



When Leadership Expectations Are Exhausting | In Interview with Aaron Osman

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Kurt Francom:

Have you ever heard of scrupulosity? This is a mental health concern that is impacting more Latter-day Saints than you think. Scrupulosity is religious obsessive-compulsive disorder, where individuals are hyper-obsessed about their worthiness and repentance. Sam Baxter, a former bishop, sat down with me to talk about his lifelong struggle with scrupulosity and how he got treatment. You can watch this interview for free in the Mentally Healthy Saints library by going to [leadingsaints.org slash 14](https://leadingsaints.org/14). This gets you 14 days free access to Sam Baxter's interview about scrupulosity and 25 plus other interviews about ministering to those who struggle with mental health. The content is priceless for leaders, so visit leadingsaints.org for free access. 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? Well, let me explain. Leading Saints is a non-profit organization, a 501c3 is what they call it, and we have a mission to help Latter-day Saints be better prepared to lead. Now, of course, that 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. Hey, everyone. In this episode, we're talking with Aaron Osman from New Zealand. I always love getting these international voices, these variety of accents on the podcast. He definitely came through for us. Aaron actually has some experience working in the leadership development world. And so I wanted to get him on the podcast and just see what

he could share from his time as a branch president in New Zealand and just in his professional research and things that he does there. And we talk about expectations, expectations we have on ourselves as leaders. Sometimes we can put too many daunting expectations on us. We unpack that concept and he gives us some perspectives, some phrases like, everything will work out. like turning our will over to God, they will be done type of approach to leadership and surrendering many of these expectations to God. So we don't reach this point of overwhelm. And I mean, it's fun to be a leader, but to be an overwhelmed leader, I mean, come on, nobody wants that. So definitely jump into this episode, maybe listen to it a couple of times, because there's some bangers here. So here's my interview with Aaron Osman from New Zealand. All right. Today I'm connecting with Aaron Osman. How are you, Aaron?

Aaron Osman:

I'm doing well. Thank you very much. How are you?

Kurt Francom:

I'm doing great. I'm glad to have more of a non-American accent here on the Leading Saints podcast. You're from Australia. Is that right? New Zealand. I did. I did it wrong, man. I would cut that out, but I got to, I got to repent of my sins, Aaron. That's right. It's New Zealand. Oh boy. And there's a little bit of a, uh, of a competition or a little bit of a tension at times between the Aussies and the Kiwis. Is that right? That's correct.

Aaron Osman:

Yeah, that's right. And anyway, I can liken it as the Canadians and Americans, right?

Kurt Francom:

That's right. That's right. Which I mean, come on, that's an easy decision. And what part of New Zealand do you live in?

Aaron Osman:

So I live near a city called Tauranga, which is in the region called the Bay of Plenty. And that's just coastline, beautiful beaches and beautiful mountains behind us. And it's just a gorgeous place to live.

Kurt Francom:

Awesome. And born and raised There?

Aaron Osman:

No, I was born and raised in a place called Porirua in the Wellington region in the capital city and only just recently moved to our current location in the last eight years.

Kurt Francom:

Oh, great. What's a temple trip look like for you?

Aaron Osman:

The temple closest to us will be an hour and a half away. And then when Auckland is dedicated, that's about two hours away from us.

Kurt Francom:

And what stage of building is that at right now? It's hard to keep track of all these temples.

Aaron Osman:

Yeah, well, it's, I think it's getting close to an open house. Temple president and matron have been called. recorder, I think, has been sorted. So I think those are the indicators that we're close to an open house, but no dates. Awesome.

Kurt Francom:

Now, the person who connected us, a mutual friend of ours, David Casperson, a good shout out to him, who's in the leadership space, but you're connected in the leadership world as well. How do you describe the career that you're in?

Aaron Osman:

Yeah, so for me, my role in the organization that I'm with is to help develop leaders of all kinds, extend their capacity, so the ability to think about the situations that they're in and help them make good decisions on how they're going to move their challenges forward or apply a specific skill within their reality. So it's content contextual, but also adding the human element of storytelling in that space. So that way, We're not just focused on the technical aspects of leadership, but the actual, the real human aspects of it, the weight, the challenges, the funnies, you know, the humor of it, all of the things that encompasses leadership. So in essence, my job is to help people think differently and deeply about what they're doing so they can choose different and experience different. That's how I describe the role that I play in it.

Kurt Francom:

Well, hopefully you'll, you'll do a little bit of that for us generally through this podcast today. So hopefully we'll see how it goes. So, and I love talking with guys like you, but the difficult thing is there's like a hundred directions that we can go in. Right. And you can probably speak eloquently to so many different topics about leadership development. Uh, so I kind of came to you as I do with others with the question of, let's say you were walking into a room full of church leaders, bishops, religious society presidents, stake presidents, whatever it is, and you want to present to them on a handful of specific topics, what would it be and where'd your mind go with all that? Or did you have to decide between a few things or how'd it go?

Aaron Osman:

Yeah, my gut feeling was really based on my own experiences serving as a branch president and the lessons that I learned through that as much as well as Connecting to life in general, there are three major lessons that I learned that I feel are quite relevant and thought-provoking for all types of leaders that doesn't interfere with priesthood keys or their particular role in the units that they serve in because, I mean, what advice could I give for their particular situations? I went to think about those three things that I learned and started from there and just kind of noted some other key points that I thought might be relevant and helpful for our listeners. So that's kind of where I went, just looked back at what I learned and thought there's a lot of story I could potentially share in that space as much as principles or lessons that might be helpful.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. So, in your outline, you talk about this concept of expectations, and we all feel that, right? When we're called to a position as a branch president, as a bishop, relief site president, whatever it is, we want to do a good job, right? We want to step up and answer the call and bring ideas to the table and get some revelation flowing and really have a good job. And so, we naturally set expectations for us, for others. Where do we begin to understand sort of the understand the expectation dynamics that are happening for a new leader?

Aaron Osman:

Yeah, I think that, you know, there's a lot of kind of factors at play, you know, so there's tradition. So we see previous leaders and how they've grown and responded and served. And I think that plays a role in how we're expected to lead as well. Second is our own, I would say, yes, expectations, but inadequacies also have a part that influence what we are expected to achieve or become or deliver. And a third one for me is goes to obviously responsibility. So when you look at the handbook, we've got more responsibilities than we have time for. And the detail in those chapters, we get into, you know, section 3.1.1.1.1, like, I mean, there's so much detail, right? We're into like three different dots into the future. And I think that particular part also plays a role and how we craft expectations. And so when I first started in what I call the honeymoon phase, you're excited, you've got that new energy, like pretty much you need calling. And you're getting in there and you're doing a lot of work and you're trying to establish yourself. But pretty soon you feel the weight of the responsibility upon your shoulders because it's the people part that really starts to play into your psyche, meaning you start to think about every individual that's in your unit, whether it's 10 people or 200 people, everybody is important. And as you become aware of every individual's needs or family's needs, then I think the combination of what I've described starts to click in. And then it becomes even heavier because you're creating a certain expectation that wasn't really there as part of your calling or setting apart. And I think that's the part where people got to wrestle with it. And in the early stages of their calling and taught, it finally clicks and they're like, Oh, actually, I don't have to be there. I'm supposed to just do this one or two things that the Lord expects me to do, not the eight or nine things that I've created for myself to do. Yeah. So some of it is kind of experience, right? You just have to learn through the hard way. what matters most versus trying to do everything.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. Yeah. So what advice would you give to a new leader who's sort of wrestling with that or, you know, they have that energy and naturally that energy leads to developing more and more expectations that, Oh, there's going to be like never before. Right. And like, how do we start to step back and do that so that we approach it in a realistic way?

Aaron Osman:

That's a great question and I definitely wouldn't want to damper anybody's enthusiasm, right? So I would say you just get in there and figure out your limits. I think we're all going to go push too hard until we realize, oh, that's too far, I can't do that, and then rein it back. To me, I won't say that's advice, but it could be a natural way that a lot of people work, and that's the way I do it. I don't know my limits until you reach them and you're exhausted. But in terms of learned lessons that might be helpful, is to really go back to what matters most, and that's the plan of salvation, and Christ is the center of it. So the question I would be asking is, what role or what activities matter most in either making, keeping covenants, bringing people closer to Christ, or making sure I have added quality time with my family? And those three things there, I think, well, they are the things that matter most, right? It's going to meetings, as important and as much as we love our meetings, not essential to be exalted, in my opinion, in terms of the day-to-day running. Going to all the youth activities, I think they can survive without you being there. a few times a year, those types of things. So yes, they're important in terms of the governance and the functioning of a church unit. But when it comes to the big rocks, the things that matter, if you're sacrificing your family and creating dysfunction to serve other people, that makes zero sense to me. And that's something I know the brethren have talked about before. So that's the thing is I would be saying that is that with all that energy, I wouldn't put it invested into activities. I'll be investing into how we're going to move people to strengthen their relationship with Christ. make and keep covenants and ordinances, and then making sure that I have allocated time for my family, that they're safe, their well-being is secure, and that I'm present for those family activities that matter most. Because I think, again, that role modeling of that should also influence say, behaviours in a ward when they look at the bishop or the branch president or whoever as the example, right? So if he puts his family first and still is doing his calling, then I think that would influence other people to put their family in the right order and do what matters most in their calling versus for the non-essentials.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And from my experience, these type of things really sneak up on you, like, because I think most leaders, I mean, generally speaking, they try to start from this place of like, we want to bring people to Christ, you know, make sure that they're, they're working towards their next covenant or whatever it is. And we start there, but then it sort of grows and it sneaks up on you where you're like, and that's why we should do this activity on Wednesday night. In fact, we should do it every Wednesday night. It's going to be great. We're going to have all these people there. And then it sort of becomes its own monster. And then the expectation just sneakily shifts to the activity of like, well, this has got to go well, because this is sort of defining my leadership and, you know, I've got to make this happen. And then it doesn't go well. And then you're frustrated. You're like, wait a minute, like, remember, like back at the beginning, you were, you were wanting to focus on bringing people to Christ. And maybe that activity is just not a good way to do it because it didn't work. Right. But don't like define your leadership by how those things, sort of those auxiliary things went.

Aaron Osman:

Yeah. It's a real wrestle. Like I certainly can't deny that. Yeah. you can stay up late at night thinking about those activities or thinking about those meetings and what they mean. But again, it's something that you learn is where are you investing the energy and say, is it worth investing it in thinking about this activity has got to go well or is it about the people that's in there? And that's what I kind of had to focus on as a branch president It's not that we didn't have the means to have activities. It's just, for me personally, I had no capacity to continually drive or even delegate. the activity, what do you call it, design and implementation to the branch, I had to think carefully, how can I justify someone leaving their family to go and do this? And if I couldn't, I wouldn't do it. And the other thing too is when I looked at my own unit is if we get together every Wednesday, is that going to bring us closer together or is that going to annoy us? It's going to take us away from other things that we could be doing and kind of lose the moment. Now, I'm not too sure what it's like around the world, but I mean, here in our country, what I've observed is that we work really well in sprints. So if we're planning to do activities in a unit that's expected to last six months or ongoing, that's never going to happen. But people get excited for one or two or three things, and then that's it. And so that kind of sprint or cycle work can be helpful, temporary stuff, initiatives, but it's just trying to play smart in terms of how you're using your resources. I think that's the thing. But again, it's just focusing on, is it the activity that's important or is it the people that's important? And I think if you're focusing on the people, the activity part will either take care of itself or it won't matter in terms of the things you worry about.

Kurt Francom:

I really like that idea of sprints, you know, like, because so often we want to do things in like a yearly timeframe, right? Like, Oh, this year we're going to focus on, you know, we're doing come follow me Book of Mormon. We're going to have like a Book of Mormon Bishop challenge or all the youth or adults that we're going to read the Book of Mormon. Right. And it's sort of this long, heavy, large thing. Um, I've heard some stakes do like, we're going to index enough names that are in a typical stake. And I've been in buildings where they have this display of all the names they've indexed and the thermometer of how far we've gone. It can sometimes be this big, heavy thing. But the sprint thing of like, this month, we're going to do this thing. And it's like, doable. And we may get to the end and be like, Oh, that was just more distracting. Or I felt more burden that month and I wanted to, and, you know, you can regroup and then try something else. So I like the idea of sprints.

Aaron Osman:

Yeah. It's just, I think we will work better that way, especially when it's not our full-time job membership wise. Um, you know, so the idea of, of trying to keep things going all year long, um, it's just too difficult, unrealistic. However, when you look at the strategy or the goals that an area

presidency might issue out or a stake, those are things to aim for that I think those sprint pieces can still align with. So it's just Yeah, it's just thinking about how people respond. And I think that that's an easy way to do it. And it just takes the burden of trying to hold that responsibility all year long.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, really helpful. So going back to like expectations of being a good leader, and when we skew that when those are skewed by our own expectations, or demands or responsibilities, anything else we haven't discussed in there that we need to make sure we cover?

Aaron Osman:

I suppose for me, when I think back in my experience, so when I was called in 2019, that was the exciting part, but instantly I look back at my journal and it was not that far and I was like, man, this is really hard. I'm pretty much ready to move on now. I got the idea. I think I've done my part. The interesting thing was that every time I would go to work, I walked past the university and I'd see, and I had this like attraction to the university. I'm like, man, there's something about this space. You know, I kept doing it day after day. And then later on, I kind of felt like there's this impression to go back to school and go to uni. And so, you know, cut the dialogue out to the decision, decided to go back to university. And so I had university, you know, branch president supporting my family and working full time. And then it was 2020, then it's COVID. So, I mean, during those times, there were lots of moments where I was like, what are you doing? Like, this is my prayer. I don't understand why I have to go through all this stuff and do all these things. And what gives this particular statement relevance is that when I start a university, I like to consider myself someone who goes all in when they make a commitment. So for me, all in means A student, A plus, blah, blah, blah. So I'm aiming for that kind of thing. The first year was very difficult to sustain. Second year, I had to lower my expectation and go, okay, maybe like a B+, I'll just aim for that. By the third year, I'm like, I'm so exhausted serving, doing everything. As long as I just hand in my assignments, that would be success for me. Not that I'm not giving max effort, it's just the capacity to do those things was basically so small that it was unrealistic for me to expect myself to push to an A-plus kind of standard when my timeframes were so small because I had other commitments to fulfill that were important. And then when I was reflecting back, I realized that the A-plus kind of mentality was my own creation, that the impression or the revelation to go back to school had nothing to do with grades. There was no instruction about getting grades. It was go back to school and get an education. That was it. And so what I had done, it was created from my own paradigms that going back to school means I achieve a certain thing. So what made that A light bulb moment for me is that I had to transfer that to a branch president, transfer that to a husband and father, transfer that to an employee, which was out of all of these responsibilities, how much of this am I creating myself? These expectations of being a great leader or what does that even mean in terms of my role as a

branch president, which was essentially, can I make When I'm interacting with people, do they feel welcomed? Do they feel wanted? When I'm having my one-on-ones with them or speaking at the pulpit, am I in a position where I'm paying attention to their needs? And so when I'm talking to them, I can give inspired counsel or help them to feel a deeper connection to Jesus Christ. So there were some key things that the Lord taught me. That's what I want you to focus on. Everything outside of that is not for you. Either delegate it or don't do it. And the church will be fine. It will not fall apart if you're not doing all the other stuff in the handbook, just as long as you do these bits. And the same with being a husband and father. That for me was striving to be present at home, certain times of the night, between this time and this time. and be with the family or I'm making dinner for them, doing the housework, just trying to do things that would be helpful of some value, making sure I'm available to watch my daughter perform, that kind of thing. So yeah, it was a real eye-opening moment and reflection to look back in my journals and go, How much of the pressure do I feel is my own creation versus what was the actual instructions that the Lord gave me to do? And the last thing I'll say on that is that the reality or the real wrestle with it is that it takes a lot to give up those expectations because you feel like if I don't do them, then these catastrophic things will happen or I'm not good or I'm a terrible leader. Or, you know, you have that kind of emotional mental risk.

Kurt Francom:

Or it feels like God literally said, these are your expectations at times, right? We misread that. It's like, well, God gave me this expectation. I can't just like get rid of it. Right.

Aaron Osman:

Yeah. Yeah. And so that's, that's part of the wrestle. But I think that's also part of our ability to grow and trust in the Lord. Yes, that you trust him enough to go, if I just do these one or two or three things, he will make up the rest. And that was quite an experience for me personally to let go of and give it to him.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, there's a lot that you said there. First of all, I just appreciate as somebody who graduated college with nothing but C's, at least I felt that way. I appreciate that. Because many times I really got to manage the expectations or check your expectations. really determine where they come from, because a lot of times we're all born with an ego for various reasons. And that ego sometimes gets a little out of control. And then the expectations fueled by the ego. And I love how you said, maybe in different words, but just this, like, what were you called to do? Like, you were called as a branch president, nobody ever came to you and said, Hey, we'd actually want you to completely disrupt and transform the nature of this branch. And so if you could do that

within your time, you know, but as leaders, and believe me, I empathize with the leader who maybe listens to leading saints, here's all these ideas, they're just like loving it. And they want to get in there and they want to make a difference. And the And so, but nobody ever asked you to do that per se. And so there's those days where then you're gauging this by the overwhelm that you feel, right? You go, man, I'm six months into this and I've never been so tired. And like, I'm dreading Sunday, right? Like, I don't know if I can step back in that building, right? Then it's like, okay, red flag, like maybe you're off track as far as misunderstanding the expectations that you had in the first place. And maybe, you know, oftentimes as a reframe, though, it's a lot of doing less of like, like you said, you know, maybe I'm just gonna, I'm just gonna turn in my assignment, or, you know, I'm just gonna make sure I show up on Sunday, that we have the general meetings are supposed to have the doors get unlocked, the lights get turned on that the sacraments available. And that's it, I don't need to figure out how to get, you know, 16 year old Billy in the ward, hanging out with the good kids, right? I mean, hopefully all these things happen, but to just sort of release yourself from those expectations that often the ego just puts on your shoulders, because you want to, you want to be that innovative dynamic leader that, you know, they build the statue of out front. Guess what? They never build statues of leaders in front of church buildings. So you don't have to worry about that.

Aaron Osman:

I don't have to worry about that at all. But I think it's a really insightful point. So what I'm referring to is our own inner resource leaders versus managing or directing, leading the unit. And so, of course, you've got presidents and leaders and assistants and counsellors and all of that to make sure the work happens. But the things that keep you up at night that no one sees, you know, the moments that you're awake at three in the morning, worried and thinking about this person or that or doing this thing. Sometimes we are creating, we're making it more difficult for ourselves than it needs to be. And so when you describe, as long as I turn up on Sunday and the doors open, the lights are on and the sacraments pass, that was my last year of service. That was it. I had capacity enough to turn up on Sunday and make sure that the ordinances of the sacrament were performed, that every person that turned up I greeted and connected with. And if I had an interview, I tend to recommend or go visit someone that I can do that. I can do those things. And what I found was that those interactions, I think, progressed our branch more effectively than trying to do so many things at a subpar level. I was really taken back by Elder Aspen, who came to Hamilton a few years ago. He made it his mission to greet every single person that turned up to this big meeting one by one. And he said something about if that was he thinks about greeting everybody one by one as one of the most important things he would do as a unit leader before he would take the stand or as an apostle, if it's reasonable for him to do so. And something about that really resonated with me as something I can do, regardless of my energy levels or capacity, is that I can go around and extend my hand to someone and make them feel welcomed. And we just don't know the impact of that. So small and simple things, that's our scripture, right? By small and simple things, great things are brought to pass. So try not to lose ourselves in that.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, and I love that because it still has that innovative component to it, right? That is different. It feels different. It can sort of disrupt maybe a negative culture or people think, wow, I remember this, you know, as a bishop, just the way our building was designed, everybody went the parking lot was in the back of the building. And so I made the most weeks made sure that I was the back of the building at that main door, shaking hands as people left and just, you know, giving my farewell or whatever. And I remember this one instance where an individual called me the sweet old lady in the ward and just articulated just how much that meant to her that I was always there. And you know, she always saw her bishop, right. And again, that wasn't this big hefty new program or a new way to do ministering, but it was just these little components that are disruptive, they're innovative, but they're not heavy. They're just these small and simple things like you mentioned, right?

Aaron Osman:

That's it. I learned towards the end of my service. to ask myself the question, how can I extend the blessings of Jesus Christ to the person I'm interacting with? Yeah. And so that's the question I would pose. And sometimes it's just a handshake. There's no magical or spiritual moment per se. It's just run of the mill, banter, have a bit of fun, socialize. But we have no idea the impact of that on the individual. And sometimes that's what they need when they're going through something or they might be a faithful member that doesn't get a lot of interaction with people because they're so busy. Everyone's scattering off everywhere, trying to do their callings. But I think that's the thing that also helps with the ministering aspect, is that if I'm looking at every individual or whoever I'm interacting with and thinking, how can I extend the blessings of Christ to them? And it's not deep and philosophical, it's just shaking their hands, saying hello, how are you, getting to know them, having a bit of a laugh with them, is just as spiritual in my mind as having a deep meaningful conversation about things that they're going through. And I think that mentality then shifts the way we do things in our ministry. I think that's the part we talked about earlier, right? Do I focus on the activity or do I focus on the people? And an extra layer is that when I'm focusing on people and thinking about how can I extend that blessing to them, whatever they need, then we organically will do what's right for that moment, even in the administrative things.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, that's powerful. This principle you put on your notes, as far as it always works out like I remember this instance, being a bishop, and you know, there's such this pressure at times to, you know, to meet regularly with your ward council, right? And you're like, all right, maybe we'll meet every other week, you know, make sure we're, we're just like, getting ahead of all the

problems or all the topics, issues that are coming up. And I remember for whatever reason, holidays and different, you know, steak, conferences or whatever, we didn't have like a ward council for like over a month. And I remember this feeling of like, like this stress set in like, Oh, no, like, it's all gonna fall apart, you know. And then a few weeks later, I sort of had this epiphany, probably from God. And I was like, huh, like nothing, nobody missed a beat. Like the primary ran as it should. The young men, young women, they did, they just did their activities. Like everything just worked. Right. And sometimes we, we put a lot of expectation in these things we do, which are important and need to be done. But, uh, I love this sort of this mantra of it. It'll always work out. And that's the beauty of it.

Aaron Osman:

Yeah, that's a President Hinckley thing. That was one of his common messages, right, is that it all works out. And what I experienced at the branch level that we had to learn pretty quickly is that a lot of times our Speakers could be away or they could be sick. We only had about 20 to 23 people, and so we speak quite regularly as a branch, but sometimes there wouldn't be anyone available. My counselor and I will look at each other and it's like, man, what are we going to do? The first time this had happened, we would start to panic and I'd be like, man, I don't know what to do. Yeah, I can get up and speak, but that's going to you know, bore people pretty quickly if I'm doing it every time. Especially if it's desperation, not inspiration, that's not going to work. And sure enough, you know, two missionaries turn up, you're like, great, we'll ask the missionaries to speak. Or a family visiting from Utah turns up or a family visiting from another city turns up and we invite them to speak. What we had encountered over about two or three times is that Every time we didn't have someone to speak, the Lord would always provide someone. And we started to learn to get comfortable with that, that it always would work out for our sacrament meetings. And so we never panicked after about the third time. We just sat there and relaxed, and then sure enough, someone would turn up, and they would be our speakers, or we'll be instructed to do something. But I think those experiences is that it's the Lord, again, teaching us to rely on Him, not our own judgment, not our own wisdom of how things should run. And I think that's a line in the Book of Mormon, right? They ran meetings that's inspired by the Holy Ghost. And we have our structure and format, but in between the major points of the sequence, We can give space for the spirit to then direct what needs to happen. So then our saints are nourished when they come to sacrament meeting. But that was just one of many. Our family had lots of that too, you know, and school, all sorts of things. Things just work out.

Kurt Francom:

Yep. I love that. And it's such a statement of faith, you know, and I mean, that's the message of the gospel is that all expectations were fulfilled through the Savior, Jesus Christ. So therefore, You know, it's going to work out. It'll be fine. No, no, no death or sickness or tragedy in mortality can ever lead to something that, you know, lead to it not working out. It will work out. And that's

the, the hope filled message of the gospel. So, um, and then there's the sort of the cousin statement to that statement, which is thy will be done. Tell me about that. Okay.

Aaron Osman:

Yeah, so I guess through the years two to five and five, you know, so even at the end of my time as a branch president, you know, it was a very heavy period of lots of challenges and every responsibility that I had that, you know, the weight was pretty heavy. And part of that, again, is what we've already spoken about, but also it was the natural response of carrying those responsibilities. We've gone through at the branch level where two deaths we had, there was family dynamics, there were COVID, there was interpersonal relationship conflict. There was lots of stuff going on in our branch that we had to navigate through. And those things were weighing on my mind. There's the demands of school. During work, I had some really tough work challenges, had to change my jobs, my job roles within the company because one got disestablished. There's all the politics of working and navigating around a corporate environment. There's lots of things that are happening. In our family, there's supporting my wife, who is also studying at university as well. My children were going through their things and we were going through our things as family. Emotionally and mentally, it was heavy all the time, every day. I barely could sleep well. I couldn't sleep well and always constantly thinking never relaxed. So that was for years, this was going on. And journaling, changing, pivoting, doing all sorts of things to make sure that I could be present and effective as much as possible helped. So setting that scene in that context, a lot of my prayer I think you could understand was, this is hard. This is really hard for me. I'm drained. I'm emotionally spent. I don't know if I can keep doing this. And so that was the language for a lot of my prayer. But then nothing would really change. So it was almost like that. Oh yeah, kids tell you something and you're like, yeah, cool story, man. Cool, go do the dishes anyway. You know, it's kind of one of those things like, I understand that you stubbed your toe, but you can still stand and do the dishes. And so yeah, so I felt like that was kind of the thing was there was no response until I had learned that one pivotal sentence, which was, this is how I'm feeling, nevertheless, If you want me to keep going, I will keep going. Not my will, because my will is, release me. My will is, why did you send me to university? I didn't ask for that. My will is, make life easy for me. That's my will. But your will obviously is something different. And so that started to shape and shift where the prayer going, this is how I feel. This is how I really feel about things. But nevertheless, If you need me to keep going, then all I ask for is the strength and the wisdom to keep going. That was it. And so that was the prayer almost every day. And especially if year four, year five, when I was completely exhausted and before I was released, I said, I can't really do much but turn up on Sunday. But if that's what you need me to do, I'll keep going, no matter what. And I think that moment there, or that type of language, that type of stake that we can get to, then allows the Lord to really show forth not only His power, but then teach us the most meaningful lessons that we are required to learn for that period of time. So had I not learned to rely on His will, therefore have access to His power, then I'd probably still be serving now because I wouldn't have learned that lesson. But if you're a slow learner, you can serve for another year. But that's probably what it was, right? So I think that it reminds me very briefly about the scripture in Ether, is that I give unto men

weakness that they may be humble. And when we look at weakness in the verses above that, Moroni does not refer to weakness as sin per se or anything that separates us from God. He refers to the fact that they're powerful speakers, but the Lord didn't make them right in writing because of the awkwardness of their hands. And he's fearful that they would be mocked by the Gentiles. It's a capability thing that he was referring to in that segment. And for me, it was a capability as much as it was a capacity issue. So I was given those weaknesses to learn to be humble. So then when you exercise faith in him, he would make those weaknesses become strengths. That's what I had to learn. And so thy will be done as part of the language of really heartfelt prayer that removes all of my own wisdom and ability to block out his influence, because I have no capacity, no energy to do all that, no energy to reason, no energy to deliberate, no energy for being learned. And I rely on my own wisdom, too tired. It's just I have enough energy to do what you need me to do, and I'll go do that. So yeah, so that's, I think that's how I would have experienced or described that I will be done piece. is that faith in Him and trust in Him, but also it's now you're real about who you are. Now you're real about where things are at and now open to be molded and shaped and taught by Him.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. I mean, what I love about that statement, obviously, you know, referencing that when the Savior said it, it's such a statement of surrender, right? And surrender, the paradox of surrender is that it's so empowering, right? You will feel strength when you turn your will over to God and say, let's do this your way, right? And this is the one thing I'm constantly sort of processing remind myself of, you know, as it seems like there's always more to do at the end of the day and not enough time at the end of the day, you know, the next day sort of hanging over me like, okay, I got to get up and really give it get after it. You know, I got my checklist, I got these things I got to get done. And to just sort of center and ground my mind with a statement of like, well, what if What if I literally gave the whole day to God? And what I mean by that is not that I just go to my closet and shut the door and read the scriptures all day, but what if I just said, no, let's just do this your way. We're going to start with prioritizing you. So yeah, I'm going to do a little scripture study. It's not going to be rushed because I have nothing to rush to if this is your will. He will always show up and and give us the strength and the needs. And even to those people that we feel like we have to show up for as leaders, right? Like he'll take care of the ward. He'll take care of the branch, the people, the sick widow, right? And sure, maybe that part of that day is like, no, you actually got to go over to their house. You got to sit with them. You got to visit them, right? That may be part of it. But I just love that. phrase, which is, I mean, it sounds so elementary of like, well, of course, you know, they will be done. But it's so often we just skip over that. And we're like, this is I can only speak from my experience on, you know, like, I just lead out with with my will, you know, I listen, that's, that's a great description, everything, but I gotta get stuff done. So I think it's such a grounding centering thought to dwell on.

Aaron Osman:

Absolutely. Surrendering is a great word. Because then it's not about you now. You know, I think that's why things get so heavy as leaders in one context is that you've got to get enough weight on you to realize that you're weighing over your head. You can't do it. But what keeps us there is the fact that we haven't figured it out yet or haven't acknowledged it or got rid of enough of our own, say, ego or enough of our own limitations that we haven't surrendered everything yet to God. And once we get there, I think we have far more capacity to do good, you know, and we start to see things in a very different way.

Kurt Francom:

You know, it takes my mind to a conversation I had recently, just online, you know, I'll hear from various people from around the world, leaders, and I always appreciate sort of just hearing their experience, you know, what's happening in their world and their leadership calling, and this individual was really struggling. And this is really a main issue that a lot of leaders face is that you know, I want to do a good job. I have this expectation, but you know, if I didn't have to deal with all these people who have their own expectations and their own, you know, desires and, and, and agency and all these things, and she was really wrestling with this feeling of like, they're not doing what, what I expect them to do. I'm not going to hit these goals and expectations that I have. And it just sort of us reaching the point of, of overwhelm. for her. And as I went back and forth, I sort of went to, you know, encouraged her with these statements of just like, surrender it, realize, you know, you don't have to do all these things. And there's a statement where she said something like, Well, I don't get it. Like, isn't it supposed to be hard? I'm like, Oh, that's interesting that you think that I mean, because Uh, I mean, cause we, I mean, you think about being a missionary, like that's, I mean, that's, that was a hard two years. Right. And you know, shouldn't, it was always hard. No, but I mean, we kind of look at that, like, Oh, it should be hard. Like the work of the Lord is hard. Um, And many times, I don't know, I almost was dumbfounded, like, I don't know how to respond to that. Like, I don't think it's supposed to be hard. I think it's supposed to be nourishing, you know, sanctifying and energizing that you're in the work of the Lord, that you're helping people, you're turning people towards Christ. And, and that's sort of just that general indicator of like, of overwhelm, where you're like, I think something's missing, right? Like that, that expectation is out of whack. And anyway, so that that's where surrender comes in and can really be a strong tool. So That's awesome. Of course. Any other thoughts, points, principles, Aaron, that we make sure we cover? Do we do a good job? I think this was a great discussion.

Aaron Osman:

I guess the only thing I can, you know, that comes to mind in terms of the interaction with other people and expectations of others, I'm projected to you and also on your congregation. The first one is always relied on the principle or the doctrine of agency. And with agency, there are natural consequences and spiritual consequences of decisions that people make that are out of

my hands. So what I mean by that or how that's helped is that sometimes I would in the early stage, take on the frustration of someone else's decision not to turn up to church or not to do their assignment or whatever it is. When that was their choice to do that, for whatever reason, the reason doesn't matter, but they chose to do that. So therefore, their choice will give them a consequence. And consequence is neutral in this context. So then When I start to think about that as a guiding principle, to me it's like, it doesn't matter per se, whether they do it or don't do it, in terms of my reaction to that, because that's their choice to do that, as much as it's my choice to turn up to the meeting, or not turn up to the meeting, or to visit or not visit, whatever. And how that's been helpful is that I'm not trying to coerce or get upset to make someone do their calling for whatever benefit I think they should receive. It's the fact that they are where they are in their spiritual journey, and they are making those choices because that's what they are choosing to do. So my response rather than reaction is that, sweet, that's your choice. You don't want to turn up to church. I don't need to get upset about that, or I don't need to feel guilty that you're not there. because that's your decision to turn up. My decision is how I'm going to respond to that, which could be go visit, could be send you a message, it could be do nothing, because sometimes patience is a really good response as well. And something in there for our listeners that they will, again, these are lessons that only the Lord can teach in His own curriculum, in His own way, I think is really helpful in removing the outward projection of expectation to others. So then when you see people where they are, then you can lift them to where they need to be by not forcing them to make decisions or whatever. It's by helping them to make good decisions when you're interacting with them and letting them choose for themselves. And then in terms of projection towards you, is something that I had those restless nights about, is the more I could turn my attention to what does God want me to do, so what is the thing that he needs me to do for this period of time, and I'm working hard within my capacity to do that, then I'm on the right track, meaning it's his church, it's his unit, I'm his messenger or I'm his servant. So I'm interested in what he wants me to do and how I'm showing up as a leader for him rather than worrying about, am I being a good leader for everybody else? So I think there's a mindset shift that people can play with in that regard is to focus your efforts on serving him. And then that way it takes away the need to be everybody or everything for everybody. because it's almost impossible to do that, to fulfill everybody's needs and wishes. Again, sometimes it comes with the wrestle to let go of certain things that you have or hold on to. But when people step back and zoom out, they can see that that makes complete sense, that I'm more interested in what God needs me to do. You look through the scriptures, it's the same thing. Prophets are interested in what God wants them to do. and not too interested in how people react.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, I love that. And one, you know, we'll put a link to it in the show notes, but sort of a related episode we did in the past, I recorded with Jody Moore, it's called expectation pain. And that's because I think we've talked about expectations we often have in ourselves as leaders. That's all that we cover in depth as far as like expect when we have expectations and others and they don't come through like we have a, we see our Bishop and it's like, well, that's not how I was a

Bishop and he should do it differently. I have different expectations. Right. And that can lead to a lot of frustration. So we'll leave that as well for sure. Well, last question I have for you, Aaron, as you reflect on your time as a leader in the church, how has being a leader helped you become a better follower of Jesus Christ?

Aaron Osman:

How it's helped me to be a better follower of Jesus Christ is to, it has deepened my relationship with him and knowing that I can rely on him for guidance that he always provides means for me to accomplish his work. but that he has a very deep, unexplainable love for me, but also for each of his children. And I have witnessed that as one who got to serve in that capacity of how individually keen he is aware. But for me, I've seen his miracles in our family. That makes me know that his love is individualized. So therefore, my love for him has deepened through the experience of being refined and stretched and molded by his grace and his mercy and love. So leading for him, it just means that it's just helped me to make him first, to make him an integral part of my life. so I can be successful in what I do.

Kurt Francom:

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 leadingsaints.org and actually leave a comment on the episode page, or reach out to us at leadingsaints.org contact. Remember, to watch the interview about scrupulosity, go to leadingsaints.org for free access to the Mentally Healthy Saints virtual library.

SPEAKER_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 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.