



## **Welcoming Young Women into the Bishop's Office | An Interview with Jennie and Dave Blaser**

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Speaker 1 00:00:02 Does a youth leader ever feel like they have it figured out? This hasn't been my experience, however, I couldn't be an effective youth leader today without Dan Duckworth's presentation about going from youth worker to youth mentor. Mentorship is a key concept to understand when leading youth. In his presentation, Dan talks about ways to really turn the traditional approach to leading youth on its head. How can you better know your purpose? How can you find out their life goals? How can you build a relationship that is transformational rather than simply filling time during the weekly youth activity? You can watch Dan's presentation in the Young Saints Virtual Library by going to [leading-saints.org/fourteen](https://leading-saints.org/fourteen). You'll get free access for 14 days, and that will give you plenty of time to watch Dan's presentation a few times. Let's give youth the leadership they deserve.

Speaker 1 00:00:54 Hey, did you know that we video record the vast majority of our interviews on the Leading Saints podcast? That's right. And then we upload it to YouTube because we have a Leading Saints YouTube channel. And you should subscribe, especially if you're the type of person that, uh, listens to the podcast while you do the dishes or work out. You can put up the video and get the more immersive experience by seeing my beautiful mug and also the face of the various guests that are on the Leading Saints podcast. And, uh, it really helps us out to go to YouTube anyways, subscribe to the channel 'cause that helps us dial in the algorithm and reach more people and get these powerful interviews out to leaders across the world who could benefit. So go to YouTube, search for Leading Saints, find our familiar Red logo and subscribe. All right, today we're welcoming in Jennie and Dave Blaser. How are you two? Good,

Speaker 2 00:01:55 Good.

Speaker 1 00:01:55 Hi, great <laugh>. Now, uh, we were working with Technicalities before. That's the hardest part of these interviews. And uh, Jennie and Dave are married and they do live in the same house. They're just in different rooms, <laugh>, because that's the best way we could figure out this technology. So I appreciate you guys rolling with that, but I'm excited for this conversation. I'm trying to think how this, there we were connected in various ways. And let's see, Jennie, you're currently in the stake, young women, is that right?

Speaker 2 00:02:20 Yes. Stake young women's presidency. I'm a counselor.

Speaker 1 00:02:22 Awesome. Yeah. And Dave, you are the bishop of your ward? I am, yes. Cool. So we're gonna talk all things, uh, youth and just those dynamics of the bishop's role or the bishopric's role with the young women and the young men. And obviously, I don't know, how long has it been? A couple years now? Three years? Maybe

Speaker 2 00:02:41 This year will be five years since the changes. Five years in the fall it or Yeah, starting, yeah, five years. So

Speaker 1 00:02:47 Yeah, so this new shift of maybe a more emphasized focus for bishoprics and the bishop to be, uh, more emphasis on focusing on youth and helping them and, and stepping, stepping in that role. The, the removal of the young men's presidency. Right. Which, boy, there's mixed feelings about that as I talk to more and more people, but it's still, even after five years, I still get the emails. It's been a little awkward and people are, are still trying to figure it out at times. And just as humans do, we slip into old traditions and then we forget maybe what is the new program? Aren't we doing it? But, you know, we forget some of the details. And Jennie, maybe, where does this story start for you that led you into this research with the handbook and everything?

Speaker 2 00:03:26 So, a couple years ago, I was a early morning seminary teacher and I was teaching, and the lesson happened to be on repentance and we were just having a conversation with the kids. And one of the girls, she made a comment about how she's like, sometimes, you know, when you need to repent and you need to talk to your bishop, don't get scared because the bishop wants what you want. He's on your side, he's your friend. I know his office is scary and intimidating, but you know, you can do that. Like go to your bishop, you know, and, and her comment was totally great and it didn't even cross my mind as, uh, anything other than a great comment. And then I had kind of moved on when immediately a priest aged young man sitting right next to her said, why would you ever feel scared or intimidated by the bishop or his office kind of in that tone?

Speaker 2 00:04:19 Like he couldn't even comprehend that this young woman would have those feelings. You know, like, we're in there all the time. We're in there. The, we hang out with the bishop all the time. He's not scary. Which I was like, oh, that's great. You know, obviously this young man, his bishop has done a great job, you know, with cultivating those relationships. And I didn't really think more of it until I was driving home. And I just thought there's a

discrepancy there between, you know, why is it that the priest's age specifically, you know, get to interact with the bishop so much and be in his office and spend so much time with him. And the young women are, I felt like were kind of missing out on that opportunity. But I thought like the rest of the church, that's just the way it was, you know, <laugh>.

Speaker 2 00:05:03 And so I remember asking my husband and even asking our bishop at the time, like, Hey, would it even be allowed for the, a young woman's class to occasionally meet in the Bishop's office? Is that even allowed? And both my husband was like, yeah, I don't think so. And the Bishop was like, yeah, that's actually a great idea. So two weeks later that Bishop was released and my husband was called on Bishop. So now, you know, I had a, we had a firsthand seat to this, you know, <laugh>. But that was how it all started. And over the next six to eight months, I was just kind of, the spirit really encouraged me and propelled me to pursue this and to really do some research. And so I started reading the handbook all about it. I studied the original talk by Elder Cook and President Nelson, where they introduced all these changes to see if I could shed more light on it. I informally interviewed bishops, young women's presidents and friends from over 20 stakes to see how it looked, how it was actually, you know, being done and their stakes. And it was just a really wonderful journey of learning. And I came away with a new appreciation for how I feel the young men and young women program, the youth program should be under this new focus. And so I wrote a couple articles on that and one of them found its way to you through a friend and that's why we're here. And here we're,

Speaker 1 00:06:29 And Dave, before you're a bishop, you were the preschool advisor. Is that right? What, what do you remember from that story? Is there any details that you would want, wanna add?

Speaker 3 00:06:37 Yeah, thanks. I was called after Covid about a year after Covid and maybe not even quite a year. I remember the bishop extended the call over the phone 'cause we were still kind of limiting how much we were meeting. But I think a huge blessing was my bishop at the time said, Hey, will you review the handbook, like from start to finish on the Young Men's program and will you report back to me like what we need to be doing or what we could do differently? And so I studied the handbook, I put a matrix together, I'm a spreadsheet guy, so I put a matrix together of all the things that the handbook suggests. And then I made a column of what that could look like within our ward, specifically the priest Quorum. And so that was my, you know, first venture back into the young men's program after being out for many years.

Speaker 1 00:07:31 Cool. And then you're called as Bishop and so did that, I mean, it just was easy maybe to move forward and test some things out even I'm sure your previous bishop would've done the same, but Yeah.

Speaker 3 00:07:41 Yeah. So I was, I was in for about a year. So we were able to, I think, implement a lot of cool things as, as I was the advisor. And I just took an active role in, um, holding presidency meeting and calling the executive secretary to say, Hey, I need to get on the Bishop's schedule. This is when we wanna hold Priest Corps presidency meeting. And of course our bishop was totally open for that. And, you know, we started meeting regularly and holding a presidency meeting and kind of working, working the pre Corps program. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:08:14 And I just love this example of, you know, this will be great, a great suggestion for if Award a new young women's presidency's called, or even on the stake level, and then the preschool advisors and the, the bishopric to go back to the handbook. 'cause the, it's been five years now and maybe some old traditions have crept into your ward more than you thought. And so it's just sort of, yeah. You know, I love going to the handbook at the start of these callings and just saying, uh, we're assuming nothing. We're pretending like we've never seen the church function in our life, and we're gonna look at the handbook and see how we can go about this. And then you can discover some of these, these nuances, right?

Speaker 2 00:08:51 Yeah, absolutely.

Speaker 3 00:08:52 I I think Covid magnified those challenges also.

Speaker 1 00:08:56 Yeah, yeah, that's true.

Speaker 3 00:08:57 As the bishop, the real, the whole ward kind of, the whole church kind of focused on different things during Covid and had to necessarily, and so as we were getting back in the timing was kind of what was good to be able to be called and, and investigate and kind of implement as we were kind of coming back full first to church.

Speaker 1 00:09:15 Yep. So Jennie, maybe, uh, take us through this, uh, as far as the, like, I don't know if it point by point or just generally, what are some of the things you discovered that helped encourage you on this path of helping the young women have more engagement with the Bishop and feel more comfortable engaging, you know, with the Bishop?

Speaker 2 00:09:34 So basically after months and months of research and reading, I call it the what or like the what of the children and youth program is that the bishop and the bishopric or should be spending regular time with the young women on Sundays and during their midweek activities. And that is quoted in general conference and in two or three places in the handbook. And I can, you know, give listeners show notes, whatever the actual handbook references for those. But it says throughout the handbook, the bishopric needs to be spending regular time with a young woman, not just on Sundays, but also, you know, during their midweek activities. So if that is the what, then of course it raises this whole logistical and organizational question of like, what does that involve? Who does that involve? How can that happen? You know, and all those kinds of things.

Speaker 2 00:10:29 So, so that's what I really delved into is to try to get a better grasp of how this could even be possible. Because I, like probably many of the people when Elder Cook in his October, 2019 general conference talk said, you know, in one sentence, the young men's presidency at the ward level are discontinued. And he's like a little bit later on talked about how the bishops, you know, are over the youth. And I think what we all did is we just build in that vacuum created by the fact that there was no more young men's presidency with, oh, I guess the bishopric is now the young men's presidency. Yeah. And I, I thought that, I mean, I remember we were listening to that session with a friend who was in the bishopric and he was like, oh man, my load just got a lot heavier, you know, like just so much more now to do.

Speaker 2 00:11:16 And I mean, that was just what we thought. We just thought that we can't exist in a church with no young men's presidency. So I guess the bishop's, the young men's presidency. And so that was one of the first things that I discovered is actually Elder Cook was right. There is no young men's presidency <laugh>, like it really has been discontinued. It doesn't exist. The bishopric is not the young men's presidency. Yeah, they have always been, since doctrine and covenants 107 came out have always been the presidency of the onic priesthood, that has not changed, that existed long before the calling of young men's presidency existed. Even so, you know, their priesthood duties and responsibilities have not changed with Elder Cook's announcement in 2019. So that was a important thing, I think, to understand.

Speaker 1 00:12:03 Yeah, I think this goes back to the, the importance of that we need to get outta this mindset of oh yeah, the Bishop is now the young men's presidency and the structure of it sometimes can like first counselors with the teachers, the second counselors with the deacons. So it's like, yeah, we're sort of team young men, you know, and when in reality we weren't. And I love the, the image of like, it did create this vacuum. So the bishop sort of just filled it and we thought, yeah, we're sort of act like the young men's pre when in reality they were introducing something entirely different than what was done before.

Speaker 2 00:12:33 So in my opinion, and this is all it is, is my opinion and my understanding from

Speaker 1 00:12:38 We wanna hear it, Jennie, this is great.

Speaker 2 00:12:40 There are four different parties that are really critical to buy into the new system, maybe to make the vision that the church has for the new youth program to make it a success. There's four people, and the first one obviously is the bishopric. They have to themselves come to this understanding, oh, I'm not the young men's presidency. My focus is not just the young men. I have to be balanced over both the young men and the young women program. That is my focus. And because of that, not split focus, but balance focus over both, I am going to have to delegate and give some things up that I previously may have thought were under my purview with the young men. So that's one party. I don't know. Dave, what do you think as the bishop, you know about that, about how bishops have to kind of change their mindset a little bit?

Speaker 3 00:13:34 Well, I, I definitely wanna support what Jennie is describing, and Jennie is absolutely right.

Speaker 2 00:13:40 Yeah. And I don't know, it's just this idea that the bishops don't have to run the day-to-day of the young men's programs.

Speaker 3 00:13:47 So that's all. So if I get, like for me it's about a new culture that we've gotta create and it's a, for me it's a culture of like being dedicated to the youth as they made these changes with, with the young men's presidency, they also reorganized the Kedi priesthood and they restructured missionary work and, and temple and family history work to kind of fall

under the Relief Society president and the elders quorum president. So in a lot of ways, the church and the handbook is asking the adult leadership or the ward council to shoulder, uh, quite a bit of the load. And I think you almost need a solid team. Well, you do, you need a solid team around you in order for the, the bishopric to be able to focus on the youth. Um, also, you know, the advisors, one thing that we discovered is when I was called as Bishop, we had two adult leaders in the priest quorum in addition to myself.

Speaker 3 00:14:48 And all three of us have busy careers and, and young children. And so sometimes only one person would be able to show up even when we had three or if I wanted to go with the young women, they couldn't have the too deep leadership if somebody else was going to miss that, that Wednesday activity. So we, we called an additional advisor into each quorum so that there are three adult advisors in each quorum so that the member of the bishopric is not relied upon to, for the young men's program to yeah. To function. So,

Speaker 1 00:15:22 And just for context for your word, how big, how many youth do you have?

Speaker 3 00:15:26 Yeah, that's a great question. We are, we are certainly blessed with an awesome amount of youth. We have just over 50 youth in our ward, and we have about 50 primary children too. So we've been in this ward for 20 years, and the amount of youth has stayed pretty consistent over those 20 years. It ebbs and flows just a little bit, but we've been blessed to have a pretty solid youth program throughout those 20 years.

Speaker 1 00:15:52 Yeah. And I don't think we mentioned, I think you, you guys are in Gilbert, Arizona, which is a very stable, you know, it's a very stable part of the church. Right. So

Speaker 3 00:16:00 I I call it Utah Light

Speaker 1 00:16:02 <laugh>. That's right. Utah. Warm maybe, but, uh,

Speaker 3 00:16:05 Yeah, there we go.

Speaker 1 00:16:07 <laugh>. Yeah. Awesome. So this is a dynamic I wanna bring up that plays into this because I think since these changes, everybody has sort of felt jealousy of their bishop time, right? The father of the ward, which is another misnomer, uh, you know, a archaic misnomer that Brian needs to go away, where, you know, I've heard of primary presidency members feeling like, ah, you know, the, the bishopric never comes into primary. And the handbook does encourage that, obviously. And, you know, that's something they have to make time for or, uh, and then I think of, you know, just the, the bishop as the figurehead for, especially for some repentance processes and things that if somebody, for example, if a marriage in the Elders quorum, Relief Society, you know, falls apart and maybe there's a betrayal, maybe they're, you know, the, some, uh, an elder is struggling with pornography or, uh, whatever it be, that process, there's still this feeling of that process needs to land on the, the Bishop's desk and he needs to handle it.

Speaker 1 00:17:03 And I think part of this process is that just that enabling of the elders quorum and the Relief Society to really step up in some of these places. And I'll go as far as say, and I know that the opinions are, are all over the board, that when somebody's going through a repentance process, even with certain transgressions that do need to be taken to the bishop, that does not mean he has to handle every step of that process and meet, have every appointment there. My hope would be that, for example, in elders quorum, a community forms there, ministering brothers are there with the permissions that, that are appropriate, that we involve some ministering brothers to make sure that he's, he's surrounded by love and support and, you know, and all these things. And then the bishop is just sort of there as that common judge to monitor that process with his keys rather than feeling like, ah, you know, I, my Wednesday, Tuesday appointments are, are stacked with people other than youth. And, and then that's when the bishop gets overwhelmed and we slip into old traditions. Right? So I think that's just part of it, to really recognize the importance of enabling the elders quorum presidency, the Relief society presidency with these other things so that the Bishop can not only refocus on the young men and the young women and do so appropriately. You know,

Speaker 3 00:18:13 We are blessed with the best Relief Society president and elders quorum president ever. Nice. Shout out, Dave did such a good job of Yeah. Just taking it on and, and I, I think Dave is

Speaker 2 00:18:25 Not shy about giving a, giving it up

Speaker 3 00:18:28 <laugh>. That's, and I think that's shifting a little bit, at least in our ward, that, well, the Bishop doesn't have to do everything. And I think it's shifting more towards allowing the Relief Society President to support the elders quorum president. Our Relief Society is starting to do, we're calling 'em focus groups, but kind of support groups for sisters going through certain experiences in life to create that space where we can be vulnerable and, and support one another. And I think the Elders Quorum is, uh, on board with doing it too. But the Relief Society is certainly championing that. So it takes, I mean, it's the whole picture, it's the whole culture. And we share with the ward, the bishopric that we are focused on the youth, that we love the youth, and we won't pass up an opportunity to be with the youth. And I think as we share that and reiterate it, and hopefully we live that way in where we're spending our time in the activities, we're going to, I think the word understands that the bishopric, we're focused on the youth. We're here to support and love everybody, and we're here to support the youth Yeah. And to be with the youth.

Speaker 1 00:19:35 And Dave, is there anything else you would add just for that experience of, of delegating, enabling your elders quorum president, or empowering the elders quorum president, Relief society president, to really step into some of those other roles? Anything that comes to mind as far as what you said to them, how you meet with them, or, I mean, how, how would you Yeah. How would you suggest someone do that?

Speaker 3 00:19:52 So when our elders quorum president was called, I told him, and well, I asked him, would he be willing if, you know, folks are facing some challenges if he'd be willing to meet counsel and support them? And he, he's, he's incredible. Yes, whatever you need, Bishop.

I'm all in. And there's been a couple times where I've met with particular because priesthood holders and, and shared with them, Hey, would you mind visiting with your elders quorum president who has priesthood keys and who has a special connection to heaven on your behalf? Would you mind meeting with him and, and sharing what you've shared with me and, and meet with him regularly? And they've done it and ran with it. And it's been, I think, a blessing for everybody.

Speaker 1 00:20:36 Cool. Really good. All right, Jennie, going, so going back to sort of this journey of the researching what was said at the launch of Yeah. Of this effort in the handbook, I think you, the first main point is that it's clear that the bishop, it's, you know, it's articulated in the handbook the Bishop needs to spend time not with just the young men, but also equally with the young women. Is that a fair way to summarize that? Right? Yes,

Speaker 2 00:20:59 Absolutely. Cool. So the first party is getting the bishopric kind of on board with this just mindset shift, for lack of a better thing. It's not a change of responsibilities or priesthood or anything like that. It's just a mind shift of, oh, I am over the young women too. Like I need to be spending time with them too. And the next party involved that really needs the buy-in for this is the young men themselves. And as I read and studied, elder Cook's talk after he unilaterally released the young men's presidency, he didn't say the bishop is now going to do their job. In fact, he said, these adjustments are going to allow the young men themselves to step up and fulfill their priesthood duties and responsibilities. And they themselves will now be able to report directly to their bishops. So he's asking, the church was asking the youth to kind of step up and take on a lot more leadership and a lot more responsibility.

Speaker 2 00:22:02 Mm-Hmm. So that is not magically gonna happen <laugh> just because Elder Cook said that in a general conference talk. Right. So there's needs to be some training, some explanation, some set expectations with the young men, especially with the quorum presidencies, as to what that looks like. And I think that that can be done by the bishopric, by the advisors, the specialists just training. And I think the handbook is a great resource because all throughout the handbook in the, under the young men's section, it talks about how they have the responsibility to lead and that it's their priest of duty to, you know, fulfill that, those roles that might have previously been done by an adult.

Speaker 1 00:22:45 Yeah. That's cool. Uh, another thing I wanna maybe highlight and get your perspective, Jennie, is that, I mean, let's call a spade a spade here. What, as a bishop, you know, as a, a male bishop, me walking into a room full of 10, 15, 16-year-old boys, I mean, I can do that. Like, let's do this. Maybe it's in the gym, they get some basketball going or whatever, me walking into a room with 10 to 15 young women, I mean, it can feel awkward for a lot of bishops. So naturally we sort of resist this, right? Like, we sort of like, yeah, I mean, yeah, I'll, I'll sit in on a lesson here or there, but you know, it's, I think for most bishops it's easier to maybe talk with a young man in the corner about, Hey, how's school going? Like, young, you made the team this year, or whatever it is where that can be a little bit awkward. I mean, David, would you, would you agree or I mean, what are your thoughts?



Speaker 3 00:23:33 I think it can be awkward. I have two older sisters and there's three of us in our family where we grew up. Oh, okay. So I, I feel like I, I'm always around girls <laugh>. Yeah. I have two daughters and a son. And so like it's, I feel okay doing it. I think having a good relationship with the adult leaders is important. So the young, young women's presidency and the advisors, I think when they understand where we're coming from and our approach and we have their support, I think it makes it, it makes it, yeah. If the adult leaders, the young women, adult leaders are going, man, what's the bishop doing here that would like, magnify that awkwardness? But when the, I always try to be on the same page with the young women advisors and young women leaders to kind of temper that just a little bit and, uh, hopefully allow everybody to feel as comfortable as possible. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:24:22 And that's kind of a, yeah, well, just over the last year as we've been striving, not we, like, as our ward has been striving to implement this, I have noticed a change in my husband's attitude towards the young women. And not that it was negative at all, but it was just more like an unknown factor, a little bit awkward, you know? And now he talks about them like he just, he is like, they're awesome. They're so fun. You know, like he really enjoys spending time with them. And they feel that, and I can, he doesn't feel awkward anymore. Like if he ever did feel awkward, I don't think it's, it exists now, but it probably did at the beginning. The first time he was like, okay, I'm gonna invite the young women, you know, into the bishop's office. Like, and I think he was a little bit nervous about how things would go. And so of course with any change or anything that's new, yeah, there's gonna be some trepidation, but also if it's the right thing, it'll work out. Yeah. And you just kind of have to recognize there's a greater purpose at play.

Speaker 1 00:25:23 Yeah. And I think it's just willing, I just wanted to voice that the bishops are feeling that, or they may not realize they're feeling that to be like, you know, this may be something you may have to meet with the young women's presidency and be like, okay, ladies, like listen, I mean, what do you want from me? Do you want me to just be a wallflower? I mean, I just, sometimes I don't know what to say. Do you want me to speak up in lessons? Yeah. Do you want me to, you know, I'll take this next Tuesday activity and be more involved there. You know, I think it's just worth having those conversations. 'cause oftentimes, absolutely, whether it's a guy thing or not, we sometimes don't realize they should be acting really awkward. And you're sort of becoming the weird guy in the room, you know, and this isn't helping. You're here, but you're actually hurting the, the process. So

Speaker 3 00:26:03 One, I will say this Kurt, like one thing that, that I've just felt pretty strongly since I've been in as bishop, is how much we need to make sure the young women feel loved and valued in the church. The spirit's just just been working on me. And I just think that's a real important part of, you know, this discussion. In preparation for this interview, I, I visited with my daughter who, how old is Eden now? 20?

Speaker 2 00:26:33 23.

Speaker 3 00:26:33 23. Sorry. Eden <laugh> <laugh>, uh, 23, newly married, graduated from BYU Return Missionary. A lot of great things going for her in her life. And I just asked her

how she was raised in a pretty good home. You know, she had a, she ha has a mom with that earned a, a master's degree, very well educated and had a pretty good life growing up, especially as it related to the church, right? And I just asked her, I said, how do you feel as a woman in the church? And she said, dad, I'm so glad you're asking me. And she shared some things with me that, that surprised me. Just the way that she has felt over the years and while she was on her mission, just the way women were treated differently than men. And I just, I feel really strongly that we need to counteract that, especially for the, the generation coming up where they just see the world a little bit differently than, than the way we saw it as we grew up.

Speaker 3 00:27:34 And it's really important to them to understand where their place is and, uh, where they fit in and where they're valued. And so we verbalize that in word council. We verbalize it when we counsel together with the young women's presidency. And anything we as a bishopric me or my two awesome counselors can do to help the young women feel that we need them and they have a place in the church of Jesus Christ. Anything we can do, we're, we're gonna do it. And so that's the dialogue we've developed. That's when we counsel together, we counsel about that. And if there's anything slightly differently we can do, we'll do it if it's gonna improve the experience of the young women.

Speaker 1 00:28:17 Awesome. Jennie, another thing you pointed out is that in the handbook, it, there are numerous opportunities for as far as like formal, you know, stake training or for bishops to discuss these things. I mean, maybe unpack that for us.

Speaker 2 00:28:32 Again, you know, the handbook is a trove of knowledge <laugh> that sometimes we, we overlook. But I was researching, like after I discovered this through all this and I thought, how are bishops supposed to learn this? You know, and every stake conference, there's supposed to be a stake priesthood leadership meeting that's at least twice a year. That's supposed to be all men who hold any sort of leadership calling for the young men's, the elders quorum high council stake officers like that. So any Bishop

Speaker 1 00:29:08 Ricks, right.

Speaker 2 00:29:08 Bishopric. So the bishopric's counselors, all the Aaronic priesthood advisors and specialists would go to that. And in that meeting, they are trained by the stake young men's presidency. So that training supposed to happen twice a year. It does say in the handbook it, if you need to, you can even do it a third time. So the handbook gives license for three times a year, but at least twice where the stake young men's presidency is training the bishoprics specifically on their roles with the youth. So a lot of the training could take place there

Speaker 1 00:29:41 Place. Yeah. That's, that's really helpful to, and sometimes, I mean, that's a whole nother podcast. Maybe we could explore. 'cause sometimes these training meetings, quote unquote training meetings or leadership meetings, sometimes just turn into another opportunity to talk about just general doctrinal concepts, which is I right. Important and can be motivating. And, but at the same time, it's also an opportunity. I remember being in a stake presidency and we held one of these meetings in the cultural hall and set up tables and, and had got, you know, groups talking together, really digging into the handbook, you know,

what does this paragraph mean for your organization? Or whatever it is. No problem. And so you can really, you know, get out of the chapel and, and dig into some of these handbook items because like, we're hopefully demonstrating it. It's easy to forget some of these nuances that Right. We read once but have forgotten.

Speaker 2 00:30:27 Well, and one thing that we did last fall, we had our, this wasn't in conjunction with stake conference, but it was just our yearly stake organizational leadership training that happens once a year. And so the Stake young women's presidency, we invited all the young women leaders, presidency advisors, specialists, and the entire bishoprics to come to our young women's training. And we talked about this specifically and we read from the handbook and we had some great feedback from the bishopric. A lot of the bishopric were like, this is so good to know. Like, thank you for making us aware. So I think that every leader, we have to extend a lot of grace because everyone is, we're all volunteer, we're just trying to do our best. So anytime that we can just help someone, um, fulfill their calling and just have a little bit more clarity on how things could be running is just a benefit to anyone. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:31:26 Very good. Jennie, anything else as far as the, what was in the handbook you discovered? Any other point that would be worth highlighting? Just as far as like the benefit that you found or principle you found reviewing the handbook in more detail?

Speaker 2 00:31:39 Oh, another one was just how important the ironic priesthood advisor and specialists are to the success of this. Okay.

Speaker 2 00:31:47 Just that their role is critical. They need to really be, understand that they need to be there, like physically at, on the Sunday meetings and the midweek activities so that the bishopric is flexible to go to young women's or other meetings. You know, so their role is, you know, we, 'cause we have that two deep leadership role, so they can't just assume that the bishopric is going to be one of the other adult men there. And I know that in our ward, my husband, the whole bishopric, they had a big training, a big meeting where they discussed this with all of the onic priesthood advisors and specialists. So Dave, you wanna talk about that a little bit?

Speaker 3 00:32:27 Oh yeah. Thanks Jennie. We invited all of the young men leaders, the adult young men, leaders, advisor specialists, and bishopric. And we just counseled together and established, Hey, are we, are we having regular presidency meetings? When are we having 'em? Are the boys engaged in planning and carrying out the activities? Are the boys engaged in planning, carrying out the lessons? And part of it was to get a feel, just to make sure we understood, we understood each other. And to be honest with you, we were all aligned. Like, yes, the boys are engaged, we're having regular presidency meeting. It was, it was pretty cool and pretty enlightening to see that. And then we just said, uh, we as a bishopric are going to make the young women more of a priority, so we need you to run with presidency meeting if we're not gonna be there.

Speaker 3 00:33:17 Now for the, I always feel a little bit different for the bishop since I'm the president of the priest Corps, right. But I've chatted with, I'm usually at, at priest quo presidency

meeting, but I've asked my advisors to please proceed without me if I'm not able to be there for whatever reason. Uh, just to make sure that the quorum continues to function if the bishopric member's not around. And so just having that level of understanding. And you know what, some of the young men, adult leaders have young women or have daughters that are young women. And so they're like, yeah, great, we'll carry the load. We've got it, no problem. And hopefully everybody benefits from that.

Speaker 1 00:33:55 Yeah. Good stuff. Anything else? Uh, Jennie as far as the, some highlights there from all this? Just

Speaker 2 00:34:01 A couple things in the handbook that I thought were interesting is it says that if your ward is small, like perhaps you're an award where you can barely get two adult leaders, young men leaders for deacons, teachers and priests. So there's like no chance it does say that you can combine meetings on Sundays and during the week, thus giving the bishopric the opportunity to go, um, visit the young women classes. So don't let the structure of the onic priesthood be a stumbling block, if that makes sense. You know? Yeah. So yeah. And then the last one was, and this actually was from elder Cook's talk and one of the footnotes he talked about that the advisors and specialists are more critical than ever because by them being there, it allows the bishopric to go to the young women's. And he also said, even though roles and titles in the Onic priesthood organization may have changed with the announcement of the release of the young men's presidency, we do not anticipate a decrease in the number of adult men serving with the onic priesthood. So I thought that was really insightful, that even though you just like, they unilaterally released four adult leaders from every young men's organization in the church the next Sunday, you could have called back those four people as advisors. Like they're saying, don't go down on the number because you Yeah. Still need that same number because the bishopric is not over the young men's, the bishopric is over the youth.

Speaker 1 00:35:30 Right. And I think you alluded to this earlier, said it that, you know, there's no limit on how many advisors or Right. What's the other term? We have the, uh, specialist. Specialist, right. I mean, you call as many as you want of those to whatever help you need and make it work, you know? So Yeah. Good stuff. Now. So I wanna go back to the beginning of sort of the story. Do you have the young women meet in the Bishop's office every once in a while? Like as a class? Or how does that work? Yeah,

Speaker 3 00:35:56 Yeah. So we do, we've, we just started it up, uh, a few months ago. And so they come in so far it's been every other, I mean, once a month Right. Which, which is every other time I invite them to come to the Bishop's office and have a lesson in the Bishop's Office. So yeah. And this last, uh, week, I'm like, I'm not gonna sit at my desk. I, uh, kind of swung around to the side and sat in a normal chair and pushed the, my chair back into the corner and just sat with the young women and, and was just a part of the class versus sitting behind the desk as the bishop, you know? Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:36:33 So, uh, the, the bishop's desk that I think that deserves its own episode as well, just this we, 'cause I remember being this bishop, like, why do I have this Cadillac size desk in my office? Like, yeah. Get rid of it. And I did actually get 'em to, you know, shrink it,

gimme a di disc that was a little bit that I could actually move or, yeah, it's like that. So, and I, you know, there's one bishop I came across in, in Colorado who got rid of the desk and he has a small desk in the corner if he needs to work at a computer or whatever. But the desk <laugh>, I mean, feel free to get rid of it if you, if you need, but

Speaker 3 00:37:04 It might be in the future. We'll see. Yeah,

Speaker 1 00:37:06 We'll see. <laugh>, I just, you know, some people might hear this and be like, well, what's the big deal? You know, we'll just make sure the bishop goes to the young women's room. But I think there is something about being physically in the bishop's office and just being familiar with the furniture, the pictures on the walls and 'cause when there's that moment where someone needs to reach out and they'll, they'll feel that much more comfortable going there, you know,

Speaker 3 00:37:28 Maybe one layer deeper than that. You know, my, my concern would be a young woman thinking and going down the line of thinking, why do the young men get treated differently? And I just don't want them to feel that way. I, I want them to just understand that while men and women might have different roles, we are equal and everybody has a place, uh, in the church. So

Speaker 1 00:37:51 Perfect. Love it. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:37:53 And we've noticed like changes, like in fact, I reached out to our young women's president and I just said, Hey, would you mind asking the young women, have they noticed in the last year this, all this effort, you know, this, this intentional effort that the bishopric has done, have they noticed anything? And there are seven different young women that responded and overwhelmingly they love it. They're like, you know, they love meeting in the bishop's office. They think it's great. They just feel like I can read some of his quotes. It says, I think lessons in bishop's office are honestly great, his insights are really great and he's so fun. And I think it's great having him around whenever he can be there. I think it's definitely helped me and the other girls in our class get to know him better. They're like, I love switching it up and having class in different rooms.

Speaker 2 00:38:46 I love how the bishop comments and gives suggestions and feedback. He makes our activities really fun. You can tell that the Bishop really cares about the youth and the bishop has been exactly what me and my family need. So I think there's just, that's just a few of them. But just one of the kind of talked about the what and the who involved and the biggest factor is the why. Why are we even trying to do all this? And, and David said it wonderfully, it's, well, it's because we've been asked to, if you wanna just look at it from a very surface level, but the why behind it, you know, we've, my husband and I have had so many discussions over the past year, like, how could this benefit the youth? And I think we're just seeing the tip of the iceberg of how these young women are feeling valued and loved and seen and appreciated.

Speaker 2 00:39:35 It's about when someone spends time with you, chooses to spend time with you, that is a sign that you matter and you're important in the past. You know, when I, for my six months of interviews with random people, I would always ask, you know, does your bishop spend any time with the young women? And the two most common answers I got were, he goes to girls camp every year, so he spends time with them then. And the second one was, yeah, anytime there's a combined activity. And so if that's the church culture that the young women get the bishop once a year and the young men get 'em the rest of the time, you know, how does that make the young women feel? And then the other thing is that if the bishopric is only there when it's combined activities, then as a woman, I felt like that because I was like, I guess we're only deserving of their time when the young men are also there.

Speaker 2 00:40:29 You know? And so I really think that church is beyond wise in this asking us to make this shift and to let these young women know just how valuable and important and loved and needed that they are. And this is one way that we can do that. There's a whole bunch of other things that we came up with. Like I think that young women, we have, you know, that you have the youth for six years and during those six years we have the opportunity here for young women especially to, as they interact with their bishopric for six years, hopefully their positive interactions, right? And that might be key to helping them build a foundation and a trust in priesthood authority and the way it's supposed to work and the way it's supposed to look. Because too often we see people leaving the church over bad experiences. And if we can get six years of good experiences, then throughout the rest of their life, if they have a negative experience with, which of course I would hope no one would ever have, but reality, you know, then they can think, well, all throughout growing up, you know, like our bishoprics treated us like we mattered, like I mattered and I was important. And so they have that foundation of, I think, the way the church is supposed to look. Anyway, that's just my own, well, personal opinions.

Speaker 1 00:41:52 Yeah. I really appreciate that. Any other point, principle concept that we didn't touch on and what that we need to make sure we, we cover before we wrap up? Or?

Speaker 2 00:42:00 I think that the final thing is just like, how do you do all this? And I'm just gonna say, study the handbook and meet with your bishopric and your young woman's presidency, your ward youth council, and figure it out for your ward. Because there is no clear delineation on who does what or how it works or if it's every other time or what regularly means or what participate means. Like have that discussion and communicate and figure out what is best for your ward and what your award needs. And that is the correct way to do it. That is the how.

Speaker 1 00:42:33 Love it. All right. Well last question I have for you, and I'd love to have you both respond independently and uh, Dave, maybe we'll start with you and then Jennie can have last word. But as you reflect on your time as a leader, as a pre Corps advisor, how is being a leader helped you become a better follower of Jesus Christ?

Speaker 3 00:42:51 I love this question. I was anticipating it. Oh, good. So, so thank you, uh, <laugh>, as I have served in the church, whether it's ministering to somebody or, you know,

leading a corner class or as bishop, I feel like I've been blessed to see people, how, how God sees them or feel his love for them. And I'm able to understand maybe how God feels about me and how much he loves me and how much my savior loves me. And that just makes me want to do well for him and follow him.

Speaker 1 00:43:28 Awesome. Jennie, what about you? How has being a leader helped you become a better follower of Jesus Christ?

Speaker 2 00:43:33 So, as I've had callings, I have always tried to approach them with how would the Savior fulfill this calling? And the answer has always been some form of reach out to the individual. It's about the individual, and especially at the stake calling. Sometimes it's easy to get caught up in the big picture, big programs 'cause it's a lot bigger numbers. But the spirit gently reminds me, it's about the individual, it's about the person. And I, I think of my savior and I think of his suffering in Gethsemane. And sometimes we think of the atonement as this ethereal, understandable thing. But if you think about it as him suffering and saying, I gotta do this for Jennie, I gotta do this for Dave, this is for Kurt because I love him. It makes the atonement very real and very personal. And I think that's what the savior wants us to do in leading one another to him.

Speaker 1 00:44:37 Hey, you made it to the end of the episode. Wasn't that so good? You know, I tend to pinch myself that this is what I get to do. I get to sit down with some remarkable people across the world, experts, everyday leaders, PhDs, therapists, whatever it be, and have such an impactful conversation. I hope you'll share it, drop it into text, message an email, and share it to someone who maybe came to mind during this episode. And if you go to the show notes and scroll to the bottom, there's actually a list of some of our most popular episodes. So don't stop with this episode. I mean, you're not done with the dishes or mowing the lawn or working out. So you might as well keep it going at the bottom of those show notes. And, uh, make sure you listen to each one, maybe a couple times on a few of 'em. Remember, go listen to Dan Duck Whip's presentation about youth mentorship by visiting [leading.saints.org/fourteen](http://leading.saints.org/fourteen).

Speaker 4 00:45:35 It came as a result of the position of leadership, which was imposed upon us by the God of heaven, who brought forth a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And when the declaration was made concerning the only, 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.