What Your Ward Thinks About Priesthood Authority, Temple Marriage, & Brigham Young | An Interview with Josh Coates

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Speaker 1   00:00:02   Have you ever had a loved one leave the church and your relationship becomes awkward. This is so common and so sad. I got the chance to interview the Packard family who have been down this road. Cindy and Blair Packard are Orthodox believing parents and Josh, their son and his wife, have left the church. We came together to discuss their journey, and it was amazing what they taught. They talked about the communications that you regretted and how other siblings responded in positive and negative ways. They learned how to pick up the pieces. Again, express love, carry on, and build a beautiful relationship. This has become a favorite in the Questioning Saints Virtual Library. You can actually gain access to this interview@leadingsaints.org slash 14. This will give you 14 days to watch the Packards interview and many others related to helping individuals who begin to question their faith. Go to leading saints.org/fourteen and get access now.

Speaker 1   00:01:01   So you're checking us out as maybe a potential podcast you could start listening to. I know many of you have been listening for a long time, but let me just talk to the newbies for a minute. What is Leading Saints? What are we trying to do here with this podcast? Let me explain. Leading Saints is a nonprofit organization, a 5 0 1 C3 is what they call it. And we have a mission to help Latter Day Saints be better prepared to lead. Now, of course, often means in the context of a calling, it may mean in your local community, your work assignments. We've heard about our content influencing all sorts of leaders in all sorts of different contexts. We invite you to listen to this episode and maybe a few others of our 500 plus episodes that we

have out there, jump in and begin to learn and begin to consider some of these principles we talk about on the Leading Saints podcast. Here we go.

Speaker 1   00:01:56   In this episode, I had the opportunity to sit down with Josh Coates. He is one of the founders of the BH Roberts Foundation, one of my favorite online platforms and resources out there. They also are behind, uh, Mormon, LDS bot. So many other resources that are both entertaining, fun, and insightful. I just love the work that Josh Coates does. And he recently put together a research study where he went out and I think it was 3,800 data points individuals, both individuals in the church, out of the church, former members, current members, and he shares with us some of the, the high points that they discovered. And he offers places you can go if you wanna do a deep dive into the data, but so fascinating to understand who are the groups, who are the demographics and award, who are maybe at most risk of maybe some of these faith struggles and, and faith crises. And a spoiler alert, it's my demographic, the millennials, and why is that? And how can we help them? And what should we understand about diverse perspectives in Ward or in a Sunday school class? Should we be uncomfortable with that? Should we make sure everybody's like towing the Orthodox line as much as possible? And what if they're not so fascinating discussion with Josh Coates, and you're gonna love it. Here we go.

Speaker 1   00:03:18   Josh Coates, welcome to the Leading Saints Podcast. Hi,

Speaker 2   00:03:20   Kurt. How's it going? Great.

Speaker 1   00:03:21   Good to hear. Yeah, this is fun. I've been hoping to bring you on the podcast sooner than later, and just with the good work you do at the BH Roberts Foundation. Now, for people who aren't familiar with the work you do, I a lot of times you'll see your work as Mormon or is that the right? Yeah.

Speaker 2   00:03:35   Mormon's kind of one of our projects. Gotcha. We have a bunch of projects, but a lot of people know us for, uh, it's funny, some people, um, know morter for the memes. Right? We, we crank out great, these, these kind of silly memes, and then other people know us for our sort of apologetic articles. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> on, I guess it's okay to call 'em apologetic. That's, you know, what they are. But they're, uh, they're q and a articles on Mormon or.org about controversial topics in the church. And they're just short form. They're not like big long essays. They're short form Q and as on, on all these different topics. And they're based on primary source documents. We have a, a large, I guess, the largest database of primary source documents about controversial topics and probably have oh, 10 or 15,000 primary source documents. So if you wanna find out, like everything Joseph Smith ever said about black people, like we have all those primary source documents, or if you wanna find out everything ever documented in the 19th century about Heavenly Mother, we've got those documents.

Speaker 2   00:04:34   Wow. And so now you can find these, if you go to the U of U archives or go to the, the church History Library archives or BYU archives and you can hunt and peck and put the collection together yourself. We just have it all in one place. Oh, that's cool. Um, so that

sort of, we don't do a lot of quotes from scholars, you know, on topics 'cause you know, there's good scholarship on all this stuff, but we just say, you know, what, what's the data say? And so that's kind of, that's so Yeah. People know for Mormon, for the memes for the q and as, we have other projects, sociological projects. Right. Yeah.

Speaker 1   00:05:06   That's what we're gonna get

Speaker 2   00:05:07   Into that we're gonna talk about today. We're working on a, a book of Mormon graphic novel. We're producing collector cards for early church history. We do, uh, artificial intelligence work. We've got lds bot.com.

Speaker 1   00:05:20   Yeah. That's, if you haven't played with the LDS bot, it is awesome. Yeah.

Speaker 2   00:05:23   Yeah. LDS bot's been a, a fun project that's been for up for, uh, almost a year now. It's had, oh, I think maybe 150, almost 200,000 conversations with people over the last year about church topics. Yeah. And, uh, so anyway, so we, we, we've got a lot of projects at the BH Roberts Foundation. That's

Speaker 1   00:05:40   Cool. Now, we always like to highlight, uh, leaders in, even in church history. So, uh, BH Roberts of people don't know who he is. Yeah. Who is he? And, and

Speaker 2   00:05:47   Yeah, BH Roberts is the foundation is named after him. Uh, mostly because I think BH Roberts was sort of the first, I think it's fair to say he was one of the first intellectuals in the church Yeah. That really decided to evaluate secular knowledge and try to integrate that with our theology. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And find the gaps and find the conflicts, and have open candid discussions about problem areas. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And that sometimes got him in a little bit of trouble, but he always pulled out and, you know, uh, he loved having robust conversations and discussions with the brethren. He was a 70, he was a mission president, he was a polygamist. He, you know, he was all, he was a politician. He was all these different things. It was, that's one thing, you know, the foundation, we don't, we don't do politics, but aside from that <laugh>, we, we try to emulate a lot of, of the spirit of BH Roberts where we can be open and candid about what the data says and how we can rationalize that with the spiritual, with our testimonies, with our understanding of theology. And so we named the foundation after him because he was so, he's a great model, I think. Yeah. Uh, in that way.

Speaker 1   00:06:59   And you're one of the founders of the, the foundation,

Speaker 2   00:07:01   Right? Yeah. Yeah. No, it is, it's, uh, yeah, I put it together a few years ago. It's, we're about three and a half years, uh, running. So it's, it's a pretty small group. We've got an office in Salt Lake and, uh, probably about a dozen employees Yeah. That, you know, do research and, and, uh, make fun little videos and, uh, you know, it's a great team. Was

Speaker 1   00:07:22   This always a, a passion project you saw yourself doing at some point, or, uh, well,

Speaker 2   00:07:26   You know, I've probably, you know, I, I first got online in 1987. Wow. So I've been online a very long time. And if you spend time online, you, you run into, uh, strong opinions about the church <laugh>. And so I've always, uh, been fascinated with the concept of defending the faith and having rational discussions about theology and philosophy. And so that's always been an interest in mine. Most of, well, my entire career has really been around tech and venture-backed startups and that sort of thing. But as a hobby, as an amateur online, an anonymous, uh, apologist, I suppose I've certainly dabbled, but I thought, you know, at some point it would be good if someone was able to just make a list of all the difficult topics, ask all the difficult questions, and then just go see what the data says on it, and then just kind of settle it.

Speaker 2   00:08:25   And if part of settling it is, I don't know, or rather we don't know. Right. Or probably yes, or probably No, that's okay. That's at least it's definitive based on the data we have. And if there was some source where you could just go and say, okay, this is kind of settled, at least as far as we know, you know, I just thought that would be a cool project to, to do. I mean, there's some great sites out there that have been doing this for years, but there's a lot of different styles to apologetics and a lot of different philosophical approaches, and I just didn't find one that I felt really fit what I was looking for. So

Speaker 1   00:09:02   You created it.

Speaker 2   00:09:02   So Yeah, I said, you know, I'm done with, you know, my commercial career. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So I've shifted gears. I'm, I'm completely out of the tech scene, and I don't do any of that sort of stuff anymore at all. And so now I do the BH drivers, uh, full-time. That's cool.

Speaker 1   00:09:17   Yeah. That's cool. And now this led to this, uh, research project that you did. Maybe give us the foundation, the background, how'd this come to be and what was the intent?

Speaker 2   00:09:24   Yeah, so because we're sort of data focused at the foundation, contemporary issues are something that we actually have the ability to get data on historical issues. We're sort of stuck with the Yeah. You know, bits and pieces that we can find can't

Speaker 1   00:09:38   Go back and survey the navu period. That's

Speaker 2   00:09:40   Right. Yeah. Yeah. And that would be so

Speaker 1   00:09:42   Fascinating someday, maybe. Yeah. <laugh>, we'll see where tech takes it. Right.

Speaker 2   00:09:45   <laugh>. Uh, but I think because we have the opportunity to get actual real data today, it's worth doing. And so the first project we did was in 2022, we did a relatively, you know, a basic survey of opinions that people have on, on the latter day Saint Faith and on Latter Day Saints and, and their understanding of Mormonism. Like a

Speaker 1   00:10:06   General audience. Yeah.

Speaker 2   00:10:07   Just a general, you know, national survey. And so we, we did conducted that and we got some interesting results. We learned some things, but what we really wanted to do is, is do a survey on the latter day saint people themselves. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And, and in addition to that, former Latter Day Saints, because they're part of our people, they're part of our culture, they're part of the conversation. And so it turns out that getting data really representative data, statistically rigorous data on latter-Day Saints and former latter-Day Saints is actually super hard. Hmm. We're such a tiny population, and getting representative data on a small population is, well, it's just expensive, frankly. Yeah. And on occasionally people spend the money to do it. The Pew, uh, uh, foundation, the Pew folks 2011 did a survey of, uh, it was about a thousand Latter Day Saints. And that was in, yeah, that was in about 2011.

Speaker 2   00:11:04   That was kind of during the Romney sort of era <laugh>, uh, where people are like, Hey, what, you know, who are these Mormons? And who's this Mormon guy Romney running for president? And so they said, Hey, this is worth finding out doing the survey. Then a few years after that, Jana Reese put a small team together and did a survey on, uh, they, they called the next Mormon survey. And that was a small survey, but a good survey because there's just not a lot out there. She, uh, I think there was about 1600 in that survey. And, and a lot of those were former Latter Day Saints. And she conducted interviews as well as doing kind of an internet based panel survey. And we said, you know what? Let's do a, the biggest survey we can do. And we talked to a lot of firms out there that did survey work and, uh, got pretty far with, with several of these large survey firms, and it's, you know, hundreds of thousands of dollars and sometimes years to do this.

Speaker 2   00:12:00   And we thought, you know what? It sounds like no one's actually figured this out, <laugh>. So we're gonna do some pioneer work ourselves. And we actually spent a fair chunk of change and put a lot of energy into, um, creating a significant size survey and sent it out to Latter Day Saints in, uh, what we call the Mormon corridor. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So basically we, we, we looked at the US Census and said, Hey, which counties in the US have more than 15% latter Day Saints? And that makes up sort of the Mormon corridor. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> that's, you know, Idaho and Arizona, Utah. And we said, let's, let's send postcards to these guys. Let's randomly send postcards to residents in these counties. We ended up sending it about 80,000 postcards out. And the reason we did that is because there's a lot of people that aren't online. You know, I mean, we think, oh, everyone's online. You know, that's, that's everybody. Right. But it's not, you know, and, and so a lot of people that are less online sort of get cut out of survey work, which

Speaker 1   00:12:58   Skews the results, right?

Speaker 2   00:12:59   Yeah. Which, which skews the results. So what we did is we did the, the postcard work, but we also did an internet-based survey as well. Over the last five years or so, many different types of social science researchers have found that advertising through Facebook, not just posting on a forum, but actual random advertisements, you can actually get a reasonable sample in the US that's statistically significant. So what we did is we combined a Facebook survey or meta really, in which include all of Meta's properties and combine that with the postcards. And so between both of those, we got a national sample, and then we got a

Mormon corridor sample, and we combined those results together to get 3,800 respondents to the survey that were valid respondents. And about a third of them were former Latter Day Saints. So it's the largest sample of former Latter Day Saints that's ever been collected.

Speaker 2   00:13:57   So that was kind of the, the base data that we were working with. And we, what we wanted to discover was really what, what are the beliefs and the practices of this, these groups of people, and what we learned, of course, it's a snapshot in 2023. We can't say, oh, this is the trend. Right. You know, perhaps we'll do another survey in a couple of years and we'll have two data points that we can see what's trending, which direction. Of course, we also can compare with the, with the other national surveys. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> that a lot of people study religion, but Latterday Saints usually don't make the cut. 'cause there's, there's just not a lot of us out there. We like to think there's a lot of us. Yeah. But there's, there, you know, it's one or 2% at best Yeah. In the us Yeah.

Speaker 1   00:14:41   And that 3,800 sample, I mean, for some people who aren't with surveying and statistics, I mean, but that's a considerable sample.

Speaker 2   00:14:50   Get reasonably good data with just a few hundred if the data's clean and if it's done in the right way. But the, the, the problem is, is when you deal with a small amount of data, it's really hard to dig into a particular slice of the data. So, you know, say you only have a thousand, and then you wanna say, well, you know what, what I really wanna find out are what do Gen Z women that identify as L-G-B-T-Q, how do they feel about the historicity of the Book of Mormon? You can't do that because when you have a thousand and then you say, well, now we're doing women, you know, you cut that in half and now we're doing Gen Z, and then you kept that smaller, then we're doing, talking about L-G-B-T-Q, and you cut that even smaller, and pretty soon you get to the point where you don't have statistically significant Yeah. Numbers. But when you start with 3,800, you can actually chop things up pretty well and still have really solid data. Yeah. So that's why all researchers really want large numbers is because they can drill into specifics. Yeah.

Speaker 1   00:15:54   So with this such an investment of going into the survey, I mean, how do you begin to formulate the type of questions that you wanna to ask and make sure you get really helpful data? Yeah.

Speaker 2   00:16:04   Well, uh, the great question. 'cause you can <laugh>, there are a lot of bad surveys out there, <laugh> that, that Right. And, and, and they're bad for lots of reasons. One reason is, you know, they're snowball surveys. Hey, just posted this on a Facebook group and the reason they're called snowballs, because if you're part of that group, you say, oh, there's a neat survey. I'm on this group with other people like me. Right. And I'm gonna share this with my friends that are like me. And so you basically, you know, it, it's like going into a, a Republican national convention and saying, oh, we're gonna, we wanna learn about what you think about, uh, freedom of religion, Uhhuh <affirmative>. And you say, look, we got data. So, you know, but it's like, well, you just ask the Republicans, you know? Yeah. And, and republican minded people, you also have to go not only talk to the Democrats, but everyone in between as well. You have to get a representation of the US. And so snowball surveys don't do that. So

snowball surveys are very common. They're very cheap. And there's, uh, unfortunately there's a lot of bad data floating around related to Mormonism that have been done with snowball surveys. Mm-Hmm. So it's tough. You just gotta be a, a good, a smart consumer of data. So yeah. The, the other thing about surveys is questions. Right. You can skew a question pretty bad. Yeah. Um, if you're not careful. So just how

Speaker 1   00:17:15   You write it, right? Or

Speaker 2   00:17:16   Exactly how you write it, what options you offer. There's a lot of subtle ways to nudge people one direction or the other. And so, um, really you have to rely on the integrity of the survey author to say, you know, to use kind of standardized methods for finding out information. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, there's surveys like the GSS or the CES and lots of sort of standard secular surveys that have asked, you know, questions about happiness and, uh, emotional wellbeing and belief in God. And, and so we modeled a lot of our questions off of the sort of standardized ones that have been used for decades. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, even if they're, we worded a little strange. It's important to, to utilize those wordings so you can compare your data with data that's been around for decades. It's well understood. You don't wanna reinvent the wheel, but then a lot of 'em, of course, yeah.

Speaker 2   00:18:09   We have to carefully word the survey ourselves because they're not, they're not common questions. Yeah. So what did you wanna find out then? Oh, you know, all the fun stuff, uh, <laugh>, you know, we started out with just basic beliefs about God, the Book of Mormon, the nature of Priesthood authority, historicity of the Book of Mormon, uh, opinions on, uh, black Saints in the priesthood ban tithing. So these questions we asked, we segmented them to people that identified as Latter Day Saints. And then we also had a segment where they said, you know what? I used to be a latter day saint. And what's important to understand about any kind of survey work is we're only able to survey the people that felt like responding, obviously. But I think people forget, there's a lot of former latter Day saints that have absolutely no interest in responding to a survey like this.

Speaker 2   00:19:03   Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And, and, and we don't know how large that segment is. So you can think of it, if we did a survey about golf and you're a golfer, you're probably gonna take that survey. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you're like, Hey, I, yeah, I love golf. Hey, I'm happy to talk, you know, I'm gonna share my opinions about golf. And so those are the Latter Day Saints, right? So we get a lot of people that are like, oh, if I get a survey about my church, you know, a small minority religion, the latter day Saint Faith, I absolutely want share my opinion about that. But if you quit golf, you know, a few years back and you've picked up tennis, you see a golf survey, you're like, eh, I just don't care. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> like, you know, that takes 20 minutes to fill that out. And I just, I just don't care.

Speaker 2   00:19:41   I'm about tennis nowadays, so we miss those people. Hmm. But let's say you're like, you know what? Yeah. I remember tennis, excuse me. I remember golf and Yeah. There's a reason I quit golf. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, I'm gonna tell you why I quit golf <laugh>, you know, like I, yeah, I'll take your survey. So we get those former Latter Day Saints, you know? Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> that care enough to want to share. And we're so grateful for

that. Right? Yeah. So we have some insight, but the point is, is we miss a huge demographic of people that have moved on and have no interest. So the former Latter Day Saints data we have is just the former Latter Day Saints that felt strongly enough that they wanted to share Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you know? Yeah. Whereas the Latter Day Saints, we feel pretty comfortable that like, Hey, we've got all sorts of different types of Latter Day Saints.

Speaker 2   00:20:28   All of them were like, Hey, yeah, I, I wanna share my opinion about the church. 'cause you know, if, if they identify as a latter day saint, they care. We found about 70% of latter Day Saints, um, are active by some definition of active Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, they, they attend semi-regularly or regularly to church. But a lot of people, the first reaction is, what, 70%? There's no way there's a 70% activity rate. Again, this is people that have identified as Latter Day Saints. So if they care enough to say, yeah, I'm Mormon, 70% of those people are, well, they're active, they're participating. Yeah. Now, there's a whole bunch of people on the roles that don't identify as Latter Day Saints anymore. And that, that's not to say they say, oh, I'm a former latter day saint. A lot of 'em are just like, yeah, I, I opt out. I don't do that stuff anymore. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>,

Speaker 1   00:21:13   You know. Yeah. Whether they took the time to write the letter or get their name removed.

Speaker 2   00:21:16   Sure. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. And so, so yeah. But the people that do identify as Latter Day Saints, we found are pretty active in the church. Hmm.

Speaker 1   00:21:25   So, uh, I'll just start with this question. I think it is so easy from a personal standpoint, or being a leader and looking at your ward and the type of interviews you, you see, or the youth and where they end up, do they go on a mission? Do they not, there Is this feeling like people are leaving in droves? Like are they

Speaker 2   00:21:41   Well, probably <laugh>. Okay. You know, you know, and I say that probably it's really hard to tell. Okay. It's difficult to measure activity rates. It's difficult to measure disaffiliation rates again, because of this problem. A lot of people that leave, they don't want to answer your question, <laugh>. They don't want to be part of your survey. And some that leave are of course more than happy to. So we do have data, but it's really hard to connect that data to trends. Mm. Um, the key is, is trends. So you, you wanna be able to be measuring the number of disaffiliated Latter Day Saints over time. Yeah. And there's just not a lot of data on that. There's some national surveys, but they're relatively small numbers of Latter Day Saints because they're, they're broad surveys based on the data that we have from these national surveys.

Speaker 2   00:22:34   There's a secular trend of course, that's overwhelmingly evident that people are moving away from religion in general. We're certainly, as Latterday Saints not immune to it, we're a lot less affected than a lot of Protestant churches that the five or six mainline Protestant churches, uh, in the US have lost millions and millions and millions of members over the last 20 years. That's certainly not the case with our faith. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, we've actually, at least membership on the roll has net increased over the last,

you know, 10 years. Uh, it's somewhere around half a million or so in the US as opposed to losing millions. So, so in that sense, we're somewhat resistant to the general secular trend of disaffiliation, but we're definitely feeling it because our growth rates are going down as a church. That's growth rates, not in absolute terms, but Yeah. Yeah. I mean, being a religious person in America is becoming less common.

Speaker 2   00:23:33   Yeah. And certainly in our faith as well, what we found is that there's sort of two types of latter day Saints and I, I guess I should say statistically speaking, right? Yeah. Right. We did something called a a k means cluster analysis, which is a standard tool for doing, um, analysis of populations and sociological research. And it basically told us when we did this analysis, Hey, you've got two types of people in your survey that are latter day saints. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Right. You put the former ladder to say it's over here for a minute. You just take the people that say, Hey, yeah, I'm a Latter Day Saints. And it turns out there's two types, there's 80%, we call that cluster one. And that 80% group, for lack of a better term, is pretty orthodox. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, they, they're active, they're paying tithing. They believe that President Nelson has the, is a, uh, a prophet of God.

Speaker 2   00:24:27   They fall in line with the standard policies of the church. And that's a, a pretty tightly clustered group. And that's 80%. So the vast majority of latter day Saints are in that category. Then you have a 20% group, which is not that, and they don't actually cluster around a single sort of average as far as, uh, behavior and belief. They're kind of scattered. Right. Generally speaking. Right. And, and it's important to understand that these are averages across this population. You know, only a third of them are certain that there's a God, only a third of them, uh, believe the Book of Mormon is actual history. Only a third of them pay tithing. So they tend to think that women should be ordained. They tend to believe that the priesthood ban, uh, against Black Saints was, uh, completely an error and not inspired at all. This group is not, uh, and just just a note on that, the church takes a neutral stance on the, the priesthood ban.

Speaker 2   00:25:34   And an interestingly enough day, saints as a whole are, are pretty evenly split on that. Hmm. A third kind of say, you know, I don't know. I'm gonna take a neutral approach. I don't know if it was inspired or not. A third are like, no, it was, it was inspired for some wise purpose, it was inspired. And then a third are like, yeah, no, God had nothing to do with this. Hmm. So that's pretty evenly split, interestingly enough. But the 20%, they're a challenging group in many ways because first of all, they, they're part of our community. They're latterday saints, they identify as such, they're a little less active, but,

Speaker 1   00:26:09   But they do show up to church.

Speaker 2   00:26:10   But they do show up to church. Yeah. Right. Yeah. I mean, not as much as cluster one. Right. But a significant amount. And again, they identify, they say, yeah, I am a latter day saint. Or

Speaker 1   00:26:20   Would you say that they show up to church where maybe their spouse is cluster one, but they're, they're sort of, of hidden in the, in a cluster one family, even though there may be cluster two. I don't know. Right, right.

Speaker 2   00:26:29   Yeah. Yeah. That would actually be interesting to understand sort of the family dynamics of these two clusters. But Yes. But they're, they are attending, they're in our congregations, they're in our pews, and, you know, there are brothers and sisters for whatever reason. And of course, we couldn't go as deep as we'd, we'd like in the survey, you can kind of, you sort of have a limitation. You can't say, Hey, could you take a two hour survey? <laugh> Yeah. <laugh>. Uh, so we had to limit our questions. We'd love to know why. Tell us more about why you're, you know, you feel this way versus this, this other way. But I think it's really important to understand that these people are part of our community, but they don't necessarily have the same level of adherence as you might expect, you know, a good moron to have.

Speaker 2   00:27:12   Yeah. And I think that's really important, especially for leaders in the church to understand that, you know what, when you give someone a calling or you're, uh, having a tithing settlement interview or answering concerns that they might have about something going on in the ward, you know what, maybe this person's in the 20%, you know, which simply means that they practice as a latter day saint differently than sort of the mainstream, the core. And to recognize that that population exists in our wards, in our branches. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And they're part of our community. And once you realize, oh, okay, this is a normal part of our community, this 20%, I think that can help people realize that maybe it's not this aberration. Like, oh my gosh, this person doesn't believe in tithing. What's wrong with them? Yeah.

Speaker 1   00:28:03   We should really be worried. And yeah.

Speaker 2   00:28:05   It's like, no, we're, we're

Speaker 1   00:28:06   About to lose them. Right.

Speaker 2   00:28:07   Actually, a whole lot, you know, relatively speaking. Yeah. There's a large group of people that just aren't sure about that, or aren't really sure the Book of Mormon is actually true, you know, but again, they're showing up. Yeah. And so again, this is Amer in America, right? Yeah. Yeah. We did not do any, any research internationally. And I, and I would imagine that would be quite different. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But here in the US Yeah. This is this distinction between these two groups.

Speaker 1   00:28:34   Yeah. No, the, the temptation for leaders, and, and again, you're collecting data. You're not necessarily learning how to alter this data or, or change the trend per se. But like a lot of leaders are thinking, well, how do we get cluster two to come cluster with us over here in cluster one? Right. Sure. Like, and, and that's, I think what you're saying is just, it's helpful to know that they, they're there, they're like, they're in Sunday school class, and maybe that will impact how you, how you go about Sunday school.

Speaker 2   00:29:00   Absolutely. And I, and I think we don't know if people that leave the church transition from cluster one, the 80% mm-Hmm. To two cluster two, the 20%, and then eventually out. And maybe there is a trend that way. We can't speak to that. We know for sure that there are people in cluster two that have always been there, and they are always will be

there. And there's, you know, solid members of the church as far as their attendance and participation. They just have a different way of thinking and participating in church. And then there's, so this is, this is actually quite interesting. We did a generational analysis on these two clusters. We found that Gen Z is just as represented in cluster one as the Boomers. Hmm. In other words, that cluster one where we have people that are fall right in line with the church.

Speaker 2   00:29:51   They're paying their tithing. They believe in profit, they believe in the Book of Mormon. You know, they're just, they're checking all the boxes. There's just many Gen Z in there as there are as any of the other generations. Where it gets a little different generationally is with the millennials. Hmm. Millennials are dramatically overrepresented in cluster two. So millennials, more often than any other generation will say, you know, I'm not sure about the Book of Mormon. Mm-Hmm. I'm not sure about God, I'm not sure about this policy. I'm not sure about that policy. And so I, and I can't tell you if, and that's not to say that, oh, hey, gosh, I guess Gen Z's fine, right? <laugh>,

Speaker 1   00:30:29   Right.

Speaker 2   00:30:29   That data doesn't say anything about, you know, how many Gen Z are leaving the church. What it does say is, if a Gen Z, and these are people in their twenties, if a Gen Z identifies as a latter day saints, 80% of them are largely adherent with the policies of the church. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, there is one exception, gay marriage. Oh, really? Gen Z, they have a different idea about gay marriage than, uh, sort of the traditional policies of the church. Hmm. That's really the only aberration with Gen Z. And in all other ways, they line up just like the boomers or the Gen X folks. But, uh, yeah. So there is one, one little aberration there.

Speaker 1   00:31:08   Interesting. Now, I'm, uh, on the older side of the millennials. And, and this is interesting to watch. 'cause we do worry about, I mean, these are our, technically these are, this is the group that's sort of moving into that, the church leader segment of, of our church. Right? Absolutely. And that, that can impact going forward and what, what that'll look like. But I mean, is there, 'cause again, with these clusters, people who maybe leave the church or leave their faith, they could be in cluster one where they're, maybe they're overly rigid or, or overly orthodox, and then suddenly their paradigm shifts to the point they can't reconcile things, then they're out. So just because they're in cluster two doesn't mean they're on their way out by any

Speaker 2   00:31:44   Means. Right? No, that's, that's correct. We can't really speak to that. There are certainly people that, that are in sort of cluster one that, that sort of orthodox, again, for lack of a better term, that group that, um, maybe have more rigid beliefs that can break, because I think rigidity is fragile. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, even though it could be hard and resistant, I think when it breaks, it shatters. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And so there are people that certainly leave the church from that first cluster, cluster two, I think there's a lot of similarities between cluster two and people that are former latterday saints, statistically. But again, we can't show a transition. But it doesn't matter. You're in cluster one, cluster two, you know, no one has a bulletproof testimony. We all have to do the work, the praying, the fasting, the service. You know, we, we have to continue to be adherence, uh, to the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's sort of, uh, that's what the program's about. Yeah.

Speaker 1   00:32:40   Now, typically, you know, I feel like most leaders are worried about the youth, about maybe the young single adults. And I would say like early twenties, you're, you're no longer in that millennial demographic, are you?

Speaker 2   00:32:51   Right, yeah. Early twenties or Gen Z,

Speaker 1   00:32:53   Right? Yeah. Gen Z. So, but we typically we're worried about that demographic. Maybe we overlook the millennial demographic. What

Speaker 2   00:32:59   Would you say? Well, yeah, actually, I think that's an interesting point. I mean, the millennials today are, you know, they have kids. Yeah. They, you know, they're getting to the point where they're, you know, getting called as relief society presidents and as, as bishops and, and becoming leaders in the church. And that'll be interesting to watch over the next few decades to see if, because we have an overrepresentation in cluster two, many of those I imagine may be called and accept positions in leadership. It'll be interesting to see how they interpret. Right. Sort of the more traditional policies of the church and how they implement that. And there's benefits. I think there's a lot of good, you know, there's a lot of good evolution that that has happened in the church culturally over the last 20 or 30 years. And there's a lot of good with that.

Speaker 2   00:33:44   There's also been some things that I think maybe have eroded sort of the foundation of many people's faiths. And so it's, it's a balance. It's very difficult. We, we as a people can learn a lot from the world, from the secular world, and adopt the good things. Sometimes we import things that are less helpful. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And so it's difficult. And I think the millennials did a lot of importing, and a lot of that imports are good into our faith. Some of those imports were probably less helpful. And so I think that's the generation that really, they're the ones that grew up with the internet.

Speaker 1   00:34:17   Yeah.

Speaker 2   00:34:18   And before that, the Gen Xers, we didn't, you know, certainly not the boomers, the Gen Z were sort of born into sort of the internet age, the information age. And so, for example, you know, if you go to a Gen Z person and say, Hey, did you know Joseph Smith may have been involved in folk magic? They're like, oh, that's cool. Whereas a millennial will be like, oh my gosh, I, I'm having a faith crisis

Speaker 1   00:34:42   Now. They never taught me that in seminary.

Speaker 2   00:34:43   They never taught me that in seminary. And how dare they, and I feel betrayed. You know? And, and maybe there's some, you know, maybe they're justifiably upset. Sure, yeah. You know, that like, oh my gosh, the, the church curriculum did not keep up with the state of the art in historical research. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Or maybe they dis, you know, disputed the state of the art. And so that's why they didn't include it. And or whatever reasons the millennials are the ones that took that big hit from the shift in the information age. Yeah.

Speaker 1   00:35:11   So, yeah. That's interesting. So, I'm just curious, you know, apart from the, the survey and the data, just with your work with apologetics, like if you're, if a leader has award that maybe the majority are millennials, like what advice would you give? Or how could they better approach that group of people?

Speaker 2   00:35:26   I think just awareness, right? If you have a ward that's significantly millennials, you know, these are people in their early forties and, you know, thirties and early forties, uh, just be aware that, you know, when you're speaking over the pulpit and you're like, Hey, here is the, you know, here's the line that we're gonna tow from, you know, church headquarters in Salt Lake. Just know that a lot of people in your congregation are not towing that line. They're uncomfortable with a lot of those ideas. And I think it's important not to alienate our community, people in our community that think differently than we do. But at the same time, great opportunities to minister to be inclusive. It doesn't mean, as a leader, you have to say, oh gosh, we gotta compromise. Right. I have to undermine the brethren. Yeah. I have to, the General Relief Society president tweeted something that, you know, upset people.

Speaker 2   00:36:17   I, I, I, now I have to condemn that. No, no, no, no, no. Yeah, yeah. Right. It just means you have to be aware that when leadership from the church gives a message, not all of it is received the same way. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And that you can be, um, in some sense a shock absorber. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you know, you, you can be a buffer. And to help people understand, Hey, this is where, you know, the church is coming from. I understand that some people might think differently. That's okay, here's what we learn in the gospel. Here's what's practical on a day-to-day basis. And also, I think it's important to understand that, you know, we hear this over and over again. The church isn't perfect. The church makes mistakes. That's a real thing. You know, the, the church leadership has been saying that forever. And I think the balancing act is to say, you know what?

Speaker 2   00:37:01   If you don't like this policy, it might change. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, if you don't like this doctrine probably won't change. Yeah. And so are we gonna do about it? And, and so how do we deal with that? Yeah. Right, right. Um, because theologically speaking, our church has been remarkably consistent over 6,000 years. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> of, you know, if we can include all of <laugh> all, all of scriptural history, uh, as being part of God's people, the theology is remarkably consistent, instantiating different components of our theology. Obviously, you know, over time, you know, the law of Moses, we don't practice that anymore, but theologically speaking, it's like, oh, no, there, there's good reasons, foundational reasons for that. And, and separating policy in a doctrine is very challenging, especially I think, nowadays. So, yeah. I guess my advice is really for leaders, sort of digesting this data is to understand that we have a community.

Speaker 2   00:37:54   It's diverse, approximately, I'd say one in seven in your congregation looking out on any Sunday it would be one in five, but the 20% are there a little less often. So I'd say one in seven in your congregation on average, looking out are gonna have problems, fundamental problems with certain aspects of the church and theology, but they're there, they're participating, they're part of the community, but we need to embrace 'em and be sensitive and also learn from 'em. Right. They're brilliant people in both cluster one and cluster two. Yeah. And

so let's get the good from 'em and also understand that there's people in cluster one that orthodox, you know, uh, sort of cluster that are real buttheads, you know, <laugh>, they're, you know, that are a pain in the butt, you know, and, and, and they're two ridges and they're too judgmental, and they're too, you know, and understand that like, gosh, we gotta moderate those folks too and help them to be more empathetic. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you know, and you can't just think, well, hey, the cluster one people are all right, and the cluster two people are all wrong. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> or think, well, the cluster one, people are all just, you know, traditionalist, close-minded sheep who

Speaker 1   00:39:04   Haven't read enough. Right?

Speaker 2   00:39:05   Yeah. And the cluster two people are the ones that are actually more inclusive and more empathetic and have a more nuanced view of the gospel. They're just the smarter people. You can't think in those terms. Yeah. Right. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you just have to understand there's good, brilliant, beautiful people in both clusters. And there's also rotten people that are pain in the butt in both clusters.

Speaker 1   00:39:25   <laugh>, <laugh>. I appreciate it. That's awesome. Now, uh, you know, as a church leader, sometimes, you know, we're essentially sort of offering and really encouraging people to have this, uh, a life model that can lead to joy and happiness and hope. But sometimes we, you know, with all the messaging out there and the, the things you hear online, sometimes you wonder, well, I don't know, am I, is it like, you know, I've heard, uh, multiple sources say that, oh, divorce in the church or temple ceilings is just as common as any, you know, out any marriage outside of, of that arrangement. But you're, for example, you're, you talk about that the divorce rate is about, uh, three times lower for a sealed couple. That's what your, your data unveils. So what are some of these data points that maybe leaders can stand behind with confidence, knowing that if I encourage people towards the temple marriage, you're actually really benefiting them and doing them a favor?

Speaker 2   00:40:17   Yeah. It's fascinating. We, we actually spent a lot of our allocation of questions on the survey on marriage. We really wanted to get some really good data about marriage and divorce rates. What we found is that there is a very high correlation between temple marriage and activity in the church. Again, not surprising, but we have the data. Now, if you are a former Latter Day Saints, you are more than four times likely to have not been married in the temple. Hmm. If you're a former latter day saint, the divorce rate is twice as high. Hmm. If you are a latter day saint that's been married in the temple, your divorce rate is about actually over three times lower than the general population. So across the board, no matter which sort of group we look at making covenants in the temple related to your marriage. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> strengthens your marriage. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Now, a lot of people might ask, well, gosh, are those happy marriages? Yeah. Are those, you know, are, do they

Speaker 1   00:41:17   Feel stuck or trapped?

Speaker 2   00:41:18   They feel trapped. That's a, a whole nother can of worms to open up Uhhuh <affirmative>, generally speaking, latter Day Saints that are active, um, there's been a, a

fair number of surveys related to wellbeing and religiosity. Religious people tend to be happier. Hmm. Just, uh, more content. And that's inclusive of Latter Day Saints, that's inclusive of marriages and latter day saint marriages as well. But there's a lot of questions to ask about why there is such a dramatic disparity as it relates to marriage and your status in or out of the church. So a lot more research needs to be done in that area. But what we did find is that yeah, temple marriages are a very big deal. Yeah.

Speaker 1   00:41:58   Any other data point that maybe Cluster one would find encouraging with the Latter Day Saint Life model?

Speaker 2   00:42:03   Yeah. Let me talk about some interesting things related to cluster one and cluster two, and also former Latter Day Saints. And that is our research we did on Moral Foundation Theory. So some people may be familiar with Moral Foundation Theory. It was developed by Jonathan Haight and several other, uh, social scientists in, uh, about 20 years ago is when the, the, the initial research was done, and now it's pretty well accepted as a model. That's a, a valid model for understanding how people make decisions, moral decisions. The idea is, is that when we make a decision about morality, Hey, is this a good thing or a bad thing? We base our decision unconsciously, typically on five sort of moral foundations. Hmm. We ask ourselves, is this gonna hurt someone? Is this fair? So we have a, a harm and a fair foundation, those are called individualizing foundations.

Speaker 2   00:43:02   So those are more of the individuals that's gonna hurt an individual person. Is this fair to an individual person? Then there's what are called the binding values, and there's three of those. There's loyalty, for example, Hey, this guy did a rotten thing, but he's actually part of our family. What do we do now? Yeah. Right. That, that would be an example of someone struggling with a, a loyalty moral foundation. Like, Hey, they're part of our group. How do we deal with them? Or do we cut them off and abandon them? There's authority. Should we teach children to respect authority? Hey, you know, this person is a policeman, this person is a judge. This person, you know, is a guy with a badge behind a counter at a store. Uhhuh, <laugh>, I, I mean, people that have authority, should we, should we say, Hey, let's give them a little bit of respect.

Speaker 2   00:43:52   So authority. And then the final one is purity. And the purity one's really interesting is not just about sexual purity, right? Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> people think, oh no, but it's just the idea of the sacred. Hmm. Are there some things that are just inherently sacred that matter? Right? So those are all binding values because they have more to do with binding a society together. Right. So these are the five different moral foundations. Now, what's interesting about this is, is hate and the other social scientists that use the moral foundation's theory. There's, you know, about 30 questions in the standard questionnaire to determine how you kind of evaluate things morally. And what they found is across societies and countries and languages, the model is functional. They found that people fall into kind of two camps. They either lean towards individualizing or they lean towards a more balanced view, which is inclusive, individualizing, as well as binding.

Speaker 2   00:44:52   So that's a long way of saying that basically if you are a politically minded left wing liberal, then you tend to only care about harm and fairness. Hmm. You don't really care about authority or loyalty or sacredness. And so when you evaluate things, is this fair? Does this hurt people? That's all I wanna know. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. If you are a moderate politically moderate American or a conservative, you say, well, let's see if it harms people. Let's see if it's fair. But let's also see how this affects authority structures. Let's see how this affects loyalty between groups. Let's see if this is harming something that we think is sacred. So it's a more balanced view. What we found with our Latter Day Saints samples is that former latter day Saints map to the same level as self-identified extreme liberals. Hmm. So if you identify as, Hey, I am as liberal as anybody, I am a progressive left-wing liberal, then a former latter-Day Saints will match your moral foundations mapping.

Speaker 2   00:46:04   Yeah. And in fact, in areas of loyalty and sacredness or purity and respect, they actually care about those less than political liberals. Even more so members of the church do former Latter Day Saints. Oh, former Latter Day Saints. Interesting. Okay. Yeah. So, so former latter day saints, basically, and this actually maps with agnostics and atheists as well. Uhhuh <affirmative>, the most politically active group in the US are atheists. And when I mean politically active, they have the strongest political opinions, Uhhuh, <affirmative>, and they're liberal and Democrat. And I'm not saying if you're a liberal Democrat that Oh my gosh, you're an atheist. You're godless. I'm not saying that at all. Right. <laugh>, I'm just saying this is what the data indicates. Yeah. Latter Day Saints, on the other hand, map much closer to your average political moderate, with one exception purity. We are off the charts on purity.

Speaker 2   00:46:57   Uh, if you are a latter day saint, we think things that are sacred are super important. Yeah. Don't mess with them. Right? Yeah. The average American's like, nah, I don't, eh, you know, I'm not sure I care that much. Uh, that's the average American, and then the left wing American's like, yeah, that doesn't matter at all. Right. That's, yeah. Know, these are kind of the, the attitudes of these different groups, and we find cluster one and cluster two, cluster two tends to be a little more liberal in their more moral foundations mapping cluster one, the 80%, the Orthodox, they tend to be much more balanced Yeah. In their moral foundation's theory. And so this is a really fascinating study that's never been done on Latter Day Saints. It's been done on other religious groups, other political groups, different types of demographics, but this is the first time this has been done Yeah. On our people.

Speaker 1   00:47:47   Yeah. And the, the what's helpful about these moral theories is that it's just good for individuals to understand that different people, for whatever reason, prioritize, you know, one of these five differently than other people. Right. And it's not, and it's also easy to see someone who sees the world differently, like you're broken or something like what happened to you or, but is there anything like, why are people this way <laugh>? Like does it, does it come down to how they're raised their DNA or any, any insight there? Yeah,

Speaker 2   00:48:16   Great question, and I don't think there's a good answer, right? Yeah. Uh, I think that our theology is, can be reduced to, you know, basic morality. Most theology, uh, most religion is a set of of moral rules. Yeah. And so when you abandon that, you change your worldview. And what we find is former latter day saints and current latter day saints are

dramatically different in their moral foundations. It's very unlikely that people are born and raised with a particular moral foundation set, and that causes them to leave the church. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, what the data seems to suggest, strongly suggests is that a shift happens. Part of the deconversion process is you dramatically change your concept of morality when you leave the church and you adopt a new type of moral view of the world that happens to align very closely with people that are politically hard left.

Speaker 2   00:49:17   Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And I think as, as leaders of the church, and we have, all of us have loved ones family members or, or, or friends that have left the church, I think it's important to understand that, Hey, you should read this enzyme article. It'll help you bring you back. Or, oh, hey, look, here's a, here's an article that talks about how Brigham Young wasn't as racist as you think. You know. I mean, like, none of these things are gonna be terribly helpful generally speaking. Right. Based on these findings, these findings would suggest that if someone has left the church, they might think, you know what? I am overweighted on the concept of fairness and women are not ordained to the priesthood. That's not fair. There's absolutely nothing you can tell me about the church that will change the fact that that's not fair. And because my worldview says that's the most important thing Mm-Hmm.

Speaker 2   00:50:12   <affirmative>, I don't care what you tell me. So understanding that the data suggests that this is the norm for former latter-Day Saints, I think can help save a lot of grief for people that are trying to minister to people. And by ministering to form latter to Saints, it's really like, how do we love and embrace our friends and our loved ones that have chosen a different path? Yeah. Right. That's what I'm talking about. Ministering, not necessarily, oh, I gotta reconvert these people. Right, right. That would be lovely. Because I guess sociologically speaking, statistically speaking, people are happier in the church <laugh>. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> and outside of the church, there are a lot of challenging. The data is challenging. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> for people that take that path. And so as far as that goes, yes, it'd be lovely to have them back in the church. In the interim though, being their brother and sister and, and mother and father and their friend, that's kind of the first priority. And this can help us understand how to connect with them. Just say, Hey, we see the world generally speaking differently. Latter Day Saints have a more complex balanced view of morality. We have to, if you open the scriptures, Hey, God's all about justice and he is all about mercy. How those things don't match. How does this work? It's a balancing act. Yeah. Morally speaking, outside the church, it's not a balancing act. It's really just, Hey, is anyone hurt? And is this fair? That's it. And so it's a very different way of thinking. Yeah.

Speaker 1   00:51:39   Yeah. That's helpful. Anything else about the, the data that either surprised you, found encouraging, or, or really like, oh, we gotta really look at this problem in the straight on or,

Speaker 2   00:51:49   Well, something that, uh, interesting that came out of this is that because we had a large n right, we had 3,800, we were able to kind of dig down and, and look at some of the smaller subgroups in our community. We found that about 4% of respondents that identified as latter-Day Saints were also identified as L-G-B-T-Q. And that's significantly lower than the national average. 4% is, is significantly lower. We found that people that have left

the church identify as LGBT Q4 times as much. Hmm. So, and we can't assign a reason for that, but we find that I, I guess the headline is first there are L-G-B-T-Q people in the church. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. I mean, I think we know that, but like, yeah, no, there's a significant number. 4%. That's a lot. And they're in the church. The other thing we found is that more than half of those L-G-B-T-Q members are neutral to positive on the church's policy of not sealing same sex marriages.

Speaker 2   00:52:52   Hmm. Which is interesting. 'cause you think, well, gosh, they, they must believe a certain way about the current policies of the church. Yeah. Well, it turns out that, you know, they're, uh, like I said, neutral, the positive Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, which is interesting. Right. It's, there's a lot of conflicts in our church, in our theology, and they have to be reconciled. I think that's part of the challenge of mortality is reconciling these, these conflicts, whereas outside the church Yeah. A four x difference. So, so one idea could be if you identify as queer, some type of L-G-B-T-Q identification, you're like, Hey, I, I can't be in the church for whatever reason. This is not working for me and you, and you leave, and that's the norm. And so you have a significant number of former Latter Day Saints that are outside the church. However, that, you know, 17, 18% of former latter-Day Saints that identify that way, that number's significantly higher than the national average.

Speaker 2   00:53:49   Hmm. And so a lot of questions, you know, does that identification go part and parcel with leaving the church? Does it happen after? Does it happen before? Because again, identification is not the same, uh, necessarily as how people feel. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you know, at some point in time people say, you know what? I'm, this maybe five years before they felt that maybe they, maybe they feel like they were born. Like, Hey, ever since I can remember this is how I felt. But it takes time to make a decision about identification. Gotcha. Yeah. So we don't know if, when that decision happens, but again, it's four times higher in former latter-Day Saints.

Speaker 1   00:54:28   Yeah. Interesting. Any other point, principle data point that we should cover before we wrap up? Or

Speaker 2   00:54:33   There's a lot more data that we're digging out. We're gonna be publishing in some peer reviewed journals, some deeper analysis. We'll be publishing a white paper this, uh, summer, that'll have a lot more of this data. Right now we have a methodology paper that's long and boring, but it explains at least that the statistical significance of the process that we, we went through. Yeah. But yeah, that's, that's kind of where we, we ended up

Speaker 1   00:54:57   And currently you, you co-author three articles that were in the desert news that sort of go into some of these concepts a little bit further than what we talked about. And people can check that. Yeah.

Speaker 2   00:55:06   If, if people wanna just kind of get, uh, reader's Digest, they can do a search on Desere News for either Josh Coates or Steven Cranny. Uh, Steven works, uh, for the BH Roberts Foundation, and he's, he's a professional social scientist. He does independent contract work with a variety of groups out there. Some religious, some not religious. But yeah,

we publish these articles that, that have a lot of this data. Or you can go to the BH Roberts, uh, website. Cool. And check out what we have there.

Speaker 1   00:55:31   And is the website just in general for BH Roberts Foundation, is that a good starting point? Yeah,

Speaker 2   00:55:35   The BH Roberts Foundation website basically is home to the archive of primary source data. So if you, you know, are the kind of person that loves geeking out in libraries, uh, <laugh>, that, that might be fun for you. But it's more of a, a step off point for different projects that we have. The most of our work is@mormonor.org.

Speaker 1   00:55:53   Okay. Cool. Awesome. Well, last question I have for you, Josh, is, uh, just considering this research project and the data, and now that you've reviewed it, what encouragement would you give to a room full of, of church, of lay church leaders?

Speaker 2   00:56:06   I think the encouragement I would offer is that we have a remarkably strong church compared with other Judeo-Christian faiths. The latter day Saint faith in America has been remarkably resilient to the secular trends. I think think that we have a diverse group of people in church, you know, from the millennials down. We have that diversity. And I think people that have diverse views about their faith that come into the chapel and sit down and participate and partake are awesome and makes our church strong and interesting and fascinating. As leaders, I think being conscientious of the diversity that we have within our chapel walls can allow us to have a really enriching experience at church for no matter where you fall statistically speaking in, in your beliefs. And so, even though we do see people, some people step away, I think we continue to be strong as a faith.

Speaker 2   00:57:09   And I think understanding fundamental aspects of our faith are really, really important. I think people need to focus on the roots and worry less about the leaves, because the leaves, you know, they sway back and forth and the wind and branches can break or whatever. But the roots of the church, and, you know, these are, these are faith in God, uh, faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ following the brethren. We don't have to agree with everything, but guess what? The church leadership, the, the priesthood, uh, structure and authority in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, that's the program we're signing up for. So let's, let's be supportive of that. But I don't think requiring some orthodoxy test is terribly helpful. <laugh>, we need to be flexible. Sure. Temple recommend questions, you know, fall in line. That's kind of the program. But gosh, being a member of our faith is more than just that.

Speaker 2   00:58:09   I think that's a kernel and a root and an important component, but it's not the only one. And I think it's important to minister to all the different aspects. But as a leader, I think it's also important to, to stay strong because there are winds blowing, there are currents flowing, and leaders are not immune to getting pulled in different directions. There's a lot of podcasts out there that are really unhelpful. There are podcasts out there that are healing and enriching, but I think as leaders, we have to be really strong and say, okay, how do I tow the line with the inspired leaders of our church, but also be a shock absorber for the people in my congregation that maybe have a different way of thinking or are struggling with concepts.

Speaker 1   00:59:04   That concludes this episode of the Leading Saints podcast. Hey, listen, would you do me a favor? You know, everybody's got that friend who listens to a ton of podcasts and maybe they aren't aware of Leading Saints. So would you mind taking the link of this episode or another episode of Leading Saints and just texting it to that friend? You know who I'm talking about, the friend who always listens to podcasts and is always telling you about different podcasts? Well, it's your turn to tell that friend about Leading Saints. So share it. We'd also love to hear from you. If you have any perspective or thought on this episode, you can go to leading saints.org and actually leave a comment on the, uh, episode page or reach out to us at leading saints.org/contact. Remember, go to leading saints.org/fourteen to hear the Packard family's experience of when loved ones leave the church.

Speaker 3   01:00:00   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 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.