. Um, any like, stories of like, people really being impacted or, or turning to, to Christ in a different way?

Speaker 2 00:19:14 Yeah. Um, the, the one that probably stands out the most, and this happened last year, um, I was, I, I, I'm from Bountiful and I was just driving through Bountiful, and I saw the sister missionary sitting on the corner of, down downtown, uh, bountiful on Main Street. And I, I always take the opportunity to stop and say, Hey sisters, will you share a message just like you would if you're in somebody's home and say, before we leave, can I share a scripture with you? Uhhuh <affirmative>? I'll stop and I'll record them and, and post it. And so we walked over, uh, in front of the Bountiful Tabernacle, and they shared their message just like

they normally would. And I posted it that night. And then a few months later, I didn't hear about this, but I knew somebody who was in the mission presidency.

Speaker 2 00:19:52 Um, you know, he's a local guy, but he's in the mission presidency. And he said, Hey, did you hear about the baptism? I was like, no. He's like, oh, I'll tell you next time you see you. And I was like, no, you're telling me now <laugh>. So I, I called him, I was like, what, what are you talking about? And he said, well, you, you, um, found some of the sisters in our mission, and they posted something on your account. And as, as I heard the story that night, there was somebody that they were teaching, and he was on social media, he was on Instagram, and he was scrolling. And what I was told is he was having a really bad night, you know, just whatever he was struggling with, he was having a really bad night. And he said, he was scrolling through and he said, Hey, those are my sisters that are teaching me.

Speaker 2 00:20:27 And he said, normally, I'll just scroll past that, but I know these sisters. So he looked at the account, and then he jumped over to declare my word. And whatever he was struggling with, I haven't heard, he was scrolling down and found a quote from, um, other DDF Udo that was an answer to whatever he was struggling with. Hmm. And what I was told is that night, he's like, there's no way that I could be scrolling through Instagram, see the sisters, and then go to a message from Elder Uchdorf of what I needed to hear. And I knew that heavenly father knew who I was. Wow. And so the next morning he called the sisters, he's like, sisters, I need to be baptized.

Speaker 1 00:21:02 That's cool. And

Speaker 2 00:21:05 I hit so excited, because that's one example that I'm aware of. Um, there's other examples, uh, where people have sent me a message, they're not active in the gospel. They don't go to church. Um, but one of my favorite, and I wish I had it so I could actually read what he said, but in short, he just said, thank you for posting these things. Sometimes at night, I just sit and scroll through these and cry because of what I'm struggling with. Um, I don't go to church, but I love listening to Elder Holland and what he says. And, and that was just a testament to me that in, in small ways, it's, it, it doesn't take a whole lot of time to post it and create the content, but it's making an impact on somebody's life. Um, and I, I, I shared that. I took a screenshot of it and I shared it with somebody, and I know that message got in front of Elder Holland, uh, president Holland now. So I'm grateful that that's cool. Um, people are able to have these experiences just from seeing a post. Yeah. But it's more than the post it's hearing the word of God from prophets and apostles. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:22:05 Speak to me about, like, uh, for youth leaders, you know, obviously we've, I think we've all come to this place that, you know, the youth are on social media, right? They're, uh, not getting off even many on TikTok. Right. Which has a lot of negative, uh, attached to it. That's a whole nother podcast for a whole other podcast, uh, network. Um, how, like, how can youth leaders leverage what you're doing or, or stimulate some of this, you know, declaring the word? Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:22:31 Um, I think it's really important. It's, it's kind of a hard message because if somebody's not on social media, I don't know that there's a message out there saying, Hey, you need to be on social media. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But I think in the world that we live in today, in whatever way most people are, they, they have an account. And I don't wanna encourage people to be on there more than they need to. Um, I don't feel like we need to say, we need more content creators. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, we need people doing things in normal and natural ways. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But, um, being in young men's, being a counselor for the last five years, being a bishop right now, for the most part, most people in my ward are on social media. I know we have some engagement with them. So what I would say is, um, going back to what Elder Stevenson said, you know, I, he, he made the comment, the benefits outweigh, you know, the risks.

Speaker 2 00:23:16 Um, and, and there are risks that go along with that. But one thing that he said is, we need people to teach the rising generation how to use social media. Um, and I think that's the role that we live in. Hmm. We need youth, uh, to be taught by leaders, how to become missionaries, how to become young men's leaders. And a part of that is we live in a world, how do we share the gospel? We share it with our neighbors. We, we don't live in a world now that we meet with our neighbors, you know, down the street as much as we used to. Yeah. We engage with people online. So the environment has kind of changed, and we need to be a part of that. So if we're on social media, I think there's a lot of things that we can do to teach the rising generation how to share the gospel, um, and make a difference in other people's lives. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:23:59 So is this something like taking a few minutes and priest quo or wherever and, and looking at some different accounts? Or, or Yeah. Like what

Speaker 2 00:24:07 Does that look like? Um, like in Priest Corps, um, yeah. This is another place that I try to be really careful and I'll share something that, um, yeah. I, I, I was able to talk with an apostle, and I'll share that story here in a second, but not every one of my priest is on Instagram. Mm-Hmm. Um, or on social media. Some of their parents, yeah. Say, no. And that's, that's fine. Um, but I, I try to go outta my way, uh, because the account is what it is, and they know that I'm on social media and they know that other people in our warden doing other things, I do try to go outta my way to say, Hey guys, I made this post and here's this experience. The things that I've shared with you is Uhhuh. <affirmative> is what I share with them, because they may not be on social media right now, but I know that their friends are.

Speaker 2 00:24:47 Hmm. I know that their parents are, and some are using it the way that they should, and some people are struggling with it. But I try to find every opportunity I can just, like, uh, when I share, when I was on my mission 25 years ago, I did this last week, I had this conversation with somebody on Instagram. You know, I had this experience, you know, and I share that, that baptism story with them. I'm always trying to find ways to help teach them, to show them, uh, the example so that when they jump on social media, they have a picture in their mind of what they could do. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

Speaker 1 00:25:17 Yeah. I, we'll see the apostle story, <laugh>.

Speaker 2 00:25:19 Oh, um, yeah, he teased us. Um, going back to Elder Stevenson said there, there's, there's quite a few, um, apostles that I think have engaged with social media a little bit sooner. I think Elder Stevenson is one of them. Um, but in October, 2022, I, I, I forget what quote or what he said, but I know he said something about social media that day in October 22 conference. And that night, I was talking to somebody else who has an account and I collaborate with, I was like, if I ever had the chance to talk to Elder Stevenson, I'm gonna ask him this question. The next morning I take my dad to go get eye surgery. You know, uh, I forgot what surgery it was, but I'm at the doctor's office. We're about to go out there. I'm at the stand. I'm filling out my dad's paperwork, and then somebody comes up to the left and grabs a mask and said, can I take one? And I look over there and it's like, other Stevenson, how are you

Speaker 1 00:26:07 <laugh> nice. And,

Speaker 2 00:26:08 And immediately I was like, less than less than eight hours ago, I just sent a message saying, if I ever get to meet Elder Stevenson, I'm gonna ask him a que Well, he's, and,

Speaker 1 00:26:17 And for those that do not live in Utah, this is not normal <laugh>. We don't just run into apostles at the grocery store, at the, at the clinic or whatever. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Speaker 2 00:26:24 So, um, he was there 'cause his grandson was having a procedure, so I didn't, I didn't want to interrupt, but I, I shook his hand. I was like, elder Stevenson, if you have a second, have a question I need to ask you. Um, and his son left. And so he was sitting there by himself. So I walked over, he was like, elder Stevenson, if I ask you these questions. And I, I kinda asked him a flurry of questions, but mainly it was, I wanted to ask him in the church, are we supposed to be encouraging people to engage on social media? But there's also a message of, um, you know, you know, I've had bishops and I've had other leaders saying, I'm trying to do whatever I can to get my kids off social media. Right. Yeah. I'm not gonna encourage them. And so that was the question is, yeah, what's the balance there?

Speaker 2 00:27:05 Um, and I just, he, he talked to me. I didn't write down, but immediately afterwards, I just wrote down all the notes that I could. But some of the things that he said is, you know, it's a parent's prerogative to, to say if they should be, you know, it's a family decision if they should be on social media or not. And Bishop should have the right to say, I don't think you should be on social media. You know, for whatever reason. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you know, if they might be struggling with something, but then he did layer in there, um, here are some opportunities. We, we can share the gospel. Um, the, the other thing that he shared with me, and he kind of got through halfway through the story, but then I've heard through other sources, you know, the rest of the story. But he said, you know, there was a time that the 12 are really going back and forth on what should we do with social media, you know, and the short story is he, he said, you know, we were in core meeting and half the brethren were four, you know, digital devices and social media, you know, and missionaries using them.

Speaker 2 00:27:57 And it was kinda like the other half were maybe opposed to it. But then there was a time, and Sister Duke kinda shares the rest of the story. That President Nelson, who was the president of the Quorum of the 12, he said, he came in, he said, we need to get every one of our missionaries on these devices. And that was right before, uh, COVID hit. Hmm. But he was just sharing that story with me that I just learned, everybody's in a different boat. Everybody has a different scenario. Bishops have their keys to work with their wards as they need to. Parents need to make making a decision. And so, uh, that what I learned from that is everybody is in a different boat, and I can't, you know, proclaim one message other than one thing I'm, I am passionate about. If you're on social media, we need to be influencers, not just with huge accounts. Every one of us has an influence. If we're on social media, we need to be sharing an opportunity, taking the opportunity to share a gospel. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:28:52 Love it. Love it. Um, anything else with, uh, declare my word as far as, um, things to consider? Stories, principles?

Speaker 2 00:29:01 Uh, let me, let me just share this. It's just one thing that, that I feel important to share. Um, elder Marcus b Nash, uh, gave a talk a couple years ago, October of 2021. And he was talking about sharing our light. And I took a lot from this, there's just a section in there where he said, sharing the gospel protects us from temptation. Lemme see if I can read this. He shared a scripture and then shared a thought. He said, the Lord commands hold up your light, that it may shine unto the world. Behold, I in the light, which you should hold up, that which you have seen me do, I have commanded that ye should come unto me, that you might feel and see even so shall you do unto the world. And whosoever breaketh, this commandment suffereth himself to be led into temptation. I never thought of that being a commandment. You know, if we don't share the gospel, we're breaking and, and putting ourselves into

Speaker 1 00:29:51 Temptation. Yeah. And make ourselves vulnerable. Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:29:52 So this is what Elder Nash says, choosing to not hold up the gospel light moves us into the shadows where we are susceptible to temptation. Importantly, the converse is true. Choosing to hold up the gospel light brings us more fully into the light and the protection it provides against temptation. What a tremendous blessing in today's world. Wow. So, you know, talking about what advice, I would just amplify what El Nas says, and he is, or, or was, you know, the director of missionary department. Oh, yeah. So I know that he's coming from, we need our missionaries to be sharing this message, but this is what I think about the youth. Um, we have a lot of youth that are struggling, but I don't know that it's because they're on social media. I think the struggle is how are they using social media? Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> how are the examples that they have using social media?

Speaker 2 00:30:40 And so that's why I always come back, if you're on social media, we can consume and be influenced, or we can hold the light and be influencers. If you have one follower, or 10, or a hundred or a hundred thousand, whatever it might be. Internally, are we taking the time and having the courage to share the gospel? And so if we can teach our youth, here's an opportunity to share the gospel, it will bring them out of the shadows and help them feel comfortable to live, especially in a digital world. I can share the gospel and I can feel

comfortable going on a mission and sharing the gospel. So I think they have a lot of opportunities to share the gospel earlier than they used to because, because, and if they're on social media.

Speaker 1 00:31:19 That's cool. So let's make a shift to just your experience as Bishop. Yeah. It's been almost a year now. Yeah. That you've been called since April. And you were in the bishoprick before that? Bishop

Speaker 2 00:31:28 Bur before, and young men's before that, so. Okay. And, and I love it. Cool. I don't, uh, aspire for the callings, but I won't turn 'em down. And I love

Speaker 1 00:31:36 Being there with 'em. So, so what's the first year been like? Like what, uh, anything that surprised you or new efforts you've tried or established your, your flavor of culture in the ward, or?

Speaker 2 00:31:46 No, I, I think the first impression that I had was, you know, being a counselor, you're there with a bishop, you're not in the same conversations as the bishop is. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But you're just aware of some of the challenges of the ward. So becoming bishop, it wasn't a tremendous shock or anything like that. But the thing that I thought was most interesting is just the different way you feel about the members of the Ward. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> just all of a sudden. And, and I love the members. I, you know, you love people. Yeah. But there's just something unique about the love that you have for people. Um, and that especially came out because I got to meet with everybody for tithing declaration, and all day, every day. I just gotta sit there all day, every day, all day, every time I

Speaker 1 00:32:27 Feel like that, I bet <laugh>. But

Speaker 2 00:32:29 For hours, I just got to meet with people and talk about the blessings of tithing. And, um, that was just a very unique experience, just the deeper love that I have for people. Um, and, and people come talking about their challenges and just, um, compassion that I don't think I've ever felt before in my life. That was kind of a, a new feeling. Um, but as, as you sit there on the stand, and I don't need, you don't need to be a bishop to see this, but if you just go to church, and if you're on the stand and you just go down the aisles Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you know, that every family has this challenge and blessings, but everybody's going through some experience Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you know, that's a real challenge. And so just doing that, there's just a greater sense of compassion that comes. And I really do think it comes with the keys. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:33:12 Now you're in Bountiful, pretty traditional established Latterly saint community, right? Yeah. Any, any uniqueness about it that you, that would be worth mentioning or,

Speaker 2 00:33:20 Um, no, I, I remember a general sorority came and, uh, that was actually one thing that he said. He was talking, he was like, you're in bountiful <laugh>, you're in Bountiful, Utah. You know, thi these things don't happen in bountiful <laugh> everywhere Saint is trying to get to people. Yeah. Um, and, and there's a lot of good things that happen in

Bountiful in North Salt Lake, you know, everywhere you go. Um, but nobody is exempt from challenges and trials. But it is really nice to be in an area where people gather and, um, it, it is kind of a contrast. Uh, I'll jump into my mission. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So I live in Bountiful Utah. I, I grew up in Mesa, Arizona, which to me

Speaker 1 00:33:55 Is another Bountiful. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:33:57 It's a great place. Yeah. But I served my mission in Estonia. Wow. And that was right after, you know, the, the Iron Curtain came down and there wasn't a whole lot of members there, but I was, uh, in Tartu, Estonia, which very few members, and I don't think anybody knows where that is or, or what's there. And I just remember being there and just having 19 people come to church. The first Sunday I was there and I just picture, man, these saints are gathering together. I don't know, they had the same thought. Then as I think about it now, yeah, I've kind of filled in some blanks, but these 19 members get together and the strength that they are to each other, um, and having an experience that there was only one deacon 12 years old who was passing aside from Wow. There was only one deacon in all of Estonia. And I just remember watching him stand there by himself, and I was like, man, he doesn't know what's ahead of him. Um, so I just think about the strength of 19 people getting together, and also the strength of people in Bountiful coming together. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> when people gather in the gospel, it may be small numbers or big numbers, but there is huge strength when people get together. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:35:00 Anything worth mentioning as far as, you know, this effort to focus on the youth as a bishopric, um, but also keep other things working? I mean, what's worked for you or not worked or, um,

Speaker 2 00:35:12 The first thought that comes to mind is, uh, we, we did this a couple years ago, but the stake will always come around and do visits to the ward, which was really good. Um, but one of the things that we did is we often will go and, and, and meet with members who may not be coming and, and we continue to go meet with them. But on this particular, uh, night, when we got together, instead of just going randomly, we now take the youth with us, with stake leaders. Okay. And go visit homes. And we, it was such a good thing we had the youth and stake leaders and more leaders go together and go to the homes of people who had served missions. Um, some of these people served in Germany like a long, long time ago. Um, and I wanted to provide them an opportunity to meet and talk with these people who serve missions. So the youth who were preparing for missions gotta talk to people who had served a long time ago. And that just created a lot of, uh, oh, really a good communication. A lot of good stories were shared, but it was not only good for the youth, but it was also good for those adults. Yeah. Who had forgotten about some of these experiences that they had.

Speaker 1 00:36:12 And adults are possibly people who aren't regularly coming to church. Yeah. Or whatever it be. And so, but you take them back there, say, you know, talk to the 16-year-old, 17-year-old about your time in Germany, or whatever it was. And,

Speaker 2 00:36:25 And there's a life that kinda shows up when you, when you have great experiences that maybe forget about and that light comes back into your mind. Yeah. Um, and you share that story. That goes a long way.

Speaker 1 00:36:33 Wow. That's great. That's great. Anything else related to youth that, uh, seemed to work or,

Speaker 2 00:36:38 Um, no. I, I, I think what it comes back to, if you want to influence the youth, provide food, they'll always show up for food <laugh>. I did. Yeah. Um, if there's a donut, it was a much better activity. <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:36:51 Yeah. Love it. Uh, anything else as far as like administrative stuff? How you run meetings, apps you use as a, as a Bishop break or anything, anything like that come to mind?

Speaker 2 00:37:02 Well, one thing that, uh, we use is, uh, appointment setting. Okay.

Speaker 1 00:37:06 Um,

Speaker 2 00:37:06 You know, our secretaries do a lot of good, you know, in scheduling things, but quite often people just have a thought, I wanna meet with Bishop, you know, and then trying to have to go to the secretary and then try to find a time. So, uh, we use a scheduling tool. It just gives somebody an opportunity if they wanna meet with the bishop or they want to get their temple re renewed, or they wanna get their patriarchal blessing, they can just go online and get that scheduled with us. Um, you know, and they don't have to worry about coordinating it. And that's actually been really helpful. I, I kind of use it. Is it safe to say like, as a marketing tool? Okay. It's an opportunity where I can share a link and, and they see, oh, patriarchal Blessings Temple recommend or meet with whatever it might be, oh, my recommends about to expire, I need to go get that renewed. So we've had a lot of people schedule their own appointments, um, to get that done

Speaker 1 00:37:50 Just through the link. Right.

Speaker 2 00:37:51 I think that's helped using modern tools Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> to, um, allow people to be better engaged with us.

Speaker 1 00:37:57 That's great. Awesome. Alright, so as we wrap up, take us maybe to that scripture that is the title of your platform. Declare My Word. Yeah. What, what's the, the story? I mean, obviously a powerful scripture, but what comes to mind?

Speaker 2 00:38:09 Well, when I was thinking what should I name the account? I've, one thing I noticed is how often the scriptures say declare, you know, declare this. Um, one of 'em is declare my word, but then I thought about it. I think, uh, if you do a search for declare my word, the scripture that's most often quoted is seek not to declare my word, but for seek e to obtain my word. Oh, yeah. So I thought, yeah, is that a good scripture? You know, it's like the one that gets saying don't. Yeah. Um, but the point is we need to learn the gospel before we share it.

However, there are so many examples in the scriptures that say, declare my word, um, declare, share your testimony, get out there and do these things. But one scripture that I really liked was from DNC 31 6, and this is when, uh, Thomas B. Marsh was being called on a mission.

Speaker 2 00:38:52 And in the verse, 'cause going to serve remission is, it's a scary thing, you know? And for the youth, when you're leaving your family, you're leaving what you're comfortable with. It was scary for me. It was, you know, have those stories. Yeah. I felt that <laugh>. Um, but in the scripture, he's talking to Thomas B. Marsh and says, behold verily, I say unto you, go from them meaning your family for only a little time and declare my word, and I will prepare a place for them. And I take a lot of comfort for that. Heavenly Father takes care of his missionaries. Heavenly Father takes care of those who share his gospel, who sacrifice and do those things. So that's kind of where it came from. Is declare my word, because if you do, I can take care of you.

Speaker 1 00:39:31 Hmm. That's awesome. That's awesome. What, any final thoughts as like, obviously we hope people follow, uh, maybe, uh, make sure people know where to follow you. Yeah. The, the, your platform so they can hear the good messages, but, uh, what should they do with the messages or, or, uh, how, how should they maybe consider actually jumping into the scriptures Yeah. From the messages.

Speaker 2 00:39:51 Um, well, a lot of thoughts come from that, you know, what can they do? Um, I think last week at least, I was listening to the podcast and remind me who it was, but you had a conversation with somebody who was a digital missionary in, in Oakland. Oh,

Speaker 1 00:40:02 Yeah. Um, Clint was his name. Clint. Clint Argyle. Yeah. Clint

Speaker 2 00:40:05 Arga. So he was talking, he was a digital missionary. And I, I never thought about this, but as a digital missionary and he has background in marketing, what he would, uh, ask people to do is go to Yelp Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> and go to your church and write a review. And if you do that, people see that on Yelp. And if they say, Hey Siri, what's something to do in Bountiful Utah? Or, Hey Siri, what's something they do in Tar two Estonia? Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. If there's reviews that pops up and people are showing up because we're reviewing that, uh, or providing reviews. And that's a way that we can share the gospel. So like with declare my word, if you're on the account, if there's something that you see or hear that inspires you and you're comfortable sharing it, please have the courage to do that. Um, and that, that would just be my encouragement. Cool. I try to provide content that people feel comfortable sharing, and hopefully it kind of puts 'em out of their comfort zone that if they're not comfortable with it, they find an opportunity to do it.

Speaker 1 00:40:57 Yeah. Perfect. People can find you on Instagram and all other major social media platforms, all

Speaker 2 00:41:02 Of them that I'm aware of. I've tried to create an account, but Instagram's the largest following. Um, but wherever you're at, anything you can do to help, uh, amplify the message would be great.

Speaker 1 00:41:10 Awesome. Well, last question I have for you. As you reflect back on your time as a leader, uh, in the midst of being a leader, how has being a leader helped you become a better follower of Jesus Christ?

Speaker 2 00:41:20 Oh, that's great. Um, being a leader, it's provided me a lot of opportunities to share my testimony. And, um, you know, especially as a bishop, just learning, having more compassion for people, more love. And I think the, I've learned, the more that I love people, um, and find ways to serve them, the more, uh, you have a relationship with the savior and you know the things that he does. So in being a leader and serving people and loving people, you learn what it's like to be like the savior. And the more that we become like the savior, the more that we wanna follow

Speaker 1 00:42:00 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. Remember, the Jody Moore presentation about youth and mental health is waiting for you@leadingsaints.org slash 14.

Speaker 3 00:42:49 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.