



## **Helping People Overcome Struggle, Sin, & Mortality in 12 Steps | An Interview with Brett and Kristin Walker**

April 28, 2024

Speaker 1 00:00:02 Have you ever heard of Scrupulosity? This is a mental health concern that is impacting more latter day Saints than you think. Scrupulosity is religious obsessive compulsive disorder, where individuals are hyper obsessed about their worthiness and repentance. Sam Baxter, a former bishop, sat down with me to talk about his lifelong struggle with Scrupulosity and how he got treatment. You can watch this interview for free in the Mentally Healthy Saints Library by going to [leading-saints.org/fourteen](https://leading-saints.org/fourteen). This gets you 14 days free access to Sam Baxter's interview about Scrupulosity and 25 plus other interviews about ministering to those who struggle with mental health. The content is priceless for leaders. So visit [leading-saints.org/fourteen](https://leading-saints.org/fourteen) for free access.

Speaker 1 00:00:52 I would be rude if I didn't take the time to explain to the newer listeners what Leading Saints is. Here goes. Leading Saints is an organization that started as a hobby blog in 2010, and then really caught some traction in 2014 when the podcast started. We talk about all things leadership in the context of the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints. We aren't owned by the church, but we have a great relationship with them and always aim to be faith promoting, even though we talk about the tough topics. My name is Kurt Francom. I'm generally the voice you hear as the host of the podcast. I've tried to get other hosts, but people demand my smooth tone and I really enjoy it. Check out [leading-saints.org](https://leading-saints.org) to really get into the weeds of what Leading Saints is and learn all about our mission to help Latter Day Saints be better prepared to lead.

Speaker 1 00:01:44 I'm back in the studio to chat with some people face-to-face, and in this episode we talk with Brett and Kristin Walker, who have a interesting approach to the Addiction Recovery program. Now, I'm not talking about they facilitate the Addiction Recovery Program, but they've taken the principles with past experience of facilitating meetings, and they've basically turned it into a institute class that they give every week, focusing on not just for addicts, but for anybody that's struggling in life, whether it's addiction, whether it's, uh, mental health, whatever struggle, mortality is put in front of us. These principles are so helpful. You know, it's almost a misnomer, uh, the Addiction Recovery Program. I've heard some people frame it as the atonement of Jesus Christ application manual, right? The these are principles that we can all put in place to help us, uh, connect with Jesus, find healing, find encouragement, and overcome the struggles regardless of what they are in life.

Speaker 1 00:02:40 And so I talk with Brett and Kristin about how they facilitate this weekly class and the way they set it up, how they bring vulnerability and how they engage people in this class. And they're, they're packing this room of individuals seeking for guidance to healing with Jesus Christ. Brett also is a current YSA bishop. And so we talk about these 12 steps that are in the Addiction Recovery program and how they're applied in just the repentance process and how he employs them in their ward, and how Kristin, as well encourages those young single adults that she mentors through these principles. And I really appreciate this approach, and I think it's something we can all step back and think about how we can apply these 12 steps in our own life, because they're not just for other people struggling with very stigmatized addictions or struggles, but they're for everybody. This is how healing's found. This is how we can be encouraged through the gospel of Jesus Christ. So here's my interview with Brett and Kristin Walker. Today I get the opportunity to welcome in Brett and Kristin Walker. How are you? Two <laugh>?

Speaker 2 00:03:53 We're great. It's so good to be here.

Speaker 1 00:03:55 Yeah. I'm, uh, we got connected and had a few phone calls and I'm just excited to finally sit down and record. And both of you wear a variety of hats right now with, uh, your YSA Bishop. Yep. In a provost YSA stake. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And then you also teach an institute class, is it at UVU where you teach

Speaker 2 00:04:11 That? So it's under the UVU curriculum, but it is two YSA stakes, so about 20 wards that come and are invited to R nstitute. But we actually have kids from all over that hear about it and come, which is awesome.

Speaker 1 00:04:23 And and where's it held?

Speaker 3 00:04:25 It's in one of the chapels by Costco. Okay. It helps for orientation,

Speaker 2 00:04:28 The double churches. Yeah.

Speaker 3 00:04:30 There's the two buildings with two chapels each in, in the building, so that's

Speaker 1 00:04:33 Cool. And so how did this, I mean, are you, do you have background in CES or how did this opportunity come? No,

Speaker 3 00:04:38 It was actually background in the 12-step program. So we had been involved as church service missionaries in the past with 12-step recovery. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, and had a lot of experience there. We got in a conversation with our stake leaders in the YSA stake about what could be done, and they wanted to start 12-step support group meetings for the stake. And we said, well, there's sort of a gap. People, you know, don't always have that degree of problem and want to, or want to admit it, but they want to have some experience. And the 12 steps are a wonderful framework for making change in life. And so we got into that dialogue. Kristin got into more of it with a stake, and you should say, what happened next?

Speaker 2 00:05:16 Well, you know, as we explained, what we saw as missionaries in the 12-step program for the church is we saw that people started going, wait a minute as I'd go meet with stake presidents or bishops and kind of, you know, invite them to send people. They'd say, wait a minute, I think we all need this. And we'd say, yes, these principles actually apply to everybody. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> to everything. And if it can, if finding Jesus can save people with the deepest, darkest problems, certainly finding Jesus can help all of us with no matter what is going on in our lives. Yeah. And so that's been our goal, is to help people. We call the class come to Jesus. And it's just been remarkable how people are understanding finally, how to apply the atonement in their everyday lives.

Speaker 1 00:05:57 So the class is framed as like an institute class. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But you are following the 12-step principles.

Speaker 3 00:06:03 Yeah. That's our framework. That's

Speaker 2 00:06:04 Our curriculum. That's,

Speaker 3 00:06:05 That's the curriculum we use. Yeah. We use the book, we have people replace the word addiction with other words, whatever my struggle,

Speaker 2 00:06:11 Struggle, challenge my issue. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>,

Speaker 3 00:06:12 Their hope, their ambition, whatever's just not happening the way they'd like it to in their lives.

Speaker 1 00:06:16 Yeah. And because there is kind of the stigma of 12 steps. Yeah. You know, where it's like, oh, you've, you know, I remember as a bishop, like, all right, you need to go to this thing. Yeah, yeah. Right. And here's the dates and Yeah. And, you know, this is like your prescription, you know, of, of fixing your problem and Yeah.

Speaker 3 00:06:30 Here's your sentence Yeah. Going

Speaker 1 00:06:32 To, yeah. And it's the first couple times it's hard to go. And then it's, you know, maybe they, they find help there, which is, we're really quite effective. But, uh, unfortunately it's been hard to escape that stigma of these 12 steps. So this is a great idea. Right.

Speaker 3 00:06:45 Getting acquainted with the framework of the 12 steps is really meaningful because again, we're teaching young single adults in this context, but whether they have an issue or may in the future, or they meet someone, a spouse, a future spouse, a friend, or whatever, or a child in the future, just knowing more about it will be good. And while that's not the full intent of what we're doing, that level of introduction has been really meaningful. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:07:09 So where was the story before this class as far as your involvement in 12-Step? Like where did that begin? Or is there a story behind that?

Speaker 2 00:07:16 You know, just years and years ago, we had a loved one that struggled with addiction and had the opportunity to be called as missionaries. And I don't even know, it's been 10, 15 years that we were involved in how many 600 plus meetings. And so with that, I think I mentioned that I had the opportunity to work, to try to develop curriculum for, for the loved ones who have family and addiction. And it just became something that it finally helped us see Jesus and who he is and what he can do. And even though this class uses that framework, we've had friends come to us, friends who, you know, have served as relief society president, you know, as mission president. Leaders, as you know, in stake presidencies say, I don't really understand the atonement. They say, you know, my brother died. And people say, let the atonement heal you. And my question is, what they say is how Yeah. How does the atonement heal me right now from this loss? And so we hope that in sharing this framework, people realize that's how you find Jesus. It's a simple 12-step process. Can be difficult if you're in deep trouble in addiction can be more simple if it's a small thing, but it's a process that helps you find Jesus and find healing.

Speaker 1 00:08:35 Yeah. Yeah. And that, that's so helpful because we do say these things even in Sunday school or elders quorum or release study, where sort of throw out these general statements and we believe it. Mm-Hmm. And we know Christ can heal and he can be there for us, and we find strength for him to sometimes on the app Mm-Hmm. Application level. It's like, well, but what does that mean? I do on Thursday? Yeah. You know?

Speaker 2 00:08:53 Yeah. Today, how does that help me today find healing through Christ? Yeah. And you know, we, last year the, the theme for the youth was, I can do all things in Christ. What does that mean? How do you do all things? How do you get out of bed right now and get to school on time through Jesus Christ? Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. And we're hoping that in discovering, you know, these principles with the people that come to our class, they're realizing this is how Jesus Christ becomes part of everything that I do. All things happen because I'm aligned with him. I'm yoked with him. I've partnered with him. I've let him be my guide.

Speaker 3 00:09:27 I'll take it back a step. As we got exposed to the 12 steps here as church service missionaries. We also lived in California for a few years, and were asked to lead the program there. It just gradually settles in on you. One of the conversations we had were, well, why don't we talk about this more the atonement of Jesus Christ. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And what was remarkable is we got to know the 12 steps, and then we began listening to the brethren and speakers from general conference talking about the atonement. We would, we began to hear things that had been talked about. We just hadn't been able to hear them the way that we now could. And over time, you know, the, the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous, that the incredible work done in the big book and the white book, and all these other books that are out there for different pockets of struggle.

Speaker 3 00:10:11 I'll talk about this spiritual solution to any problem. And back to Philippians four 13, I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me and think, what does that mean? And it's this great mystery. We had a stake president recently drawing a whiteboard and r representing repentance. And he said, and he drew a circle around it. And he said, most of us think of that as the atonement of Jesus Christ. It aim the repentance, aim, repentance part. Yeah. Yeah. Just the r Yeah. And then he drew a big circle on the board and wrote atonement in it. And he said, it's more than that. Right. So if we can do all things in Christ, what else can be done besides repentance? We know, we always ask our group, so who believes they'll be resurrected and everyone raises their hands, well, who will resurrect themselves? And all the hands go down.

Speaker 3 00:10:56 'cause we know there's a power that will do that. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> and what else? And so that exploration is really at the heart of what we talk about. The step-by-step approach of the 12 steps is just a wonderful framework for unpacking it and breaking it down. And one of the most amazing things that come from that is that people talk about jokingly who are involved in 12-step recovery, talk about the manual as the 12 Steps for Dummies or the atonement of Jesus Christ for dummies <laugh>. Yeah. We love that. But none of us are really true dummies. So the, it's understanding and applying the atonement of Jesus Christ. And as Kristin said, it's really an invitation to come to Jesus. Yeah. When we first said that as the title for our class, we thought, oh, we're being a little too glib. But the words are the most meaningful words we've found as what this 12-step process offers everyone in any circumstance. Whether it's a, a hope that's unrealized or a struggle that just nags at you and you're not sure how to get past it. Most of us realize that if it were up to us, we'd stay right where we are.

Speaker 1 00:11:57 Yeah. And I think we're just wired for steps in life. Mm-Hmm. Like, good recipe. Like, just tell me what to do. Right. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. And not that, you know, each step has its own nuances. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, but Mm-Hmm. Just to know today, I'm gonna focus on step three or whatever it is. Yeah. And, and really you can be zoned in on what you Totally. Those next steps I wanted to ask just with, you know, because from my experience, what I've noticed is that those that help with 12-step programs, a lot of them maybe come from a recovery background. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, they've gone through their own recovery. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. They're there to, to help facilitate the meanings. And then there's other people, maybe like your story where maybe a loved one or they have some maybe

more distant connection to recovery. And what advice would you give to those who are called into these roles to facilitate 12-step that maybe aren't that close to it? Where would you start?

Speaker 3 00:12:42 The steps have saved my life. I'll be just very blunt about it. And I think if you were called into a role like this, work the steps. Get involved in the steps, because they will save your life. They will change the way you think. I think that working in a 12-step process and not knowing them, knowing them intellectually is one thing. Knowing them in terms of how they have worked in your own life is a completely different thing. And the saying goes in 12-step recoveries that you don't take the steps, the steps take you. And so a lot of times people say, well, I'm on step three, but I don't really understand it. And we say, well just go back to step two and work on that for a little longer until it sweeps you along. And ultimately the steps move from one through nine, which are kind of hard work steps and different orientation of life to 10, 11, and 12. You're kind of back in the sweet spot of the gospel. You're living just like we live when we kind of think we're doing everything the right way, but with some new energy and, and new purpose. Yeah,

Speaker 1 00:13:40 Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:13:41 Yeah. I would definitely say to anyone who gets a calling like this, that's like, wow, okay, I'm now an a RP missionary and I have, you know, maybe an uncle or somebody, but I don't really know that much. I would absolutely say, get excited about your own step work. You know, we say in the program, when you get to the end of yourself, that's when you find God. So start the process, work the steps. You will know Jesus Christ better than you have ever known him. You'll find that working the steps will help you be a better parent, a better spouse, a better friend, a better ministering brother or sister. You'll find that it'll help you work through the problems at work, the problems in your own personal habits. It problems with your children making bad choices, your whatever it is that's going on in your life, if you become familiar, especially we call steps one, two, and three, the three step dance, the three step walks, and all day long, every day. If you're saying, I can't do this alone, but he can do this, and I will let him 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, dancing all day long and letting him take over. It's just a beautiful thing. So if you did get called to do this, yay. I'm so happy for you. You get to know Jesus better than anyone knows him, him, because you will do this deep work and find him to be your absolute personal best friend.

Speaker 1 00:14:56 Yeah. And it's not always about addiction, right. It's more, right. You can use the program, step back, what am I struggling with? Or Yeah. Where am I finding or losing hope? And yeah. Identifying that thing and then put it into the 12-step machine, right? Yeah,

Speaker 3 00:15:09 Absolutely. Let me read you step one, admit that we of ourselves are powerless to overcome our addictions, and that our lives have become unmanageable. Well, if you don't have an addiction, maybe you just have an unrealized hope. Maybe you want to get married and you haven't found someone yet. Maybe you don't do well in school. You don't test well. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So instead of it's, my life is unmanageable, maybe the situation is bigger than me. And we summarize it as, I can't, the, I can't step, or I can't yet, or I can't fill the spirit all the time, or I don't,

Speaker 2 00:15:35 I can't do this

Speaker 3 00:15:36 Alone. Right. I can't do this alone. And it, so it's not, we've had some people say, I never say I can't. That's it. You know, I don't allow that. I like good luck with that. But we say you can't do everything. But then contrast that with Philippians four 13, I can do all things in Christ. So how do we bridge that gap? How do we get around that corner of kind of feeling alone and isolated and kind of wondering in our own private time, like, I know I struggle here, or I, I wanna do this. I set goals, but I never seem to achieve them. Yeah. The steps provide a framework for getting there. And most of it's about removing whatever stands between us. And that promise of Philippians four 13 of being able, getting

Speaker 2 00:16:14 Out of our own

Speaker 3 00:16:15 Way to receive the strength of Christ, the enabling power of the atonement. If you look up grace in the Bible dictionary, it talks about this enabling power that'll help us do things we otherwise would not be able to do if we, if left to ourselves. Yeah. Life is filled with lots of those things right. Back to that big model of the circle with a little R in it. And it's an infinite atonement, by the way. And stake president then took the eraser and got rid of the big circle. 'cause infinite means everything.

Speaker 2 00:16:42 No

Speaker 3 00:16:42 Bounds. So what isn't included what, you know, we kinda wonder one once in a while, what can Jesus do? And you know, more, the more exciting question is what can't he do? And when we let him into our lives every day, every minute, amazing things happen.

Speaker 1 00:16:58 Yeah. And I, I really appreciate it. 'cause without Christ, there's a lot of cants. Right. If you can't Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And so that's why we need, and this is the process of involving Christ into whatever struggle that we're facing, whether it's an addiction or, or whatever. And I do worry, like church leaders, you know, obviously you think of the typical people called as church leaders, and there's some level of stability in their life, both financially, both with life and, you know, their marriage or whatever. And I just worry about sometimes those leaders think, you know, whether they intentionally think it or not, like, I think I'm good. I can do this on my own. Yeah. I mean, yeah. I've got my weaknesses and my struggles, and I kind of yelled at my kids this morning, but in for the most part, I'm good. Right? Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And that's sort of this trap that we can get in that really leaves us vulnerable. Right? Yeah. Any thoughts come to mind about

Speaker 2 00:17:41 That? Well, you know, we feel like we have to be good, especially if we get called as a church leader. I've gotta know this yet, I think if we can flip the script and realize I don't have to do anything on my own, what I have to do is let the power of Jesus Christ flow through me. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> give me strength to do whatever I'm asked to do. It is the most, I think, empowering feeling to truly do step one and admit I don't have to be the smartest person in the room. I don't have to know how to do this. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, what I do have

to know and bear testimony of is he can do this, he can do it. There's no problem. Too big for him. My God is a big God, and he can do all things, and I will just be his servant. Yeah. And if a leader can get to that point and then let Jesus Christ heal them personally, but then heal all the people around them, I think that anything is possible.

Speaker 3 00:18:33 Well, the world of our coaching and therapy is increasingly more embraced and, and very common

Speaker 1 00:18:39 And needed. Right. <laugh> and

Speaker 3 00:18:40 Needed. Yeah. And it's, you know, we grew up in with a stigma that like if you were going to counseling, that was not a good thing. And, and now we all, you know, everyone's like, well, who's your coach? And who's your therapist's therapist? Yeah. And, and we love it because we love the outside input. And so getting to the end of ourselves is what takes us into coaching or therapy. Well, why not also approach Jesus the same way? I think one of the great mysteries of our day is to how, how we have a relationship with Jesus Christ. We hear it. That advocated. Well, you know, he stands at the door and knocks, okay, we let him in. What does it look like when we let him in? Mm-Hmm. When we let him in, what happens is we let him in, not just to the front room that's neat and tidy, but if we can let him into every room is including that corner closet back there that like

Speaker 2 00:19:25 Shoved everything in <laugh>.

Speaker 3 00:19:26 Yeah. That's the one of the stuff, you know, I'm a bishop now, I don't want to go look into that. And it's not necessarily filled with bad things, it's just unfinished things. The process can help you work through all of that to get to a point where you have complete inner peace and you've let Christ into every single corner of

Speaker 1 00:19:42 Your life. Yeah. And often, again, in those closets, it's not that we're hiding only sin in there. Right. Right. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> nobody knows about. I just listened to an individual story online where he was talking about the death of his father when he was a young boy, and he obviously broke down in tears. And he just, he said that, I don't know why this is still hard for me. Mm-Hmm. Like, well, maybe there's some things in the, the closet that you just need to Yeah. You need help with. Right. You need to put, bring Christ into whatnot. Yeah. And again, not that it, well, you need to get to a point where you can talk about the death of your dad and doesn't even impact you. But maybe there's something more just to get curious about. Right. And so, again, it's not sin. It could just be abuse or tragedy or trauma in your background. Mm-Hmm. That needs to be addressed with just Jesus.

Speaker 3 00:20:22 Absolutely. Yep. And a, a really common question for leaders could be, do I have what it takes? Right. I've been called, now how do we do this job? And of course, you can talk to another leader, uh, your supervising leader, stake president, whoever it might be, and say, how do, how do I do this? And you'll get some coaching that way. But to answer that question of do I have what it takes is one that I think is we could put it on the table and use the 12-step process to Yeah. Unpack that and answer that question for ourselves.



Speaker 1 00:20:50 Yeah. That's powerful. Would you say like, 'cause 12 steps, you know, you see it in movies, the Yeah. The basement of a church. Hi, my name is, yeah. Hi, my name is Yeah. Yeah. Chairs or Circle Uhhuh. <affirmative>. Like, does this component always need a group dynamic where if I'm facing the struggle, I need to take this to a

Speaker 3 00:21:06 Group? It's interesting because we started teaching our class in a relief society room, and kind of set it up in a bit of a circle, a u-shape. And that got too full at one point. And we had 80 kids and 80 chairs packed in there in a small room. We moved it to the chapel. And while the chapel's a wonderful place to worship, it was just too spread out. Yeah. It lacked the intimacy, the need and any nature of, of this. And it wasn't so much about everyone participating at the same level of a support group meeting, but it was the ability to look across the room and see who was making the comment and engage. And the intimacy just went up dramatically. And we're cramming like 110 kids into these rooms right now as we teach, which is too tight. But we're like, we just need a bigger relief society room, I guess. And it'll make them bigger anywhere that we know of.

Speaker 1 00:21:53 Yeah. But the, so creating some place to, for people to gather

Speaker 2 00:21:57 Some way to, I think, but

Speaker 3 00:21:58 To feel safe partnered

Speaker 2 00:21:59 With these steps. And I think this is absolutely what Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father wants us to do, is connection. If you do things alone, you feel alone. And if you do things with others, you feel connection. And we talk about it in our class, that Satan's plan is the alone. He takes the cross out of the T and it says Elone, but if you put the cross back in or Jesus Christ back in, then it's the atonement. And the atonement is about connection with Jesus Christ and with others who are representatives of Jesus Christ. So doing the study like this in a group setting, or with a partner or a friend, really helps you feel like I'm not alone in my struggle. Your struggle might be that, you know, you get angry too mad and too much. And my struggle might be that I can't find a job or, or I have an addiction or whatever. But if we're meeting need and knee and we're talking about letting Jesus heal us, we feel this connection that helps us be strong. And it's just awesome. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:23:01 Because there can be a lot of shame that comes to the surface of, okay, I need to go address those things in that Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> corner closet. Mm-Hmm. But let's just do this. I got my manual here. Yeah. Mm-Hmm. Me and Jesus will handle this. Let's go to the closet. Yeah. But usually there, there's power in that and people coming together and, and witnessing of Christ and his healing power.

Speaker 2 00:23:17 Absolutely. I mean, we feel the spirit every single week as we teach. But I'm gonna say that those meetings as well, if you do decide that you want to go to an addiction recovery meeting, those meetings are some of the most spiritual meetings that are ever held. Even our prophet David O. McKay said, I wish that elders core meeting felt like those AA

meetings. There's just something very special about being that honest, that vulnerable, knowing that there is no other way except through Jesus Christ. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:23:46 So take me to just the, when you hold these meetings, it's a, it's a weekday what, what day?

Speaker 3 00:23:50 Yeah. Wednesday night. Wednesday

Speaker 1 00:23:52 Nights. Yeah. So it started small and now you're in and in a chapel full of people, did you say? Well,

Speaker 3 00:23:57 We, we went to the chapel temporarily. Oh, okay. We did one round there, and then we moved back to,

Speaker 2 00:24:01 We decided we liked everyone squished, so we put in as many chairs as we can. And sometimes kids are standing in the doorways and out in the hallways and

Speaker 3 00:24:08 Poking in. But, and I, we think young single adults kinda like to be in a pile anyway, <laugh>. So we sort of set it up. So just we

Speaker 2 00:24:13 Squish 'em in. Okay.

Speaker 3 00:24:14 Tight. And yeah, it's Wednesday nights we basically pick a step in a normal 12-step meeting you'd go through and read all 12 steps and then go around and read the step that for that week, have a sharing and have a sharing. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, we don't do it that way. We are more focused on the step. We do a lot of commentary. We bring in stories. We try to illustrate the points. We'll read the step or highlights from the step each week as a group and have the group discuss. There's a tremendous amount of interaction as people bring their own experiences, their own perspectives. And so that's the format. It's kind of a, an hour long, once a week format.

Speaker 1 00:24:49 And then every 12 weeks you start

Speaker 2 00:24:51 University. They start all over. We kind of do it on a semester so that it can be a UVU, um, institute class.

Speaker 1 00:24:57 So they get like the get credit credit

Speaker 2 00:24:58 For Yeah. So they can get credit for it. Yeah. So it's a semester class, but we do cover, we have an introduction, and then we do the 12 steps and weave our testimony. Everyone else just feels like, okay, I know Jesus better than I thought I knew him. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> when we get done, which is awesome. But kids come in at any point along the way, you know, kids will show up at step six and have no idea what we've talked about for the last five, six weeks. And that's okay. Because these principles, we make it clear that these principles, you've heard, you've heard in conference, you've read them in the scriptures, you know, and I, we encourage people to, when you read this conference talk or you read

about, you know, Amon saying, you know, as to of myself, I can do nothing. You know, you, you go, oh, that's step one. Like, you mark these things and go, these principles are true. They are things that we have heard all of our lives. We just haven't had the framework to help us know that that's how you find Jesus. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:25:50 What about the dynamic of, I mean, obviously this stimulates some vulnerability in the group. Yeah. Do you have, yeah. Are you looking for discussion? Are you looking for people to absolutely share where, what they're struggling with, or?

Speaker 3 00:26:00 We do have some of that, but even in 12-step recovery meetings, you know, they, they encourage people not to talk about the practice of their addiction or going to graphic details. In our case, it's not, uh, or our classes, it's not ever remotely that graphic. But we'll have some people that will share about an experience based on their upbringing or whatnot. Most of the time it's, it's more perspective oriented. What are they learning? How are they, they they applying it? Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So we, we don't, because of the, the number of people in the room, it's, we don't really even have time for anyone to go much. Yeah. Uh, into much detail about what they have experienced in life.

Speaker 1 00:26:36 And about how long is a typical session or lesson?

Speaker 3 00:26:39 It's about an hour. Okay. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:26:40 Yeah. Yeah. And you're going through these steps, sharing stories, like you said, and, and then they, everybody leaves sort of with a good understanding of that and then applying it Yeah. To their, their

Speaker 3 00:26:51 Life. A quick application of it is, you know, steps one, two, and three. We call those the new way of, of thinking and also the three step wat. So it starts with, I can't, I can't do this. I haven't been able to do this. I can't sustain this. Whatever the, the goal or hope in life is. Step two is he can, and it's interesting what the idea that Jesus can do these things for us or help us with these things is kind of new territory for a lot of people. Of course. We believe he can. And it's really easy, even as a missionary, I felt like I was teaching people this, but kind of had my fingers crossed behind my back. Like, I know it's true for you, but I, I really sincerely hope it's true for me. Yeah. Right. So we're trying to help people get to the place of truly believing that he can.

Speaker 3 00:27:33 Step three is I will let him. So making a decision to let him into your life. So that framework, we revisit that continually throughout this course because it's what we try to take from just, I had a big problem to every moment of every day when I meet resistance or need or unrealized hope or ambition in my life, I can go through the process of, this isn't working right now. That's kind of the, I can't step, but I know there it could work if I let him into my life. And so I think I will. And that's the waltz that you get better and better at. We've actually had people demonstrate the waltz. We've tried to learn it <laugh>, we're still learning that one. But, but like all things that, that's a dance that you don't perfect in one class. Right? Yeah. You, it takes a lifetime become to become really good at the waltz. I've heard <laugh> in our case, it, it

takes a lifetime to get good at in that moment to just go, I'm going to always remember him. Right. We make that covenant Mm-Hmm. When we take the sacrament. Well, the three steps are a way to get to that place of more frequently remembering him and bringing him into the moment.

Speaker 1 00:28:42 Yeah. It's powerful. And again, there's no like supplemental curriculum that you're going off of, apart from the Addiction recovery manual. Yeah.

Speaker 3 00:28:52 We

Speaker 2 00:28:52 Straight from that. It's our own personal experiences with so many years of studying and learning and then applying stories that we have heard or read or our own personal stories, you know, and even, you know, then finding quotes from the brethren and in the scriptures, and we apply that. So if we're reading about step one, we apply Mm-Hmm. Where in the Book of Mormon, you know, people say, I am nothing. And we apply, you know, the scriptures and the brethren when we talk about how good God is. And if he can part the Red Sea, why can he not part your personal Red Sea? He's that good. Yeah. You know? And so we try to just make sure that they see how tangible Jesus Christ is, and that this process can help them.

Speaker 1 00:29:35 Yeah. That's great. Find him. Because I'm just thinking maybe leaders are listening and thinking we should do something like this. You know, just email me your curriculum and we'll, we'll get started. But

Speaker 3 00:29:42 We Yeah. We just sent you the link to the 12-step guide. Yeah,

Speaker 1 00:29:44 Exactly. Like, there it is.

Speaker 3 00:29:45 The searches came out with a second edition of it, which threw us for a minute. 'cause it was new. It's really good. Good. All of our notes are in the other one. And, but, but

Speaker 2 00:29:52 It's good and similar.

Speaker 3 00:29:53 Yeah. It's very similar. And one of the best things that the new edition, um, contains is in a lot of 12-step programs, people are not coached, but kind of follow a tradition of, of going in and saying, hi, my name's Brett. I'm an addict. I struggle with this. And they, they say, you know, be careful not to adopt a label. 'cause what you we're first and foremost, uh, children of God. Right. I'm a child of God. That's a really powerful label. That's our title. Yeah. And by saying I'm an addict sounds like I'm limiting the atonement of Jesus Christ, the healing power of the Savior. And if we say, well, maybe I struggle right now with addictive behaviors. Maybe I'm, I have, I want to be different. I struggle. I wanna get married, but I don't know how. Right. And on and on. These are the nature of life's struggles. But

Speaker 2 00:30:40 That's not who you are.

Speaker 3 00:30:40 But we're not the struggler. We are children of God and we have the ability to be, we, we can do all things through our savior Jesus Christ.

Speaker 1 00:30:48 Yeah. Yeah. I would say the point being is you just need to recognize your brokenness without the savior. Right? Yeah. Yeah. And whatever terms are labeled or terms or phrases you need to use for that, just knowing that you're not adopting this identity, but you're recognizing what you are without Jesus. And that's a lot of camps, right? Yeah.

Speaker 3 00:31:05 So another really powerful kind of intervention in step two, we talk about how Jesus can, and we go into examples of just how unconventional he has been throughout. We

Speaker 2 00:31:15 Tell people to get used to different Yeah.

Speaker 3 00:31:17 Get used to different. 'cause when you ask him into your life, it's not gonna be what you think it will be. It's not gonna, you may have a list and lay it down before him and say, this is what I want you to do for me. Here's the recipe. And he's gonna come in and say, we're gonna do this a little different, but you're gonna be really happy and you're gonna find yourself agreeing with everything that comes up along the way. And we'll pull out second Nephi chapter 25, 23, a statement that is confusing at a level. We know that it is by grace that we are saved after all we can do.

Speaker 2 00:31:47 We love this conversation that after all, we can do thing. Because I think that that has been, uh, maybe something that is members of the church. We kind of feel like we've gotta try, try, try, try, try. And then after we do all of that, then

Speaker 3 00:32:00 We can go to Jesus at the end of life, maybe. Yeah. Right. Or right. When I'm perfect, I can go to him and finally repent of the stuff that I was imperfect about. But I read recently, Adam Miller and others have talked about this in 1830 when that phrase was first written. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, the notion of it meant despite. Right.

Speaker 1 00:32:15 So

Speaker 2 00:32:15 There's nothing we can

Speaker 3 00:32:16 Do. So despite, well, and I love the, I love framing up, like despite how hard I try or what about despite how big of a mess I have made, right. I'm still saved by grace. And that, that notion creates more hope than almost anything else we've ever discovered. That it's not just at the end of life or at the end of today. It's in this moment. So that three step walls get used to it. I can't do this right now, but he can, I'll let him and just get into the rhythm of letting Jesus into our lives more all the time. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:32:47 Uh, that's powerful. Love that. Let's shift a little bit to, well, let me just ask, is there anything other principles as far as this, the dynamic of the class that you do? We, uh, that we need to make sure we cover?

Speaker 3 00:32:58 Okay. We team teach it. We remember the Jeff and Pat Holland show at BYU years ago

Speaker 1 00:33:03 In the eighties. Yep.

Speaker 3 00:33:04 Yeah. And, uh, they were so good. And you see it with commentators calling, you know, professional games and college games. <laugh> the back and forth is so wonderful and powerful. One time Sister Walker was out of town. Kristin was out of town. I forget what forum we're in here. <laugh> and I taught it by myself. And it was just, it was harder to deliver the energy that comes from a, a team format, in part because we both have deep experience and we can draw work with each other. And it's wonderful to teach with my wife. But there's something about that, that, that helps you recognize more and work with the group and facilitate. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And maybe it's the missionary companionship model that works well for instructing people as well. But we, we love facilitating that together and would really recommend an approach like that. Love

Speaker 1 00:33:49 It. Cool. Yeah. Now let's just shift as far as your calling as a YSA Bishop. Did that calling come after you were doing these? You started these

Speaker 3 00:33:57 I was actually serving in a bishoprick. Okay. She was serving in our Stake Relief society presidency in that same stake. So the topic came up and we both said, we stepped into it and said, we've got some experience here, should cool. Would you let us carve this out? And we worked with a member of our stake presidency to kind of initially frame it up, but, and then I got, we started into it, and then I got called to be a bishop, and they're like, you're not gonna have time. And it's been worth every bit of time I've allocated for this to be able to teach the class. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:34:24 So

Speaker 1 00:34:24 Fun. So take me to, let's go into the bishop's office then, because this is where, you know, the, the r part of someone often shows up, but also other parts outside of that. 'cause I think a lot of church leaders struggle with just the dynamics of repentance. And sometimes I, you know, I say sometimes a bishop can just become a spiritual parole officer. Like, all right, yeah. Two more weeks, six more weeks, no sacrament, you know, let's regroup all you relapse. Well, you know, yeah. Two more weeks, six more, you know, whatever it is. And so they, but they wanna be helpful. They wanna be a hopeful voice and, and see change and offer healing. But like you said, sometimes I don't even know what it means to apply the atonement of Jesus Christ. So where's a good place to start as far as being a bi YSA bishop with these principles?

Speaker 2 00:35:05 Well, I'm gonna pause before you start. I'm just gonna remind you, we talk about you needing more Jesus when you're there. So talk to them about the more Jesus situation. Bread. Say more about that and the bread. How much bread? Oh,

Speaker 3 00:35:18 <laugh>. So I will have a lot of experiences, but I'll have people come to my office and confess something and they'll say, I, I haven't been taking the sacrament now for

a month. And I'll say, who told you to stop taking the sacrament? I'll say, well, I just felt like I shouldn't. And that script has evolved more in my mind. And I say, you know, we're command not to judge. You're not a judge. And yet I am as a bishop. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you know, I'm a common judge in Israel. And so I said, there are only two people that can tell you not to take the sacrament and neither of them is you. And they look at me like, okay, so who are they? <laugh>. So I say, did I tell you not to take the sacrament or did the stake president were the key holders for you?

Speaker 3 00:35:56 And they will work with me on that. And then oftentimes I feel, and this is dependent on the person and the key speak to say, I think you need to take the sacrament. And I wish we could give you a bigger piece of bread, maybe even a half a loaf <laugh>, if you need that much Jesus. Right. A big drink of water. You need more Jesus in your li life, not less. So let's bring that into your life. Go into the sacrament meeting as though it's the emergency room of the hospital instead of a place where everyone that is lily white is sitting. All the perfect people go Right. And, and know that everyone has got their own struggles. But it's been wonderful to invite people into that way of thinking about that moment. So that's the more Jesus idea. And we all need more Jesus. Right. And especially in that one, as I say it, I think, so how many times during this conversation have I really thought about Jesus other than advocated about it? Like, am I feeling it? Am I really making room for him? 'cause the dynamics of my life changed when I, I let him in

Speaker 1 00:36:55 More. Yeah. Another context I remember seeing it is that individuals will even take off their temple garment thinking that they've done something. You know, and maybe as a bishop or listening, thinking, yeah, this is probably going to lead to removal of, of membership, but for right now, you need to get that garment back on. 'cause you're still in the covenant. Yeah. And, uh, and we'll, we'll discuss when, if that, that needs to be changed.

Speaker 3 00:37:16 Yeah. That's not your choice. Right. Work with me as your bishop. Really the biggest dimension I focus on with, with individuals in my office, and you know, if my ward members ever hear this, I hope they can attest to this point. <laugh>. Okay. Um, but that is that most of us don't have the tools we need to do the job. I mean, if you've ever taken a, a pedal off a bike, you can't just use a regular wrench. You have to have a very specialized wrench to do that. And the same applies to so many other problems that we encounter in life from home repairs, to fixing cars, to whatever the right tool makes all the, the difference. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, do I know all of the right tools personally? Have I used all the right tools myself? In every case? In every situation? No. But I know tools are available.

Speaker 3 00:37:59 So one of the things I advocate mostly in, in recovery and people working out of their way, out of deep problems is to kind of create a triangle of support. One being the bishop, the other being professional support, like a therapist. It could be a doctor based on anxiety or depression. It could be whatever they need, but bring them that person into their corner. And then the third can be support groups, support meetings. And I've seen people who use that, those three points, that three legged approach to support thrive in ways that they didn't thrive before. Using tools can be so powerful. One of my favorite examples of this is, um,

a story when Jamal Williams played at BYU and he's a running back. It's funny, I I get a story wrong 90% of the time because I can't remember exactly the name of all the, the parties.

Speaker 3 00:38:48 But he got a handoff and he ran, broke through the line and he was running down the field and he started zigging and zagging without looking back. And he got tackled after about 20 yards or so. And the commentator came on, I think it was Blaine Fowler from BYU at the time, who in the replay, he said, watch his eyes. And you see Jamal looking up at the jumbotron. Oh. And he can see the guys coming from behind him. And he's moving based on that information, <laugh>. And he said he's, this was the most profound statement that I think I've heard in a long time. He said he's using all the tools available to him. I think so often as members of the church, we are aware of tools and we kind of don't want to use them. In some cases we don't know what tools we might benefit from. But as a bishop, I feel like my primary job is to help people find tools. 'cause I gotta work with them for three to six months. Right. In a lot of cases. And they move on. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So if I can leave them with anything, it would be use tools. Tools are gonna be, yeah. They're gonna save you, you know, for whatever purpose you'd wanna dig a hole, don't use a spoon, use a shovel or a backhoe depending on the size of hole you need to dig.

Speaker 1 00:39:57 Yeah. And with that perspective, it's so, 'cause they're being so much pressure on the bishop, like, okay, I've gotta like fix this problem. I've gotta Yeah. Read the right scripture to 'em. I've gotta, you know, have the answers. But instead of re you can reframe yourself as the bishop. No. You're just the place of resources or tools like Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> did that tool work? Oh, it didn't work. Okay, well let's I got like 10 others. What

Speaker 3 00:40:17 Can you do differently? Right. It's about different behavior. Trying something new and different than, 'cause a lot of times people say stuck, they stay stuck because of their own best thinking. They're not gonna think up a new tool. So go read, go talk to people, go get curious about what could be available that could help you. Especially during your clear-minded times. Right. When you decide you're not gonna struggle with that problem for a few days or a few weeks, get some tools then Yeah. Put up some barriers. One of my favorites is like, turn some controls on, on your phone. It's like bumper bowling. You're not going, it doesn't guarantee a strike, but your ball will not go in the gutter <laugh> if you put the bumpers up. <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:40:57 Yeah. Yeah. That's really helpful. So, and that, those three things, the professional support groups and then what was the,

Speaker 3 00:41:02 And the bishop work with your

Speaker 1 00:41:04 Leader Bishop. Yeah. The, just that spiritual mentor. Right. Yeah. Awesome. Anything else that comes to mind as far as just your experience in the YSA ward with applying these principles or regardless if it's in the bishop's office or not anything coming to mind?



Speaker 2 00:41:17 You know, I'm just listening to him talk. I get the opportunity to have some of the ysa come visit with me that are just having, they don't need to see the bishop, but they do need a little bit of support. And I just love pointing them to Jesus. And I even love when they say to me, I don't really understand what that means because I pray to Heavenly Father. So my relationship with heavenly Father is really good. I don't understand how to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Mm. And I love helping them break that down and recognize that he's the advocate. He has been walking by their side in every single prayer. He has been taking that prayer to the Father. He has never left them alone. He's standing there. And if they do turn their head or their back, he's knocking, knocking, knocking, knocking.

Speaker 2 00:42:01 Let me in, let me in, let me in. I'm here. I'm here, I'm here. And I'd love helping them understand that they have a savior in Jesus Christ that will truly help them accomplish all the things that they need. Including finding more friends, including dealing with their anxiety, including deciding which major or which internship or which boy to date, or which girl to date, or which, you know, I mean, or how to get over the fact that a friend to betrayed them or, and when they start seeing that, wait a minute, Jesus can help me do this 'cause I am not alone in all of this. And he is so good at all of that. And it doesn't matter that I'm so bad at all of that. It just, it's very fulfilling to help them find Jesus that way. That's

Speaker 1 00:42:43 Cool. Love it. Any other point, principle concept that we missed?

Speaker 2 00:42:47 I'm gonna share a quote that kind of, I feel like speaks to this, to us culturally, maybe in the church and, and it's a Sherry do quote and she says, I fear that some of us understand just enough about the gospel to feel guilty. Guilty that we are not measuring up to some undefinable standard, but we don't understand enough about the atonement to feel the peace and strength and power and mercy it affords us. And so our gre is hope, I think is helping people not feel the guilt Yeah. But to instead feel the hope in the atonement of Jesus Christ. Yeah,

Speaker 1 00:43:21 Yeah, yeah. Removing that shame really is the step one. And sometimes that's a long step. Yeah. Right. Not then the 12 steps, but that's, they're walking in there, their bishop's office are showing up to church, bury buried in shame and guilt and let's remove that. So the master can do is work, you know? Yeah,

Speaker 3 00:43:37 Absolutely. One of

Speaker 2 00:43:38 The, put it on the table,

Speaker 3 00:43:39 One of the things that we do and my ward, and we're trying to do this in our own lives and in our classes to talk about Jesus more. And you know, months ago I would've felt less comfortable just saying, talk about Jesus. I think I would've felt like I had to say, talk about Jesus Christ or the Savior, our Lord and redeemer. Right. We have a lot of comfortable terms that we use, but it is a church of Jesus Christ, of Latterday saints. We are, um, taking his name upon us. And so I wanna talk about Jesus as Jesus more, our standard assignment for our speakers is to share their Jesus experience. How do they know him? What

do they know about 'em? Who is he to them? Second thing we do with our class, and we've done this a lot with our own, in our own lives, is we've curated a playlist and we call it come to Jesus life on Spotify.

Speaker 3 00:44:27 That is just great music. It's a lot of contemporary Christian music. Uhhuh <affirmative>. And if you've never listened to K Love or the first time you turn it on, you might feel a little bit overwhelmed by the Jesus tone of the music. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But I have found that through my life, I washed my mind with so much else. You know, I'm a big fan of eighties music and whatever, but, and that's all good, but it didn't have any kind of, that Jesus can save me notion in it, or he can save me in this moment, he can lift me, he can strengthen me. So, so much of this music, and we have some LDS artists on the list, but it's just like, it's, I listen to it when I go to the gym now, it's like my, yeah. My power anthems or you know, or these songs because they, they take us to a place of remembering him and reflecting on the miracles that we see around us.

Speaker 3 00:45:16 And sometimes one song will talk about the creation and another song will talk about everybody can come to the table. Right. Just and on and on. But they're just such great messages. And so Kristin is really particularly good. We, we have, you know, Alexa devices around our house and it's always playing Christian music. And so we, those are some tools that help us shape our thinking about Jesus Christ. It's not beyond what we hear from general conference or through reading the Book of Mormon, but it's beyond what culturally we normally accept. Hmm. And I think if we can enlarge what we accept culturally and keep it doctrinally Correct. We can go places we've never gone. Yeah. And there's some remarkable places to go. Yep.

Speaker 1 00:45:59 Yeah. I love that. All right. Last question I have for you two, and Brett, maybe we'll start with you and then Kristin, you can end, but just reflecting on your time as leaders, as teachers, how has being a leader helped you become a better follower of Jesus Christ? Brett, what would you say?

Speaker 3 00:46:14 You know, clearly when you preach at some point, it accumulates in a way that you go, am I really practicing what I preach? And so the 12 steps advocate in step 10 to take daily inventory of your life. And I think one of my greatest reflections now as a leader and as a, a follower of Jesus Christ is to, is to reflect daily on what I am doing in relation to what I preach. Am I living it? Am I living it fully? One of my favorite things, uh, lately to do is, is I look at even my temple clothing or my temple garment is to remember in that moment the things that it represents, as opposed to just once in a while when I visit the temple. And so I'm trying to bring Jesus into my present moment in every way that I can. And I say that as though I've achieved something. Not really. I'm, I'm working on it. I'm at a 2.58 <laugh>. Um, right now. On some scale you decide what scale is, but, but, you know, it's, I'm striving and I, I love that word in the temple, recommend questions too. I'm striving to remember him more 'cause the benefits outweigh the effort by so much. So that's my, yeah, my endeavor.

Speaker 1 00:47:26 Kristin, how has being a leader helped you become a better follower of Jesus Christ?

Speaker 2 00:47:30 You know, it's, you can't serve people without falling in love with them. It just happens. And so it's really such a blessing to be called in different capacities. And, um, I actually did get an opportunity to teach, um, early morning seminary for a few years while we were in California. And in every client from those kids at, you know, six o'clock in the morning to serving in young Women's and Relief society and primary or whatever are now teaching institute, you start to love the people that you serve and it brings back the most important things that we can do. The two great commandments love God and love people, and it's such an opportunity to love people. And then as we love people and we feel the power of Jesus Christ in our lives, we can't help but bear testimony of him and how much he loves them. And there is really nothing that brings a spirit more in your life than telling someone, do you know how much Jesus loves you? You matter to him. He gave all for you. He is all in on you. And the Spirit just touches their hearts to know I matter. And that's what having an opportunity to serve in the church has done for me.

Speaker 1 00:48:44 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 to watch the interview about screw velocity, go to [leading-saints.org/fourteen](http://leading-saints.org/fourteen) for free access to the Mentally Healthy Saints virtual library.

Speaker 4 00:49:15 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.