



How Can Leaders Better Talk About Sex? | An Interview with Dr. Jennifer Finlayson-Fife

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Kurt Francom:

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

I got an email the other day from an individual, I forget where he is in the world, but he says, Kurt, I love Leading Saints and I listen to it every time I'm on the treadmill. And then one time during an interview, he heard that Leading Saints has a YouTube channel and like all the interviews, at least the vast majority of them are video recorded and you can watch the video recording of the podcast episodes. And I'm like, yeah, man, get on there, go subscribe on YouTube to Leading Saints and you can get a visual of the interview and not just an audio experience. And even if you're not a big YouTube user, do us a favor because this actually helps us gain more reach and expose our content to individuals who could really benefit from it, leaders around the world. So regardless if you are on YouTube a lot or not, go to YouTube and

search for Leading Saints. Find the familiar red logo and just subscribe even if you don't plan to view every episode there. That's going to help us gain a larger audience and more reach. Dial in the algorithm and we'll start showing up on leaders feeds that they didn't know how much they're missing here at Leading Saints. So head on over to YouTube, search for Leading Saints and subscribe to our channel. And leave a comment every once in a while, but be nice.

Hey everyone, welcome back to the Leading Saints podcast. This guest has been requested time and time again, and we finally arranged our schedules to make it happen. That is with Dr. Jennifer Finlayson-Fife. For those of you not familiar with that name, Jennifer is a PhD counselor therapist who is often looked to as the expert of all things sexuality in the Latter-day Saint context. And so she is the go-to resource about this really difficult topic. And I wanted to bring her on the Leading Saints podcast and ask her some questions more, obviously, in the context of being a leader and what a leader should address or how a leader can approach this topic of sex, both to not only like as developing youth and helping youth develop healthy sexuality, but also about married couples. and individuals who are having marital problems in the ward, and which way to point them, and how to get them help and resources, and how to talk about sex in general that's not so stigmatized or shameful or like it's this evil thing, but adding it into the beautiful theology that we have and the purpose of it, that it's something beautiful that should be a part of our faith experience, our relationships, and so forth. And the discussion that followed was remarkable. And just to give you maybe, I thought I would read an email I received, and I used the perspectives of this email in various ways in our discussion to touch on some questions and jump into some topics that are most, would be most helpful for leadership audience.

The email says, good episode with Ashly Levitt on the topic of betrayal trauma, despite being very skewed to men being the only bad actors. I have one major concern about it. It didn't address the betrayal trauma men experience when their eternal companion gaslights and abuses their husband through neglect, using intimacy as a weapon, starving their spouse emotionally while filling her tank with her friend's phone calls and other relationships. Typically, these friends and other relationships are not sexual or romantic. All while the husband is trying with all he knows to do to provide for her and their family. Nonetheless, these relationships have a spirit of emotional infidelity. Having a fair and balanced discussion would be nice. I have never condoned a man retreating to pornography or another person. All too often, when it does occur, it's a surprise to all but him, having lived in an emotional desert for 20, 30, 40 years. The scriptures are clear about men and women maintaining their relationship so that temptation doesn't enter in. I don't believe women in our society and the LDS micro-society are held sufficiently responsible for their contribution to bad marriages. It's just so easy for everyone to call these men garbage and throw them away. I've been guilty of that tendency myself. It would be refreshing to hear a guest which is not a man, one that understands this but is instead a woman therapist expert that can bring light and validity to this gaping hole in our approach to this difficult issue. I'm a physician that hears this not infrequently, and if we really want to help marriages, this is a major problem being ignored and men can't say it without being castigated as a misogynist toxic patriarch. Thanks for letting me comment.

Well, I appreciate that email and that's sort of the direction I hit on several questions thinking back to this email in this discussion and phenomenal responses that Jennifer Finlayson-Fife gives a lot to think about, a lot to consider, and ways that we can highlight this beautiful gift of sex and sexuality that can enhance relationships, especially those sealed for time and all eternity. So here's my interview with Dr. Jennifer Finlayson-Fife. All right, we finally have Jennifer Finlayson Fife in the studio for Leading Saints. How are you, Jennifer? Good. Yeah. Good. You know, you're, I don't know, you have this, you have a brand in our community, I mean, in a broader community, but definitely in the Latter-day Saint community of you're the person that talks about sex, right?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

Yeah, I am. I would have been horrified to know that when I was an adolescent, that that was going to be my future. Right. Yeah.

Kurt Francom:

Well, I think I couldn't have anticipated the career path I have either. But here we are, nonetheless, and these are important topics to talk about. And I mean, is that I mean, on this topic, there's just so many ways we can go. And obviously, in the leading saints world, we're going to focus on, you know, what church leaders maybe need to consider or understand about this dynamic. But Like, I'm just, especially when I connect with a therapist, I'm just curious, like, as far as Latter-day Saints go, like, what are the general themes you're hearing right now or the concerns or issues that are coming up most when you're meeting with some of your Latter-day Saint clients?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

Well, a lot around faith crisis things, one or both people going into some level of questions and just trying to sort out who they are, how they're in relationship to one another, how to be in relationship to the church, you know, just a lot of that happening, at least of people that are coming to me. The kind of larger story of my work has been around sexuality and creating more intimate marriages and, you know, women's sense of self shifting in society, men's sense of self shifting in society. Women often taking a lot of the brunt around sexual conservatism. What I mean by that is, you know, traditionally, but I think men more so with pornography and a lot more focus on men's sexuality in the last couple of decades. So, you know, that's a really broad way to answer, you know, a lot around sexuality, intimacy, spirituality. Those are the themes that are always, you know, coming into my office.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And this is the interesting thing about our faith is, I mean, all religions sort of have this emphasis on marriage, but our faith maybe has a more unique doctrine around marriage and sealing for time and all eternity, those things. And, you know, sex is such a huge part of that dynamic, but we also never really address it or it's sort of done passively or, hey, here's this pamphlet or read this book. But on a fifth Sunday, you're not going to hear a bishop stand up

and be like, great, let's talk about sexuality as everybody has an excuse to go home early. That dynamic exists, right? A little bit differently in our faith.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

Yeah. Right. Like we really, exactly. We really value marriage. I think it's implicit that we value sexuality, but a lot of people, I'm working on a book right now and I'm actually writing about this right now, which is just this discrepancy between the kind of valuing and clarity about how you actually achieve an intimate marriage. Because we focus more on roles, at least traditionally we have, and needs and fulfilling each other's needs, which is not the same framing that is necessary for creating an intimate marriage. And so we value it, but we haven't really done a great job of understanding what it is enough to facilitate or help saints achieve it. So, you know, it's not anybody's fault. It's more that we have a kind of mixed model sometimes and it can be difficult for people who are trying to sort out how to have a happy or joyful marriage, how sexuality fits into that.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And I mean, as you, as you speak and you do classes and things like, how do you get a general Latter-day Saint audience to a place of just feeling comfortable to begin to broach the topic? Anything come to mind

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

Well, they're usually a good question. I mean, usually by the time somebody's sitting in that chair, they've crossed a threshold of being willing. Right. But, you know, a lot of people show up and they're pretty anxious and you can tell they're anxious and they're afraid they're going to run into somebody they know. Of course, the good news is if you do run into someone, you know, they're having the same issues, because they're also there. I mean, I think that I can see that people get pretty comfortable within an hour or two. And maybe that's because I'm just pretty real about it. And I don't see this as a pathological issue for people, but a normal developmental issue, and that we have a theology that supports that development. And I think that hopefulness and clarity coupled with being real just helps people settle down a little bit and feel some sense of hope. And I think that it starts resonating with them as true. And so I think it just helps people feel less anxious, less afraid, less strange, you know, and they just see how normal the challenges that are in marriage are, that they're not uniquely impaired, that they're not uniquely defective, right? I think that can be a huge relief that alone for people.

Kurt Francom:

Now, when we think about sexuality in general, and obviously, like you've touched on, like it's something especially married couples need to address, process, you know, talk about. And a lot of like, I guess my question comes to like, where does, what's the church's role in all this or church leaders role in all this? Because sometimes as a youth, you know, I think we all think

back in the 80s and 90s, those that were raised that time of The bishop gave his law of chastity talk or the YSA war. Every year, the bishop does his law of chastity talk. At the end of my time as bishop, I came to this place of like, wait a minute, that's not my job. You parents should go home and have a law of chastity talk. It's not my job to have that awkward conversation. I feel like they outsource it to the bishop a lot. Bishop, you should talk about that. And then as we kind of mature into marriage, like then I think it can easily dismiss like, well, yeah, you figure that out if you need help, find a good counselor. But would you say does the church as an institution play a role in healthy sexual development?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

I mean it's an excellent question and I guess I would actually say I think it should. I just think we need to do a better job of it because our sexuality is a part of our morality and our spirituality. The problem is we're so afraid of sexuality that we actually interfere with our own goals in our attempts to manage a high standard around sexuality. And so we often create so much fear and anxiety in people about the fact of their sexuality or we, out of our desire to get them to not have sex or whatever, we kind of conflate sexual feelings with Satan tempting them. And it creates a division within people that interferes with what I call sexual integration, the ability to accept your God-given sexuality, and align your choices with your values, right? and to have agency, right? To be an actor around your sexuality rather than feeling controlled by it. But when we teach messages, you know, scare tactics that those feelings are temptations, they're coming from Satan, they're attempts to destroy the spirit and so on, we're really creating a false binary reality of sexuality and spirituality as two separate things and keeping people from ever being able to find, to accept their sexuality and create good with it, to create the self-control that they need around it, to be able to choose well and choose wisely. So we want to give, I think, a vision of what it really is and how we relate to this gift but we need to do it in a way that's less fear-based. It isn't like the church is doing this terrible job. It depends a lot on who your leader is. I know when I was younger, I could tell which leaders actually liked sex and which ones had a lot of turmoil around it because you could tell sort of in the way that they talked about it. And so it's difficult because you need to have your own clarity that sexuality and spirituality can actually be deeply integrated to be able to give a younger person a vision of what's possible. Because when you haven't found that in your life, then it's just easy to promote the same thing that interfered with your sexual integration. And so, you know, we have a theology that embraces the body, that embraces development, intimacy, as a way of growing in our spirituality, and joy as our highest aim. And to me, there's no greater place for a sense of transcendence and joy than intimate, loving, marital sexuality.

Kurt Francom:

Right. Right. So, you know, you talk about sort of we use fear at times is we, we include fear in the context as we talk about sex and, and maybe with youth sort of as this deterrent, right? Like, you know, bad news here, folks, like do, you know, do anything else, singing him or whatever. Is there anything that comes to mind, like that a leader can consider of like, whether there are things to say or things not to say, or do we make a big deal about a lesson about it? Do we more just sort of interject some comments?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

I think what I would say is that, you know, if you're feeling sexual feelings, nothing's going wrong, right? That's probably everything's going right. If you're feeling sexual feelings, if you're an adolescent, that's a gift, even though it doesn't feel like a gift in adolescence. Because you are newly embodied and you're trying to manage a lot of impulses, feelings, a body kind of doing things you don't necessarily want or think it should do, and that you have a job to do of coming to some peace with this sexuality of yours. But fearing it or making it inherently a threat to your spirituality interferes with the ability to sort it out. Sometimes I talk about it around food. It's a similar thing. You know, to live a joyful life, right, you need to be able to integrate pleasures in a way that accrues to your well-being, sexuality being one of them. But if you have a family that's like, you should never want sugar, and if you eat sugar, you're a bad person, or you shouldn't get fat, and that means you're a terrible person, well, you create so much anxiety around that pleasure that you drive people either into anorexia or into compulsive eating, right? And neither one of those is a spiritual state, that's an anti-spiritual anxiety, either direction. And we do the same thing with sexuality and we interfere with being able, like let's just use food as a metaphor, like to be able to eat a dessert on occasion and have it make your life richer and better, but also be very attuned to what your body needs and feeding it what it needs. That's the joyful life, right? So you're able to be in a relationship to pleasure in a way that accrues to your well-being and the well-being of your relationships. That should be our goal around sexuality, right? Part of our spiritual development is learning how to be embodied and the body does bring a lot of impulses and sensation and feeling and you can either fear it all and shove it all down but never be at peace in your own skin or you can run around indulging every feeling and get arrested. But learning how to manage your impulses, you know, I talk about in the book I'm working on, we start out in the first phase of development as impulsive, we go from impulsive into inhibiting, because we need to learn how to inhibit our responses, because you got to have brakes, you can't just have gas pedal, right? But then the next stage is inhabiting the body, right? You're like able to not just be run around by your impulses or your repression of them, but being able to choose wisely around your sexuality or your desire for food or your desire for pleasure, that's the person that's capable of joy. And if we don't learn how to do that, we're going to always be sort of being run around by our bodies, either in getting away from it out of fear or indulging it. But neither one of those stances is a place of peace.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, yeah, that's helpful. So I'm curious, like, maybe let's go to a scenario where, you know, a bishop may find himself where a youth comes in and confesses, you know, the use of pornography. And the difficult part of all that is there's so much shame wrapped in that experience. And not only that, you know, not only the pornography side of it, but that you had to set an appointment, you had to kind of go to the church principal's office, and there you are, and you know, you got to confess and you messed up and, so there's so many layers of shame already, but how could a bishop better approach that as far as, what should he keep in mind as far as responding to that where a youth is opening up?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

as a starting point, I would say on some level to normalize it. The fact that you find sexuality appealing, attractive, alluring, makes you a normal human being. It's just part of how we're wired because we're drawn to sexuality. we need to be. It's part of being able to procreate. It's a part of creating an intimate marriage. So there's nothing strange about the fact that you find that compelling. The question is, is whether or not it's going to accrue to something good in your life and what you ultimately want in your life. So it's like, yes, you have the feelings. That makes sense. That doesn't make you because a lot of people I've worked with are afraid that that makes them degenerate or their next thing they're going to be a child molester. Like they have a lot of anxiety about what this ultimately means. And they're calling themselves a porn addict, like out of the gate, which is all very unhelpful. It's not helpful. you're just a human being. I remember when I was younger, I'd find this year's catalog and, you know, you'd be looking at the underwear section. And, you know, I mean, I don't know, I at least think of myself as a normal. We just didn't have access to to the Internet. But, you know, still, I and my siblings found sexuality interesting. That just, I think, makes us a normal human being. So you can say like, look, that makes you normal. But you're in an environment where you're trying to eat healthy, but you're kind of living in a candy store. That's the truth. That's the reality of the Internet and of pornography. And it's I don't think it's good for our kids. I think we're in an environment that's kind of uncharted and challenging to navigate well for parents and kids alike. But to sort of lay it out that, you know, if you want to be someone who's healthy and has a healthy body, you know, or a healthy sexuality, you are trying to navigate an environment that is not particularly healthy. It doesn't accrue to that reality. Yeah. And so it's not weird that you want it, but you're going to have to be making clear choices for yourself around what you want to create with this gift of your sexuality.

Kurt Francom:

Gotcha. And it kind of puts them back in the driver's seat.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

Yes. As an agent.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

And in my dissertation research where I talked to women, LDS women, about the real question I was looking at was sexual agency. The women who actually transitioned the most happily into marriage and obeyed the law of chastity most successfully had a strong sense of being the architects of their lives. So even in adolescence, they weren't obeying the law of chastity because a leader told them to, or because they didn't want the bishop to think badly of them, or God think badly of them even. They did it because they wanted that reality for their lives. And they had a strong sense of self, like that they were like, I'm not going to do for a guy, I was only interviewing women at the time, anything that goes against who I am and what I want for my life.

And so they were more able to fend off unwanted sexual advances and and forge the reality they wanted and actually behave quite conservatively without shaming sexuality, without making sexuality the problem. They actually all thought sexuality was a good thing, even with their very first experience of it, like some of them had masturbated, you know, early on and then made a decision not to do that anymore. But they didn't see it as a bad thing. They actually saw it as like, oh, that's exciting that my body can do that. And I want to wait until later. So they actually went from kind of putting it on the back burner for years towards being able to really step into marriage because it was driven not by shame, not by fear, but by self-authoring. And so it's really, really important that we we facilitate that in our adolescents, that they are making the you know, we can we're like afraid for our kids to self-author. We're like, You've got to make the right choice. You can't make the wrong choice. But ultimately, they're going to decide. And the more that they take ownership of what that life is going to be, the better they'll do with it, rather than doing it out of rebellion or compliance.

Kurt Francom:

Gotcha. Yeah. And so what I'm hearing there is like, sometimes we frame sexuality as like a desire that sneaks up on us when in reality, it should be desire that we should choose as part of our story that we want it to be a healthy choice.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

That's right. Exactly. Exactly. Like the women who did well, they saw it as like, I like this part of me. I'm grateful for this part of me. And I can't wait to be able to express it in a way that is good in my life. And that means waiting for now, but they didn't deny the desire. They channeled it. They, you know, we even have the language of bridling. Sometimes we think of bridling as suffocating, but if you bridle a horse, you're actually directing the energy in a way that's good for you. Right. And so you don't want to suppress it. You want to bridle it.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. Yeah. And it seems like sometimes we frame marriage almost like sex is sort of this fringe benefit, right? Like marriage is great. You get a friend, like you go to the temple, the doctrine behind sealing is really cool. Families are forever. And oh, and guess what? Like you can actually have sex too. Yeah. When in reality it's maybe... It should be a choice of like, I want healthy sexuality, therefore I'm going to choose marriage rather than I'm choosing marriage. And oh yeah, and I get to have sex, right?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, it's also the idea that we think it's just so natural. It's just going to like just kick in in the right way rather than kind of owning that identity early on. You know, I mean, we're so afraid of it. But the thing is, even babies are sexual beings. We're just sexual from birth. That's what we are. And how we relate to that sexual nature has a lot of implications for our life. But yeah, owning it as a part of life and part of a joyful life does set you up to be able to be sexually intimate. Because if you've suppressed it and you think, you know, as a woman, for

example, your husband is going to bring this part out of you, this part that you've suppressed over, you know, two decades of time, that doesn't usually go well. And he's not that powerful, usually. Yeah, yeah.

Kurt Francom:

So going back to the youth context, like it's obviously normalizing these feelings. You're a very normal person for having them. Is there anything else is like, I mean, because the law of chastity is a doctrinal principle, is a doctrinal thing that, yeah, there's going to be lessons on it. Sure. But I mean, do we need to have lessons focused on it?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

it is valuable to talk about what our standards are. But I think it's also and talking about some of the contrasting values in society. Like this is what we stand for as a church. This is what is in the current reality of society, which is sort of a doctrine of if you're healthy, you are sexual, right? So if you're not sexual, you are unhealthy. That's kind of the current environment. which has truth in it and it has real limitations in that ideology. So it's helping kids to see better and then giving them the clarity that they ultimately are choosers. So, you know, there's times when I've been asked to teach young women about the law of chastity, and I will lay out what is the law of chastity? What is it teaching us? What are the standards, right? But ultimately, they are going to determine what they choose and what they live by. And they should think seriously about what it is they want to create around the reality of their sexuality. And so, you know, I've had young women like write in their journals or on pieces of paper that they don't share with me what it is that they really desire. And that it's important for them to be true to that, to never betray the best in them, to get someone to like them or to get someone's attention or to take advantage of another person like that will never, ever work to their well-being. That, you know, it's basically just handing the mantle of responsibility to the emerging adult, because that's where the power is. That's where the self-control will come from. And it's a beautiful doctrine. to say like, we value sexuality, we value the body, we value pleasure, we value joy. And the way in which you express it has huge moral implications for your well-being. And so men and women as equals, like have the gift and the opportunity to enter into a sexually intimate relationship, which has, there's elements of that that will drive you crazy. And we'll pressure your growth, which is maybe another thing we can talk about. And there's elements in that which will sustain your soul and give you joy and peace as a marital sacrament.

Kurt Francom:

It really is. Yeah. So let's like move in maybe to adulthood where it seems like, you know, there's a lot, maybe a lot more lessons or attempts to, to address sexuality and the law of chastity in those youth years, because that seems like that tension just so there, or like, these are blossoming feelings and let's make sure we, we bridle them from the beginning. But then in adulthood, like I remember you know, as a bishop, people coming in, couples coming in sort of with this tension in their marriage. And of course, you know, I'm reaching out to resources, professional therapy and whatnot, but sort of this, you talk about everything else going on, the

communication or the kids or, you know, whatever it is, but rarely do you talk, you know, bring up like sex actually might be a thing because, you know, nobody really knows how to talk about that. So like, take us into like, as far as adulthood, as far as what the role of the church is for those adults.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

Well, this is all super tricky because you know, we've got our theology and then it's sort of like who's in charge of having those conversations and especially like poor Bishop, you know, I mean, what I mean is like, they might be an engineer, they're not a sex therapist, it is not easy, other than holding what our values are and holding our values clearly. Okay. Because how you help a couple get there can be tricky. I mean, but I'll come to that in a minute. But one of the other reasons why I think we focus a lot on the youth is because we sometimes understand our goal in the church is to keep people from having sex. And if we get them across that finish line to the marriage altar without having sex, we've succeeded. Where that's just like, in my view, not the real measure of success. The real measure is the ability to be in a peaceful, genuinely ethical relationship to your body and your sexuality and to be capable of sexual intimacy with a marriage partner. That's the goal. And so I think we have to be clear about that. And when it comes to marriage, it is tricky. You know, one of the issues that we've had in our messaging that's been a really problematic and short sighted message is that men have sexual needs and good women fulfill them. That's a terrible message. It's a very intuitive one because men's sexual desire is usually more evident than women's is because men have testosterone and that's a part of the differences between men and women. But when you frame it as women should take care of men's sexual needs, you kill sexual passion for both men and women right away because women's desire does not thrive in caretaking ever. And I'm sure there's a lot of people listening to this that have a firm testimony on that. Because women don't want to be in the caretaking, mothering frame in sex. They want the opposite. They want to be taken care of. They want freedom from that role. Now, a lot of women won't let themselves do that either, okay, because that takes a strength of self to be capable of that kind of care and to be able to receive on that level. And a lot of women have been taught in the church that receiving is selfish and that knowing what your desires are is antithetical to spirituality and to goodness. And so we have in our efforts to make women obedient and service oriented have pummeled the sexual desire and clarity out of them. And then we say women should then take care of men's needs. And yeah, you might get sex once a week in that frame, but you're never going to have passion. And that's what men want, is they want to know that they're not a predator. They want to know that they're being desired and received and that they're not hurting their wife because men have been taught to be protectors. And so how can I do unto her something she doesn't want done unto her, right? And so it can eat at the souls of men too if they don't feel desired. And so then sometimes men will go for the, well, I have needs thing, but then they keep in place the very thing that causes both so much pain.

Kurt Francom:

Hmm. Yeah. So this caretaking dynamic, and I know I've heard, you know, horror stories about that, or, you know, a husband struggling with pornography. And, you know, we look toward the

wife and be like, Hey, you know, just make yourself more available. And that should, you know, that should do it. Right. When, which isn't helpful. I'm curious, like, because I don't necessarily hear this. I kind of feel like sex in general is just not even talked about, let alone told to be, you know, that women should be a caretaker that way. Like, are there other ways that this is or how are ways that this is communicated that we should be made aware of?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

It's a good question. I mean, it's interesting because when I work with women, a lot of times they'll say, like, I don't even know how I heard this message. I just understood it as true because I mean, I think when we talk about modesty, for example, we tend to focus on the idea that men have sexual desires and that women can be helpful by masking their sexuality to manage men's desires. Right. So it's just a message of you're partly responsible for handling this guy's feelings and needs. Also, just that I know that I grew up, I grew up in the 80s, so things have probably shifted. But in Young Women's, I was getting lessons a lot on the idea that good women are selfless, that they are attending to the needs and the feelings and the desires of their husbands and their children. That's the measure of a good woman. And so also the idea that the ideal woman is virginal and virtuous. She is not sexual. Right? She is pure and has pure thoughts. And so for so many of the women I work with, the way they understood that was I should, in the effort to be that pure flower, not the one that's collecting all the dirt, the one that's the most desirable, I need to push this part of me down, be selfless, be attentive to my husband's needs. And there's just nothing in that that cultivates the ecology of a woman's desire.

Kurt Francom:

That's helpful. And I think that message in general, I think, you know, just as I learn more and more about these clinical terms and concepts like codependency, for example, like as a man in the church, like I feel that that is also a message that's highly communicated and valued of like, Like just give, give, give of yourself until you're completely empty and then give a little bit more, right? And just give, give, give. And then we sort of create this culture of nice guys of like, and that same dynamics is happening with women as well. They think, Oh, I'm in this marriage now. So I'm just supposed to address this need, need, need until, until I'm empty or I can't do it. And then that's where the, that's where the problem. Yeah, exactly.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

And I think a lot of men feel like, okay, look, if I take care of her and I provide for her and I attend to her emotional needs and so on, then she should be so grateful for me. There's nothing wrong. This is a very normal human things to think. It's just that it crashes on the rocks of reality, you know, then she'll desire me and she'll be so grateful for me and she'll just want to make love to me. And, and then she doesn't. And then what the heck, you know, like I've sacrificed so much and she still is not there for me. Yeah. And the feeling of despair and loneliness and grief is just painful. It's really hard. And this is usually not people that are not trying. It's just that a lot of times people just don't have the understanding of what actually creates a sexually passionate marriage. And, you know, of course, some LDS couples get this worked out and they do great,

right? They're just not having pain around this. They like sexuality. They enjoy it together. But a lot of people that I work with have just not been able to integrate their sexuality into their sense of self and into their marriage. And it causes a lot of sadness.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And let's keep going with this topic and maybe I'll set up a, you know, an email I received. I think I passed on to you before I interview, but basically the, you know, I had this, I did a whole episode with a therapist about the concept of betrayal trauma, which, in my opinion, every bishop needs to understand generally the dynamics of what betrayal trauma is. And basically when like a spouse has betrayed the relationship, oftentimes sexually or with pornography or whatever it is, that trauma that the other spouse feels can be real trauma and it can lead to all sorts of things. So as I was going through that naturally in our conversations about, you know, pornography or betrayal or sexuality, we default to the man is the one with the problem and it does the betraying. And this email I received from somebody basically just said, well, what about the other way around? And because I feel like that betrayal often looks like different for men where the women, obviously, you know, the wife walks in or catches her husband, you know, viewing pornography or affair, it comes to the surface or whatever. It's obviously very traumatic, but for the male side of things where here they are, you know, they went through the youth lessons. They heard all the don'ts and the, you know, suppress this and sing a hymn and just get to marriage and whatever. And then they get to marriage and, you know, we, we think that, Oh, this solves so many things because now we have the big green light and we're good to go. But then just more complexities introduced. And now that this husband is like, well, wait a minute. I thought this would be something that's available to me. And now you're using it sort of as a weapon or it's perceived that way. Right. if I restricted my wife from using the checking account and saying, no, you can't use this money, like that would be abusive. But the wife using sex in the same manner sometimes is overlooked or can be hidden away. So help us through this, like what this dynamic, what comes to mind?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

Oh, so much. So, you know, I was just working with a couple for lots of good reasons. She went from, I'll just give this as a little story to kind of see the complexity. She went from when they first started dating to having lots of desire, lots of excitement in touching him and being with him. And I'll just put this is that women especially, but this is true for men and women, We want to belong to our sense of self more than we want to be sexual. This is really, really important thing to understand that nobody wants to give up themselves in order to be sexual. A lot of times the higher desire person is high desire because they want to be sexual so they can feel that they're desired or feel that they're enough or feel that they're wanted and that's why they're trying to get something emotionally met even beyond the biological pressure of it. They're trying to manage a feeling about themselves, right? client was, you know, grew up in an environment where she was caretaking people all the time, even the adults in her life. When she fell in love, it was freedom. You know, this guy likes me. I feel good in his presence. I like touching him. I like being with him. And this is a story on repeat throughout all of my meetings. Really, it is such a common thing. But then when she got engaged, Now another meaning clicks in, which is he's

my husband or my husband to be, and I'm supposed to take care of his sexual needs. It turns from freedom and validation of her desirability to I have a job to do. And my genitals are half his now because that's how I learned this is how this goes because he's going to be providing. And so I'm supposed to be providing this sexual care. Well, it's not that she stopped doing it, but he was like, wait a minute, it feels different. Like you don't seem that into it. You don't see. And she's like, no, no, no, I'm into it. It's good. It's good. Because she was also confused. Like, why did the desire go away? And maybe it's coming back. but it just seemed to disappear in thin air. And so she's kind of telling him nothing to see here, but it feels different. It's not that she wouldn't engage with him. It's that he could tell that she didn't want to be there. There was no more passion. And that's what he wanted was the passion, right? And so then he would go from like saying nothing to blowing up and being angry and saying mean things to her to going quiet for a long time, then being the nice guy, then blowing up and saying mean things. And then she'd say, like, you don't even love me. Like, you just freak out and get abusive once a month. And, you know, I don't want to be with you. Right. So it just kind of sets this like self-protective spiral into place. So it's tough because he thought he was entering into a desire-based marriage. And when they got engaged, she was like, wait, it seems different. You seem more passive or less into making out with me. And she's like, no, no, no, nothing, nothing. But then he enters in and he's like, wait, I feel betrayed in a way because I thought you were choosing me and really you aren't and you weren't. Now she had a lot of good reasons to not desire. Do you know what I mean? Like it was so linked to caretaking, so linked to obligation that there's a, it's understandable why she wasn't just being a jerk. She's in a new meaning that she can't even see is there. And yet it's operating on her desire and her sexuality. But he also feels like, and then he'd go into like, what a horrible person I am. She's a good woman. She's so good to me in every other way. She's good to our family. Why am I such a hedonistic pig? And, you know, what is my problem? And all of the fears that he had growing up in young men's around sexuality and how it harms all just seem true. Like I'm doing to her something she doesn't want. And could I just excise this from my consciousness? And so, yeah, there's a kind of betrayal in it from the woman to the man in a way. I mean, betrayal gets a little tricky for me. It's not my favorite word, but yes, it's like we assume this was a sexual partnership. And I think this does happen sometimes where, I'll say it in the way that the question is being placed, you know, that women who are low desire, they want to be desired, but they don't want their husband to take his sexuality elsewhere, but they don't want to desire. You see what I mean? So like, I want this to be a sexual relationship as in you don't take it elsewhere, but I don't want to show up for the sexual part of it. And that can be very confusing in a sex negative culture. I mean, I don't think our theology is sex negative, but we can be certainly sex negative in our culture. That can make men really be very conflicted about what is it that I want? And is it fair to want it? And hey, like, I also feel like you haven't lived up to your half of the deal. And they're right. They're often absolutely right. And the way to solve it is not more obligation for the woman, because that's still the wrong muscle. And that's usually the muscle that gets pushed on. Like, fine, I'll do it. I'll give you bad sex twice a week. Okay, well, that's not going to solve it.

Kurt Francom:

Nor does any man want that.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

No, exactly. No, exactly. But then the life force, the Aeros energy of the couple, that's been squashed by obligations and fear and pressure. You know, the man can, let's say the man's the higher desire. He can pressure around. I have needs. The low desire woman, if that's the way it goes in the marriage can pressure around. Why are you just such a natural man that you just care so much about this selfish thing? We have lots of ways to pressure our partners to like make us comfortable. that it's not really living up to the best in the marriage, which is to really choose your partner and to grow up, but through the pressures of the marriage, which is a different idea than being pressured by your partner. It's like, look, I'm married to someone who has a different relationship to sexuality than I do. And yet I promised God I was going to love them and love them well. So how are we going to do this? Because I can't I don't want to betray myself. Right. But I also don't want to betray you. I want to be fair to you. So how do we work around these differences? And men and women have good and meaningful differences around sex. They relate to it in two different ways. And when you can accept the best in both of those, you can create some pretty amazing marital sex. But you have to be open enough to the best in each other's sexual orientation, or what I mean is their the orientation to what makes sex valuable and pleasurable to create something that two people really desire and aren't doing out of obligation.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And in pivoting a little bit back towards the leadership experience, like, I guess it's that stigma that I'm not quite clear what to do with where, for example, and I've been in these meetings or you hear it in general conference, even sort of this, this lecture to men, as far as like, listen, brethren, you need to step up, help her out around the house, help to get the kids to bed, date night, you know, once a week, let's like, let's show up as men and give these, you know, beautiful daughters of God, the men that they deserve, But you never hear that on the other side. It's like, all right, women, listen. And obviously it'd be weird coming from a male leader, but even from a sister leader of like, women, listen, we got to show up. We need to be, take sex a little more seriously. And like, cause there's just such this stigma around like men. We probably should be doing that, frankly. That's my question. I mean, should we? Yeah.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

Well, I mean, I'm doing that really in my, I'm not saying in this shaming way, really I'm not, but more like, look, we have this amazing gift of women's sexuality. And women's sexuality, I mean, not to brag, is more impressive than men's sexuality. It's just pickier. It's just, it's pickier. Okay. And so women are picky for good reasons. Okay. And you know, you, you want to be careful who you let into your body, right? Because it has biological implications and so on.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

How do I take deeper ownership of my femininity, of my desirability, of my sexuality, of my sexual desirability, and not live my life in so much sort of fear and repression? Not to manage his needs, but to claim the gift of your sexual and sensual self and step into your strength. So if I'm ever, you know, talking straight to the women, it's not about be there for your husbands. I'm not crazy about the message men are getting either, to be honest, because it's kind of a patronizing message.

Kurt Francom:

Yes, exactly.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

But speaking to the women's side, it's like, look, you got to step into your strength because doing this just to keep a man happy is not stepping into your strength. It doesn't make your marriage richer. The truth is, and the truth we're all afraid of, is that women are in fact sensual, attractive creatures. Like we all know it, right? And when we're so afraid of it, that we're telling women to suppress that. And I don't mean go flaunt it and be irresponsible with your sexuality. But to be able to claim your desirable sensual self, because it's a part of our wisdom and our strength, and to choose wisely with it. But how do you bring that energy into your life and into your marriage? How do you create goodness with it? Not just scare it away, because if you scare it away, you don't have the Eros energy that the marriage needs to be joyful. and for women to be joyful in marriage. Women can do hard work of raising children and so on, but if they feel alive in their marriage, if they can feel that their sexuality is a gift and they can be taken care of in the best sense in the marital sexual relationship, it blesses both the man and the woman very much. I know It's not too personal to say this, but I know in my own life, like the postpartum period was really hard for me because this was so much a way of feeling taken care of and that I would have the strength I needed to go do all the hard work of raising a newborn. And it was just, yeah, I just didn't, I, you know, but if women have it in, like, I've got another one to take care of, I'm taking care of this newborn and I've got to take care of my husband. I mean, forget it. They'll be like, no, the doctor said six months or maybe it was six years, but they don't want another person to take care of. They may want to be taken care of.

Kurt Francom:

Right. But that blesses both. Right. So I'm like going back to that, the betrayal trauma dynamic of like, like the stigma around like a husband betraying their wife, you know, maybe a long history of pornography use or even a fair comes out. And it's suddenly there's like, okay, this is what needs to happen. And, and the sort of the women feel empowered to be like, you're going to a 12-step program, we're going to therapy, we're going to do this or this. But when there's that maybe that betrayal on the other side, my struggle is because there's no like heavy stigma there. Yeah. And so what would you say, I mean, if that husband is feeling like, man, I am not in this relationship that I should be and I'm feeling a little bit betrayed, what do we do about that?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

You're right. Oh, I know. It's so tricky. And I mean, the thing is, is there's problems with the way that we're handling the man side. So I don't think that the value is to do the same thing to women because both are not really healthy. Right. But but I agree with you, first of all, that I think that, you know, the betrayal trauma label, it just I take a little bit of issue with it. It's not that I take issue with the fact that if a woman finds out that her husband is living in a duplicitous way, that is traumatic. I mean, that is so disorienting because you're like, wait a minute, you've been posing as one thing and you're actually another thing. And the sense of disorientation is really, really challenging. What I think can be, just to speak to that side of it before I go to the women's side, what I think can be difficult about that is that men sometimes will then go to their groups and women go to their betrayal trauma groups and they create an intimacy with their group and their identity as victims in a sense of sexuality, as opposed to how do I grow into a more responsible person? in my life, in my marriage? What role do I play in? I don't mean to say that a man went to pornography because the woman wasn't fulfilling his needs. That's not my position. But do I have anything to do with the marital dysfunction? Do I have anything to do with what's happening? And what have I not been dealing with in my own life? in my own sense of self, in my own relationship to my sexuality and to partnership. You know, people come by these things, honestly. It's not like, oh, bad woman or bad man. We kind of are just growing until we crash into it. We're going along and then we crash into a wall and we're like, oh, wait, we've got a problem. And then how do we get the help we need? But one of the problems that we have is we don't frame marital sexuality very well as a couple's reality that sexuality is a good thing for women. We just need to give that message more, that this is a part of belonging to your strength and your wisdom and being at peace in your skin and having something joyful in your life. And to talk to men about the value of women's sexuality, right? Rather than a woman helps you gratify your sexuality. Because when we have the framing set up, then if you go and browbeat women into, you should just put out more, It's just not going to go well, ever.

Kurt Francom:

Right. And that's the complexity of it all where, I mean, there's so much to consider and there's so much nuance and dynamics happening. And this is where a lot of church leaders are just like, throw up their hands, like, I don't know, you figure that out. Like, I don't know what to do with it. And so, I mean, give us some, like, maybe some high level guidance. Like, I mean, if we have that couple that's struggling and maybe isn't about sex, but usually it's a component of it. I mean, do we just make sure we have to find a good therapist for them? I mean, is there a different way we can show up as leaders?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

I'll just think out loud what I might say if it's a couple where she's low desire, he's high desire and this frustration. You know, I might say it like, you know, you probably have good reasons for being low desire and you're in a stalemate as a couple around this. I don't know how you're going to work it out. It's not my job. I don't have the training to help you work it out. But what I would say, and I'm just winging it here, so I may take back what I say, but I think what I might say if I were in that leadership position is that the sexual relationship matters for both of you. You entered into this marriage under the auspices of a sexual relationship. That is to say, you

chose each other in part because of desire. You chose each other and said, we're not going to put our sexuality elsewhere. And I'm not saying you should do it in a need fulfillment way. I'm saying to thrive as a couple, You ultimately need to both choose to bring your sexuality exclusive to each other and to share your sexuality and to work out something you both can be happy about and both enjoy. And that's going to take a lot of honest and hard conversations that probably only the two of you can have or you can have with a therapist that can help you have them. But just as a church leader, I'm just here to say it matters that you create something that both of you can feel at peace with and that is based in your desire and choice of each other. Not about needs, but choosing each other and sharing your sexuality with one another. And so it's like, you know, don't go to the porn, bring it to your marriage. Don't just accommodate him resentfully. But you choose, you choose into the marriage. And that's harder. That's why people don't do it. Because it means more conflict. It means having to deal with your own thoughts and feelings and not being sure if they're right or fair or whatever, but being willing to get into some of those harder, invalidating conversations that intimacy asks of us. I mean, we all say it's all about intimacy, intimate marriage, blah, blah, blah, but nobody is actually that into intimacy because what intimacy requires is being honest. It means building the foundation of your marriage on truth. And truth hurts, right? That's the part that got edited out of the New Testament, which is the truth sets you free, but it really makes you suffer first.

Kurt Francom:

So true.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

And so, yeah, we got to go through that process if we're going to grow up spiritually and sexually and relationally.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. So what I'm learning and just hearing and gathering from a leadership standpoint, like if I was to do the bishop thing again or whatever, like it's not necessarily of browbeating one side or the other, but like encouraging, like highlighting sexuality as a thing, as a healthy thing that should be present and regardless of the dynamics that each couple's facing individually, like if there's some tension in the relationship, like how is sex showing up in that or what role is sex playing in that? And then just inviting people into that choice or into the to take the journey into that world of sexuality to figure it out. Because when it's dialed in as close as possible, it's a beautiful dynamic that enriches a couple's life rather than just ignore it and wait till the kids are over. Then we can finally wait till the kids are older. Like,

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

But a lot of people do that. They sort of imagine, we'll just put this aside and then it will be... It's hard to wake it back up. But yes, absolutely. It's in the invitation of it. Because in my book, one of the things I write about is stages of sexual and spiritual development. And when we're very young, we need the do's and the don'ts, the black and white, Authority is very external. Then we

move into like the social stage and that's where we're learning that we have an impact on other people. We learn about roles in marriage and so on. But external is authority still. So that is to say that's where we can get browbeaten pretty easily because we're still sort of looking outside of ourselves to tell us who should I be and what is it that I'm supposed to do. We need those stages. Okay, we need to start there because it's helping us to shape our morality and to get a sense of right and wrong and what the rules of engagement are. But when our spirituality really thrives and what's at the core of the capacity for intimate, joyful marriage is what I call stage three in my way of talking about it, which is the self-authoring stage or the self-defining stage where you are a creator of goodness right through your choices. And so when a bishop is talking to somebody in a marital challenge, it's an invitation. around stepping closer to what our ideals are and what actually creates joy. But it's not the browbeating, of course, it's not about you should do this, you know, and you're a terrible person if you don't, but more you could create this if you wanted to. you could bring your moral courage and talk more honestly to each other and start sorting out who the two of you are and letting the growth that naturally comes from that happen to your souls. But it takes a lot of courage, right? Sometimes we'd rather do the external authority and, you know, just put out or whatever sexually, but not really choose. It feels more exposed, but I think that's adult spirituality and where we do best as leaders of adults is to invite them to live up to their ideals better.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah. And I think that, I mean, sexuality is such a microcosm of so many other dynamics, maybe in a relationship where if as a husband, if I'm just doing the dishes because I'm supposed to, or showing up as a father because I'm supposed to, that's much different than when I make the choice of like, I'm going to, I want to be a remarkable father and step into these relationships. She can feel it. She can feel it.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

Is he doing the dishes because he wants sex? Okay. Or is he doing the dishes because he's invested in my life and he cares about me? Because when it's the latter, it's like, that's a very attractive man. If it's the former, it feels like that's a manipulative man and I don't, I'm going to resist it. Right. So yeah.

Kurt Francom:

And the nuance is so fine between those at times.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

It is, but it's really, we're good at mapping each other. We're good at tracking motivation. And so you have to say like, wait, you want to track yourself. Am I doing this because I want a reward or am I living into my higher self right now? And when you're living into your higher self, you become a more trustworthy person and you become more capable of intimacy because you're more willing to be known.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, that's really good. Any other point or principle that we could better understand as we talk about this topic in our religious context?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

Just the idea that comes to mind is just that church members are often very complicit in looking to the bishop or the leader to tell them what to do. Because we want to be commanded in all things, at least on some level, right? We want like, just tell me what to do. How many times a week should I have sex, whatever, you know, I'm not gonna look at porn so I can get to the next meeting and tell you I didn't do it. But it's very, how to say, it's very childlike. And look, we do childlike things all the time as adults. But as a leader, you want to be careful to not be complicit in that unless it's somebody who really, really needs that level of handholding because they're lower in their development. But if they're adults that are sort of ready to take more responsibility for their lives in the moral sense, then in some ways giving the onus to them, like it's on you guys to decide what kind of marriage you're gonna have. It's on you guys to decide if you're gonna be in a constant fight over sex. It's on you guys to decide if you're gonna create something beautiful with the gift of your sexuality in this marriage. It's up to you guys if you're gonna live up to what you promised God who you would be. I mean, one of the things that I've found with people is when they betrayed their own view of who they would be in their marriage, they have a lot of anger towards their spouse. So that is, they will sort of blame their spouse because they have not been the person they feel good about. And it can be helpful to ask people to consider if they have lived up to their own expectations about the kind of marriage partner they would be. And if not, in what ways haven't they? Now you have to watch people because they'll try to sneak in a lot. It's because it's his fault or her fault. But pushing people to live up to their highest selves is where you get traction rather than be a good boy, be a good girl.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, the old principle of, you know, Lord is at eye, right? Being very self-reflective. Absolutely. Even in the problems or situations that seem to be caused by other people. That's right. Right. Yeah, that's really good. And going back to, you know, what I'm gathering from there and correct me if I'm off here, but I just feel like I don't see that the law of chastity lesson is the bishop's responsibility or that the sex talk or addressing sex is the bishop's responsibility, but the bishop could be remarkable resource of that invitation on this journey. Do you need some books? Do you need a good therapist? Do you need a podcast? Start there and let me know if you need anything else.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

Yeah. And I do think a bishop or a good teacher can be giving a vision of what's possible. I think that's helpful. I've had non-Latter-day Saints take my online courses One was a client who was Catholic and he came back to me after taking it and saying, I like never learned in my religious upbringing that sex could be so meaningful. So basically what he was doing was he was

tracking a way of thinking about what sexuality could be that I think is something we understand on some level. that you can have high meaning sexuality and create a lot of beauty there. And I think there's a spiritual value in that vision and that it's shared, that we get it out of this dumb, you know, fulfilling needs thing. And we give it in this frame of really couples as actual equals, as collaborators, masculine and feminine, creating an intimate bond with our embodied selves. That's an important spiritual vision of what our theology points us towards, and I think bishops and church leaders who understand it can point their flock in that direction. I don't think they need to get involved in the details because it's probably outside of their capacity of how to navigate that with a couple, but the vision counts. It matters.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, I love that. And that's the core of leadership is just casting vision in all things. That this can be a beautiful concept and you should not assume that, yeah, you're in your 40s. So, you know, maybe every few months, you know, sex is part of your life. Like, isn't everybody there? Like, but to really cast this vision of like, no, sex can be a beautiful, a huge component of a thriving relationship.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

And I would maybe throw in there, if you're a leader teaching it, and women know a lot more about good sexuality than they sometimes let on. So that is when women have been taught to be the virginal, they often aren't talking about what they want and they just sort of go and accommodate what the man wants. But what women often are looking for depth and investment and a deeper kind of connection, but they don't stand up for it. And then the marriage doesn't evolve into something richer that works for both and is desirable for both. So it's also getting out of the masculine-centric version of sex and more feminine-centric because there's a lot of information there that the marriage needs.

Kurt Francom:

Yeah, that's insightful and intriguing for sure. Yeah. So any other concept, story, principles that we need to cover? Do we do we sum it up pretty well?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

I would just say, you know, I think it's great that people are willing to take on leadership positions and want to make a difference for people and are here listening to this, striving to really lead in ways that will make people's lives more whole. richer, have a deeper spirituality as a part of their lives and so I think it's worthy what people listening to this are trying to do. Awesome.

Kurt Francom:

And if people want to learn more about the resources, I mean, you have online courses, you have retreats and things. Where's a good place to send people to learn more about your work?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

Just go to my website, which is my last name. So it's Finlayson, F-I-N-L-A-Y-S-O-N hyphen Fife, F-I-F-E dot com. And then you can see I have a podcast conversations with Dr. Jennifer, which is conversations like this. That's free. I have room for two, which is a subscription podcast where I'm working with actual couples around these issues. So it could be helpful. For anybody that's counseling couples to just kind of listen to how I'm talking through the issues that couples are facing. These are, you know, anonymous and their voices are distorted, but they're LDS couples. And then I have five online courses that are all about, for Latter-day Saints, and all about how to relate to our theology in a way that helps us grow into our ability to create emotionally and sexually intimate marriages. So that's all There.

Kurt Francom:

Awesome. We'll definitely link to all that. It'd be a phenomenal resource to send people. And then last question I have for you, Jennifer, is just, and I usually ask this question, you know, how has being a leader helped you become a better disciple of Jesus Christ? But I'm just curious in your context, like, what could you share with a leadership, you know, religious audience as far as like, what is your journey on being a student and of sexuality and researcher? How has that impacted your personal faith in Jesus Christ?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife:

Well, what I would say is that it's really helped me see very clearly the difference between good and evil and how much we're making decisions in the moment to moment realities of our lives of if we'll lean in the direction of light or in the direction of the dark and how much it impacts your own soul, your relationship, your children, what you do. and that it takes a lot of courage to choose the light sometimes, to choose what's true, to choose what's honest, to self-confront and do the more right thing, to put your ego aside. But when I see people do this, it is so beautiful because you see like the light in them, like the change in their countenance. You see the transformation of people and the beauty that happens there, the deeper depth in the marriage, the greater peace in their homes. And when people choose their fear and their anxiety and their self-justification and their ego, they create more suffering. So in the immediate sense, they get away from it, perhaps the hard thing, but then they create more. And these are all ideas I learned growing up, but to actually see it in real time, because counseling and coaching people is really a moral activity. I'm really in the morality of people's choices with them. And so it's really remarkable to see how much our choices shape our souls and shape our lives and how deeply they matter. And Christ got it right, you know, when he's talking to us about the point is love, right? And the point is not how things look. Our faith is here to teach us to love, We're not here to just comply with our faith and think we're better than other people, which is the natural man thing to do. But how do we use our belief in God and goodness and our intimate relationship with God in Christ to forge more courage and to do the right thing in our lives? And so, you know, it's beautiful and hard.

Kurt Francom:

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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. 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.